

# MOTHER INDIA

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SPECIAL NUMBER

for

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

of

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

at

THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

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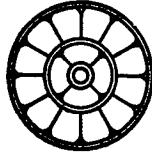
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this special issue is to give some glimpses of the work of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on the occasion of its 25th anniversary.

The Centre of Education is an integral part of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and it serves as a field for a new experiment and research in education. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which began to assume an organised form in 1926, has strictly the aim of Yogic research which includes the work of preparing future humanity to manifest upon earth a divine consciousness and life. And for years Sri Aurobindo considered the formation of an Education Centre as one of the best means of realising that end. It was, therefore, in order to give a concrete shape to his vision that the Mother opened a school for children on December 2, 1943.

This school has continued to grow and experiment on various educational problems. In 1951, a Convention was held at Pondicherry which resolved to establish an International University Centre in Pondicherry as a fitting memorial to Sri Aurobindo. Accordingly, the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre was inaugurated by the Mother on January 6, 1952. In 1959, in order to give a wider scope and meaning to the education imparted here, the Mother decided to drop the word 'University' and renamed the Centre: "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education."

At present, the Centre of Education has provision for education from the kindergarten to the higher and advanced levels of study. It has the Faculties of Humanities, Languages, Science, Engineering Technology, and Physical Education. It has also facilities for Art, Music, Dance and Drama. In addition, facilities are provided for practical and manual work.

The system of education is integral: its object is the development of all the aspects and capacities of the personality under the sovereign direction of the inner guiding principle of growth, the true soul and spirit. In this system, the methods of education that are being experimented in permit the free growth and progress of each individual student on the lines of his inner law of development. This system is thus truly Free Progress System.

What is presented here may be regarded as a cross-section view of the Centre. For a fuller view, the readers are recommended the following books:

*Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education*

*Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Physical Education*

*Sri Aurobindo on The Future Evolution of Man*

*Education and the Aim of Human Life* by P. B. Saint-Hilaire (Pavitra)

*A Scheme of Education* by Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya

**PART I**  
**SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER**  
**ON**  
**SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM**

*(Compiled from Their Writings)*

**A DREAM**

THERE should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and every one. In the general organisation, intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, will be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they give being limited solely by each one's capacities and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which on its side would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where the relations among human beings, usually based upon competition and strife, would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess the necessary knowledge to understand and accept it nor the indispensable conscious force to execute it. That is why I call it a dream.

Yet this dream is on the way of becoming a reality. That is exactly what we are seeking to do at the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo on a small scale, in proportion to our modest means. The achievement is indeed far from being perfect but it is progressive; little by little we advance towards our goal, which, we hope, one day we shall be able to hold before the world as a practical and effective means of coming out of the present chaos in order to be born into a more true, more harmonious new life.

THE MOTHER

## THE ASHRAM

THIS Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step.

\*  
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This is not an Ashram like others—the members are not Sanyasis; it is not *mokṣa* that is the sole aim of the yoga here. What is being done here is a preparation for a work—a work which will be founded on yogic consciousness and Yoga-Shakti, and can have no other foundation. ..

\*  
\*\*

We are not a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes.

\*  
\*\*

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Ashram which is a “laboratory” for a spiritual and supramental yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only *sattwic* and cultured men come for yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical, and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of human being. Those in the Ashram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.

In the course of the Yoga, collectively—though not for each one necessarily—as each plane is dealt with, all its difficulties arise. That will explain much in the Ashram that people do not expect there. When the preliminary work is over in the “laboratory”, things must change.

\*  
\*\*

Music, painting, poetry and many other activities which are of the mind and vital can be used as part of spiritual development or of the work and for a spiritual purpose; it depends on the spirit in which they are done.

SRI AUROBINDO

**Our aim** is not...to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga, but to create a ground and a way which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. **All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West.** All may find great difficulties in their personal or common human nature; but it is not their physical origin or their racial temperament that can be an insuperable obstacle to their deliverance.

The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of the mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter. This is an exceedingly difficult aim and difficult yoga; to many or most it will seem impossible. All the established forces of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness are opposed to it and deny it and try to prevent it, and the sadhak will find his own mind, life and body full of the most obstinate impediments to its realisation. If you can accept the ideal whole-heartedly, face all the difficulties, leave the past and its ties behind you and are ready to give up everything and risk everything for the divine possibility, then only can you hope to discover by experience the Truth behind it.

SRI AUROBINDO

**The Integral Yoga is new as compared to the old yogas...**

- (1) Because it aims not at a departure out of the world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object ..
- (2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supracosmic achievement .
- (3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, namely the total and integral change of consciousness and nature, taking up all methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive. I have not found

this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old yogas... Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, **but a spiritual adventure.**

SRI AUROBINDO

**We are attending on the birth of a new world**, not yet recognised, not yet felt, denied by most: but it is there, it is there endeavouring to grow and quite sure of the result. Yet, the road to reach there is a new road that has never before been traced; none went by that, none did that. It is a beginning, a universal beginning. Therefore, it is an adventure absolutely unexpected and unforeseeable.... We are for a new creation, entirely new, carrying in it all the unforeseen, all risks, all hazards,—a true adventure of which the goal is sure victory, but of which the way is unknown and has to be traced out step by step in the unexplored. It is something that has never been in the present universe and will never be in the same manner. We must leave behind whatever has been foreseen, whatever has been designed, whatever has been built up and then on the march into the unknown, come what may!

THE MOTHER

| **WHY** do men cling to a **religion** ?

Religions are based on creeds which are spiritual experiences brought down to a level where they become more easy to grasp, but at the cost of their integral purity and truth.

The time of religions is over.

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

THE MOTHER



## PART II

### THE NECESSITY OF A SPIRITUAL CHANGE IN SOCIETY AND THE WAY OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

*(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Writings)*

### THE NECESSITY OF A SPIRITUAL CHANGE IN SOCIETY

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being: but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable

means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideals and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and inter-mixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation, he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life

A life of unity, mutuality and *harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being* is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organisation of the activity of mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change. An accommodation of the egocentric human individuality, separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative. But because the burden which is being laid on mankind is too great for the present littleness of the human personality and its petty mind and small life-instincts, because it cannot operate the needed change, because it is using this new apparatus and organisation to serve the old infraspirtual and infrarational life-self of humanity, the destiny of the race seems to be heading dangerously, as if impatiently and in spite of itself, under the drive of the vital ego seized by colossal forces which are on the same scale as the huge mechanical organisation of life and scientific knowledge which it has evolved, a scale too large for its reason and will to handle, into a prolonged confusion and perilous crisis and darkness of violent shifting incertitude. Even if this turns out to be a passing phase or appearance and a tolerable structural accommodation is found which will enable mankind to proceed less catastrophically on its uncertain journey, this can only be a respite. For the problem is fundamental and in putting it evolutionary Nature in man is confronting herself with a critical choice which must

one day be solved in the true sense if the race is to arrive or even to survive. The evolutionary *nisus* is pushing towards a development of the cosmic Force in terrestrial life which needs a larger mental and vital being to support it, a wider mind, a greater wider more conscious unanimsed Life-Soul, *Anima*, and that again needs an unveiling of the supporting Soul and spiritual Self within to maintain it.

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new values and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realise these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialisation of a few restricted ideas or slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanised compression of the elements of life, a mechanised unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The communal ego is idealised as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the community; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscious and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

Another solution that is attempted reposes still on the materialistic reason and a unified organisation of the economic life of the race; but the method that is being employed is the same, a forced compression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organisation of the communal existence. A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilisation or a drying up of the springs of life and a swift or slow decadence. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness: for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops;

they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

An alternative solution is the development of an enlightened reason and will of the normal man consenting to a new socialised life in which he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. If we inquire how this radical change is to be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by the magic of the social machine cutting humanity into a better pattern. *But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man;* it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection—even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute,—by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardised shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence. The reasoning mind with its logical practicality has no other way of getting the better of Nature's ambiguous and complex movements than a regulation and mechanisation of mind and life. If that is done, the soul of humanity will either have to recover its freedom and growth by a revolt and a destruction of the machine into whose grip it has been cast or escape by a withdrawal into itself and a rejection of life. *Man's true way out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanisation of mind and the ignorance and disorder of life-nature.* But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. *But organised religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society;* it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being, it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or

surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. *A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself.* Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualisation of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion: but the human ego and vital nature were too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance. *It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.*

At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavour too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle. *But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it:* what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. *To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature.*

SRI AUROBINDO (*The Life Divine*)

## A FIRST EVOLUTIONARY FORMATION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

A COMMON spiritual life meant to express the spiritual and not the mental, vital and physical being must found and maintain itself on greater values than the mental, vital, physical values of the ordinary human society; if it is not so founded, it will be merely the normal human society with a difference. An entirely new consciousness in many individuals transforming their whole being, transforming their mental, vital and physical nature-self, is needed for the new life to appear; only such a transformation of the general mind, life, body nature can bring into being a new worthwhile collective existence. The evolutionary nîsus must tend not merely to create a new type of mental beings but another order of beings who have raised their whole existence from our present mentalised animality to a greater spiritual level of the earth-nature.

Any such complete transformation of the earth-life in a number of human beings could not establish itself altogether at once; even when the turning-point has been reached, the decisive line crossed, the new life in its beginnings would have to pass through a period of ordeal and arduous development. A general change from the old consciousness taking up the whole life into the spiritual principle would be the necessary first step; the preparation for this might be long and the transformation itself once begun proceed by stages. In the individual it might after a certain point be rapid and even effect itself by a bound, an evolutionary *saltus*; but an individual transformation would not be the creation of a new type of beings or a new collective life. One might conceive of a number of individuals thus evolving separately in the midst of the old life and then joining together to establish the nucleus of the new existence. But it is not likely that Nature would operate in this fashion, and it would be difficult for the individual to arrive at a complete change while still enclosed in the life of the lower nature. At a certain stage it might be necessary to follow the age-long device of the separate community, but with a double purpose, first to provide a secure atmosphere, a place and life apart, in which the consciousness of the individual might concentrate on its evolution in surroundings, where all was turned and centred towards the one endeavour and, next, when things were ready, to formulate and develop the new life in those surroundings and in this prepared spiritual atmosphere. It might be that, in such a concentration of effort, all the difficulties of the change would present themselves with a concentrated force; for each seeker, carrying in himself the possibilities but also the imperfections of a world that has to be transformed, would bring in not only his capacities but his difficulties and the oppositions of the old nature and, mixed together in the restricted circle of a small and close common life, these might assume a considerably enhanced force of obstruction which would tend to counter-balance the enhanced power and concentration of the forces making for the evo-

lution. This is a difficulty that has broken in the past all the efforts of mental man to evolve something better and more true and harmonious than the ordinary mental and vital life. But if Nature is ready and has taken her evolutionary decision or if the power of the Spirit descending from the higher planes is sufficiently strong, the difficulty would be overcome and a first evolutionary formation or formations would be possible.

SRI AUROBINDO  
(*The Life Divine*)

## THE TEACHING OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. It is possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of separative consciousness and become aware of the true Self, the Divinity within us and all.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the process by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.

But while the former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will in the plant and animal life, in man Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. It is not, however, by the mental will in man that this can be wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. In the past, it has been attempted by a drawing away from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or Spirit. *Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not merely release the spiritual Self out of the world, but release it in the world, replace the mind's ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental Truth-Consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race.* The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the descent and working of the higher still concealed supramental principle.

This, however, cannot be done at once or in a short time or by any rapid or miraculous transformation. Many steps have to be taken by the seeker before the supramental descent is possible. Man lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body, but there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake—for it is only a very restricted influence from it that he receives now and that pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of this inner being and to live



from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force. In doing so he discovers in himself his true soul which is not this outer mixture of mental, vital and physical elements but something of the Reality behind them, a spark from the one Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in his soul and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. But even then it is not at once the full supramental Light and Force. For there are several ranges of consciousness between the ordinary human mind and the supramental Truth-Consciousness. These intervening ranges have to be opened up and their power brought down into the mind, life and body. Only afterwards can the full power of the Truth-Consciousness work in the nature. The process of this self-discipline or sadhana is therefore long and difficult, but even a little of it is so much gained because it makes the ultimate release and perfection more possible.

There are many things belonging to older systems that are necessary on the way—an opening of the mind to a greater wideness and to the sense of the Self and the Infinite, an emergence into what has been called the cosmic consciousness, mastery over the desires and passions; an outward asceticism is not essential, but the conquest of desire and attachment and a control over the body and its needs, greeds and instincts are indispensable. There is a combination of the principles of the old systems, the way of knowledge through the mind's discernment between Reality and the appearance, the heart's way of devotion, love and surrender and the way of works turning the will away from motives of self-interest to the Truth and the service of a greater Reality than the ego. For the whole being has to be trained so that it can respond and be transformed when it is possible for that greater Light and Force to work in the nature.

In this discipline the inspiration of the Master and, in the difficult stages, his control and his presence are indispensable—for it would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chance of success. The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his teaching and still more by his influence and example but by a power to communicate his own experience to others.

This is Sri Aurobindo's teaching and method of practice. It is not his object to develop any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion—for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose. The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.

SRI AUROBINDO  
(*Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*)

## THE PLACE OF WORK IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

INTO the third and last category of the works of sacrifice can be gathered all that is directly proper to the Yoga of works; for here is its field of effectuation and major province. It covers the entire range of life's more visible activities, under it fall the multi-form energies of the Will-to-Life throwing itself outward to make the most of material existence. It is here that an ascetic or other-worldly spirituality feels an insurmountable denial of the Truth which it seeks after and is compelled to turn away from terrestrial existence, rejecting it as for ever the dark playground of an incurable Ignorance. Yet it is precisely these activities that are claimed for a spiritual conquest and divine transformation by the integral Yoga. Abandoned altogether by the more ascetic disciplines, accepted by others only as a field of temporary ordeal or a momentary, superficial and ambiguous play of the concealed spirit, this existence is fully embraced and welcomed by the integral seeker as a field of fulfilment, a field for divine works, a field of the total self-discovery of the concealed and indwelling Spirit. A discovery of the Divinity in oneself is his first object, but a total discovery too of the Divinity in the world behind the apparent denial offered by its scheme and figures and, last, a total discovery of the dynamism of some transcendent Eternal; for by its descent this world and self will be empowered to break their disguising envelopes and become divine in revealing form and manifesting process as they now are secretly in their hidden essence.

This object of the integral Yoga must be accepted wholly by those who follow it, but the acceptance must not be in ignorance of the immense stumbling-blocks that lie in the way of the achievement; on the contrary, one must be fully aware of the compelling cause of the refusal of so many other disciplines to regard even its possibility, much less its imperative character, as the true meaning of terrestrial existence. For here in the works of life in the earth-nature is the very heart of the difficulty that has driven Philosophy to its heights of aloofness and turned away even the eager eye of Religion from the malady of birth in a mortal body to a distant Paradise or a silent peace of Nirvana. A way of pure Knowledge is comparatively straightforward and easy to the tread of the seeker in spite of our mortal limitations and the pitfalls of the Ignorance; a way of pure Love, although it has its stumbling-blocks and its sufferings and trials, can in comparison be easy as the winging of a bird through the free azure. For Knowledge and Love are pure in their essence and become mixed and embarrassed, corrupted and degraded only when they enter into the ambiguous movement of the life-forces and are seized by them for the outward life's crude movements and obstinately inferior motives. Alone of these powers Life or at least a certain predominant Will-in-life has the appearance of something impure, accursed or fallen in its very essence. At its contact, wrapped in its dull sheaths or caught in its iridescent quagmires, the divinities themselves become common and muddy and hardly escape

from being dragged downward into its perversions and disastrously assimilated to the demon and the Asura. A principle of dark and dull inertia is at its base; all are tied down by the body and its needs and desires to a trivial mind, petty desires and emotions, an insignificant repetition of small worthless functionings, needs, cares, occupations, pains, pleasures that lead to nothing beyond themselves and bear the stamp of an ignorance that knows not its own why and whither. This physical mind of inertia believes in no divinity other than its small earth-gods; it aspires perhaps to a greater comfort, order, pleasure, but asks for no uplifting and no spiritual deliverance. At the centre we meet a stronger Will of life with a greater gusto, but it is a blinded Daemon, a perverted spirit and exults in the very elements that make of life a striving turmoil and an unhappy imbroglio. It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of the mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to make life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture. Another Will-in-life there is that is ready to follow the ameliorating ideal Mind and is allured by its offer to extract some harmony, beauty, light, nobler order out of life, but this is a smaller part of the vital nature and can be easily overpowered by its more violent or darker duller yoke-comrades; nor does it readily lend itself to a call higher than that of the Mind unless that call defeats itself, as Religion usually does, by lowering its demand to conditions more intelligible to our obscure vital nature. All these forces the spiritual seeker grows aware of in himself and finds all around him and has to struggle and combat incessantly to be rid of their grip and dislodge the long-entrenched mastery they have exercised over his own being as over the envioning human existence. The difficulty is great; for their hold is so strong, so apparently invincible that it justifies the disdainful dictum which compares human nature to a dog's tail,—for, straighten it never so much by force of ethics, religion, reason or any other redemptive effort, it returns in the end always to the crooked curl of Nature. And so great is the vim, the clutch of that more agitated Life-Will, so immense the peril of its passions and errors, so subtly insistent or persistently invasive, so obstinate up to the very gates of Heaven the fury of its attack or the tedious obstruction of its obstacles that even the saint and the Yogin cannot be sure of their liberated purity or their trained self-mastery against its intrigue or its violence. All labour to straighten out this native crookedness strikes the struggling will as a futility; a flight, a withdrawal to happy Heaven or peaceful dissolution easily finds credit as the only wisdom and to find a way not to be born again gets established as the only remedy for the dull bondage or the poor shoddy delirium or the blinded and precarious happiness and achievement of earthly existence.

A remedy yet there should be and is, a way of redress and a chance of transfor-

mation for this troubled vital nature; but for that the cause of deviation must be found and remedied at the heart of Life itself and in its very principle, since Life too is a power of the Divine and not a creation of some malignant Chance or dark Titanic impulse, however obscure or perverted may be its actual appearance. In Life itself there is the seed of its own salvation, it is from the Life-Energy that we must get our leverage; for though there is a saving light in Knowledge, a redeeming and transforming force in Love, these cannot be effective here unless they secure the consent of Life and can use the instrumentation of some delivered energy at its centre for a sublimation of the erring human into a divine Life-Force. It is not possible to cut the difficulty by a splitting up of the works of sacrifice; we cannot escape it by deciding that we shall do only the works of Love and Knowledge and leave aside the works of will and power, possession and acquisition, production and fruitful expense of capacity, battle and victory and mastery, striking away from us the larger part of life because it seems to be made of the very stuff of desire and ego and therefore doomed to be a field of disharmony and mere conflict and disorder. For that division cannot really be made; or, if attempted, it must fail in its essential purpose, since it would isolate us from the total energies of the World-Power and sterilise an important part of integral Nature, just the one force in it that is a necessary instrument in any world-creative purpose. The Life-Force is an indispensable intermediary, the effectuating element in Nature here; mind needs its alliance if the works of mind are not to remain shining inner formations without a body; the spirit needs it to give an outer force and form to its manifested possibilities and arrive at a complete self-expression incarnated in Matter. If life refuses the aid of its intermediary energy to the spirit's other workings or is itself refused, they are likely to be reduced for all the effect they can have here to a static seclusion or a golden impotence; or if anything is done, it will be a partial irradiation of our action more subjective than objective, modifying existence perhaps, but without force to change it. Yet if Life brings its forces to the Spirit but unregenerate, a worse result may follow, since it is likely to reduce the spiritual action of Love or Knowledge to diminished and corrupted motions or make them accomplices of its own inferior or perverse workings. Life is indispensable to the completeness of the creative spiritual realisation, but life released, transformed, uplifted, not the ordinary mentalised human-animal life, nor the demoniac or Titanic, not even the divine and the undivine mixed together. Whatever may be done by other world-shunning or heaven-seeking disciplines, this is the difficult but unavoidable task of the integral Yoga; it cannot afford to leave unsolved the problem of the outward works of life, it must find in them their native Divinity and ally it firmly and for ever to the divinities of Love and Knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO  
*(The Synthesis of Yoga)*

## SALIENT FEATURES OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

WE see, then, what from the psychological point of view—and Yoga is nothing but practical psychology,—is the conception of Nature from which we have to start... The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of Yoga; and this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape into the higher,—the ordinary viewpoint,—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher Nature. It is this, rather, that must be the aim of an integral Yoga.

The method we have to pursue, then, is to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense God Himself, the real Person in us, becomes the sadhaka of the sadhana as well as the Master of the Yoga by whom the lower personality is used as the centre of a divine transfiguration and the instrument of its own perfection. In effect, the pressure of the Tapas, the force of consciousness in us dwelling in the Idea of the divine Nature upon that which we are in our entirety, produces its own realisation. The divine and all-knowing and all-effecting descends upon the limited and obscure, progressively illumines and energises the whole lower nature and substitutes its own action for all the terms of the inferior human light and mortal activity.

In psychological fact this method translates itself into the progressive surrender of the ego with its whole field and all its apparatus to the Beyond-ego with its vast and incalculable but always inevitable workings. Certainly, this is no short cut or easy sadhana. It requires a colossal faith, an absolute courage and above all an unflinching patience. For it implies three stages of which only the last can be wholly blissful or rapid,—the attempt of the ego to enter into contact with the Divine, the wide, full and therefore laborious preparation of the whole lower Nature by the divine working to receive and become the higher Nature, and the eventual transformation. In fact, however, the divine Strength, often unobserved and behind the veil, substitutes itself for our weakness and supports us through all our failings of faith, courage and patience. It “makes the blind to see and the lame to stride over the hills.” The intellect becomes aware of a Law that beneficently insists and a succour that upholds; the heart speaks of a Master of all things and Friend of man or a universal Mother who upholds through all stumblings. Therefore this path is at once the most difficult imaginable and yet in comparison with the magnitude of its effort and object, the most easy and sure of all.

There are three outstanding features of this action of the higher when it works integrally on the lower nature. In the first place, it does not act according to a fixed system and succession as in the specialised methods of Yoga, but with a sort of free, scattered and yet gradually intensive and purposeful working determined by the temperament of the individual in whom it operates, the helpful materials which his nature offers and the obstacles which it presents to purification and perfection. In a sense,

therefore, each man in this path has his own method of Yoga. Yet are there certain broad lines of working common to all which enable us to construct not indeed a routine system, but yet some kind of Shastra or scientific method of the synthetic Yoga.

Secondly, the process, being integral, accepts our nature such as it stands organised by our past evolution and without rejecting anything essential compels all to undergo a divine change. Everything in us is seized by the hands of a mighty Artificer and transformed into a clear image of that which it now seeks confusedly to present. In that ever-progressive experience we begin to perceive how this lower manifestation is constituted and that everything in it, however seemingly deformed or petty or vile, is the more or less distorted or imperfect figure of some element or action in the harmony of the divine Nature. We begin to understand what the Vedic Rishis meant when they spoke of the human forefathers fashioning the gods as a smith forges the crude material in his smithy.

Thirdly, the divine Power in us uses all life as the means of this integral Yoga. Every experience and outer contact with our world-environment, however trifling or however disastrous, is used for the work, and every inner experience, even to the most repellent suffering or the most humiliating fall, becomes a step on the path to perfection. And we recognise in ourselves with opened eyes the method of God in the world, His purpose of light in the obscure, of might in the weak and fallen, of delight in what is grievous and miserable. We see the divine method to be the same in the lower and in the higher working; only in the one it is pursued tardily and obscurely through the subconscious in Nature, in the other it becomes swift and self-conscious and the instrument confesses the hand of the Master. All life is a Yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself. Yoga marks the stage at which this effort becomes capable of self-awareness and therefore of right completion in the individual. It is a gathering up and concentration of the movements dispersed and loosely combined in the lower evolution.

An integral method and an integral result. First, an integral realisation of Divine Being; not only a realisation of the One in its indistinguishable unity, but also in its multitude of aspects which are also necessary to the complete knowledge of it by the relative consciousness; not only realisation of unity in the Self, but of unity in the infinite diversity of activities, worlds and creatures.

Therefore, also, an integral liberation. Not only the freedom born of unbroken contact of the individual being in all its parts with the Divine, *sāyujya-mukti*, by which it becomes free even in its separation, even in the duality, not only the *sālokya-mukti* by which the whole conscious existence dwells in the same status of being as the Divine, in the state of Sachchidananda; but also the acquisition of the divine nature by the transformation of this lower being into the human image of the divine, *sādharmya-mukti*, and the complete and final release of all, the liberation of the consciousness from the transitory mould of the ego and its unification with the One Being, universal both in the world and the individual and transcendentally one both in the world and beyond all universe.

By this integral realisation and liberation, the perfect harmony of the results of Knowledge, Love and Works. For there is attained the complete release from ego and identification in being with the One in all and beyond all. But since the attaining consciousness is not limited by its attainment, we win also the unity in Beatitude and the harmonised diversity in Love, so that all relations of the play remain possible to us even while we retain on the heights of our being the eternal oneness with the Beloved. And by a similar wideness, being capable of a freedom in spirit that embraces life and does not depend upon withdrawal from life, we are able to become without egoism, bondage or reaction the channel in our mind and body for a divine action poured out freely upon the world.

The divine existence is of the nature not only of freedom, but of purity, beatitude and perfection. An integral purity which shall enable on the one hand the perfect reflection of the divine Being in ourselves and on the other the perfect outpouring of its Truth and Law in us in the terms of life and through the right functioning of the complex instrument we are in our outer parts, is the condition of an integral liberty. Its result is an integral beatitude, in which there becomes possible at once the Ananda of all that is in the world seen as symbols of the Divine and the Ananda of that which is not-world. And it prepares the integral perfection of our humanity as a type of the Divine in the conditions of the human manifestation, a perfection founded on a certain free universality of being, of love and joy, of play of knowledge and of play of will in power and will in unegoistic action. This integrality also can be attained by the integral Yoga.

Perfection includes perfection of mind and body, so that the highest results of Raja Yoga and Hathayoga should be contained in the widest formula of the synthesis finally to be effected by mankind. At any rate a full development of the general mental and physical faculties and experiences attainable by humanity through Yoga must be included in the scope of the integral method. Nor would these have any *raison d'être* unless employed for an integral mental and physical life. Such a mental and physical life would be in its nature a translation of the spiritual existence into its right mental and physical values. Thus we would arrive at a synthesis of the three degrees of Nature and of the three modes of human existence which she has evolved or is evolving. We would include in the scope of our liberated being and perfected modes of activity the material life, our base, and the mental life, our intermediate instrument.

Nor would the integrality to which we aspire be real or even possible, if it were confined to the individual. Since our divine perfection embraces the realisation of ourselves in being, in life and in love through others as well as through ourselves, the extension of our liberty and of its results in others would be the inevitable outcome as well as the broadest utility of our liberation and perfection. And the constant and inherent attempt of such an extension would be towards its increasing and ultimately complete generalisation in mankind.

The divinising of the normal material life of man and of his great secular attempt

of mental and moral self-culture in the individual and the race by this integralisation of a widely perfect spiritual existence would thus be the crown alike of our individual and of our common effort. Such a consummation being no other than the kingdom of heaven within reproduced in the kingdom of heaven without, would be also the true fulfilment of the great dream cherished in different terms by the world's religions.

The widest synthesis of perfection possible to thought is the sole effort entirely worthy of those whose dedicated vision perceives that God dwells concealed in humanity.

SRI AUROBINDO  
(*The Synthesis of Yoga*)



## THE WAY

FIRST be sure of the call and of thy soul's answer. For if the call is not true, not the touch of God's powers or the voice of his messengers, but the lure of thy ego, the end of thy endeavour will be a poor spiritual fiasco or else a deep disaster.

And if not the soul's fervour, but only the mind's assent or interest replies to the divine summons or only the lower life's desire clutches at some side attraction of the fruits of Yoga-power or Yoga-pleasure or only a transient emotion leaps like an unsteady flame moved by the intensity of the Voice or its sweetness or grandeur, then too there can be little surety for thee in the difficult path of Yoga.

The outer instruments of mortal man have no force to carry him through the severe ardours of this spiritual journey and Titanic inner battle or to meet its terrible or obstinate ordeals or nerve him to face and overcome its subtle and formidable dangers. Only his spirit's august and steadfast will and the quenchless fire of his soul's invincible ardour are sufficient for this difficult transformation and this high improbable endeavour.

Imagine not the way is easy; the way is long, arduous, dangerous, difficult. At every step is an ambush, at every turn a pitfall. A thousand seen or unseen enemies will start up against thee terrible in subtlety against thy ignorance, formidable in power against thy weakness. And when with pain thou hast destroyed them, other thousands will surge up to take their place. Hell will vomit its hordes to oppose and enring and wound and menace; Heaven will meet thee with its pitiless tests and its cold luminous denials.

Thou shalt find thyself alone in thy anguish, the demons furious in thy path, the Gods unwilling above thee. Ancient and powerful, cruel, unvanquished and close and innumerable are the dark and dreadful Powers that profit by the reign of Night and Ignorance and would have no change and are hostile. Aloof, slow to arrive, far-off and few and brief in their visits are the Bright Ones who are willing or permitted to succour. Each step forward is a battle. There are precipitous descents, there are unending ascensions and ever higher peaks upon peaks to conquer. Each plateau climbed is but a stage on the way and reveals endless heights beyond it. Each victory thou thinkest the last triumphant struggle proves to be but the prelude to a hundred fierce and perilous battles...

But thou sayest God's hand will be with me and the Divine Mother near with her gracious smile of succour? And thou knowest not then that God's Grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals or Kuvera's priceless treasures? Ask of his chosen and they will tell thee how often the Eternal has covered his face from them, how often he has withdrawn from them behind his mysterious veil and they have found themselves alone in the grip of Hell, solitary in the horror of the darkness, naked and defenceless in the anguish of the battle. And if his presence

is felt behind the veil, yet is it like the winter sun behind clouds and saves not from the rain and snow and the calamitous storm and the harsh wind and the bitter cold and the atmosphere of a sorrowful grey and the dun weary dullness. Doubtless the help is there even when it seems to be withdrawn, but still is there the appearance of total night with no sun to come and no star of hope to please in the darkness.

Beautiful is the face of the Divine Mother, but she too can be hard and terrible. Nay, then, is immortality a plaything to be given lightly to a child, or the divine life a prize without effort or the crown for a weakling? Strive rightly and thou shalt have; trust and thy trust shall in the end be justified; but the dread Law of the Way is there and none can abrogate it.

SRI AUROBINDO  
*(The Hour of God)*

**PART III**  
**THE MOTHER**  
**ON**  
**THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION**  
**AND ON**  
**THE VITAL PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION**

**AN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION\***

THE conditions under which men live upon earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. All who have had the perception of what could be and should be done to improve the situation, in the different domains of human life, economical, political, social, financial, educational or sanitary, are precisely the individuals who have developed their consciousness more or less to an exceptional degree and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas remained on the whole theoretical; or, if an attempt was ever made to realise them practically, it always failed lamentably in the long or short run: for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another, religions, spiritual or social, have been created, their beginnings were at times full of promise: but, as humanity was not transformed at heart, the old errors arising from human nature itself have reappeared gradually and after a time it was found that one was left almost at the same spot from where one had started with so much hope and enthusiasm. In this effort, however, to improve human conditions there have always been two tendencies, which although apparently contrary to each other should rather be complementary and together work out the progress. One seeks a collective reorganisation, something that would lead towards an effective unity of mankind: the other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that it is the individual who should be given conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both the lines. Collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, it is necessary that something of an antecedent progress be achieved in the collective life. A way has therefore to be found whereby the twofold progress can go on simultaneously.

It is in answer to this pressing need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of

\* Reproduced with a few alterations from the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, April, 1952

his International Centre of Education, so that the élite of humanity may be made ready who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who at the same time would be prepared to embody the new force descending upon earth to transform it. Some broad ideas would serve as the basis for organising this centre of education and as a guide for the programme of studies. Most of these have already been dealt with in the various writings of Sri Aurobindo and in the series of articles on Education that have appeared in this Bulletin.

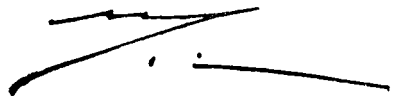
The most important one is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither through uniformity nor through domination and subjection. A synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its own place in accordance with its own genius and the role it has to play in the whole, can alone effect a comprehensive and progressive unification which may have some chance of enduring. And if the synthesis is to be a living thing, the grouping should be done around a central idea as high and wide as possible, and in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, would find their respective places. That idea is to give man the conditions of life necessary for preparing him to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All urge of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination should disappear giving place to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration.

To make this possible, children from their very early age, must be accustomed not merely to the idea but to its practice. Therefore the International Centre of Education will be international not because students from all countries will be admitted here, nor because the education will be given in their own mother tongue, but particularly because the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically too through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of world-exhibition has to be organised in which all the countries will be represented in a concrete and living manner; the ideal is that every nation with a very definite culture would have a pavilion representing that culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of the country: it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as manufactured, products also that best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus find a practical and concrete interest in cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work by taking over the charge of the pavilion that represents it. A lodging house also could be attached, large or small according to the need, where students of the same nationality would be accommodated; they will thus enjoy the very culture of their own motherland, and at the same time receive at the centre the education which will introduce them as well to other cultures existing upon earth. Thus the international education will not be simply theoretical, on the school bench, but practical in all details of existence.

A general idea of the organisation is only given here: the application in details will be shown gradually in the Bulletin as things are actually carried out.

The first aim then will be to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries upon earth. For all world organisation, to be real and to be able to live, must be based upon mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. It is only in the collective order and organisation, in a collaboration based upon mutual goodwill that lies the possibility of man being lifted out of the painful chaos where he is now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the Centre of Education: and their solution will be given in the light of the Supramental Knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.



## **WHY ARE DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES NOT GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS OF THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION?**

FOR about a century mankind is suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more, and in our days, it has become most acute, it is what we may call "utilitarianism" Things and persons, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle alone. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. It goes, of course, without saying that what is useful is better than what is not so. But one must first of all understand what one calls useful—useful to whom, to what, for what?

Indeed more and more, the races who considered themselves civilised have been naming as useful that which serves to bring, to acquire or to produce money. Everything is judged from this monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is very contagious, for even children do not escape from it. At an age when one should have dreams of beauty and greatness and perfection, perhaps too sublime for ordinary common sense, but certainly higher than this dull good sense, they dream of money and worry how to earn it

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

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare to pass examinations with success; for it is with diplomas and certificates and titles that they will be able to get good positions and earn much

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

To learn in order to know, to study in order to have the knowledge of the secrets of Nature and of life, to educate oneself in order to increase one's consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to be master of oneself, to overcome one's weakness, one's incapacity and ignorance, to prepare oneself in order to progress in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true...they hardly think of that and consider all that as mere utopia, the only important thing is to be practical, to prepare and to learn how to earn money

Children who are affected with this disease are not at their place in the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And it is to demonstrate this to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination and competition and do not give them diplomas or titles which may serve them in the outside world.

We want to have here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who are eager for knowledge and perfection, who look ardently towards a more wholly true future.

## TO THE CHILDREN OF THE ASHRAM

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

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

You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the Ashram, that is to say still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus become the representatives of the new race. Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favoured conditions with regard to the environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.

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

24th July, 1951

# A PROPOS

## THE EDUCATION COMMISSION AND A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR INDIA

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.

THE MOTHER

### SOME QUESTIONS AND THE MOTHER'S ANSWERS

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

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

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

A. Make matter ready to manifest the Spirit.

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

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

*Q. How does the Mother view the progress of Science and technology in India? What contribution can it make to the growth of the Spirit in man?*

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

*Q. 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?*

A. 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.



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

A. 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

*Q. 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 enjoyment?*

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

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

A. (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.

August 1965

## PART IV

### STUDY AND YOGA

*(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Letters)*

#### STUDY AND SADHANA

*Q. Do you encourage my reading books ? I read with the object of knowing the language and acquiring mental knowledge. Will it be of any help in my sadhana ?*

A. Yes, reading can be done for the improvement of the mental instrument as part of the sadhana.

17-10-1935

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Study cannot take the same or a greater importance than sadhana.

22-10-1935

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I have not "asked" you to study—I have sanctioned your studying. Making it a part of your sadhana depends wholly on the spirit in which you do it.

20-1-1936

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What you can do is to read not for pastime but with the clear intention of furnishing your mind with knowledge.

22-9-1935

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Study is of importance only if you study in the right way and with the turn for knowledge and mental discipline.

29-10-1936

*Q. Do not logic and philosophy help one in Yoga? I mean, isn't one who has studied these things better off than one who hasn't?*

A. They can help to prepare the mind or they can help to express knowledge properly in the mental way. What else do you expect them to do?

4-11-1936

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(Regarding Philosophy)—Some learn in order that the mind may look in a complete and accurate way at things. But that is of course a mental, not a spiritual knowledge.

15-4-1935

#### KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES

Knowing languages is part of the equipment of the mind.

4-11-1936

#### SRI AUROBINDO'S OWN MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

I started the Yoga in 1904 and all my work except some poetry was done afterwards. Moreover my intelligence was inborn and so far as it grew before the Yoga, it was not by training but by a wide haphazard activity developing ideas from all things read, seen or experienced. That is not training, it is natural growth.

13-11-1936

#### THE INTELLECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

To have a developed intellect is always helpful if one can enlighten it from above and turn it to a divine use.

23-9-1935

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People don't take time etc. for developing the intellect. It is only one man out of thousands who has a trained intellect. In others it is either ill-developed, undeveloped or very partially developed.

31-1-1936

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The intellect of most men is extremely imperfect, ill-trained, half-developed—therefore in most the conclusions of the intellect are hasty, ill-founded and erroneous or, if right, right more by chance than by merit or right working. The conclusions are formed without knowing the facts or the correct or sufficient data, merely by a rapid inference and the process by which it comes from the premisses to the conclusion is usually illogical or faulty—the process being unsound by which the conclusion is arrived at, the conclusion is also likely to be fallacious. At the same time the intellect is usually arrogant and presumptuous, confidently asserting its imperfect conclusions as the truth and setting down as mistaken, stupid or foolish those who differ from them. Even when fully trained and developed, the intellect cannot arrive at absolute certitude or complete truth, but it can arrive at one aspect or side of it and make a reasonable or probable affirmation; but untrained, it is a quite insufficient instrument, at once hasty and peremptory and unsafe and unreliable.

31-1-1936

*Q. You say that the intellect of most men is imperfect and ill-trained. Then what is necessary for training it in the right way?*

A. To look at things without egoism or prejudice or haste, to try to know fully and accurately before judging, to try to see the truth behind other opinions than your own—etc., etc.

3-2-1936

*Q. How can one develop the intellect?*

A. By training it to see, observe, understand in the right way. Reading and study are only useful to acquire information and widen one's field of data. But that comes to nothing if one does not know how to discern and discriminate, judge, see what is within and behind things.

9-10-1936

*Q. In one of your recent letters to me, you spoke of mental training. What kind of training were you exactly referring to?*

A. Reading, learning about things, acquiring complete and accurate information, training oneself in logical thinking, considering dispassionately all sides of a question, rejecting hasty or wrong inferences and conclusions, learning to look at all things clearly and as a whole.

28-10-1936

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The intellect is made of imaginations, perceptions, inferences. The pure reason is quite another thing, but only a few are able to use it. As for knowledge in Yoga, it comes first from the higher mind, but even that does not see the whole Truth, only sides of it.

## THE PURE REASON

Pure reason deals with things in themselves, ideas, concepts, the essential nature of things. It lives in the world of ideas. It is philosophic and metaphysical in its nature.

9-4-1936

## THE RATIONALISTIC TYPE OF INTELLECT

*Q. If the mind is developed, does it not help one in the sadhana?*

A. It may or may not—if it is too intellectually developed on certain rationalistic lines, it may hinder.

4-11-1936

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The intellect can be as great an obstacle as the vital when it chooses to prefer its own constructions to the Truth.

7-6-1935

## THE SEPARATION OF THE MENTAL PURUSHA FROM PRAKRITI

You will have to learn the trick. You must learn to become the observer of thoughts and no longer the thinker.

17-2-1936

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The only way is to separate the Prakriti and Purusha. When you feel something within watching all the mental activities but separate from them, just as you can watch things going on outside in the street, then that is the separation of Purusha from mental Prakriti.

*Q. Whilst reading, if the consciousness tries to keep itself separate, it cannot understand what is being read. It is a little difficult to follow how a double consciousness can be developed—one doing the mental work and the other supporting it and watching it.*

A. That only means that you cannot separate yourself from your mental consciousness in its activity. Naturally, if you take your mental consciousness off the reading, you can't understand what is being read, for it is with the mental consciousness that one understands. You have not to make the mental consciousness separate from the reading, but yourself separate from the mental consciousness. You have to be the Witness watching it reading or writing or talking, just as you watch the body acting or moving.

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It is, I suppose, because you have not yet got the mental Purusha separate from mental Prakriti—so when you pull the Purusha back, the Prakriti comes with him.

15-2-1936

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The reading must learn to accommodate itself to the pressure—that is, be done by the outer mind while the inner being remains in concentration.

13-7-1934

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A time must come when the reading as well as any other outward occupation does not interfere with the pressure or activity of the higher consciousness.

27-11-1934

### IMPROVING THE MEMORY

*Q. Just as I can bring down peace, silence, etc. into me, in the same way is it not possible to bring down the power of remembrance?*

A. No, but by the change of consciousness, there can be a more conscious and perfect functioning of the memory replacing the old mechanism.

19-11-1935

### GROWTH IN CONSCIOUSNESS NECESSARY

A thousand questions can be asked about anything whatsoever, but to answer would require a volume, and even then the mind would understand nothing. It is only by a growth in the consciousness itself that you can get some direct perception of these things. But for that the mind must be quiet and a direct feeling and intuition take its place.

9-2-1936

## II

### DISCIPLINING THE MIND

*Q. How can one become free from mental constructions?*

A. By getting a quiet mind.

15-6-1933

*Q. From where do thoughts come and how do they act?*

A. They come like everything else from Nature and take form in the mind.

25-8-1933

*Q. How to prevent thoughts from entering into the mind—thoughts that come from Nature and take form in the mind?*

A. You can prevent them only in one of two ways:—

(1) Calling down an absolute peace and stillness into the mind.

(2) Becoming aware of the thoughts at a distance before they enter the personal mind.

Until then what you have to do is to reject them.

1-9-1933

*Q. What is meant by drawing back from mind, life and body?*

A. Not identifying yourself with their movements—looking at them as you would look at anything outside you.

10-9-1933

### THE MENTAL PURUSHA

*Q. What is meant by the mental Purusha?*

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

15-9-1933

*Q. When can the Purusha control the movement of Prakriti?*

A. When he chooses to, he can start doing it. By degrees the Prakriti will learn to respond to his will.

23-9-1933

### THE MIND AND THE VITAL

*Q. What are the respective functions of the mind and the vital?*

A. That is too long a question to be answered in a few lines. But the main action of the mind is perception, thought, understanding, the main action of the vital is sensation, impulsion and desire.

13-9-1933

### IMPULSES AND DESIRES

*Q. From where do impulses and desires come? From inside or outside?*

A. From outside first, then they take shape inside and rise.

25-9-1933

## READING OF NOVELS

*Q. Does not the reading of stories and novels do harm to a Yogi?*

A. A Yogi cannot easily be harmed by anything, but a Sadhak can. But there are plenty of books besides novels and stories.

July 1933

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The Yogi is one who is already established in realisation—the Sadhak is one who is getting or still trying to get realisation.

2-7-1933

## THE TRUE MEANS OF CONTACT WITH THE DIVINE

*Q. How is it that some people read the sacred books and are still very far from the Divine, while some read very stupid books and are all the same in contact with the Divine?*

A. It is not reading that brings the contact, it is the will and aspiration in the being that brings it.

11-8-1933

## THE DIVINE TRUTH

*Q. You have written in the 'Arya' that we must not only cut asunder the snare of the mind and the senses, but also flee beyond the snare of the thinker, the snare of the theologian and the church-builder, the meshes of the word and the bondage of the Idea. Will you please explain what this means?*

A. It would take too long. You can get it explained to you by someone, it is not difficult. The central idea is that the Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy—so you must not tie yourself to any of these things.

18-9-1933

## III

## DISCIPLINE

*Q. X says that discipline is not of much importance. Sometimes it may be even advisable not to follow it—it is, after all, only a mental rule. Is this correct?*

A. No—the discipline has been laid down by the Mother—to break it is disobedience to the Divine.

5-7-1933



## THE TRUE RELATION BETWEEN SADHAKS AND SADHIKAS

*Q. What is the relation between sadhaks and sadhikas in our Ashram? Are they brothers and sisters or simply comrades?*

A. They are simply fellow sadhaks.

14-11-1933

## THE SPIRITUAL CALL

*Q. What is meant by the spiritual call?*

A. The call in the inner being to seek after the Divine.

28-8-1933

## PEACE, CALM, ANANDA AND SILENCE

*Q. How is one to get the Divine Ananda?*

A. Get peace and purity first.

8-8-1933

*Q. What is the difference between peace and calm?*

A. Not much. Peace is more positive than calm—there can be a negative calm which is merely an absence of disturbance or trouble, but peace is always something positive bringing not merely a release as calm does but a certain happiness or Ananda of itself. There is also a positive calm, something that stands firm against all things that seek to trouble, not thin and neutral like the negative calm, but strong and massive. Very often the two words are used in the same sense, but one can distinguish them in their true sense as above.

27-11-1933

*Q. What is the meaning of passive and active silence?*

A. The passive silence is that in which the inner consciousness remains void and at rest, not making any reaction on outer things and forces. The active silence in which there is a great force that goes out on things and forces without disturbing the silence.

26-11-1933

*Q. How can I make my vital being more calm and quiet?*

A. Train it to be quiet. It is a matter of habit. Habituate it more quietly and consciously.

27-12-1933

*Q. What is the difference between joy and Ananda?*

A. Joy is vital—Ananda is spiritual.

30-11-1933

### THE PSYCHIC BEING

*Q. How to separate the soul which is joined to the mental, vital and physical, so that it may rule over them?*

A. It is not joined—it is behind them—i.e. if you mean the psychic being. It is the action of the psychic being, not the being itself, that gets mixed with the mental, vital and physical distortions because it has to use them to express what little of the true psychic feeling gets through the veil. It is by the heart's aspiration to the Divine that the psychic being gets free from these disabilities.

29-8-1933

### TAMAS

*Q. How to get rid of the 'tamas'?*

A. By the descent of the Force.

29-11-1933

### CONCENTRATING ON WORDS

*Q. I want to concentrate on the words "Divine Love". What is the right way of doing it?*

A. If one concentrates on a thought or a word, one has to dwell on the essential idea contained in the word with the aspiration to feel the thing which it expresses.

22-8-1933

### BECOMING CONSCIOUS OF WRONG MOVEMENTS

*Q. When I do something wrong, I am not conscious of it till I have done it. How can I become more conscious so that I can stop myself when I am about to do anything wrong?*

A. If you want that very much and aspire for it, it may come in one of several ways—

1) You may get the habit or faculty of watching your movements in such a way that you see the impulse to action coming and can see too its nature;

2) a consciousness may come which feels uneasy at once if a wrong thought or impulse to action or feeling is there;

3) something within you may warn and stop you when you are going to do the wrong action.

7-2-1933

## LAYING OPEN ALL MOVEMENTS BEFORE THE MOTHER

*Q. After I had made my daily report to the Mother, telling her with whom I had talked during the day and on which subject, I felt happy and relieved.*

A. Very naturally, because you have put all before the Mother.

2-11-1933

## IV

## YOGIC KNOWLEDGE

*Q. I can understand that the inner knowledge is bound to come with the growth and heightening of consciousness. But what about the outer knowledge—what we ordinarily call knowledge?*

A. The capacity for it can come with the inner knowledge. E.g. I understood nothing about painting before I did Yoga. A moment's illumination in Alipore jail opened my vision and since then I have understood with the intuitive perception and vision. I do not know the technique of course but I can catch it at once if anybody with knowledge speaks of it. That would have been impossible to me before.

*Q. Suppose you had not studied English literature; would it be possible for you to say something about it by Yogic experience?*

A. Only by cultivating a special siddhi, which would be much too bothersome to go after. But I suppose if I had got the Yogic knowledge (in your hypothetical case) it would be quite easy to add the outer one.

*Q. The other day we were discussing Bengali literature when X remarked that there was not much use in cultivating literary capacities here, as no one would be able to excel Tagore—not even become a really first-class poet; of course, barring the action of the Supramental Force. So there was no point in chasing will-o'-the-wisps; instead one should direct one's energies towards spiritual achievements.*

A. I don't agree. If a man has a capacity for poetry or anything else, it will certainly come out and rise to greater heights than it would have done elsewhere. Witness Dilip who was unable to write poetry till he came here though he had the instinct and the suppressed power in him; Nishikanta whose full flow came only here, Arjava, Pujalal whose recent poems in Gujarati seem to me to have an extraordinary beauty—though I admit that I am no expert there. X wrote beautifully before, but the sovereign excellence of his recent poetry is new. There are others who are developing a power of writing they had not before. All that does not show that Yoga has no power to develop capacity. I myself have developed many capacities by Yoga. Formerly I could not have written a line of philosophy—now people have started writing books

about my philosophy to my great surprise. It is not a question of first class or second class. One has to produce one's best and develop; the "class", if class there must be, will be decided by posterity. Tagore himself was once considered second class by any number of people and the value of his poetry was fiercely questioned—until the Nobel Prize and his towering fame ended these discussions. One has not to consider fame or the appreciation of others, but do whatever work one can do as an offering of his capacity to the Divine.

Certainly the energies should be directed towards spiritual achievement here—other things can only be a corollary or else something developed for the service of the spiritual Force.

...Well, the first business of Yoga is not to make geniuses at all, but to make spiritual men—but Yoga can do the other thing also.

14-II-1934

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## PART V

### STUDY AND YOGA

*(Compiled from The Mother's Letters)*

#### STUDIES

STUDIES strengthen the mind and turn the attention from concentrating on the impulses and desires of the vital. Concentrating on studies is one of the most powerful means of controlling the mind and the vital; that is why it is so important to study.

28-1-1935

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You will always find my blessings with you when you are attentive and diligent in your studies.

9-12-1934

*Q. How is it that studies do not give me much pleasure?*

A. One does not study in order to have pleasure—one studies in order to learn things and to develop mentally.

1-2-1935

*Q. I am thinking of making a resolve—not to take my dinner whenever I fail to do my studies.*

A. What a ludicrous idea! You want to punish your body for a fault the vital has committed! That's not just.

21-13-1934

*Q. When the lessons are difficult, I do not understand anything.*

A. That is because the mind has not been sufficiently disciplined for studying.

25-10-1934

*Q. I have two reasons for reading novels: to know new words and to learn to have a good style. I don't know if the vital is at the same time satisfying its desires.*

A. In order to learn you must read with great care and choose carefully what you read.

25-10-1924

*Q. I would like to know if looking at pictures is harmful.*

A. Naturally it depends on what the pictures are. Most often, they are about the things of the ordinary life, and therefore pull down the consciousness towards them.

10-12-1934

### YOGA

*Q. I was sleeping but woke up exactly when it was time to attend classes. Was it the Divine who woke me up?*

A. Not necessarily. There is always a part of the subconscious which is awake, and it is sufficient to have the will to wake up at a certain hour to make this part awaken you.

3-3-1933

*Q. I would like to know why I had a such a disturbed night.*

A. Obviously you did not quiet your thoughts before going to sleep. At the time of lying down one should always begin by quieting one's thoughts.

28-1-1935

*Q. How can one conquer the obscure vital—rather, how is it possible to change the obscure vital into a luminous vital?*

A. By the surrender of the vital, its opening to the light, and by the growth of consciousness.

4-3-1933

*Q. Sometimes I become absolutely quiet, I speak to no one, but just remain within myself, only thinking of the Divine. Is it good to keep this state constantly?*

A. It is an excellent state which one can keep quite easily, but it must be sincere; I mean, it should be not a mere appearance of calm but a real and deep calm which spontaneously keeps you silent

9-3-1933

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Refuse to do anything whatsoever which leads you away from the Divine.

18-10-1934

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Be very sincere and straightforward, harbour nothing within yourself which you cannot show me without fear, do nothing of which you would be ashamed of before me.

11-7-1934

## PART VI

### ART AND YOGA

*(Compiled from The Mother's Talks)*

*Q. Is it possible for a Yogi to become an artist or can an artist be a Yogi? What is the relation of Art to Yoga?*

A. The two are not so antagonistic as you seem to think. There is nothing to prevent a Yogi from being an artist or an artist from being a Yogi. But when you are in Yoga, there is a profound change in the values of things, of Art as of everything else; you begin to look at Art from a very different standpoint. It is no longer the one supreme all-engrossing thing for you, no longer an end in itself. Art is a means, not an end; it is a means of expression. And the artist then ceases too to believe that the whole world turns round what he is doing or that his work is the most important thing that has ever been done. His personality counts no longer; he is an agent, a channel, his art a means of expressing his relations with the Divine. He uses it for the purpose as he might have used any other means that were part of the powers of his nature.

*Q. But does an artist feel at all any impulse to create once he takes up Yoga?*

A. Why should he not have the impulse? He can express his relation with the Divine in the way of his art, exactly as he would in any other. If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, Art is not very different from Yoga. But most often the artist has only an indefinite feeling, he has not the knowledge. Still, I knew some who had it; they worked consciously at their art with the knowledge. In their creation they did not put forward their personality as the most important factor; they considered their work as an offering to the Divine, they tried to express by it their relation with the Divine.

This was the avowed function of Art in the Middle Ages. The "primitive" painters, the builders of cathedrals in Mediaeval Europe had no other conception of art. In India all her architecture, her sculpture, her painting have proceeded from this source and were inspired by this ideal. The songs of Mirabai and the music of Thyagaraja, the poetic literature built up by her devotees, saints and Rishis rank among the world's greatest artistic possessions.

*Q. But does the work of an artist improve if he does Yoga?*

A. The discipline of Art has at its centre the same principle as the discipline of Yoga. In both the aim is to become more and more conscious; in both you have to learn to see and feel something that is beyond the ordinary vision and feeling, to go within and bring out from there deeper things. Painters have to follow a discipline for the growth of the consciousness of their eyes, which in itself is almost a Yoga. If they are true artists and try to see beyond and use their art for the expression of the inner world, they grow in consciousness by this concentration, which is not other than the consciousness given by Yoga. Why then should not Yogic consciousness be a help to artistic creation? I have known some who had very little training and skill and yet through Yoga acquired a fine capacity in writing and painting. Two examples I can cite to you. One was a girl who had no education whatever; she was a dancer and danced tolerably well. After she took up Yoga, she danced only for friends; but her dancing attained a depth of expression and beauty which was not there before. And although she was not educated, she began to write wonderful things; for she had visions and expressed them in the most beautiful language. But there were ups and downs in her Yoga, and when she was in a good condition, she wrote beautifully, but otherwise was quite dull and stupid and uncreative. The second case is that of a boy who had studied art, but only just a little. The son of a diplomat, he had been trained for the diplomatic career; but he lived in luxury and his studies did not go far. Yet as soon as he took up Yoga, he began to produce inspired drawings which carried the expression of an inner knowledge and were symbolic in character; in the end he became a great artist.

*Q. Why are artists generally irregular in their conduct and loose in their character?*

A. When they are so, it is because they live usually in the vital plane, and the vital part in them is extremely sensitive to the forces of that world and receives from it all kinds of impressions and impulsions over which they have no controlling power. And often too they are very free in their minds and do not believe in the petty social conventions and moralities that govern the life of ordinary people. They do not feel bound by the customary rules of conduct and have not yet found an inner law that would replace them. As there is nothing to check the movements of their desire-being, they lead easily a life of liberty or license. But this does not happen with all. I lived ten years among artists and found many of them to be bourgeois to the core; they were married and settled, good fathers, good husbands, and lived up to the most strict moral ideas of what should and what should not be done.

There is one way in which Yoga may stop the artist's productive impulse. If the origin of his art is in the vital world, once he becomes a Yogi, he will lose his inspiration, or, rather the source from which his inspiration used to come will inspire him no more, for then the vital world appears in its true light; it puts on its true value, and that value is very relative. Most of those who call themselves artists draw their inspiration from the vital world only; and it carries in it no high or great significance. But when a true artist, one who looks for his creative source to a higher world, turns to Yoga, he



will find that his inspiration becomes more direct and powerful and his expression clearer and deeper. Of those who possess a true value the power of Yoga will increase the value, but from one who has only some false appearance of art even that appearance will vanish or else lose its appeal. To one earnest in Yoga, the first simple truth that strikes his opening vision is that what he does is a very relative thing in comparison with the universal manifestation, the universal movement. But an artist is usually vain and looks on himself as a highly important personage, a kind of demigod in the human world. Many artists say that if they did not believe what they do to be of a supreme importance, they would not be able to do it. But I have known some whose inspiration was from a higher world and yet they did not believe that what they did was of so immense an importance. That is nearer the spirit of true art. If a man is truly led to express himself in art, it is the way the Divine has chosen to manifest in him, and then by Yoga his art will gain and not lose. But there is all the question: is the artist appointed by the Divine or self-appointed?

*Q. But if one does Yoga can he rise to such heights as Shakespeare or Shelley? There has been no such instance.*

A. Why not? The Mahabharata and Ramayana are certainly not inferior to anything created by Shakespeare or any other poet, and they are said to have been the work of men who were Rishis and had done Yogic *tapasyā*. The Gita which, like the Upanishads, ranks at once among the greatest literary and the greatest spiritual works, was not written by one who had no experience of Yoga. And where is the inferiority to your Milton and Shelley in the famous poems written whether in India or Persia or elsewhere by men known to be saints, Sufis, devotees? And, then, do you know all the Yogis and their work? Among the poets and creators can you say who were or who were not in conscious touch with the Divine? There are some who are not officially Yogis, they are not *gurus* and have no disciples; the world does not know what they do; they are not anxious for fame and do not attract to themselves the attention of men; but they have the higher consciousness, are in touch with a Divine Power, and when they create they create from there. The best paintings in India and much of the best statuary and architecture were done by Buddhist monks who passed their lives in spiritual contemplation and practice; they did supreme artistic work, but did not care to leave their names to posterity. The chief reason why Yogis are not usually known by their art is that they do not consider their art-expression as the most important part of their life and do not put so much time and energy into it as a mere artist. And what they do does not always reach the public. How many there are who have done great things and not published them to the world!

*Q. Have Yogis produced greater dramas than Shakespeare?*

A. Drama is not the highest of the arts. Someone has said that drama is greater than any other art and art is greater than life. But it is not quite like that. The mistake of the artist is to believe that artistic production is something that stands by itself and

for itself, independent of the rest of the world. Art as understood by these artists is like a mushroom on the wide soil of life, something casual and external, not something intimate to life; it does not reach and touch the deep and abiding realities, it does not become an intrinsic and inseparable part of existence. True art is intended to express the beautiful, but in close intimacy with the universal movement. The greatest nations and the most cultured races have always considered art as a part of life and made it subservient to life. Art was like that in Japan in its best moments; it was like that in all the best moments in the history of art. But most artists are like parasites growing on the margin of life; they do not seem to know that art should be the expression of the Divine in life and through life. In everything, everywhere, in all relations truth must be brought out in its all-embracing rhythm and every movement of life should be an expression of beauty and harmony. Skill is not art, talent is not art. Art is a living harmony and beauty that must be expressed in all the movements of existence. This manifestation of beauty and harmony is part of the divine realisation upon earth, perhaps even its greatest part.

For from the supramental point of view beauty and harmony are as important as any other expression of the Divine. But they should not be isolated, set up apart from all other relations, taken out from the ensemble; they should be one with the expression of life as a whole. People have the habit of saying, "Oh, it is an artist!" as if an artist should not be a man among other men, but must be an extraordinary being belonging to a class by itself, and his art too something extraordinary and apart, not to be confused with the other ordinary things of the world. The maxim "Art for Art's sake" tries to impress and emphasise as a truth the same error. It is the same mistake as when men place in the middle of their drawing-rooms a framed picture that has nothing to do either with the furniture or the walls, but is put there only because it is an "object of art".

True art is a whole and an ensemble; it is one and of one piece with life. You see something of this intimate wholeness in ancient Greece and ancient Egypt; for there pictures and statues and all objects of art were made and arranged as part of the architectural plan of a building, each detail a portion of the whole. It is like that in Japan, or at least it was so till the other day before the invasion of a utilitarian and practical modernism. A Japanese house is a wonderful artistic whole; always the right thing is there in the right place, nothing wrongly set, nothing too much, nothing too little. Everything is just as it needed to be, and the house itself blends marvellously with the surrounding nature. In India, too, painting and sculpture and architecture were one integral beauty, one single movement of adoration of the Divine.

There has been in this sense a great degeneration since then in the world. From the time of Victoria and in France from the Second Empire we have entered into a period of decadence. The habit has grown of hanging up in rooms pictures that have no meaning for the surrounding objects; any picture, any artistic object could now be put anywhere and it would make small difference. Art now is meant to show skill and cleverness and talent, not to embody some integral expression of harmony and beauty in a home.

But latterly there has come about a revolt against this lapse into bourgeois taste. The reaction was so violent that it looked like a complete aberration and art seemed about to sink down into the absurd. Slowly, however, out of the chaos something has emerged, something more rational, more logical, more coherent to which can once more be given the name of art, an art renovated and perhaps, or let us hope so, regenerated.

Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few true artists; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of Yogic discipline, for by it he enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds. A man like Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else. And he was, if not the greatest, at least one of the greatest painters,—although his art did not stop at painting alone.

Music too is an essentially spiritual art and has always been associated with religious feeling and an inner life. But, here too, we have turned it into something independent and self-sufficient, a mushroom art, such as is operatic music. Most of the artistic productions we come across are of this kind and at best interesting from the point of view of technique. I do not say that even operatic music cannot be used as a medium of a higher art expression; for whatever the form, it can be made to serve a deeper purpose. All depends on the thing itself, on how it is used, on what is behind it. There is nothing that cannot be used for the Divine purpose—just as anything can pretend to be the Divine and yet be of the mushroom species.

Among the great modern musicians there have been several whose consciousness, when they created, came into touch with a higher consciousness. César Franck played on the organ as one inspired; he had an opening into the psychic life and he was conscious of it and to a great extent expressed it. Beethoven, when he composed the Ninth Symphony, had the vision of an opening into a higher world and of the descent of a higher world into this earthly plane. Wagner had strong and powerful intimations of the occult world; he had the instinct of occultism and the sense of the occult and through it he received his greatest inspirations. But he worked mainly on the vital level and his mind came in constantly to interfere and mechanised his inspiration. His work for the greater part is too mixed, too often obscure and heavy, although powerful. But when he could cross the vital and the mental levels and reach a higher world, some of the glimpses he had were of an exceptional beauty, as in Parsifal, in some parts of Tristan and Isolde and most in its last great Act.

Look again at what the moderns have made of the dance; compare it with what the dance once was. The dance was once one of the highest expressions of the inner life; it was associated with religion and it was an important limb in sacred ceremony, in the celebration of festivals, in the adoration of the Divine. In some countries it

reached a very high degree of beauty and an extraordinary perfection. In Japan they kept up the tradition of the dance as a part of the religious life and, because the strict sense of beauty and art is a natural possession of the Japanese, they did not allow it to degenerate into something of lesser significance and smaller purpose. It was the same in India. It is true that in our days there have been attempts to resuscitate the ancient Greek and other dances; but the religious sense is missing in all such resurrections and they look more like rhythmic gymnastics than dance.

Today Russian dances are famous, but they are expressions of the vital world and there is even something terribly vital in them. Like all that comes to us from that world, they may be very attractive or very repulsive, but always they stand for themselves and not for the expression of the higher life. The very mysticism of the Russians is of a vital order. As technicians of the dance they are marvellous; but technique is only an instrument. If your instrument is good, so much the better, but so long as it is not surrendered to the Divine, however fine it may be, it is empty of the highest and cannot serve a divine purpose. The difficulty is that most of those who become artists believe that they stand on their own legs and have no need to turn to the Divine. It is a great pity; for in the divine manifestation skill is as useful an element as anything else. Skill is one part of the divine fabric, only it must know how to subordinate itself to greater things.

There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. For instance, there is a certain line of music, consisting of a few supreme notes, that was behind the productions of two artists who came one after the other—one a concerto of Bach, the other a concerto of Beethoven. The two are not alike on paper and differ to the outward ear, but in their essence they are the same. One and the same vibration of consciousness, one wave of significant harmony touched both these artists. Beethoven caught a larger part, but in him it was more mixed with the inventions and interpolations of his mind; Bach received less, but what he seized of it was purer. The vibration was that of the victorious emergence of consciousness, consciousness tearing itself out of the womb of unconsciousness in a triumphant uprising and birth.

If by Yoga you are capable of reaching this source of all art, then you are master, if you will, of all the arts. Those that may have gone there before, found it perhaps happier, more pleasant or full of a rapturous ease to remain and enjoy the Beauty and the Delight that are there, not manifesting it, not embodying it upon earth. But this abstention is not all the truth nor the true truth of Yoga; it is rather a deformation, a diminution of the dynamic freedom of Yoga by the more negative spirit of Sannyasa. The will of the Divine is to manifest, not to remain altogether withdrawn in inactivity and an absolute silence; if the Divine Consciousness were really an inaction of unmanifesting bliss, there would never have been any creation.

## PART VII

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND YOGA

*(Compiled from The Mother's Talks)*

*Q. It is said that the general insufficiency in our studies comes from the fact that we attach too much importance to games, to physical education. Is it true?*

A. Who has said that? People who do not like physical education? Old dried up professors who are not able to do exercises any more? Is that so? (I do not ask for names!)

Well, I do not believe so.

You remember the first article that Sri Aurobindo wrote in the Bulletin—he answers such people in a very categorical manner.

I do not think that it is so. I am altogether convinced that it is not so. I rather believe (and I take the blame on myself) that you have been given an almost fantastic freedom, my children—I do not believe that there is any part in the world where children are so free—and indeed it is very difficult to make good use of such a freedom.

Yet the experiment was worth the trial. You do not appreciate it, because you do not know how things are when things are not so; to you here all appears quite natural. But it is very difficult to organise one's own freedom. And yet if you succeed in self-disciplining yourself—for higher reasons, not for passing examinations, making a career, pleasing your professors, getting many prizes, for all such ordinary reasons that children have—not to be scolded, not to be punished—we put aside all these reasons, and if then you succeed in disciplining yourself (each his own discipline, it is not necessary to follow the discipline of others) simply because you want to progress, you want to draw the best out of you then you become beings much superior to those who follow the ordinary school disciplines. That is what I wanted to try. I do not say, please note, that I have failed; I have still a bright hope that you will know how to profit by this unique occasion. But there is one thing that you have to find: the necessity of an inner discipline; without discipline you can go nowhere, without discipline you cannot even live the normal life of the normal man. But instead of having the conventional discipline of ordinary societies, ordinary institutions, I wanted, I want still, that you should have the discipline that you put upon yourself for the love of perfection, your own perfection; the perfection of your being.

But without that...note that if you had not disciplined your body you could not even stand erect on your two legs; you would have to be like children on all fours. You would be able to do nothing. You are compelled to discipline yourself; you could

not live in society, you could not live at all, save perhaps all alone in the forest, and even that I do not know. It is altogether indispensable, I have told you, I do not know how many times. It is not that I have a well-marked aversion for conventional disciplines, social or other, and that one should abstain from all discipline. I would like rather that everyone should find his own discipline in the sincerity of his inner aspiration and the will to realise oneself.

*Q. Sweet Mother, there are certain activities in our programme of Physical Education which are of a more serious nature than the others and call for more concentration: these tend to become boring for the children. Ought the captains to organise their groups in such a way that all they teach may be interesting and amusing, or is it that the children should try to create the interest in themselves?*

A. Both are indispensable and ought, as much as possible, to be always present.

With a little imagination and inventive suppleness, the instructors ought to give charm and novelty to what they teach.

On their part, the children, by cultivating in themselves the will for progress and the taste for progress, should create a constant interest in what they do.

In the meanwhile, the captains can partly entrust to the children the care of organising their own exercises, by using as much as possible whatever ingenious ideas may occur to them.

If the sense of collaboration and of responsibility is awakened in the children, they will at the same time get interested in what they do, and will do it with pleasure.

*Q. Sweet Mother, we have a minute of concentration before and after the group every day. What should one try to do during this concentration?*

A. Before, make an offering to the Divine of what you are going to do, so that it may be done in a spirit of consecration.

After, ask the Divine to increase in you the will for progress, for becoming instruments more and more apt to serve Him.

You may also, before starting, give yourselves to the Divine in silence.

And, at the end, thank the Divine in silence.

I mean a gesture of the *heart* without words in the head.

*Q. During matches many play in a bad spirit. They try to hurt in order to win and we have observed even the little ones are learning that. How to avoid it?*

A. As for children, it is, above all, ignorance and bad example that does the harm. So it would be good if the group leaders, the captains, before they begin the games, called all who are under them to repeat and explain to them what is said about games and sports in "The Supramental Manifestation", "The Code of the Perfect Sportsman" and "What an ideal child should be". These are things that should be repeated often to the children. And then they should be put on guard against bad company, bad comrades; lastly and especially, give them a good example.

Be yourself what you wish them to be. Give them the example of unselfishness, patience, self-mastery, self-forgetfulness, a constant happy mood in all circumstances; overcome little personal inconveniences, for example do not be unpleasant, do not be impatient when you are tired or indisposed; have a constant kindness, understanding of others' difficulties and that equality of temper so that children have no fear of you; for what makes children dissimulating, lying and vicious is the fear for punishment. On the contrary, if they feel confident they will hide nothing and you can tell them precisely to be loyal and honest.

Of all things then the most important is good example. And that demands a perfection, a self-mastery representing a great step on the way of realisation. And if you fulfil the necessary conditions for being a true leader, even if you be the leader of a small group of children, you have already advanced far in the necessary discipline for the fulfilment of the Yoga.

You must look at the problem under this aspect, the aspect of self-mastery, of self-control, of an endurance that does not allow your personal condition to react upon your group or collective action. To forget oneself is one of the most essential conditions for being a true leader; to relate nothing to oneself, to want nothing for oneself, to consider only the welfare of the group, of the whole, of the totality depending on you; to act only for this end, without seeking any personal profit.

It is thus that the leader of a small group can become the perfect leader of an important group, of a nation and prepare himself for a collective role. It is a school of capital importance and it is that which we have tried to do here and which we continue trying: to give as soon as possible to each one a responsibility, small or big, so that he may learn to become a true leader.

To become a true leader one must be wholly unselfish and, as much as possible, not to be self-regarding, not to have any egoistic movement. To be a leader, one must master one's ego and to master one's ego is the very first step in doing Yoga. That is how sports can be a powerful aid for the realisation of the Divine.

Few persons understand that, and generally they who are against this external discipline, this concentration on a material achievement like the sports, are exactly the people who lack totally control over their physical being. But to realise the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, control of the body is one of the first indispensable steps. They who despise physical activities are people who will not be able to take a single step on the true way of integral Yoga, unless they get rid of their despise first. The control of the body in all its forms is an indispensable basis. A body that rules you is an enemy, it is an unacceptable disorder. It is the enlightened will of the spirit that should rule the body, not the body that should impose its law upon the Spirit. When one knows that a thing is bad, one should be capable of not doing it. And when one wants a thing to be realised, one must be capable of realising it. You must not at every step be stopped by an incapacity or a bad will or want of co-operation from the body. For that you have to follow a physical discipline and become the master of your own house.

It is fine to escape into meditation and look down from one's pretended greatness upon material things; but one who is not master of one's house is a slave.

*Q. Are competitions in sports essential for our progress?*

A. From the point of view of moral education, they are essential enough, because if you take part in them in the right spirit, it is an excellent occasion for mastering one's ego.

Naturally, if you play in the ordinary way, with all the ordinary reactions and ugly movements, without attempting to overcome your weaknesses, then you derive absolutely no profit out of them. But if you can play in the true spirit, without any movement of an inferior kind, without jealousy and without ambition, keeping an attitude of what I may call sporting correctness, that is to say, doing one's best and not caring for the result, if you can, even while you make your utmost effort, be not troubled, because you have not met with success for things have not turned in your favour—then it is very useful. You can come out of all these competitions with a greater mastery over yourself, and a detachment with regard to the result that helps you much in the formation of an exceptional character. That compels you to make a special effort and go a little beyond your ordinary limits. And it is certainly an occasion to make you conscious of movements which would otherwise always remain unconscious.

But it is well understood, you must never forget that these tournaments and contests should be an occasion and means for progress. Because if you go on playing quite in the ordinary way, you lose time. But whatever you do it is always the same. Always everything depends much more on the spirit in which you do things than the thing itself that you do.

If all of you were yogis and you did nothing but with the maximum effort and to the utmost of your possibilities, doing not merely as well as one can do, but with the idea of doing better still, then evidently competitions, prizes, rewards would be unnecessary. But as Sri Aurobindo writes, you cannot ask of children to become yogis, and during a period of preparation, there must be a stimulant for the most material consciousness to make an effort for progress. And this period of infancy sometimes may last many years.

The ideal would be precisely what I indicated in the last Bulletin: "Have no ambition, above all pretend nothing, but be at every moment the utmost that you are capable of being." And whatever you do, that is the ideal condition for an integral life. If you realise that, you are certainly very far on the way to perfection. But evidently a certain inner maturity is needed to be able to do it in all sincerity

In the meanwhile you can always make a programme of it.

*Q. Why is it that the largest number of people take interest in games, while only a minority is interested in serious exercises?*

A. Because in the immense majority of cases what creates the interest is vital satisfaction. If you are to find interest in exercises of training, which has not the



excitement of games, your being must be governed by Reason. In the case of ordinary humanity Reason is the summit of the consciousness, that part of the being which would govern the rest, because it is the ordered and reasonable part, that is to say, it does things with a sense of the orderly and of the good and the useful and according to a given plan recognised and followed by each one.

The vital part of the being, on the other hand, likes the excitement, the unforeseen, the adventure, all that makes play attractive, the competition, above all, the effort for success, the victory over the adversary. All that is vital impulse, and as the vital is the seat of enthusiasm, drive, ordinary energy, when this attraction of the unforeseen, of the struggle and victory is lacking the vital goes to sleep, unless it has the habit of obeying in a regular and spontaneous manner the will of the Reason.

One of the very first uses of physical training is precisely this that you cannot do it truly well unless the body is habituated to obey Reason rather than the vital impulses. Let us take, for example, exercises for the development of bodily perfection—dumbbells, etc.—that have nothing particularly exciting in them, that demand the discipline of a strict life, regular and rational habits giving no room for passion or desire or impulse; well then, to be able to do them perfectly, you must have a life ruled by Reason.

And it is not very usual. Generally it is impulses,—impulses of desires—enthusiasm and passion with all their reactions that are masters of human life. You must have become already somewhat of a sage in order to be able to follow a strict discipline of the body and obtain from it an ordered, regular, monotonous effort that can lead to its perfection. So there is no place here for fancies and desires: as soon as you indulge in excesses, in intemperance of any kind or a disordered life, it will become absolutely impossible for you to master your body and develop it normally. Moreover, you spoil your health, and in consequence the very basis of all ideal of bodily perfection vanishes. With a bad and shaken health you are not good for much; certainly it is the gratification of desires and vital impulses or the unreasonable demands of ambition that cause the body to suffer and fall ill.

And naturally there is the ignorance, too frequent ignorance of the very elementary rules of life. Everybody knows that one must learn how to live, to learn, for example, that fire burns, that one may be drowned in water. But a humanity on the lower level has no taste for life unless it is to live one's passions and it does not admit always that the control of reason over life is indispensable, if for nothing else than to be in good health.

I remember a man who came here very long ago to stand in the elections as a deputy. As people wanted to know my opinion of him, he was introduced to me; he put to me some questions about the Ashram, the life that was led here and then asked me what was according to me the discipline indispensable for life. I must tell you that he was a man who was smoking the whole day, drinking much more than was necessary and he complained that he felt extremely tired and was at times incapable of controlling himself. So I replied to him: "The very first thing you have to do is to

stop smoking and drinking.” The man looked at me in utter bewilderment and cried out: “But then, if you do not smoke, if you do not drink, life is not worth living.”

The thing is more common than one believes. It appears to us absurd, to us, because we have something else which is evidently more interesting than smoking and drinking, but for ordinary humanity, the satisfaction of desires is the only motive for existence. People who indulge in excesses and in vice do so to assert as it were their independence and their reason for existence; while in reality it is a deviation, a deformation, a negation of the life-instinct, an unhealthy and perverse intervention of the mind and vital impulse in physical life.

Perversion is a human malady, a malady that exists rarely in animals, and only among animals that have come near man and as a result have been contaminated by his mode of being. Otherwise, they are by instinct infinitely more reasonable than human beings.

On this subject the following story is told. Some officers garrisoned in Algeria had adopted a monkey. The monkey lived with them and one evening at dinner they had the grotesque idea of giving it alcoholic drink. Seeing others drinking and himself interested in it, the monkey emptied the glass that was offered to him, after which he rolled under the table a prey to violent pain, sick, so sick that he was about to die, thus showing by example to man the spontaneous effect of alcohol on a physical nature that is not yet perverted. He was cured, however; and sometime after he was again admitted to the dinner table and once more one of the officers put before him a glass of alcohol. Then in a terrific rage the monkey took it up and flung it at the head of the person who had offered it. And by that the monkey proved that he was much more wise than men.

It is quite good to begin when you are very young to learn that reason must be the master of the house, if one is to lead an effective life and obtain from the body the maximum it is capable of giving. Note well that I do not speak of Yoga nor spiritual realisation, but of life that is common and current. A man who is not governed by reason is a brute inferior to the animal; because if animals have no mind or reason to rule them, they obey the instinct of the race, an extremely reasonable instinct that governs all their activities for their good, and automatically, without knowing it they submit themselves to this instinct. Those who for some reason or other are freed from it—because they live near men, for example, and obey men instead of obeying their instinct—are precisely those that are perverted and lose the qualities of their species. But left to its natural life and free from human influence, the animal is an extremely reasonable being from its own point of view, because it does nothing that does not conform to its nature and its welfare.

Perversion begins with the conscious mind and the human species. It is a bad use that man makes of mental capacity. It is a depravity of nature’s progress which mental consciousness represents.

The first thing that is to be taught to every human being as soon as he is capable of thinking is that he must obey reason which is a kind of super-instinct of the species.

And I repeat that it is not a question of spiritual life, but the very elementary wisdom of human, purely human life. Every child must know that he is created to become a mental being, and if he is to manifest his human nature, reason must govern his life and not vital impulses. That is the elementary education that should be given everywhere.

The reign of reason would not end until the coming of the psychic law which manifests the Divine will.

*Q. Should one play in order to win?*

A. When you have a consciousness three or four years old, that is an altogether necessary stimulant. But you may have a four-year-old consciousness even at the age of fifty; is it not so? No, when you have a ripe consciousness you must not play in order to win. You must play for the sake of play, to learn how to play and to progress in play and in order that your play becomes the expression of your inner consciousness at its highest—it is that which is important. For example, people who like to play well, do not go and choose bad players to play with, simply for the pleasure of winning—they choose persons who are the best players and play with them. I remember I learnt to play tennis when I was eight years, it was a passion; but I never wished to play with my little comrades, because I learnt nothing (usually I used to beat them), I always went to the best players; at times they looked surprised, but in the end they used to play with me—I never won, but I learnt much.

*Q. When we play badly we find that we have no energy, but if we play well, with great enthusiasm, we find that energy comes. Why?*

A. This is perfectly true. To enter into contact with terrestrial energy, one must establish some harmony within oneself. If you know the game well, if you know how to make the moves and if you interest yourself enthusiastically, if you have a sort of ambition somewhat childish perhaps, a desire to win, then as you go on succeeding you feel a kind of inner joy, not very profound perhaps, but which creates the necessary harmony for the interchange of energy. On the contrary, they who do not know how to accept defeat, who get angry and bad tempered when things do not go according to their will, lose their energy more and more.

Also if you slip into depression, you cut every source of energy—from above, from below, from everywhere. That is the best way of falling into inertia. You must absolutely refuse to be depressed.

Depression is always the sign of an acute egoism. When you feel that it is coming near, tell yourself: "I am in a state of egoistic illness, I must cure myself of it."

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To solve a problem, to learn a lesson much concentration and attention are needed, everybody knows it—an intellectual attention and concentration. But concentration is not an intellectual thing only, it can be in all the activities of the being,

including bodily activities. The concentration of your nerves should be such as gives you a complete concentration on what you are doing and by the intensity of your concentration you succeed in getting an immediate response to an external stimulus. To arrive at such a concentration, one must have a conscious control over the energies

Are you conscious of the energies that you receive and those that you spend?

You are more or less conscious of the energy that you spend, particularly when you spend too much! Here we are speaking of a constant exchange between the receipt and the expenditure of energies. Before their age of reason little children receive much energy and spend abundantly without thought, that is why they can play for hours together without getting tired. But as thought grows, you begin to measure and calculate your energies—generally that is useless, for unless you have the knowledge of the process how to receive energies, it is better to spend freely what you receive rather than allow it to stagnate within.

First of all, you must become conscious of receiving the energies, of their passing into your being and of their spending. Next, you must have a kind of higher instinct that makes you feel where the most favourable energies come from; then you put yourself in contact with them through thought or quietness or any other process—there are so many. You must know what energy you want, where it comes from and in what it consists. Afterwards comes the control over the energy received. Ninety per cent of people do not absorb sufficient energy or absorb too much and do not assimilate what they absorb—as soon as they take in a sufficient dose, they throw it out immediately, in moving about, talking, shouting and so on. You must know how to keep within you the energy you receive and concentrate it wholly on the required activity and not on any other thing. If you can do that, you will need no longer to use your will. You have only to gather all the energies received and use them consciously, concentrating with the maximum attention on doing whatever you want to do.

And you must learn to put a real value on what you *will* to do—what the higher part of your being wills to do—for to do what one *desires* to do is not difficult

*Q. What is concentration?*

A. It is to bring back all the scattered threads of your consciousness to one single point, one single idea. They who are able to realise a perfect attention succeed in everything they undertake, they will always make great progress. And such concentration may be developed just like muscles. One can follow different systems, different methods of training. It is known today that the most sickly person, for example, can become, through discipline, as strong as others. You must not have a will that is extinguished like a candle.

Will, concentration must be cultivated, it is a question of method, of regular exercises. If you will, you can.

But the thought “what is the use?” must never come in to weaken your will. The idea that one is born with a character and nothing can change it is a stupidity.

## PART VIII

### ARTICLES BY TEACHERS OF THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

## THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

I SHALL enumerate here a few specific ways in which the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education functions and which have proved useful for the work that we are carrying on.

There is first what we may call the *homogeneity of the scholar population*. Most of the students are children of disciples of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and, whether they live in hostels or with their families in the Ashram, they have been brought up and are continuing to live in an environment suited to our ideals. Too often, outside, the work of the educator is hampered by the conditions, physical or otherwise, which the child finds at home.

Secondly, there is a *continuity of education* from the Kindergarten up to the end of the studies. The students remain in the Centre of Education for ten to fifteen years and they may, if they so choose, live afterwards in the Ashram, which truly offers them a suitable field in practically all lines of human activity.

Thirdly, *the Centre of Education is a part of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram*, its extension, so to speak in the educational field. The life of the children is intimately interwoven with the Ashram life, in which very often they have parents or relatives. This fact, coupled with the first two points, means that they live in a community which is a big family, in which the relations are peaceful and loving. Young and old mix freely, without any complex of superiority or inferiority.

The community provides each of its members with what he requires for his growth according to his nature. This is one of the reasons why the Ashram has developed into such a complex organism, with many departments and services, workshops, farms, and with a number of commercial and industrial undertakings attached to it.

Fourthly, *the Centre of Education is international* in practice and not only in name. This is in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's conception that unity manifests in diversity without losing its unifying oneness. The students as well as the teachers are from all parts of India and from many countries abroad, without any distinction of sex, race, creed or caste. Most of the Indian languages are taught, as also several foreign languages. The cultures of different nations are made accessible not merely intellec-

tually in ideas, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture and decoration—and physically in dress, games and sports. Shows, exhibitions and films are used extensively for this purpose.

[The aim is] to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries upon earth. For all world organisation, to be real and to be able to live, must be based upon mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual.<sup>1</sup>

All these conditions are eminently favourable to a work which we consider as an experiment in education. When a biologist wants to produce certain results, he selects the favourable conditions and protects his strain from influences which would hinder or prevent success. The wisdom and protection of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have acted with us in a similar way.

But above all these favourable conditions there is the towering presence of The Mother. She is not only the organizer who directs and harmonizes our effort, but she is the guide, the Guru, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, to whom all, children and parents, students and teachers, girls and boys, come with love and confidence, for advice, help, strength, comfort and peace.

PAVITRA

<sup>1</sup> The Mother, *An International University Centre*, in *Bulletin of Physical Education*, April 1952, reprinted in *Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education*, 2nd ed., p. 130

## TRUE EDUCATION

ALL knowledge is within you. Information you get from outside, but the understanding of it? It is from within. The information from outside you gives dead matter. What puts life into it, light into it is your own inner light.

All education, all culture means drawing this inner light to the front. Indeed the word 'education' literally means 'to bring out' Plato also pointed to the same truth when he said that education is remembrance. You remember what is embedded or secreted within, you bring to the light, the light of your physical mind, what you have within, what you already possess in your being and inner consciousness. Acquisition is not education. Indeed a miser is not a rich man, rich is he who knows how to utilise his wealth, even so a possessor of much information is only a carrier of loads.

True education is growth of consciousness. It is consciousness that carries the light and the power of the light. We are born upon earth with this consciousness at the centre of our being. And a growing child is nothing but a growing consciousness. Growth of consciousness means an increasing intensity and an increasing amplitude or wideness of the light. Unfortunately, placed as we are under the circumstances of life as it is, this light of consciousness is not allowed to grow in its natural and normal way. The external demands of life and the world put a pressure upon it which turns it away from its straight path. Things are demanded of this light or consciousness which do not belong to its nature, which are not an expression of its nature. It is as though twisted, tortured or smothered under utilitarian necessities.

The brain should be a flowering of this consciousness, a developing vehicle for the expression of the increasing consciousness. For that a guidance is needed so that one may always turn within and look for that consciousness, feel it growing, and with one's will and thought and act help its growth and development. A brain is not developed by the mass of information that may be pressed into it. Pieces of information are necessary but they should be presented in such a way as to serve as fuel, helpful fuel to the mounting fire, they must not be merely piled upon and around the fire or be as so many wet faggots crushing it down with their weight. A true learner is one who seeks sincerely this inner consciousness which is one's own; the true teacher is one who knows how to lead the learner towards this inner light.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## **A CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN YOGA: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM**

How is our Ashram different from the large number of Ashrams that abound in India today? How can we call this Ashram a Centre for Research in Yoga? What are the proofs that such a Research is being carried on here, and where are the records containing the conclusions?

Let me state at the outset that we do not claim any superiority for our Ashram over others. All that we say is that our aim is different from that of the others, our ideal is different and our way to realise it is something distinct from the traditional methods of Yoga. Usually the goal of Yoga as practised in India is liberation from the limitations of Nature, from Ignorance, and release either into a state of utter Peace or positive Bliss. The achievement is individual and whatever consequences ensue for society, they are incidental. The collectivity does not, as a rule, enter into the scheme of Yogic endeavour. One may indeed exert oneself for the total welfare, *lokasamgraha*, or put out one's energies to help suffering humanity in the way of the Buddha; but that is secondary. The main pre-occupation is personal salvation. The place where one retires to work it out is a retreat from the world and its activity. The world is left to itself while the individual salvages his soul by a progressive isolation of his being from the rest.

The aim of this Yoga and the Ashram where it is being practised in an organised manner is double: first, individual development, liberation, perfection, and then, participation in the world for its elevation and change of character by the force of one's own achievement. The two are not steps that are taken one after the other, but lines of progression that proceed in parallel. Inner development is closely related to outer expression. Thus this Yoga has two aspects: inner and outer—and both develop simultaneously. Spiritual gains made in the inner domains of the being are canalised into purposeful activity for affirmation of the inner status in the outer conditions of the world.

We believe in life, in the possibility of the eventual perfection of the material world, not merely in the perfection of the soul freed from the trammels of the body. The key to that change lies within ourselves. To find it there and turn it in the lock that shuts up the world-nature in a cosmic Ignorance, is our aim. Each sadhak exerts himself in this direction, for the reclamation of his part of the material world to the Light and Power of the Divine that are realised in his soul-state. We have not devoted our whole lives to our personal liberation, *mukti*, but have dedicated ourselves to the Ideal of manifesting the Divine in this world of Matter. To serve the Divine, to express the Divine, to embody the Divine in order to rebuild the world in the image of the Divine is our living Ideal.

In this teaching Matter, the physical realm is not rejected either as an inferior order of reality or as a temporary formation of Maya to be put behind. It is treated



as a projection of the Divine, as real as the Divine. The spiritual and the material are two poises, statuses of the same Reality. To bring out this inherent relation in overt operation by infusing the active consciousness of the Divine Spirit in this triple world of Matter, Life and Mind, is our object. All spiritual effort in the Ashram is directed towards realising the higher and still higher states of consciousness in oneself and turning their flowings outward into life; all material effort is to make this complex of body-life-mind more conscious, more pure and more steady to receive this higher charge and illumination. No part of life is left outside our purview; all is equally sacred awaiting its hour of fulfilment in the divine manifestation. Every section of life is epitomised in the Ashram for this purpose. In fact no distinction is made between life-activity and sadhana. The whole of life, during all the hours, is to be lived as a continuous sadhana for self-upliftment, self-enlargement and self-dedication. Visitors are often surprised that we do not have separate timings set apart for *satsang*, holy communion, common prayers, etc. The explanation is very simple: our endeavour is to be constantly in a state of communion with the Divine inwardly; meditation and prayer are there fixed in attitude and inner poise, so that all life becomes a sadhana, all moments and movements a prayer and aspiration.

I have been in touch with many centres of Yoga in our country and have had some knowledge of their aims and activities. At the best, they are working for the Godward growth of man away from life; but if there are any who have this double purpose of the perfection of man and perfection of the world, I would be only too happy to know. To participate in activities of life by economic necessity or on the generous impulses of humanism is one thing; to take on the problem of the world at its crux in order to resolve it both at the individual and the collective level by spiritual means is quite another.

Regarding the second question, I would put it this way. Research means the discovery of new processes, new truths or principles hitherto not patent, and their bearings on our existence. In the context of Yoga, research would mean the opening up of new realms of consciousness, new areas of Knowledge, and the means to establish them in the human range. And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pioneers of this Yoga, have been doing. Day after day, for nearly seven decades, they have been engaged in mapping out the subtler domains of this Creation, effecting fresh openings for the efflorescence of the human consciousness and its faculties, drawing into the universe, truths and powers of higher orders of existence and establishing them in this triple world. Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*, particularly the pregnant section on the "Yoga of Self-Perfection", is a standing testimony to the new Knowledge gathered in this field, and the processes tried out and made available to man for a total perfection. In fact, no book on Yoga or spiritual Philosophy contains such a vast store of the Knowledge of Principles and Formulations of Soul and Nature in the Cosmos. Similarly, the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* are a remarkable transcript of the experiences and realisations registered in her being in the course of her work of linking together the highest and the lowest terms of this manifest Creation.

The Talks given by her to the disciples, young and old, contain spiritual and occult wisdom unparalleled in the extent of spiritual literature for its sheer amplitude and the facility with which profound truths are delivered in forms which even a child can grasp.

At the moment, the Mother is preoccupied with the organisation of the New Consciousness-Force, the Dynamis of Knowledge-Will, the Supramental Shakti that has been brought down on earth by the concentrated tapasya of herself and Sri Aurobindo. She is ceaselessly engaged in extending its roots, furthering its blossoming in the earth consciousness. She has exposed her own physical body representing the Earth-principle in evolution to the workings of this transforming Force. Her latest writings in the *Bulletin*—the main organ of the Ashram—contain meticulously faithful and detailed notes of her experiences in the course of this unprecedented labour. She examines the reactions of the very cells in her body to the influx of the Supramental Power and describes the manner in which the fusion is steadily taking place. Here is a graphic record of the transition that is going on from humanity to super-humanity.

Naturally, the aim of her endeavour being what it is, she needs a collective base to support her work. If it were a question of her personal supramentalisation or transformation, she could very well have done it in a hermitage in a forest. But her spiritual conquests are meant for mankind, they are to be established as the property of the whole of humanity. For this purpose a representative collection of humanity at all stages of development, in all its variations of types, has been organised around her in the form of this Ashram. Each spiritual advance that is made in this Central Consciousness housed in her body is automatically radiated and reached to those around. She is trying to establish and affirm these developing states of being and consciousness in those who are equipped or are equipping themselves for this call. In this sense each member of the Ashram, each inmate, participates in the task, contributes his mite and shares in the general advance at some level of his being or other. Thus the process is one of extending her own realisations to as many as possible so that things may get founded in the general consciousness and become available there to be drawn upon by anyone who seeks for them. The Ashram is a nursery of the new race to come.

Knowingly or unknowingly, all those who live in this Yogic milieu, absorb the vibrations of the Truth-Consciousness and those of us who are conscious know very well to what extent our own movements of mind, heart and even of the body are undergoing perceptible changes. A great reservoir of spiritual power, light, consciousness is daily and hourly being built up for the benefit of the world. The fact that the work is done in silence, without fanfare or publicity, does not make it any the less effective. Even agnostics cannot help being struck by the solemnity, peace and quickened pace of life and joy in the Ashram atmosphere.

If this is not research in Yoga *par excellence*, I would like to know what else is.

M. P. PANDIT

# RESEARCH IN EDUCATION AT THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

## I

### EDUCATION AND LIFE

EDUCATION primarily aims at preparing the child and the youth for life. But what is life? And what is the aim of human life? The nature of education will depend upon the answers that we give to these basic questions.

Research in Education as conducted at the Ashram starts from an inquiry into these basic questions and this has resulted in a formulation of what can most properly be called "Science of Living".

All life, we find, is an affirmation and a growth, a pulsation of an interplay of forces, seeking blindly or half unconsciously and half consciously some deepest satisfaction, in which it may find its resting-place or assured stability or equilibrium.

There are, we find again, three fundamental and powerful, but conflicting, views concerning the goal or aim that life seeks to realise:

i) According to the first, all life is an ignorant movement seeking for Knowledge, which, however, can be found only by the cessation of Life, which in turn, can be achieved only by the realisation of the supracosmic static Self or featureless Nirvana.

ii) According to the second, all life here is a preparation for a life elsewhere on a supraterrrestrial plane, conceived either as a paradise or a heaven or an abode of perpetual joy and bliss.

iii) According to the third, which is very much in vogue today, the aim of life is to affirm itself here in this world or earth itself. There is, according to this view, nothing beyond this cosmos, or even if there be anything beyond this cosmos, the aim of life has nothing to do with it, either because the connection of life with that beyond cannot be known or because life here is so preoccupying and absorbing that it does not inspire us, or leave us sufficient time, to inquire into that beyond.

All these three views have been deeply studied at the Ashram and our conclusions are as follows:

a) Each one of the above views answers to the aspiration of one or more of the elements in the human personality; but, in the human personality, these elements are found to be coexistent, though not integrated as yet. However even this coexistence raises a possibility of an integration.

b) And when the integration of these elements is effected, we find a clue to the reconciliation of the above three seemingly opposite views of the aim of life. We find then the exact relationship between the supracosmic, the supraterrrestrial and the terrestrial, and of all these with the individual striving and growing on the earth. It is then

realised that the supracosmic, the supraterrrestrial and the terrestrial are the three terms of reality, the last two rooted in the first. The will to realise the self-fulfilment and perfection here on the earth is not a vanity or a perversion; only its unwillingness to look beyond is a self-defeating limitation; for the complete self-fulfilment on the earth can be attained only by a union with the supracosmic and by a journey through the supraterrrestrial and terrestrial planes and by preparing and realising the harmonisation and perfection of the principles and powers of the embodied existence here

c) Education then must be a preparation for such a journey, such an adventure, such a seeking and a realisation of harmony and perfection.

d) In practical but precise terms, this would mean that education must consist in the training and development of five essential aspects of personality, in order to widen, enrich, subtilise and integrate them into an ideal perfection. These five aspects are: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual.

Research is being conducted at the Ashram into the various problems that arise in the implementation of this integral view of education .

## II

### AN EVALUATION OF EXPERIMENTS IN EDUCATION

I. An interesting problem is to consider the relationship of the experiment conducted at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram with the experiments made in the field of education in the past or those which are being conducted at present.

i) It is recognised that in the history of the development of education, we find in certain systems of education a stress on a harmonious development of the physical, the vital and the mental. Such indeed was the Greek ideal of education, which has reappeared in the modern West, and which influences the modern educational thinking in India. It is also recognised that there have been systems of education laying a great stress on the building up of the character and on the inculcation of the moral virtues. In some systems of education, an attempt has been made to provide for the study of some religious texts and for some religious practice. There is also a tendency to suggest a system of education in which all the above elements would in some way be incorporated.

The system of integral education as being experimented in at the Ashram accepts the truths and values underlying all the above-mentioned systems of education; but it is identical with none of them. It does stress the harmonious development of the physical, the vital and the mental; but the harmony is sought to be achieved not by any mental or moral or religious idea or system, but by an uncompromising stress on an inner seeking and discovery of the psychic and spiritual principles in the personality. Again, this stress on the psychic and the spiritual is not conveyed through any religious doctrine, dogma, ritual or ceremony, but through spiritual example and influence, and through individual or collective spiritual guidance.

ii) Such a system of education is unique and unprecedented, for even in ancient India in the Ashrams of the Rishis, where spirituality was not life-negating and where there was an attempt at the integral development of the various parts of the being by the stress on the inner psychic and spiritual seeking, even there the aim of the complete spiritualisation of life here on the earth was lacking or was not yet fully put forth. Indeed, the educational system of the ancient spiritual Ashrams has been a most valuable gift and, even when our aim is not absolutely identical and we have to hew out new paths in education, many of the characteristics of our endeavour will bear close resemblance or even show identity, both in spirit and form, to those which obtained in the ancient Ashrams. The integral system of education is thus in a sense a continuation and enrichment of the ancient Ashram system; but it is also a new creation, with a more radical and perfect spiritual aim, and in the conditions of the modern world which are very much different from those of ancient times. Fresh and more complex problems of education have to be met in this new endeavour and research. There is no doubt that if education has to reconcile the underlying values of modern Science, Technology and the dynamism of life with the spiritual ideals, it can be shaped only in this direction.

iii) It is significant that there is at present a great drive towards experimentation in education. And some of the new methods of education, that are being proposed and experimented upon at the forward centres of education all over the world, seem to be leading straight to the right solution. The ideas of individual differentiation, the stress on multiple methods of teaching for different categories of students, recognition of the phenomena of genius, insistence on all-round development of the personality, and an ardent attempt at implementing the idea of freedom and that of consulting the child in his own education—all this has created a new atmosphere which augurs well for a new creation.

In the experiments in education at the Ashram, all these movements have been taken into account, and an attempt has been made to give to all the new and significant ideas in education their full value and work out their extreme conclusions, so that in the final solution each truth of educational theory and practice may find its true place and complete fulfilment.

2. There has recently been in India a great deal of thinking on the problem of moral and religious or spiritual education. It has been strongly felt that even while "religious education" as such cannot be sponsored by the Secular State, education in moral and spiritual values can and should be made an integral part of the national system of education. There is also a serious inquiry as to the connotation of moral and spiritual values, and the methods by which these values can be inculcated—among the students. The inquiry is far from complete, and even serious doubts have been raised as to whether in the context of the present day educational environment, moral and spiritual education would at all be possible, or whether, even if attempted, it could be anything more than the teaching of moral and religious philosophy.

These doubts cannot be brushed aside, for what is very often suggested is not "re-

ligious education,” or “spiritual education” or “moral education”, but education *about* religion, spirituality or morality, and that too by means of a few standard and graded books, and in the environment of the classroom and school-benches. Even when better suggestions are being hazarded, they do not seem to lead us far into the heart of the solution of the problem

A central research into this problem is therefore urgently called for.

The Ashram has, however, been engaged in research in this problem for the last several decades, and this research has been both practical and theoretical. Some of the conclusions of this research will be considered in the next section.

### III

#### PSYCHIC AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

1) A basic distinction has to be made between morality, religion and spirituality.

Morality is a part of the ordinary life. The ordinary life consists of the seeking of satisfaction and the development of the body, life and mind without any reference to their original source or self. Morality is that part of the ordinary life which seeks to regulate and guide the various physical, vital, mental or ideal pursuits by some definite principles determined by the rational thought or by some intuitive insight obtained at the level of the highest practical or pure Reason. But the standards of conduct erected by the moral consciousness, even the so-called universal principles of the categorical imperative, cannot be determined with certainty, and these in the present application by a bewildered and imperfect humanity come easily to be conflicting principles. Justice often demands what love abhors, and in fact man's absolute justice easily turns out to be in practice a sovereign injustice. Morality is always in a state of disequilibrium and thus the moral values cannot be credited with absoluteness

Religion is an endeavour of man to turn away from the earth towards the Divine; but this seeking is still of the mind or of the lower ignorant consciousness, as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bounds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue.

Sometimes, the absoluteness of the moral values is sought to be derived from some religious sanction. Thus religions have attempted to erect a system and declare God's law through the mouth of the Avatar or Prophet. Such systems have proved more dynamic and powerful than the dry ethical idea. But quite often they conflict with what reason can support or they are so ingrained in certain religious dogmas that they cannot have any appeal to those who would not accept those dogmas, and, besides, there is too a conflict among the dogmas. Or else, they are so rigidly framed that they prove unworkable and are, therefore, rejected by Nature. Or, some-

times, they are turned into a system of compromises and become obsolete in the march of Time.

The truth is that neither morality nor religion represents the highest reach of man's consciousness. They may prepare, but they are not the resting-place; as stations on an evolutionary journey they can be accepted, but not as the destination. Both of them are a seeking. Morality is a seeking of a guiding principle of conduct; but this seeking is mental and, when it goes beyond, it no more remains morality. Religion is a seeking of the Divine, but the method of this seeking is that of dogma, ritual and ceremony, and an involvement in a fabric of moral, social and cultural institutions all determined and permeated wholly or partly by the dogmatic tenets and rules of the sect or creed. It is an ignorant and a mental way of seeking. When it goes beyond, and liberates itself from dogma, ritual and ceremony and rules, it ceases to be religion in the strict sense of the word. Beyond morality, beyond religion, is the path of Yoga; beyond the moral and the religious life is the spiritual life.

The spiritual life proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into *direct and living contact* and then into *union with the Divine*. For the spiritual seeker this *change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters*. Both morality and religion in their deepest core touch spirituality and may prepare the change of consciousness; but the element of "spirituality" does not constitute the differentia by which we can define morality or religion. *Spirituality not only aims at the total change of consciousness, but even its method is that of a gradual and increasing change of consciousness*. In other words, spirituality is an exploration of consciousness through consciousness.

In the spiritual consciousness and in the knowledge and the effectivity it delivers, there is the fulfilment of the highest that morality and religion in their deepest core seek but fail to realise. It replaces the moral law by a progressive law of self-perfection spontaneously expressing itself through the individual nature. No more in this operation is the imposition of a rule or an imperative on the individual nature; the spiritual law respects the individual nature, modifies it and perfects it, and in this sense it is unique for each individual and can be known and made operative only by a change of consciousness and by an entry into the real self. In its progressive movement, it may, if necessary, permit a short or a long period of governance by a moral law, but always as a provisional device and always looking for going beyond into a plane of a spontaneous expression of the Right and the Good. To the spiritual consciousness, moral virtue is not valuable in itself, but as an expression of a complex of certain qualities which are for the time being for a given individual necessary and useful in an upward journey. Again, for the spiritual consciousness, what is commonly called a vice has, too, behind it, a complex of certain qualities which have a certain utility in the economy of Nature, and can therefore be converted by placing them in their right place, into a complement to what lies in consciousness behind the commonly called virtues.

Spirituality is not confined merely to the aspect of conduct, the conduct dealt with by morality is only a minor aspect of the totality of works, inner no less than outer. Spiritual consciousness includes all these works and strives by the method of a progressive change of consciousness for the perfect expression of all the aspects of the works and in this striving it realises also the unity of works with the highest Knowledge and the deepest Love.

Religion too is an attempt to include all aspects of works and to arrive at some sort of unity of works with knowledge and love; but once again, its method is mechanical, mental, moral and dogmatic and, instead of arriving at a comprehension of all the values, it ends only in a system of compromises. The progressive law of the spiritual development may permit, if necessary, a short or a long period of governance of the individual or of the race by religion, but only as a provisional device: what it always makes for is a passage beyond into the plane of a comprehensive consciousness where the distinctive religious methods disappear or cease to have any fundamental or useful meaning. To the spiritual consciousness, religion is not valuable as a form, but only in so far as it may aid the too ignorant consciousness of man to turn towards something that is deeper and higher and, even there, it stresses the necessity for every man to have his own distinctive religion. And, again, for the spiritual consciousness, what is commonly called agnosticism, scepticism, atheism, positivism or free thinking, has behind it a concern and a demand for a direct knowledge, which, if rightly understood, recognised, respected and fulfilled, would become a powerful complement to what lies in consciousness behind the commonly accepted religious qualities of faith and unquestioning acceptance of dogmatic teachings and injunctions.

For spirituality always looks behind the form to the essence and to the living consciousness; and in doing so, it brings to the surface that which lies behind, and its action is therefore of a *new creation*. Spirituality transcends the forms and methods of morality and religion and creates and recreates its own living and progressively perfecting forms. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.”

ii) Spirituality and spiritual values and the methods of realising them are distinctive and must not be confused with either morality or religion, and their methods. The method of spirituality is purely yogic, and nothing short of Yoga can bring about the realisation of the spiritual values.

A mere learning about Yoga is not Yoga, and even the most catholic book on Yoga cannot be a substitute for the direct yogic practice of an inner change of con-



sciousness by which one can perceive and realise the inner and higher Self and transform the workings of the outer instruments of nature. Nor can Yoga be practised in a casual way or only as a part-time preoccupation. Yoga to be properly practised must be taken as a sovereign and central occupation and must govern and permeate every aspect of life and its activity. Then alone can there be any promise of realisation of the spiritual values

iii) An education that aims at the inculcation of spiritual values and at the reconciliation of these values with the dynamic demands of life must also be as radical and uncompromising as Yoga itself. It would not do merely to prescribe a few graded books on morality or spirituality and to allot a certain fixed quantum of hours to the study of these books. Spirituality is a living process and spiritual or true education is a process of kindling lights which cannot be done except by the Light that can kindle. Again, spiritual values are central and supreme values and they must therefore govern and penetrate as such all the values and aspects of education.

In practical terms, this would mean the dynamic Presence and Influence of the Teacher or teachers who have unveiled the inner Light and who in their own consciousness comprehend the underlying spiritual truth and unity in the various branches of knowledge.

Moreover, life itself is the great teacher of life; and, therefore, unless spiritual values are the very atmosphere and life-breath of the educational environment, they cannot be truly or effectively brought home to the students.

These conditions can be realised only in the Ashram system which not only admits the young ones for their basic or higher education, but creates a spiritual life and atmosphere through an advanced training and research in spiritual values, in which the students can actively participate, and, even in a real sense, can contribute to the spiritual progress of their teachers.

It is recognised that it is extremely difficult to fulfil these conditions; but it is equally true that there is no other way.

iv) The role that the teacher has to play in this conception of education demands of him certain special qualities. The function of the teacher is to enable and to help the student 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.

The teacher must have complete self-control not only to the extent of showing no anger but to that of remaining absolutely quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances.

In the matter of self-confidence he must also have the sense of the relativity of his importance. Above all, the teacher must have the knowledge that he himself must progress if he wants his students to progress, must not remain satisfied with what he is or with what he needs.

He must know that all are equal spiritually and he must not merely exercise tolerance, but have a global comprehension and understanding.

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

Whatever subject he teaches, he should enter into the very heart of it, and in doing so, he must go beyond the level where thinking proceeds by words, and enter into a plane where thinking proceeds by pure conception and ideation; and finally, he must enter into the consciousness where knowledge is acquired and expressed through direct experience.

The teacher in fact must be a yogi in order to discharge his responsibilities. And the greatest Master is much less a Teacher than a Presence pouring the divine consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss into all who are receptive around him. He does not arrogate to himself Guruhood in a humanly vain and self-exalting spirit. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "His work, if he has one, is a trust from above, he himself a channel, a vessel or a representative. He is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul awakening souls, at highest a Power or presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine."

v) The pursuit of the spiritual values is in fact the pursuit and cultivation of the truths and powers of two overruling aspects of personality, *viz.*, what we have called the psychic and spiritual.

The psychic being is the real individual, the real person behind all personalities; it is the integrating centre which, little by little, projects itself into the body, life and mind, in proportion to their right development, and suffuses them with its light and purity and establishes by its progressive governance a harmony of the different parts of the being. It is that which knows its real mission as an individual expression in the totality of all the individuals in the world, a mission that is unique to itself. Its goal is a higher realisation upon earth and its law of action is that of mutuality and unity and utter dependence on the Supreme.

While the psychic is the inmost and deepest being in us, the spiritual is the higher and transcendental. While 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 the eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation, beyond time and space.

And there is still an integrating supramental consciousness, which reconciles the transcendental tendency of the spiritual and the immanent tendency of the psychic.

#### IV

#### PSYCHIC AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION SOME PRACTICAL HINTS

A complete psychic and spiritual education is a life-long process, and yet, in so far as they truly give meaning to the life-development, they must determine the entire

process of the education of the child and the youth. In fact, they must truly be the starting-point of all education. A few indications and ideas which would govern this programme of education are given below:

a) It may first be noted that a good many children are under the influence of the psychic presence which shows itself very distinctly at times in their spontaneous reactions and even in their words. All spontaneous turning to love, truth, beauty, knowledge, nobility, heroism, is a sure sign of the psychic influence.

b) To recognise these reactions and to encourage them wisely and with a psychic feeling would be the first indispensable step

c) It is also important to note that 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. The best qualities to develop in children are: sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, and self-control; and they are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches

d) The role of the teacher is to put the child upon the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping, but not imposing or interfering. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily conversation and the books read from day to day

e) 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.

f) Opportunities should be given to the students, within a limited sphere, of embodying in action the deeper and nobler impulses which rise within them.

g) The undesirable impulses and habits should not be treated harshly. The child should not be scolded except with a definite purpose and only when indispensable. Particularly, care should be taken not to rebuke a child for a fault which one commits oneself. Children are very keen and clear-sighted observers: they soon find out the educator's weaknesses and note them without pity.

h) When a child makes a mistake, one must see that he confesses it to the teacher or the guardian spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confessed, he should be made to understand with kindness and affection what was wrong in the movement and that he should not repeat it. A fault confessed must be forgiven. The child should be encouraged to think of wrong impulses 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 and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love.

i) A great care should 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.

j) An affection that sees clear, that is firm yet gentle and a sufficiently practical knowledge will create bonds of trust that are indispensable for the educator to make education of the child effective

k) When the child asks a question, he should not be answered by saying that it is stupid or foolish, or that the answer will not be understood by him. Curiosity cannot be postponed, and an effort must be made to answer the question truthfully and in such a way as to make the answer accessible to the brain of the hearer

l) The teacher should ensure that the child gradually begins to be aware of the psychological centre of his being, the psychic being, the seat within of the highest truth of our existence, that which can know and manifest this truth.

m) With this growing awareness, the child should be taught to concentrate on this presence and make it more and more a living fact.

n) The child should be taught that whenever there is an inner uneasiness, he should not pass it off and try to forget it, but should attend to it, and try to find out by an inner observation the cause of the uneasiness so that it can be removed by inner or other methods.

o) It should be emphasised that if one has a sincere and steady aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet in one way or another, externally by study and instruction, internally by concentration, revelation and experience, the help one needs to reach the goal. Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and realise. This discovery and this realisation should be the primary occupation of the being, the pearl of great price which one should acquire at any cost. Whatever one does, whatever one's occupation and activity, the will to find the truth of one's being and to unite with it must always be living, always present behind all that one does and that one experiences, all that one thinks.

p) There are aspects of the mental, vital and physical development which contribute to the psychic and spiritual education. They can be briefly mentioned:

i) In its natural state the human mind is always limited in its vision, narrow in its understanding, rigid in its conceptions, and a certain effort is needed to enlarge it, make it supple and deep. Hence, it is very necessary to develop in the child the inclination and capacity to consider everything from as many points of view as possible. There is an exercise in this connection which gives greater suppleness and elevation to thought. It is as follows. A clearly formulated thesis is set; against it is opposed the anti-thesis, formulated with the same precision. Then by careful reflection the problem must be widened or transcended so that a synthesis is found which unites the two contraries in a larger, higher and more comprehensive idea.

Another exercise is to control the mind from judging things and people. For true knowledge belongs to a region much higher than that of the human mind, even beyond the region of pure ideas. The mind has got to be made silent and attentive in order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it.

A still another exercise: whenever there is a disagreement on any matter, as a

decision to take, or an act to accomplish, one must not stick to one's own conception or point of view. On the contrary, one must try to understand the other person's point of view, put oneself in his place and, instead of quarrelling or even fighting, find out a solution which can reasonably satisfy both parties; there is always one for men of goodwill.

And there are many such exercises.

A wide, subtle, rich, complex, attentive and quiet and silent mind is an asset not only for the psychic and spiritual discovery, but also for manifesting the psychic and spiritual truths and powers.

ii) The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depression, of passions and revolt. The vital is a good worker, but most often it seeks its own satisfaction. If that is refused totally or even partially, it gets vexed, sulky and goes on strike.

An exercise at these moments is to remain quiet and refuse to act. For it is important to realise that at such times one does stupid things and in a few minutes can destroy or spoil what one has gained in months of regular effort, losing thus all the progress made.

Another exercise is to deal with the vital as one deals with a child in revolt, with patience and perseverance showing it the truth and light, endeavouring to convince it and awaken in it the good will which for a moment was veiled

A wide and strong, calm but dynamic vital capable of right emotion, right decision, and right execution by force and energy, is an invaluable aid to the psychic and spiritual realisations.

iii) The body by its nature is a docile and faithful instrument. But it is very often misused by the mind with its dogmas, its rigid and arbitrary principles, and by the vital with its passions, its excesses and dissipations. It is these which are the cause of the bodily fatigue, exhaustion and disease. The body must therefore be free from the tyranny of the mind and of the vital, and this can be done by training the body to feel and sense the psychic presence within and to learn to obey its governance. The emphasis on the development of strength, suppleness, calm, quiet, poise, grace and beauty in physical education will ensure the contact of the body with the psychic centre and the body will learn to put forth at every minute the effort that is demanded of it, for it will have learnt to find rest in action, to replace through contact with the universal forces the energies it spends consciously and usefully. By this sound and balanced life a new harmony will manifest in the body, reflecting the harmony of the regions which will give it the perfect proportions and the ideal beauty of form. It will then be in a constant process of transformation, and it will be possible for it to escape the necessity of disintegration and destruction, and death.

q) At a certain stage of development, when the seeking of the student is found to be maturing, he can be directed more and more centrally to the psychic and the spiritual discovery. And here we come to yoga proper, the nature and problems of which have to be studied separately.

## V

A SUITABLE ORGANISATION FOR THE PSYCHIC AND  
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION  
—FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM—

An education governed by spiritual values stands in need of a very flexible structure of organisation. A brief description of the salient features of such a structure that is growing at the Ashram as a result of several experiments made there in this direction is given below:

a) The structure is oriented towards the meeting of the varied needs of the students, each one of whom has his own special problems of development;

b) It is not merely the 'subjects' of study that should count in education; the aspiration, the need for growth, experience of freedom, possibility of educating oneself, self-experimentation, discovery of the inner needs and their relation with the programme of studies, and the discovery of the aim of life and the art of life—these are much more important, and the structure of organisation must provide for them;

c) In this system, each student is free to study any subject he chooses at any given time; but this freedom has to be *guided*; the student should experience freedom; but it might be *misused*; the student has therefore to be watched with care, sympathy and wisdom; the teacher must be a friend and a guide, must not impose himself, but may intervene when necessary. The wastage of opportunities given should not be allowed indefinitely. But when to intervene depends upon the discretion of the teacher.

d) A great stress falls upon the individual work by the students. This individual work may be a result of the student's own wish to follow a particular topic of interest; or it may be a result of a suggestion from the teacher but accepted by the student. It may be of the nature of a follow-up of something explained by the teacher, or it may be of the nature of an original line of inquiry.

This "individual work" may be pursued in several different ways:

- i) by a quiet reflection or meditation;
- ii) by referring to books or relevant portions of books suggested by the teacher;
- iii) by working on "work sheets" prepared for the students by the teachers;
- iv) by consultation or interviews with the teachers;
- v) by carrying out experiments;
- vi) by solving problems;
- vii) by writing compositions;
- viii) by drawing, designing, painting, etc

or

ix) by any other work, such as decorating, cooking, carpentry, stitching, embroidery, etc.

e) There are topics in each subject where lectures are useful; and for these topics,

lectures are organised; but these lecture classes are comparatively fewer than those obtained in the classical system. This necessitates the announcement of time-tables every week.

f) There are also classes of discussions between teachers and students and between students and students. These discussion classes again are not compulsory. However, the discussions do not pertain merely to academic subjects; they often centre round the individual needs of growth, and thus they provide an opportunity for guiding the students in their inner search.

g) In each subject, there are topics which more easily yield to the project system, teachers therefore announce a few projects in each subject, and students according to their choice select at least a minimum number of projects for which they collectively or individually work and produce charts, monographs, designs, etc., which are periodically exhibited for the benefit of the whole school.

h) The role of the teacher in this system may be summarised as follows:

To aid the student in uncovering the inner will to grow and to progress—that should be the constant endeavour of the teacher;

To evolve a programme of education for each student in accordance with the felt needs of the student's growth; to watch the students with deep sympathy, understanding and patience, ready to intervene and guide as and when necessary, to stimulate the students with striking words, ideas, questions, stories, projects and programmes; this should be the main work of the teachers;

But to radiate inner calm and cheerful dynamism so as to create an atmosphere conducive to the development of higher faculties of inner knowledge and intuition—that may be regarded as the heart of the work of the teachers.

1) An adequate organisation of the above working of the Free Progress System would need the following:

- (1) A Room or Rooms of Silence, to which students who would like to do uninterrupted work or would like to reflect or meditate in silence can go as and when they like;
- (2) Rooms of Consultations, where students can meet their teachers and consult them on various points of their seeking;
- (3) Rooms of Collaboration, where students can work in collaboration with each other;
- (4) Lecture Rooms, where teachers can hold discussions with their students and where they can deliver lectures—short or long—according to the need.

The study of each subject can be so directed that it leads ultimately to the discovery of the fundamental truths underlying the subject. These fundamental truths form ultimately a unity, and at a higher stage a philosophical study of this unity would itself contribute to the deepening of the sense of Truths which directly helps in the maturity of the psychic and spiritual or yogic aspiration.

The sense of the unity of the truths would also contribute to the reconciliation of the various branches of Knowledge, thus leading to the harmony of Science, Philo-

sophy, Technology and Fine Arts. In the spiritual or yogic vision, there is an automatic perception of this unity, and in the teaching of the various subjects the teacher can always direct the students to this unity. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: "The Yogin's aim in the sciences that make for knowledge should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine Consciousness-Puissance in man and creatures and things and forces, her creative significances, her execution of the mysteries, the symbols in which she arranges the manifestation. The Yogin's aim in the practical sciences, whether mental and physical or occult and psychic, should be to enter into the ways of the Divine and his processes, to know the materials and means for the work given to us so that we may use that knowledge for a conscious and faultless expression of the spirit's mastery, joy and self-fulfilment. The Yogin's aim in the Arts should not be a mere aesthetic, mental or vital gratification, but, seeing the Divine everywhere, worshipping it with a revelation of the meaning of its works, to express that One Divine in gods and men and creatures and objects. The theory that sees an intimate connection between religious aspiration and truest and greatest Art is in essence right; but we must substitute for the mixed and doubtful religious motive a spiritual aspiration, vision, interpreting experience."

The above-mentioned system of Free Progress Classes and the new vision of the unity of knowledge necessitate new types of text-books and reference books. And here too, the teachers in the Ashram are engaged in the writing of such new books. This work is a most pioneering adventure in education, and it has involved teachers in a long, difficult and arduous path of Research.

There are golden reaches of our consciousness, and from them and from the reaches intermediate between them and our ordinary mental consciousness there have descended forces and forms which have become embodied in literature, philosophy, science, in music, dance, art, architecture, sculpture, in great and heroic deeds and in all that is wonderful and precious in the different organised or as yet unorganised aspects of life. To put the students in contact with these, eastern or western, ancient or present, would be to provide them with the air and atmosphere in which they can breathe an inspiration to reach again to those peaks of consciousness and to create still newer forms and forces which would bring the golden day nearer for humanity.

The teachers and scholars at the Ashram are preoccupied with this work, and their research work in this direction is contained not only in their published or unpublished books, but also in the actual contents of their day-to-day work and lectures and in their organisations of exhibitions, of dance, drama, music, and numerous other educational activities. An adequate account of this work would fill a volume.

It is in the context of this vibrating and powerful process of the psychic and spiritual education that the activities of the physical, vital, and mental education are set and worked out at the Ashram. In each of these fields, again, there are specialists in the Ashram who are engaged in various activities of experimentation.

(The following is a very brief account of the conclusions of the research conduc-



ted at the Ashram in the physical, vital and mental education and of the present organisation of the activities in this field at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.)

## VI

### MENTAL EDUCATION

1) All the processes and methods of mental education can best be determined by the knowledge of the nature of the Mind. Mind, as we regard it, is primarily a faculty of understanding: all understanding, again, is a discovery of a centre round which the ideas or things in question are held together.

Mental education then is a process of training the mind of the student to arrive at such central conceptions round which the widest and the most complex and subtle ideas can be assimilated and integrated

It is again found that even these central conceptions point still to a beyond, to their own essential Meaning, which can be glimpsed and conceived by the mind, but which cannot be held and possessed fully in experience by the mind. This point marks the climax of the mental development as also a clear sign of the limitations of the mind. Having reached there its office is to fall into a contemplation of silence and to open to the higher realms of experience, to receive clearly and precisely the intuitions and inspirations from those higher realms, and to give creative expression to them.

To train the mind on these lines, there are five phases of the programme:

- i) Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention;
- ii) Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness,
- iii) Organisation of ideas round a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life;
- iv) Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants;
- v) Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being.

The mental faculties should first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas. "Our dealings with language," writes Sri Aurobindo, "are much too perfunctory and the absence of a fine sense for words impoverishes the intellect and limits the fineness and truth of its operation. The mind should be accustomed to notice the word thoroughly, its form, sound and sense; then to compare the form with other similar forms in the points of similarity and difference, thus forming the foundation of the grammatical sense; then to distinguish between the fine shades of sense of similar words and the formation and rhythm of different sentences, thus forming the foundation of the literary and the synthetical faculties. All this should be done informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set teaching and memorising of rules.

The true knowledge takes its base on things, *arthas*, and only when it has mastered the thing, proceeds to formalise its information."

Multiplicity of ideas, richness of ideas, totality of points of view—these should grow by a developed power of observation and concentration and by a wideness of interests. Care should be taken to see that the central ideas are not imposed upon the growing mind—that would be the dogmatic method, which tends to atrophy the mind. The mind should grow towards the central ideas, they must come as a discovery of the mind, they must come as a result of a rigorous exercise of the speculative faculty.

A stress should fall not only upon understanding, but also upon criticism and control of ideas. Not only comprehension, synthesis and creativity, not only judgment, imagination, memory and observation, but also the critical functions of comparison, reasoning, deduction, inference and conclusion. Both the aspects of the human reason are essential to the completeness of the mental training.

One of the best methods is to create an atmosphere in which the massive and powerful ideas are constantly being thrown as a stimulation and a challenge impelling the students to arrive at them or strive to grasp and assimilate them.

Thinkers alone can produce thinkers; and unless the teachers are constantly in the process of building up great thoughts and ideas, it is futile to expect a sound or vigorous mental education

An atmosphere vibrant at once with ideation and silence, an atmosphere surcharged with a synthetic thought and a most integral aspiration, and an atmosphere filled with the widest realisation and a harmonious unity—such an atmosphere is an indispensable condition of the perfect mental education

And such a condition obtains at the Ashram.

One of the important aspects of this condition is the international character of the Ashram and of the Centre of Education. An attempt is made here to achieve this in such a way that the different cultures of the world are accessible to all, not merely intellectually in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms such as painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decorative arts and crafts—and physically through dress, games, sports, industries, food and even reconstruction of natural scenery. The ideal is that every nation with its distinctive culture should have a contribution of its own to make so that it would find a practical and concrete interest in cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work.

A subsidiary problem arising out of this international character is that of the medium of instruction. Most of the students have come here at a very young age, and because of the various languages spoken by the people in the surroundings in which they move and have their activities, they pick up many languages. Two international languages, English and French, are commonly spoken and understood. Most of the children know two or three other Indian or foreign languages. To nourish this spirit and to perfect expression in the various languages, some subjects are taught in English, some in French, and the mother-tongue is taught through the same language. A special importance is given to Sanskrit. Quite often lectures and

recitations are given in Sanskrit and in other Indian languages which are open both to the students and other members of the Ashram.

Particular mention may be made of the research and translation work done by the department of languages. A notable work is Rigveda Bhashya in Sanskrit with commentaries. A second such achievement is the Vedic Glossary which is unique in the field of Vedic interpretation. Yet another book (still unpublished) is a work in Sanskrit on Sri Aurobindo's 'Hymns to the Mystic Fire' in the style of traditional Sanskrit commentaries. Similarly, the Chinese Section has translated into Chinese the *Bhagavad Gita* and Kalidasa's *Meghadootam* from the original Sanskrit with commentaries. Also translated into Chinese are Sri Aurobindo's *On Yoga, Bases of Yoga, Kena* and *Isha Upanishad* and the Mother's *Conversations*.

At the Centre of Education, there is a graded programme of instruction right from the kindergarten to the post-graduate level in languages, mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences and general subjects in Humanities, which are all taught on the lines and principles indicated above. Classical languages such as Sanskrit, Latin and Tamil; European languages such as English, French, German, Italian and Spanish; and Indian languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Telugu and Kannada are also taught.

An important feature of the courses is that each subject is regarded as an independent field of study. The progress of the student in each subject is independent of his progress in other subjects. Thus a student can be at different levels in different subjects according to the progress he makes in each of them.

There is no artificial barrier between different branches of knowledge; and therefore, throughout the courses, a great sense of unity of knowledge pervades in the pursuits of academic and cultural studies.

The Library of the Ashram has about 65,000 volumes, numerous collections of educational films, collections of natural history, and additional facilities for the expansion of knowledge. The Library receives nearly 300 magazines and periodicals related to a variety of subjects from all over the world. Young students are helped by competent hands to choose and read books. Special exhibitions of literary, artistic or historical interest are organised and children encouraged to participate. There are besides meetings for visual education in the open air, at frequent intervals with the help of instructional and educational films.

There is a department of Information and Research which endeavours to collect the latest materials, books, cuttings, papers, reports, etc. to provide the teachers with up-to-date information in various subjects. It is also a stimulating centre for the students for consultation and extra reading.

A constant attempt is to present each topic to the student in a challenging way so as to stimulate the student and to excite his interest in the topic. To find new and imaginative methods, to compile materials from various sources, to introduce new concepts and new interpretations in various subjects, to develop new subjects, and, above all, to attend in detail to all the psychological faculties and their development in such

a way that the mental education does not veil the soul—this in brief is the endeavour and its spirit.

## VII

### VITAL EDUCATION

Vital education aims at the training of the life-force in three directions: (i) to discover its real function and to replace its egoistic and ignorant tendency to be the master by a willingness and a capacity to serve higher principles of the psychological constitution; (ii) to subtilise and sublimate its sensitivity which expresses itself through sensuous and aesthetic activities; and (iii) to resolve and transcend the dualities and contradictions in the character constituted by the vital seekings, and to achieve the transformation of the character.

The usual methods of dealing with the vital have been those of coercion, suppression, abstinence and asceticism. But these methods do not give lasting results, and besides, they only help in drying up the drive and dynamism of the life-force; and thus the collaboration of the life-force in self-fulfilment is eliminated.

The right training of the vital then is much more subtle and much more difficult, needing endurance, endless persistence and an inflexible will. For what is to be aimed at is not the negation of life but the fulfilment of life by its transformation.

First, the powers of the senses have to be developed, subtilised and enriched. Next, there are inner and latent senses which are to be discovered and similarly developed. Third, the seekings of these senses have to be trained to reject grossness and coarseness and to enjoy the finer tastes and higher aesthesis. Finally, there has to be a deeper and piercing observation of the desires, passions, ambitions, lusts, etc., their risings, revolts and contradictions, and an attempt by various methods to separate out in each movement the elements that contribute to the concord and harmony from those tending in the opposite direction, and to eliminate these latter from the very nature and fibre of our psychological constitution.

The effective methods of this last aspect are:

- i) to instill in the child as soon as possible the will towards progress and perfection;
- ii) rational argument, sentiment and goodwill, or appeal to the sense of dignity and self-respect, according to the nature of the child in question;
- iii) above all, the example of the educator shown constantly and sincerely;
- iv) to insist on the idea that the will can be developed, and that no defeat should be taken as final;
- v) to demand from the will the maximum effort, for the will is strengthened by effort.

But still the direction in which the effort has to be made can be known only by the training of the mind and by the opening of the secret knowledge that is within us.

To develop therefore in the vital the habit to open to this light and to act in that light would be to place the vital in its proper place as a will-force executing the inner and higher Knowledge.

In the actual practice, the ideas on vital education can be implemented by:

a) a special emphasis on the study of Science in which sense-observation requires to be greatly cultivated and made very precise;

b) a great stress on audio-visual methods, taking, however, care to see that these aids do not become a bar to the children's own discovery of things and their aspects by their own observation;

c) a stress on the different kinds of fine arts and crafts;

d) an organisation of the activities in which the dynamic participation by the students is encouraged so as to give them the opportunity to maximise their effort and the exercise of their will;

e) conditions in which what is valued most is not the result, but application and doing one's best;

f) conditions in which inner observation and introspection are encouraged enabling the students to analyse the inner dualities and contradictions with a will to change and transform the character;

g) conditions in which the need for outer advice is minimum, and in which the work of change of the students' character is sought by example, presence, influence and inner work on the part of the teachers.

It is on these lines that the Ashram has organised its activities leading towards the perfection of the vital education.

The life energy is channelised in disciplined and fruitful directions; the principle of assigning responsibility and leadership in different activities so as to develop courage and heroism is given its full value and practical application. Several of the Captains in the Physical Education Department are students; advanced students are given some responsible work or even teaching work at the Centre of Education. Besides, students are encouraged to develop the qualities of straightforwardness, uprightness, frankness and honour.

The child is expected and allowed to think for himself and act according to what he thinks best; advice is given where needed but nothing is imposed. Care is taken to provide a surrounding in which the child can feel that he is a responsible and free being for his self-expression and true-expression by which alone he can be a harmonious part of the world.

The students who show interest and talent in art, music, photography, crafts, etc., are given every facility to develop themselves in these directions. There is a provision for teaching music—vocal and instrumental (both Eastern and Western). Gifted artists are in charge of guiding the students in drawing and painting. There is also a provision for learning the Indian system of dance and Western Ballet. Similarly, there are arrangements for students to participate in works of applied science carried out by the various departments of the Ashram, such as printing press, cottage indus-

tries, tailoring, embroidery, paper manufacturing, farms, building service, workshops for automobile and metal work, bakery, dairy, laundry, medical establishments, etc. In addition, there is a technical course which students can take up along with their academic studies. Also, there is a Home Science and Nursing Course for those students who show interest in these fields. There is also a course in weaving and other Cottage Industries.

Besides, throughout the year there are varied programmes of dramatics, dancing and vocal and instrumental music. Every Saturday, there is a programme largely arranged by the students under the guidance of the teachers which endeavours to meet the special needs for artistic and cultural expressions.

Exhibitions are organised throughout the year in which the maximum participation of the students is sought.

The activities in physical education are so designed that the students get the opportunity to develop the team spirit, the qualities of collaboration, friendliness to competitors, self-control, 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, a ready obedience to the command of the captain and a loyal acceptance of the decision of the referee. The competitions in the physical education are so conducted as to give the highest value to the maximum effort rather than to the results of the competitions.

## VIII

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

This brings us to the physical education proper.

The physical is our base, and even the highest spiritual values, to be effective on the earth, must express themselves through the life that is embodied here. *Śarīram khalu dharmasāadhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action.

Of all the domains of education, the physical is the one most completely governed by method, order, discipline, procedure. All education of the body must be rigorous, detailed, foreseeing and methodical.

The education of the body has three principal aspects:

i) control and discipline of functions; ii) a total, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body, and iii) rectification of defects and deformities, if there are any.

The physical education must be based upon a knowledge of the human body, its structure and its functions. And the formation of the habits of the body must be in consonance with that knowledge.

The child should be taught right from the early stage the right position, postures

and movements. A similar training should be with regard to the choice of food. The child must develop the taste for food that is simple and healthy, substantial and appetising. He must avoid all that merely stuffs and causes heaviness; particularly, he must be taught to eat according to his hunger and not make food an occasion to satisfy his greed and gluttony. The child should also be taught the taste for cleanliness and hygienic habits. It is important to impress upon the child that he is not more interesting by being ill; rather the contrary. Children should be taught that to be ill is a sign of failing and inferiority, not of a virtue or a sacrifice.

In the general programme of education for the children, sports and games should be given a fair place. At the Ashram, detailed experiments have been made on the following problems of sports, games, and general physical education:

- (1) Comprehensive physical training versus specialised physical training;
- (2) Can men and women have the same programme of physical education?
- (3) The integration of the Indian and the Western systems of physical education; and
- (4) Physical education as an integral part of spiritual perfection.

The results of these experiments have appeared continuously in the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, which is our official organ since the year 1949. A brief description of the present methods and organisation of the physical education at the Ashram will give an idea as to how the solution of the various problems are being worked out.

The Ashram has organised a well-knit Association, called J.S.A.S.A. (Jeunesse Sportive de l'Ashram de Sri Aurobindo). To this Association are admitted students from the age of 6 onwards and there are members of this Association who are over the age of 75. For it is understood that it is never too soon to begin nor too late to continue. All the members are divided into several groups according to age; and for each group, there is a time-table suited to that age-group. Normally, students are required to allot nearly two hours daily to physical education throughout the whole year. (There is no vacation.) The programme of physical training is carefully organised: it consists of athletics, gymnastics, aquatics, combatives and Indian and Western games. Every student, instead of specialising in one or two items, participates in all the aspects of physical education; the lack in high specialisation is more than compensated by the wide and synthetic training of all the parts and aspects of the body. But still there is also a provision for specialisation at a higher stage, for those who would choose specialisation.

An attempt is made to integrate the truths of the Hatha Yoga with the principles underlying the western system of exercises. It is noted that the awakening of the Kundalini which is one of the results of the Hatha Yogic Asanas can very well be accomplished by the western system as well.

The ladies have more or less the same programme of physical education as men. It is our conclusion that it is a mere prejudice to stress too much a different programme of physical education for ladies.

The year is divided into four seasons; and at the end of each one, there are competitions and tournaments in the various items of physical education. A complete record of the results is maintained, and there is a comparative study of these results with the international standards and achievements in the respective fields.

Facilities for carrying out the programme of physical education are numerous: a stadium with a 400 metre cinder track with provision for field events, grounds for football and cricket, and a swimming pool of 33  $\frac{1}{3}$  metres built to Olympic specifications with an attached pool for children and a large gallery for spectators. Besides, there are two tennis courts, two grounds for basketball and volley ball, a pit for Indian wrestling, a ring for boxing and a dojo for Japanese Judo, a large courtyard and a gymnasium with the most modern equipment.

Individual attention is paid to each member and steps are taken to inculcate an aspiration in the youngsters to have not only a healthy body but also a form of grace, symmetry and beauty. Members are encouraged to make the body increasingly supple and responsive.

Nourishment of the children is given prime importance. Good, healthy and nutritious food is provided to the children and the physical education provided to them ensures good health. Besides there is a periodical health examination and dental check-up conducted by efficient doctors. Those who need to follow up a treatment are given careful attention. The massage clinic helps the injured and those who specially need its service to relieve them of pain and stiffness which some people experience after their course of training. There is also an X-Ray Department attached to the Medical Section. A system of body measurements with posture photographs and tests is also conducted to help the children know how they are growing and to see if the development is in the line of good proportion and harmony. Special exercises are given to those who need them in order to bring harmony and proportion and to correct defective formation and bad posture.

## IX

### TOWARDS THE FUTURE

We may conclude this brief analysis of the various aspects of education by quoting the following words of the Mother:

“As we rise to this degree of perfection which is our goal, we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the Truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and perfect harmony.”

A complete realisation of this ideal would also mean what the Mother calls the supramental education. And an attempt at this highest education is one of the most



difficult tasks in the research work of the Ashram. A brief idea of the motive and nature of the supramental education is given by the Mother in the following words:

“From beyond the frontiers of form, a new force can be evoked, a power.... which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and bring forth 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 therefore be 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 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.”

KIREET

## FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM— ITS NECESSITY AND MEANING

ALL education aims at the progress of the students. But the question is: how to ensure this progress? The ordinary methods include the routine pursuit of a syllabus, exposure to a series of lectures and finally a system of examinations which decide the promotion or failure of students.

These methods, it is universally agreed, are so rigid and so deadening in their effect that they need to be radically changed. Indeed, a new system of ensuring the progress of the students has to be discovered and implemented.

And, first, what is Progress? Is it an increasing amassing of information? Is it even a development of certain skills? Or is it a development of the psychological abilities of adaptability, discovery, invention, manipulation, ideation and organisation? Is it the training of the mind to deal with large and universal ideas so as to be able to reconcile and unite by some kind of dialectic opposing or conflicting systems of thought? Or else can it be a development of body, life and mind so as to arrive at a harmony among them by the governance of Reason?

Or should we not mean by progress a discovery of an inner principle of guidance, which holds in it the light and the truth of the development, harmony and perfection of our body, life and mind? And shall we not even go farther and say that true progress is an ever-open step towards a total revolution of our entire being and consciousness so as to transform all the limitations to which man as an evolutionary being is subject?

And, again, is it not irrational to set a standard of progress uniform for all? Or is it not wiser, although more difficult, to consider each individual as a special centre having his own unique rhythms and stations of progress and thus to assess each individual's progress by standards appropriate to each individual?

The idea of Free Progress is precisely an answer to the above questions. For, if man is not the last term of evolution, if Reason is not the true or highest governor of life, if the general aim of human life is to discover one's inmost and highest principles and to transform by their light and power the entire mode of one's present embodied mental life, and if the specific aim of each individual is to be a special or unique centre of a higher action according to the rhythms of that action, then education must be a process of free progress so organised

(i) as to give to each one the possibility to discover his own line of development in accordance with his inner truth of being,

(ii) to give the possibility of progressing at one's own pace of progress, and

(iii) thus, ultimately, to enable him to take the charge of his own development.

Education is a process of a harmonious and progressive awakening; education is a process of self-revelation of knowledge which is within, and, as Sri Aurobindo has

said, "The first principle of teaching is that nothing can be taught." Education is a process of the discovery of one's true place and function in the totality of existence and of the progressive lifting of one's station to the highest possible reach of consciousness and action.

This is the truth of education underlying the Free Progress System. It is free because it is not prefabricated; it is free because it is not imposed on any individual; it is free because it encourages each one to break the limitations of the past and to open to an exploration of new future possibilities; it is free because it is guided, not from without, but by oneself, by one's inner self, one's inner soul. In the words of the Mother, "Free Progress is progress guided by soul and not enslaved by habits, conventions and preconceived ideas."

TANMAYA and KIREET

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# WHAT IS FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM?\*

## I

### BASIC PRINCIPLES

IN Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* we find an explicit and luminous passage which is the key to his views on education. Apropos of the new trends evidenced by the experiments in education carried out in various countries, he says:

"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. ... 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."<sup>1</sup>

This passage throws considerable light on the forceful statement which Sri Aurobindo has given as the fundamental principle of education:

"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

\* Sections I & II are reproduced, with minor alterations, from the author's book *Education and the Aim of Human Life*, published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 3rd Ed., 1967.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 37.

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.”<sup>1</sup>

It is quite clear that, according to Sri Aurobindo, the current idea that the teacher should impart *his* knowledge—what he knows about a subject—to the child is fundamentally wrong. He must show the child *how to learn* that subject by himself, help him in devising his own methods of learning and of organizing the knowledge which he gathers or discovers.

We can understand this better if we observe how a young child gains spontaneously the knowledge of his surroundings. He does it through a ceaseless activity which is natural to him whenever he finds interest in the objects at his disposal. He examines, touches, manipulates every object he can lay his hand upon, studies how he can use it for his own purposes (often very different from his parents’ ends and views). He explores every nook and corner of the room, of the house, of the garden, sees how he can make use of them for his activities, his games (with little care for the purpose and the tranquillity of the grown-ups). All this is done and pursued in conformity with the needs of his stage of growth. It is the *learning by doing*, as named by Dewey. When we say that a child is amusing himself or playing (alone or with playmates), it is almost always the purposeful activity (solitary or collective) of a growing being deeply engaged in the process of building up and perfecting his instruments of knowledge and action. We are indeed in presence of a genuine education, leading to discovery and invention—discovery of the world around and of its meaning (for the child’s mentality), invention of the usage he can put it to (for the child’s aims and interests)—and it is a self-education as it does not require lectures or books. An adult’s intervention is in most cases not sought for, nor is it effective, as the adult’s understanding is too remote from the child’s mentality.

But the adult has an important part to fulfil. When a child is idle, restless or mischievous, it is either that his natural activity has been hampered or distorted, or that he has exhausted the opportunities given to him by his surroundings and his activity has no outlet. It is for the adult—parent or teacher—to keep the environment supplied with elements of interest. These objects should act by their presence, not by their purpose. Their aim is to satisfy an immediate and actual need of the child, not a future need as anticipated by the parent or teacher (pass an exam, get a good job, raise a family). The purpose of a child is always immediate: the satisfaction of an actual need, which is one of the forms taken by the deep fundamental urge in him to grow physically, emotionally and mentally. He does not paint with the aim of becoming an artist (such an aim belongs to the adult mentality, and it is often

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education*, first published in the *Karmayogin* in 1909, when Sri Aurobindo was a leader of the National (Swadeshi) Movement in Bengal. Reprinted in book form in 1924 and included in *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education*, 2nd ed., 1960, p. 15

unwisely and untimely instilled into the child's receptive mind), but for the satisfaction of the creative impulse in him. He does not try to solve a problem of mathematics to become a mathematician or a good engineer, or even to know geometry and algebra, but for the satisfaction of the discovery, the lightning that suddenly flashes into his mind when he "gets it", for the inner joy of having overcome a difficulty and succeeded. He does not play the mouth organ to have a large audience and be recognized as a musician (if he has these ambitions, he got them by the praises bestowed upon him by elders), but for the joy of self-expression and the pleasure he gives to his nearest mates and friends.

Therefore the foremost need of a child is that his environment should be well supplied with all kinds of objects suited to his stage of development. The child will move freely among these objects and spontaneously display an activity through which, by observation and experiments, he will grow to the knowledge of the environment. The child judges, foresees, compares and reasons for himself in all that concerns him. The knowledge thus gained has already all the characteristics of a scientific knowledge and, what is more, it is acquired spontaneously in a scientific way, by trial and experiment, although (the adult will say) with much fumbling.

Child psychologists have distinguished in the child's activities various stages in relation with his surroundings. There is the stage of manipulation, the stage of construction, the stage of observation (truly all are parts of a single process of discovery). The child comes often across objects, the understanding of which is beyond his powers. This is particularly the case of man-made instruments and machines (from the time-piece, the sewing-machine and the gramophone, to the motor car and radio and television sets); observation alone gives access only to a small part of their secrets. The child will therefore look for help from an elder, parent or teacher. Later the age comes when the child begins to open and react to stimuli from objects of a different nature; they are no more material objects, they are objects only in the philosophical sense: we may call them intellectual objects. Such are mathematics, history, geography, foreign languages, sciences, philosophy, in their various branches and aspects. At this time the help of the teacher becomes indispensable and assumes a more complex form, which we shall study presently as it is the true support of mental education.

It is certain that this spontaneous activity leading to a knowledge of the surroundings and to their right use and mastery is the most natural and efficient form of education. What we have to find are the ways and means to extend this form of education to the gradual discovery and knowledge, not only of the whole outside world but also of the inner worlds, the world of emotions and feelings, the world of thought. Above all, our education should induce the child to look quietly and persistently for the inner guidance, so that the soul may reveal its presence, assume the leadership and prepare the proper use and true mastery of both the outer and inner worlds. This will be fully in accordance with the injunctions of Sri Aurobindo and it is the aim we place before us.

We can already see that, at every stage of the child's development, the first task

of the educator—parent or teacher—will be to keep the environment of the child adequately furnished with all that is capable of arousing the stimuli which the child needs at this stage for a natural and continuous growth

Sri Aurobindo has further stated another fundamental principle of education:

“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 prearranged 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. Everyone 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.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the work proposed to a child must be suited to his mental age and outlook, and he must be allowed to do it according to his own capacity and speed. A child who is given a work corresponding to his needs as a growing being, accepts it readily and does it with attention and joy.

From this it follows that the child must be given individual attention and be allowed to proceed independently. It is the child and not the teacher that sets the pace.

## II

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

1) The first task of the teacher is to maintain the class environment well supplied with objects of interest suited to the varied grading of his students. He has to prepare the work-sheets—a considerable work—and the related documentation (photos, pictures, etc.). I hope I have clearly shown that the self-education which is the core of the method can only start and sustain itself when the child finds a satisfaction of his needs in the school equipment.

2) The second task is to organize and maintain the good will of the students. For this purpose the teacher must carefully observe the behaviour of every student and detect any sign of boredom, fatigue or restlessness, any hitch in the normal functioning of the class. He must find the cause of the disturbance and remove the obstruction.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *loc. cit.* pp. 15-16

It is wrong to believe that the teacher should constantly goad his students into activity. The urge to work must come from the student himself. The teacher is there only to canalize the interest of the child and supply a constructive outlet to his activity.

During the first stage (adaptation) the teacher's role is mainly to see that the necessary equipment is available, to eliminate obstacles due to a faulty organization of the classwork, to smoothen and facilitate the adaptation of the children to the new method.

During the second stage (responsibility) he should help the students to organize their work and show them the way to responsibility. His intervention should always be restrained, tactful and unassuming. He should avoid pushing himself forward and act only when requested. Especially in speech, he should be moderate and discreet. In most cases, the initiative of speech should come from the student, and the teacher's answer should fit exactly to the student's question.

Indeed the teacher must guard himself against reverting to the old outlook, *i.e.* the attitude of one who has the knowledge and whose duty it is to impart it to the student. There are very subtle forms of this reversion and the teacher will find that the return of old habits has disastrous results.

Many people may think that the teacher has now a reduced role and that he may as well be dispensed with. Nothing could be farther from the truth. His presence is of paramount importance : it must be *constant* and *total*, as I have explained. The success of the class will depend on the correctness of his attitude towards the children, on his psychological insight, his forbearance, his self-mastery, his devotion to the work and his spirit of collaboration with his colleagues.

Let there be no misunderstanding. When I say that the teacher must be moderate, discreet and unassuming, I do not mean that he should concede every demand of the students. When I say that he is not the one who has the knowledge and whose duty is to impart it to his students, I do not mean that he is devoid of knowledge, but that his aim is to teach the students how to liberate the knowledge that is within them. If he should not speak too much, it is because he is a source of information and not of knowledge and he must supply only the information that is needed. If he should not enforce his decisions, it is not because he is unable to reach a decision or to impose it, but because his purpose is to train the students to come to their own decisions. The teacher is there to support the children's growth towards responsibility and self-acquired knowledge. He must therefore be steady, strong and reliable. Thus only can he inspire confidence and conform to the need of the child for security and protection. In short, I can say that the good teacher is certainly a person of character and authority, but these should be felt rather than asserted. His action and guidance are constant, but they are indirect and veiled

3) The third aspect of the teacher's work is to help the children to find the inner guidance. This part is the most delicate of all: to be able to induce a psychic opening in the children he should himself always keep in touch with his soul.

As the Mother said:



"Teachers who do not possess a perfect calm, an unflinching endurance, an unshakable quietness, who are full of self-conceit will reach nowhere.

"One must be a saint and a hero to become a good teacher.

"One must be a great Yogi to become a good teacher.

"One must have the perfect attitude in order to be able to exact from one's pupils a perfect attitude.

"You cannot ask of a person what you do not do yourself. It is a rule."<sup>1</sup>

This statement should not give rise to hesitation and misgiving, it should rather encourage us. To teach is certainly a very efficient form of sadhana and the Mother has also said:

"I have never asked any of those—who were educated here—to give lessons unless I saw that it would be *for him* the best means of disciplining himself, of learning in the best way what he has to teach and to attain an inner perfection which he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this occasion for disciplining himself, which is *exceptionally* hard."<sup>2</sup>

We can say that the demand made upon a teacher is great, but his reward is to watch and assist the emergence of living souls.

Now there is a point about the teacher's action at which I have hitherto only hinted. It is the collaboration among teachers.

The organization and working of a new class require a constant exchange of thoughts and experiences, coordination and harmonization of decisions among the teachers of the same class. They must know each other well, trust one another and act as a team. A new class is thus a very good field for the practice of true collaboration. It has been found also that the presence at the same time of more than one teacher has beneficial results both for teachers and students: a better mutual understanding among teachers, a more intimate knowledge of the students, more dignity, self-mastery and punctuality from the teachers, a feeling of closeness and unity, and better relations between teachers and students.

The necessity of a co-ordinated collective action of the teachers makes it indispensable that one of the class-teachers should be in charge of the organization of the class and responsible for its unity. Let us call him the *First Teacher*.

Some teachers might be afraid lest this organization should restrict their own independence. Freedom for the child is all right, they will say, but what about the freedom of the teacher? Will there not be a great rigidity and fixity in the system?

First, when text-books, collective class-teaching and homework are replaced with work-sheets prepared by the teacher and with individual work by the students under his guidance and control, the teacher's freedom of action is not impaired in any way, it means only that one set of instruments has replaced another set. And the

<sup>1</sup> *The Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1961

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

new one gives to the teacher the possibility of a greater adaptation to the individual nature of the children and hence a greater flexibility.

But it is true that the new class is a collective unit, from the point of view of both students and teachers. The action and attitude of every teacher have often immediate and important repercussions on the atmosphere of the class, and therefore on its work and progress. In the same way every child's behaviour has an effect on the whole class. This is also true in the traditional education, but it is perhaps felt here with a greater acuity, owing to the quietness of the class and the harmonious yet independent activity of the students. One can say that the atmosphere is more sensitive. This is probably due to the fact that the children are less subjected to outer commands and impacts, more often placed face to face with themselves and asked to look silently within for guidance.

What would one say of a musician who refuses to play his agreed part in an orchestra but insists on complete independence and freedom of action? Or of a mason who rejects the architect's plan and follows his own inspiration regardless of what the others are doing? Or of a volley-ball player who declines to concert and synchronize his movements with his fellow-players? The same is true of all collective work. The independence of each is qualified by the interdependence of all. Each one has to accept a certain degree of restriction and even subordination. The closer the collaboration, the better the efficiency.

Now, a new class is eminently a collective undertaking. Yet much freedom is left to the teacher, not only in the preparation of the work-sheets, but in the guidance of the students and in contact with them. What is important is that the principles and distinctive features of the method should be carefully observed—the rules of the game—as any deviation from them would create confusion and render the scheme worthless. The principles have been laid down by Sri Aurobindo and the features of the method are in complete conformity with the principles. Moreover, these principles and features are supported by the recent findings of child psychology and the trend of modern research in education. Therefore, there can be no valid objection to a sadhak's entering into such collaboration.

However, as the method is new and not yet fully tested, it must be expected that some teachers of our Centre of Education may be reticent and feel the need of further experiment before committing themselves. For this reason there can be no question of imposing the new method on anybody. Those who will join the new classes as teachers will be entirely volunteers. Not only must they accept freely the method, but it is my opinion that they should feel a certitude about its correctness, its value—they should see it as *a step in the right direction*. Moreover, if they understand all its implications, they will discover that it is truly a *new attitude towards the child and education*. They must feel an urge to participate in what is and will be a pioneering work.

I recall here the recent words of the Mother in connection precisely with this new venture:

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

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

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

“Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of Sri Aurobindo’s help.”

### III

## SYLLABUS IN FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM

We are often asked what programmes of studies we follow in our Free Progress Classes. An answer can be formulated thus:

We wish, during the 13-year School Course (Kindergarten, primary, secondary and higher secondary), to awaken the child to his soul, that is to the existence in him of a Divine Spark, as a living Presence to whom he can refer and from whom he can draw guidance, comfort and help in dealing with the problems and difficulties of daily life. This is our aim.

If we can succeed in providing the child with an educational environment and the individual attention of spiritually awakened teachers so as to enable him to work in full freedom with interest and joy—both go always together—during these thirteen long years, we feel sure that the best in him will be brought to the surface and made active. Even if it does not bring him any academic recognition, he will have acquired concentration, the capacity of learning, self-confidence and poise. Whatever knowledge he now has is certainly well understood and assimilated. At this level the “quantity” of factual knowledge in the child’s mind is of little importance. Gaps may be filled easily later when the need arises, as he will have learnt how to use documentation. And certainly his contribution to society and the world will be the best he can make. This is truly our programme.

If the child—now an adolescent—chooses freely to pursue his studies, our Higher Course offers him a comprehensive set of subjects from which he may select as many as he wishes, to give a wide and solid base to his knowledge. In each of the selected subjects, the student will work projectwise under the individual attention (not leadership: the leader is the student’s soul, not the teacher, however learned he may be!) of a capable guide.

The student will be advised (not compelled) to include in his selection the study of the principal works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother concerning man’s psychology, his place in evolution and the future destiny of mankind. In this way, with an awakened soul and the knowledge of man’s future evolution, the young man or woman will be one of the spiritual pioneers of the nation and humanity. This will be our reward—if we need any!

PAVITRA

## A TRUE PROFESSOR

THE Mother says a professor, a true professor, must be truly a yogi. That is to say, a teacher, even a school-teacher, one imparting what is called secular education, has to be nothing less than a yogi. The Indian term for teacher is 'guru' and 'guru' meant a teacher both spiritual and secular. This distinction of the two words is made by the modern spirit, it did not belong to the ancient culture. The secular knowledge was also considered a necessary part of the spiritual knowledge, that which prepared for it and led towards it. The 'apara vidya' or the 'vedangas' were but limbs of the supreme knowledge 'para vidya' and 'veda'.

"A teacher has to be a yogi" does not mean that he is to be a paragon of moral qualities, following, for example, the ten commandments scrupulously. Not to tell a lie, not to lose temper, to be patient, impartial, to be honest and unselfish, all these more or less social qualities have their value but something else is needed for the true teacher, something of another category and quality. I said social qualities, I might say also mental qualities. The consciousness of the teacher has to be other than mental, something deeper, more abiding, more constant, less relative, something absolute. Do we then prescribe the supreme Brahma-consciousness for the teacher? Not quite. We mean the consciousness of a soul, the living light that is within every aspiring human being. It is a glad luminousness in the heart that can exist with or without the brilliant riches of a cultivated brain. And one need not go so far as the vedantic Sachchidananda consciousness.

That is the first and primary necessity. When the teacher approaches the pupil, he must know how to do it in and through that inner intimate consciousness. It means a fundamental attitude, a mode of being of the whole nature rather than a scientific procedure: all the manuals of education will not be able to procure you this treasure. It is an acquisition that develops or manifests spontaneously through an earnest desire, that is to say, aspiration for it. It is this that establishes a strange contact with the pupil, radiates or infuses the knowledge, even the learning that the teacher possesses, infallibly and naturally into the mind and brain of the pupil.

Books and programmes are of secondary importance, they are only a scaffolding, the building within is made of a different kind of bricks. A happy luminous consciousness within is the teacher's asset, with that he achieves all, without it he fails always.

If the teacher is to be a yogi, the pupil on his side must be at least an aspirant. But I suppose a pupil, so long as he is a child, is a born aspirant. For, as the Mother says, a child's consciousness retains generally something of the pure inner consciousness for sometime at least until it is overshadowed by the development of the body and the mind in the ordinary normal way. Something of this, we know, has been expressed in the famous lines of the visionary English poet:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar...  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison house begin to close  
Upon the growing boy.

But if the right teacher is found, that pure flame in the child's consciousness can be kept burning, can even be made to burn brighter and higher. A teacher too, on his side, in the presence of a pure child-flame in his pupil may profit by its warm touch; for the two by their intimate interaction grow together towards a greater fulfilment in both.

When we speak or think of education and consider the relation of the teacher and the pupil, we generally confine ourselves to the mental domain, that is to say, aim wholly or mainly at the intellectual acquisition and attainment, and only sometimes as per necessity as it were we turn at most to the moral domain, that is to say, we look for the growth of character, of good manners and behaviour—social values as we have said. Here we have tried to bring into the educationist's view a more important, a much more important and interesting domain—a new dimension of consciousness.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## READING SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

WHY do we read the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother ?

And if we read them, how should we read them?

Do we read for the sake of study? to know things? to acquire knowledge? That is a secondary aspect, a profit gained by the way. The real purpose of coming in contact with the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is to become conscious, to acquire consciousness, to be more and more conscious, increase more and more the consciousness. To understand, that is to say, to seize by the mind, to grasp intellectually the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is rather difficult. The easier, the more right way would be to enter into the atmosphere of the world that they have created with their words, to feel the vibration that the words emanate. For the words that they have uttered are not mere words taken or found in the dictionaries, they are not mere sounds, dead syllables, they are living entities, symbols of consciousness, the consciousness of which I have just spoken. These symbols, being symbols of consciousness, are luminous, they shed light all along, they are full of power and extend power all along, they have life and they are full of delight. It is this inner world behind the outer world of words that one has to be in touch with, be aware of, in the first instance, before one can have a mental understanding; in other words, you must cultivate the right attitude, a turn of your consciousness in tune with the consciousness that has worked out the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You have to take a plunge, as it were, dip into the waters, and be soaked in the caress of that element, to come in the living touch of the substance of words, go behind the meaning if necessary, avoiding it even. You must contact the living sap, the *rasa*, that has poured itself out in the creation. If you have tasted of that, then—it has its own light—that will suffuse you automatically with its radiance; the delight of bathing in the living spring will formulate itself in rhythms of knowledge and true understanding.

At least such should be the basis of approach to the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You may have possessed a rich intellectual apparatus, you may have all the information that sciences and philosophies have gathered, you may have perused the whole story of the evolution of human knowledge up to the present time, all these are lesser lights, they do not illuminate the light before which you stand. That light is shown and recognised by its own reflection or emanation in you, the little light that is in you, your soul.

Indeed, there have been instances where great intellectuals, famed savants found themselves bewildered before the simplest magic phrases of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. On the other hand, simpler minds with no burden of learning, nor pride of pedantry, with their pure streak of light in the depth of their consciousness were able to seize and unveil the secret sense.

Your mental understanding, your intellectual apprehension may or will add to the joy of your discovery; one that is perhaps at the end or subsequently, when your brain, your physical reason has been washed by the flow of the inner light, when it has been made pure and plastic and docile.

In another way, to understand the Truth—the Truth that the words of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo express—you must start by living it, approaching it not merely through your mind, in fact not even through your heart, but possessing it in the very body. The Mother says, real understanding comes by the body-understanding. Indeed, the true aim of knowledge is not merely to know but to be.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM IN THE HIGHER COURSE

THE following points will briefly give an idea of the organisation of the Free Progress System in the Higher Course of our Centre of Education.

- (a) There is no compulsion with regard to any subject of study;
- (b) The choice of a subject for a study is freely made by each student, and this choice reflects a real and serious quest of the student;
- (c) At the beginning of the session, students are invited to indicate what lines of study or what particular topics they would like to explore;
- (d) In order to facilitate the choice of topics, teachers may present to the students a suggestive but detailed list of suitable topics;
- (e) Each topic thus selected constitutes a short or a long project, according to to the nature of the topic;
- (f) In exploring each project, students would take the help of the teacher or teachers whom they might choose from among the teachers competent to deal with it;
- (g) Teachers, on their part, endeavour to relate the exploration of the project to the inner needs of the students and the methods of exploration would be so organised as to permit the cultivation of intuition and the higher faculties of knowledge and action;
- (h) In guiding the students, teachers are expected to endeavour to widen and intensify the area of exploration so as to avoid narrow specialisation or a mere wide superficiality;
- (i) Each student's programme of studies is thus flexible, supple and evolutionary;
- (j) In the selection of topics of study, students are not compressed to any single Faculty, whether of Arts or Science or Technology, even though they may belong predominantly or almost exclusively to one of the Faculties by virtue of the nature of the topics that they might have selected;
- (k) There are no fixed oral classes; but teachers arrange, by agreement with their students, oral classes as and when necessary;
- (l) The Time-Table indicates as to when and how long a teacher will be available for consultation, etc;
- (m) The period of study for the predominantly Arts and Science students is three years, and that of the predominantly Engineering students is six years;
- (n) The exact quantum of work to be covered by each student for his selected course cannot be predetermined, but in order to have completed his Course, he should have shown regularity of sustained effort, development of capacities, understanding of his subjects and the power of answering relevant questions orally and in writing with sufficient clarity and precision. The quality of the work is considered more important than the quantity of the work, although the latter too should not be meagre, but commensurate with high standards.

KIREET



# ON QUESTIONS CONCERNING FREE PROGRESS SYSTEM IN ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

## *General and Basic:*

Whatever courses of training be given to our students, the basic indispensable training should be:

To develop the mind in order to control and guide what is below the mind—the infrarational—to the maximum extent possible, and be quiet enough to receive without distortion from whatever is above the mind—the suprarational—for the change of our nature. All our courses should be designed with this fundamental object in view.

*Q. 1. What should be the ideal length of the Engineering Course?*

A. To teach Engineering fundamentals, the University I had joined had four terms of six months each, that is, a total of two years. I do not see why our students, who are taking up this course after our Class Ten, cannot accomplish this in the same time. My idea will be to teach the students only the basic fundamentals and to let them study further on their own, which may cover two or three or four years, depending upon what they are interested in.

*Q. 2. Should this length be the same for all the categories of students? If not, would you elucidate your view?*

A. The first part may be the same, although not necessarily so. The second part obviously depends upon the students themselves.

*Q. 3. It is said that there is something like a basic course in Engineering, and that it can be studied only by a formal way of teaching, consisting of a course common to all students, and through lectures followed by home work, etc., in regular and almost fixed doses and almost at fixed periods. Do you agree with this view?*

A. The basic training for which I have visualised a period of two years may more or less be given in the formal way. For the rest of the programme, the students may have a number of interesting projects which they can conduct on their own initiative with some help from teachers as and when necessary.

*Q. 4. Could not even the basic course in Engineering be broken up into a number of interesting projects which can be pursued by students on their own initiative with the necessary help from teachers as and when necessary—help which may take the form of occasional lectures or short periods of lectures-cum-discussions and personal and individual work by students in an atmosphere conducive to silent and free work and to the cultivation of higher faculties of knowledge?*

A. The present total period of six years covering the basic and project work may

be so designed as to be an integrated process giving the students time to imbibe basic information and do the project work on their own—the two processes following each other as closely as possible.

*Q. 5. Do you think that the training given on the lines suggested above would not be as effective as the one given in the traditional way?*

A. The stress being given to the development of the mind in the manner indicated above, the training given on the lines suggested should be very much more effective than that obtained in the ordinary way.

*Q. 6. What do you think teachers should strive to do constantly in the new Project System that is proposed?*

A. The essential thing for the teachers is to have a developed mind, a quiet mind; that should be our first endeavour; everything else will follow.

*Q. 7. What should be expected of students? And how can the new attitudes expected of teachers and students be realised?*

A. Aspiration to become what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother want us to become. Teachers should aspire to become suitable instruments of the Mother. Only when they have become that, can they guide the students.

PRADYOT KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

## TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE question has at times been put to us, why we have introduced Technical Education in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and there seems to be implied in the asking that there is some incongruity in the idea which to us is but a natural and obvious development.

Hence I have been forced to think about it and to find reasons to explain this to others, if not to myself.

To all of us here who practise the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, everything we do is quite natural and congruous. If there is any question at all it is why we do not do more. The Yoga encompasses every aspect of human endeavour so that nothing need be left outside its orbit. Yet we do realise that there are some things that may have to wait the proper time for their introduction.

Though the search of knowledge and hence Education is the very essence of Yoga, formal education on lines recognised by the world was started comparatively recently. From a limited syllabus it has grown very rapidly, as could have been expected, and technical education is but one of the latter extensions. There can be really nothing surprising in that!

To each one here is given the opportunity to express himself as fully as possible according to individual inclinations and aspirations. While the poet and painter and artist are given full encouragement and scope to develop and progress, the engineering technologist also is not denied. In fact, for the organisation of the Ashram, it was necessary to have Engineering departments for maintenance and production almost from the very start. It was here that those with technical knowledge and skills could express themselves as much as a painter on his canvas.

But with the introduction of a formal educational system there came children who did not have this knowledge and skill, yet did have the desire to acquire them and so naturally technical education perforce had to be made available to them.

But enquiry in this subject follows the same approaches as in the other subjects. The guide lines of education given by Sri Aurobindo are as valid for technical education as for the arts and humanities. And in following these lines, technical research can arrive at perhaps more startling results than in other subjects, because it deals with material and concrete facts where the progress can be more effectively demonstrated whenever demonstration is necessary.

Sri Aurobindo has shown us that knowledge exists within us and has only to be awakened. That is the main approach of our whole system of education. The teacher is there not to put knowledge into the students but to help awaken that which is already there in each of them. The teacher is really the guide rather than the instructor.

All knowledge, all "discovery" or "invention" is already there, pre-existent, in some plane of consciousness quite apart from the mental plane of course, but yet reachable by the proper method. So far, in the world, all efforts have been to extend the range of mental knowledge, mostly assuming that this is the only realm of knowledge. But we know this to be very far from the truth because the mental plane is where the knowledge is organised and developed—the knowledge itself coming from elsewhere. It is this elsewhere that we must reach if we are to have real knowledge.

But in order that the knowledge, if and when it does come into the student, be properly understood, used and developed—the mind of the student must be prepared. It is here that our technical education plays its greatest part.

In this present world where technology has advanced so much, where the great complexities of matter and physical forces have been studied in so much detail, the new knowledge that now comes is also much greater and will need much better instruments to receive and utilise it. Hence we have to take our students along established paths of science and engineering—so that they know much of what has come down already and thus be prepared for further descents of knowledge.

This, in brief, is the general line of our approach in technical education as indeed it is in all our other branches also.

With this now understood, can anyone still question the necessity of technical education in the Ashram?

But before leaving the matter here, let us examine some of the specific questions that have been raised in the connection.

It was once put to me that technical education implies some commercial aspects and it was felt that in an institution like ours which has such a high philosophical approach, this commercialism might be vitiating. There is some force in this argument—not only for technical but for every kind of formal education. An economic advantage seems to be the primary goal. But, I assured the questioner, such is not at all our objective. We are not training our children to get jobs or earn their living or even to get degrees or diplomas. Our objective is to awaken them to knowledge so that it comes to them to enrich their beings and develop their personalities—so that they can better express themselves in their aspiration. To the teachers themselves and to the older students, our education is a part of the sadhana—conscious and deliberate; to the younger students the spiritual growth may not be consciously sought but it arrives nonetheless.

The question then arises, to what practical end is all this technical education if it is not to serve Society and earn a living for oneself. To this we can answer that the Ashram is expanding so rapidly that we ourselves have need of all the persons trained without their having to go elsewhere for service.

Then of what value are they to the country? This is rather a naive question. If any institution in the country grows and develops—is not the country richer thereby? And particularly an institution such as ours.

Then we are asked if we have the necessary facilities and equipment to teach and

train students in modern technology which has become so highly specialised and instrumentalised. Well, we do not—not as yet. Modern equipment for technical teaching and testing laboratories are costly and we cannot have all that we want for lack of the money needed. But we do have some to meet the more basic needs, which we have bought from the educational grants we have been recently receiving. As the amounts available were not large, we have had to be very careful and selective in our purchases with the result that we have better equipment than would normally have been had with the money sanctioned; more equipment will be necessary of course, much more, and this will depend on the munificence of future grants.

But the point to be really stressed is that equipment by itself is not sufficient. We know of some places which are magnificently equipped but where much of the stuff is unused or rarely used. It makes a very good show and the list is most impressive on paper. We have never thought of making such a showing—and that is why we have not clamoured for costly equipment remembering that some distant frontiers of scientific knowledge were reached with the aid of two bits of wood and a string.

Then the inevitable question of syllabus crops up very frequently. A very rich syllabus seems to satisfy most questioners—only a few remain to ask how these are followed. We here are rather chary of fixed syllabi. We do have general guide lines but we keep ourselves free to alter these considerably as we go along and as occasion demands. A rich plasticity of both teacher and student is what we always try for.

The question of standards is another frequent one. Here there is a deal of divergence between our view and that of most educationists. While for them the norms have been set at the levels of degrees and diplomas, to us this has no meaning. We do not pump knowledge into the student which he can bring out in due course at examinations and thus get his degree or diploma, and arrive at the “standard”. We insist rather on an integral development where body, mind and spirit move forward together “to a large synthesis”. We do not set our standard in some dusty corner of a master’s room but on a hilltop so that “man too may rise to greater heights, his being draw nearer to the gods”. I know that this will offend many educationists who have themselves very sonorous degrees of which they may be proud, but many know also what little worth these degrees have except to give a status, and that most of one’s real knowledge comes in later life—after leaving college.

So we try here to do away with these vanities and to get our students interested in the quest of knowledge and growth rather than in academic degrees.

Another yardstick often applied in assessing the worth of a system is in the length of the courses. This normally guides the layman’s judgment but nevertheless the question must be met.

Our present Course of Engineering is envisaged as of six years’ duration after the equivalent of Pre-University course, as against perhaps a little more in other systems. But it must be remembered that our six years will be more packed than the years of the others. Our hours of work are longer and holidays much less. In a year there is only one break of a month and a half—not really of holidays but of develop-

ment in other spheres. Throughout the year, also, we do not indulge in all the state and national holidays with which our country is beset. We rather prefer to honour these days more fittingly by work than by relaxation.

The question of teaching staff is quite pertinent, however. Frankly, our present resources are a bit strained. The kind of education we give here calls for teachers of a particular development, and not necessarily of high academical stature. We have had to draw on our engineering personnel from the departments of the Ashram. But this has the great advantage that all the teachers are practising engineers who can therefore more forcefully bring home to the students the engineering precepts that they profess. And all being disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, they have with the students that fraternity of "guru bhaism" which makes more for a healthy exchange of ideas and inspiration than for didactic pronouncements.

Above all, it must be remembered that the Science of Engineering deals with material objects and material forces which are not really automata following inexorable laws but which have their own secret consciousness. It is our endeavour to discover these inner mystic recesses and sources of action and by identifying our own consciousness with theirs to serve and be served by them.

This bringing down of a new consciousness into the world and the awakening of even the consciousness of Matter is one of the high aims of our Yoga. It is the greatest adventure and experiment the human race has ever attempted. Is not this an objective worthy of the support and encouragement of all men of vision? Our country has not lacked in such men. The great technical achievements of our Rishis in the past were possible because of the benign conditions which surrounded them. That inheritance cannot wither and our sacred land will blossom into a new richness with the realisation that Matter and Spirit are not divided but act together for the fulfilment of Man.

UDAR

# SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

## AN UNNECESSARY ANTINOMY AND A HARMONIOUS RECONCILIATION

“Earth is the Mother and Heaven the Father.”

*Rigveda*

“All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony ”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 4

### WHY RECONCILIATION?

BECAUSE of the complexity of his nature and being, man has always felt a double attraction apparently involving some sort of mutual contradiction: the lure of Earth and the call of Heaven. As a result, the human race has ever oscillated between two extreme and opposite ideals. On one side is the Hellenic ideal as taken up by Western civilisation and characterised by the cult of a critical and constructive rationality of which Science is the last outcome and which hopes to make individual men perfected social beings in a perfected economic society. On the other is the Eastern ideal imbued with a spiritual preoccupation, a mystic *élan* towards the Beyond and Unknown, a search for the self and the inmost truth of being, to which “every passing thing is nothing but a symbol”.

An undue overstress on any one of these ideals to the detriment of the others can only lead to a reductivist-omissive fallacy that misses their essential and harmonious compatibility and instead makes of them irreconcilable antagonists. But try as they may, the materialist and the ascetic can still none of the aforesaid fundamental urges of man for all time, because they correspond to some essential elements of his being. Today, in India, we are on the threshold of a crisis of decision in which is concealed a choice of the nation's destiny. we are in the presence of the two extremes poised for a final confrontation, demanding if possible a harmonious reconciliation, otherwise an irrevocable parting of the ways.

It is well to remember that this confrontation between Science and Spirituality will brook no eclectic compromise nor an uneasy *marrriage de convenance*. What is called for in India is a deep and true and luminous reconciliation arising out of a mutual comprehension that will give to both “their due portion in Life and their due justification in Thought”, thus relating the eternal aspiration of man upward and inward towards the Divine to his equally abiding drive towards the fullness of life and the triumphant mastery of this world's powers and possessions.

In our day this sought-after reconciliation has become all the more urgent, for the history of the race during the last half a century has made us poignantly aware that

(i) a sole stress on the economic and material existence of man leads inexorably to the rise in our midst of civilised barbarians so dangerous to the welfare of humanity itself;

(ii) an exclusively rational-scientific secular-material culture creates a dangerous void and imbalance in the subjective sphere of man's existence, so much so that the man of our epoch, in spite of all possible material comforts and conveniences, has fallen a prey to an all-pervading sense of anxiety with its background of frustration, maladjustment and inner disintegration;

(iii) although Science has brought to man an increasing mastery over his physical surroundings and along with it a growing material power, it has brought, alas, no adequate self-knowledge or self-mastery in the user of that power, the inevitable result being a horrible subjective chaos and the universalized confusion and discord that we witness everywhere;

(iv) Science and technology have made the life of humanity materially one, but have miserably failed to provide with a harmonising light of the spirit that would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life-unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. "All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life-satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that it is his way out to something ideal."<sup>1</sup>

The dark doom to which humanity is hurtling headlong down under the impact of its external opulence and inner penury can be averted only if there dawns in man a greater spiritual consciousness adequate to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. "A greater whole-being whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life."<sup>2</sup>

It is in the fitness of things that in India a conscious attempt is being made to harmonise modern science and technology with the age-old spiritual tradition of the land. And if India can find this basis of abiding collaboration between Science and Spirituality, she will not only do service to herself but show the necessary way to the bewildered world at large

The present essay purports to prove that such a harmonious and fruitful reconciliation is not merely possible but natural and inevitable if only Science and Spirituality, in their extraneous and inessential fortuitous accretions, consent to shed the dead weight of their inhibitions and presumptions. So the Mother has said, anything "that keeps to its proper place and plays its appointed role is helpful, but directly it

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 934



steps beyond its sphere, it becomes twisted and perverted and therefore false".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as we shall see in the course of our essay, much of the conflict between Science and Religion is solely due to this overstepping of respective spheres and is therefore devoid of any veritable *raison d'être*. But before we may arrive at the reconciling solution, we propose first to analyse the reasons, historical as well as metaphysical, that have tended to put Science and Spirituality in two opposite camps; for a problem clearly put and squarely faced often brings its own solution.

#### CONFRONTATION OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

It is not so much spirituality and Yoga as the accredited credal religions that have historically clashed with the spirit and findings of Science. For what characterises a truly spiritual life is a direct contact with the spiritual Reality, a union with the Divine and a living in the Divine Consciousness. Spirituality represents thus an essentially catholic mood, a programme of inner regeneration and finally a realised goal. The spiritual life, as distinguished from a religious life, "proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker *this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters*".<sup>2</sup>

Now, the only and true function of a religion is, or should be, to prepare man's mind and life up to the point—and that in as catholic a manner as possible—where spiritual consciousness can directly take them up and illumine and govern their movements with the all-reconciling light of the spirit. But forgetting this central role and its essentially spiritual core, the religious attitude very soon degenerates in practice into some irrational and superstitious exoteric religionism that vaunts with dogmatic insistence an arbitrary array of theological dogmas, fixed beliefs and creeds, hollow ceremonies and lifeless ritual. And who can deny that, historically and as a matter of fact, religious traditions and orthodox reactions have stood violently in the way of science, burned a Bruno at the stake, imprisoned a sixty-seven years old Galileo, heaped abuses on a Darwin and often represented a force for retardation, superstition and oppressive ignorance. And all this simply because "men in the passion and darkness of their vital nature had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophic truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive".<sup>3</sup>

It is no wonder that Science with its spirit of free enquiry had to rise in revolt, as a reaction of sheer survival and self-defence, against the silly tenets and crude and

<sup>1</sup> *Words of the Mother*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Part Two, p. 147

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 218

inadequate dogmatic notions of popular religions. Science could not but recoil with a sense of estranged indifference, contempt and scepticism from what claims to determine truths even in Science's own domain by some so-called sacrosanct and infallible divine authority. This explains the historical hostility of Science and Religion, especially in Europe, which has led to the growth of the modern rationalistic attitude that seeks to make the earthly life our preoccupation and labours "to fulfil man by the law of the lower members divorced from all spiritual seeking."<sup>1</sup>

#### INHIBITIONS OF ASCETIC SPIRITUALITY

Ironically enough, in India, it is not the religions but a widely pervasive variant of metaphysical mood, a mood of ascetic spiritual aberration, that is likely to oppose the efflorescence of Science and the successful exploration and utilisation of Matter and the material world—not of course actively and outwardly as in Europe but in a passively negative and all the more potent way of mortifying the very initiative to scientific research through the cultivation of a spirit of world-disgust. For the last two thousand years India has lived in 'the shadow of the great Refusal' and laboured under the sense of the cosmic Illusion. A supposed metaphysical dualism between Spirit and Matter, Reality and Appearance, has created in the collective Indian mind a feeling of the vanity of earthly existence, of the unimportance of things in Time, of the essential illusoriness of human life and its terrestrial aims and the unreality of the phenomenal world. The garb of the ascetic has been considered to be the highest possible possession of a man, *kaupīnavanta khalu bhāgyavanta!*

And if this be the true sense of spirituality and this anti-life attitude its inevitable consequence, this sort of spirituality, however ennobling for some isolated individual men, can have no essential dynamic validity nor any fruitful message for human society in the field of social effort, hope and aspiration. And, of course, it is futile to expect any universal growth of Science in the stifling atmosphere and on the unpropitious soil provided by this dilapidating *vairāgya* mood.

Fortunately, this anti-life mood and world-disgust, active or veiled, is not at all a necessary concomitant of true spirituality nor, for that matter, does it represent the robust catholicity of ancient Indian lore which admitted "both the claim of the pure spirit to manifest in us its absolute freedom and the claim of universal Matter to be the mould and condition of our manifestation",<sup>2</sup> and heroically proceeded to embody here upon earth and not elsewhere, *īharva*, a higher consciousness and a spiritually moulded life

What India wants today is not an obscurantist credal religionism nor the vitalistic occult and pseudo-spiritual practices, but the integral all-embracing dynamic spirituality of the Upanishads and the Vedas whose ancient wisdom, *purāṇī prajñā*, did not make this formidable division between Heaven and Earth, but accorded to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 26.

both equal love and reverence. The Rishis went so far as to declare that "the Earth is the foundation and all the worlds are on the earth".

What, then, characterises this dynamic spiritual vision? What is its programme of action for man?

#### AN INTEGRAL AND DYNAMIC SPIRITUAL VISION

The present appearance of our terrestrial being is a veiled and partial figure, and to limit ourselves to that first figure of the moment, to the present formula of an imperfect humanity, and base our world-conceptions on this appearance alone, as if that were an abiding truth for all times, is to exclude our divine possibilities. We have to bring a wider meaning into our human life and manifest in it the much more that we secretly are. We have to recognise the purport of our whole complex human nature in its right place in the cosmic movement, and give its full legitimate value to each part of our complex being and many-sided aspiration; we have to find out the key of their unity as well as their phenomenal difference; and this finding must be by a synthesis and integration.

Now this all-reconciling dynamic integral spirituality posits that:<sup>1</sup>

(i) There is a Permanent above the transience of this manifested world we live in; there exists a supreme consciousness beyond and above this limited consciousness in whose narrow borders we grope and struggle at present, there is an Absolute beyond and behind every relative form and figure in this universe;

(ii) This omnipresent Reality is the truth of all life and existence, this Reality of a Being and Consciousness, one and eternal, is behind the appearances of the world; all beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true self and Reality in the mind, life and body;

(iii) This absolute Reality is in its nature indefinable; it is beyond the grasp of the ineffectual probe of separative mental consciousness; but there is a spiritual consciousness, a knowledge by identity,—attainable by a certain psycho-spiritual discipline otherwise called Yoga,—that can seize this Reality in its fundamental aspects and its manifold powers and forms and figures; Yoga can help us to remove the veil of separative consciousness and make us aware of the true self, the Divinity within us and all;

(iv) This primary, ultimate and eternal Existence, this *Sat*, is not merely bare existence, or a conscious existence whose consciousness is crude force or power; it is a conscious existence the very term of whose being, the very term of whose consciousness is bliss. In other words, that which has thrown itself out into forms is a true Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Sachchidananda;

(v) This world is real because of the Reality that sustains it, because it is in its essence nothing else than the self-manifestation of the Supreme; but in its actual state

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Sri Aurobindo, mostly in his own words

strongly marked with inadequacy, imperfection, suffering and evil, it cannot be described as the perfect expression of Sachchidananda;

(vi) The supreme Reality, here in this manifested world, has taken upon itself the aspect of a Becoming in Time and this Becoming is essentially evolutionary in its character with Mind and Man as its highest products so far;

(vii) But Sachchidananda has yet to emerge fully in manifestation, therefore this evolution, this spiritual progression cannot stop short with Mind and with the imperfect mental being called Man; Mind is too imperfect an expression and Man too hampered and burdened a creature to be the last terms of evolution;

(viii) The former steps in evolution were taken by Nature in the plant and animal life without a conscious will or participation; but in men the substitution of a conscious for this subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable;

(ix) Indeed the object of man in the world is "to become, to be conscious, to increase continually in our realised being and awareness of self and things, in our actualised force and joy of being, and to express that becoming dynamically in such an action on the world and ourselves that we and it shall grow more and always yet more towards the highest possible reach, largest possible breadth of universality and infinity".

(x) Since earth-life is thus seen to be not merely a lapse into something undivine, vain and miserable, offered to the embodied soul as a thing to be suffered and then cast away from it, as soon as its own inner evolution or some hidden law of the spirit makes that possible, the motivation for sadhana and the goal of spirituality should not be the drawing away from the world and its activities and a disappearance into far-off heights of the Self or Spirit but rather the invocation and descent of the higher principles here in the bosom of the world itself so that it becomes possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a divine race.

(xi) For this to be effectively realisable, man must know that

a) although he lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body, there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake and can awake through the process of the psychological discipline of Yoga;

b) he has to open the ranges of this inner being and to live from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force;

c) there are states beyond the material,—supraphysical planes and worlds,—which have laws of their own that can be investigated and utilised to the greater advantage of man if only he consents to undertake the study of them in a proper unbiased way;

d) there are several ranges of consciousness between the ordinary human mind and the supreme Truth-Consciousness and these intervening ranges have to be opened up and can be opened up in the subjective being of man, with all their potencies being actively available in the flowering of human life upon earth.

For the individual to arrive at the divine universality and supreme infinity, live in it, possess it, to be, know, feel and express that alone in all his being, consciousness, energy, delight of being is what the ancient seers of the Veda meant by the Knowledge, *vidyā*, and they recognised that *avidyā ca vidyāhīgam*. To such a spiritual vision, positive and dynamic, "all man's age-long effort, his action, society, art, ethics, science, religion, all the manifold activities by which he expresses and increases his mental, vital, physical, spiritual existence, are episodes in the vast drama of this endeavour... and have behind their limited apparent aims no other true sense or foundation".<sup>1</sup>

### SPIRITUALITY RECONCILED TO SCIENCE

Such then is the outlook of an integral spirituality that includes and accounts for all so that each truth of experience takes its due place of honour in the whole; it illumines, integralises, harmonises the significance of all knowledge, lower or higher, and gathers together all experience in the truth of a supreme and all-reconciling oneness. This spirituality is bold enough to declare in unequivocal terms that although it is a fact that without *vidyā*, the knowledge of the Oneness, *avidyā*, the relative and separative multiple consciousness, is a night of darkness and disorder, *andham tamaḥ, bhūri anṛta*, it is equally true that by excluding the field and operation of *avidyā* as if it were a thing non-existent and unreal, *vidyā* itself becomes a sort of obscurity and a source of imperfection, *bhūya iva tamaḥ*. This spirituality ordains man to cross beyond death through Avidya and enjoy Immortality by the Knowledge, *avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tirtvā vidyayāmrtamśnute*. To its vision, Matter too is Brahman, *annam brahma*, and so it does not seek to annul or deny the positive knowledge which Science has gathered from an elaborate investigation and exploration of the processes of life and nature, but only completes it by pointing out that the true foundation is above while the branchings are downward, *ūrdhavudhna nīcīna-śākha* (Rig-Veda), *ūrdhamūlo'vakśākha* (Gita), so that to know the essential truth of things as distinguished from their phenomenal appearances, one has to probe upward and inward instead of remaining content with only surface scrutiny. Ordinarily it is supposed that when we get to the higher knowledge, the knowledge that seeks to know the truth of existence from within, in its source and reality, by spiritual realisation, the world-knowledge becomes of no concern to us; but "in reality they are two sides of one seeking. All knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God, through himself, through Nature, through her works".<sup>2</sup> And therefore, since all sincere pursuit after knowledge, if not vitiated and coarsened by a too earthward tendency, tends "to refine, to subtilise, to

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 612.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 584

purify the being", a spirituality turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the supreme here upon earth cannot and will not exclude and throw away the forms and achievements of the so-called lower knowledge, nor will it shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which the Cosmic Spirit has assigned to himself in the human creature. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"All activities of knowledge that seek after or express Truth are in themselves rightful materials for a complete offering; none ought necessarily to be excluded from the wide framework of divine life. The mental and physical sciences which examine into the laws and forms and processes of things, those which concern the life of men and animals, the social, political, linguistic and historical and those which seek to know and control the labours and activities by which man subdues and utilises his world and environment, and the noble and beautiful Arts which are at once work and knowledge,—for every well-made and significant poem, picture, statue or building is an act of creative knowledge, a living discovery of the consciousness, a figure of Truth, a dynamic form of mental and vital self-expression or word-expression,—all that seeks, all that finds, all that voices or figures is a realisation of something of the play of the Infinite and to that extent can be made a means of God-realisation or of divine formation."<sup>1</sup>

Even after his attainment, a man of integral spirituality will continue to take interest in the knowledge of the world, in the "contemplation of God in Nature", and his "aim in the sciences that make for knowledge should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine Consciousness-Puissance in man and creatures and things and forces, her creative significances, her execution of the mysteries, the symbols in which she arranges the manifestation. The Yogin's aim in the practical sciences, whether mental and physical or occult and psychic, should be to enter into the ways of the Divine and his processes, to know the materials and means for the work given to us so that we may use that knowledge for a conscious and faultless expression of the spirit's mastery, joy and self-fulfilment."<sup>2</sup>

In spirituality understood in the way as we have ventured to delineate above—and which, we trust, recaptures the spirit of our ancient Indian Wisdom, *pūraṇi prajñā*, lies the harmonising light and law. And the supposed antinomy between Science and Spirituality is at least resolved from the latter's side. But what about the former? Is Science ready to clasp the hand of co-operation stretched by such a dynamic spirituality? Or will it rather by its very nature remain estranged from all spirituality of whatever sort that may be?

Here, again, our answer is in the negative. But to substantiate our proposition, we must first of all see what Science is, what its methodology, and what the outlook implied in its successful pursuit.

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp 160-61.

## THE COMMON GROUND OF ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE

One fact immediately arising out of even a cursory view of nature is the permanence of an over-riding rhythm in the sensate world of becoming and movement. In the absence of this rhythm, nature would have been totally incomprehensible, our memory useless, all science impossible and the activity of man blind and aleatory. Science is the discipline through which man attempts to catch this rhythm and imprison it in the framework of a precise formulation.

Now, all that is ordinarily knowable in phenomena is function and all discursive knowledge of which science is only a specialised form is nothing more than functional correspondence. Science replaces the study of the ontological content of a phenomenon by a functional explanation, and this explanation is sought by the application of both theory and experiment. The explanation in Science is not "revelatory" but "prognostic": "scientific truth is a prediction, or rather a predication.... Above the *subject*, beyond the immediate *object*, modern Science bases itself on *pro-ject*."<sup>1</sup>

Now it is a striking fact of good augury that a proper pursuit of scientific research calls for and develops in the scientist certain qualities of head and heart, a psychological poise and a certain global attitude that are at the same time very much needed in the fulfilment of a dynamically positive spiritual seeking. Mention may be made of:

(i) an intense mental concentration that ruthlessly eliminates all idle wanderings of mind;

(ii) a boundless patience and an unflogging perseverance in the ceaseless search after truth;

(iii) strength of "character to seek the truth even when we have reason to fear that it will not be to our liking";<sup>2</sup>

(iv) "sincerity to accept the truth when this truth happens to contradict all that we have previously professed";<sup>3</sup>

(v) "modesty to recognise that man...must stoop to experiment" to attain to truth;<sup>4</sup>

(vi) a spirit of heroic adventure that does not shun problems, rather confronts them with zest only to conquer them;

(vii) a creative imagination eager to strike out new pathways, to open up new vistas and explore new avenues to the unknown and the unconquered;

(viii) determination not to get lost in the diversity of appearances but rather to penetrate deeper and wider into the mystery of things until one gets at the veiled connections and the underlying essential unity (cf. *vahunāmekam vījam vahudhā yah karoti*);

(ix) readiness to sacrifice one's time and energy in an attempt to raise, even if a little more, the veil covering the face of truth;

<sup>1</sup> G. Bachelard, *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique*.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> & <sup>4</sup> A. d'Abro, *The Rise of the New Physics*, pp. 9-10

(x) a positive and discriminating and constructive faith that steers clear of the two extremes of superstitious belief and sterile doubt.

It is not without significance that the Mother has remarked: "the method of scientific work is a marvellous discipline. Those who follow it in all sincerity truly prepare themselves for Yoga. It requires but a slight turn, somewhere in their being, which will enable them to come out of their a little too narrow point of view and enter into an integrality which will surely lead them towards the Truth and the supreme mastery."<sup>1</sup>

It may also be noted in this connection that "Yoga (itself) is scientific to this extent that it proceeds by subjective experiment and bases all its findings on experience; mental intuitions are admitted only as a first step and are not considered as realisation—they must be confirmed by being translated into and justified by experience."<sup>2</sup> But in order to obviate any possible chance of misunderstanding it must be forthwith stated that "the subjective discovery must be pursued by a subjective method of enquiry, observation and verification; research into the supraphysical must evolve, accept and test appropriate means and methods other than those by which one examines the constituents of physical objects and the processes of Energy in material Nature".<sup>3</sup>

Here at this point there is some scope for serious misgivings about the prospect of reconciliation between Science and Spirituality. For, it is generally asserted that the methods adopted by the seekers of Yoga to attain to knowledge as well as the very content of this "knowledge" go counter to the basic methodology of Science and are hence altogether to be put out of court! But these objections are more apparent than real and spring from a superficial view of things and from entire misunderstanding of the case for spiritual seekers. For, what is after all the methodology of Science and, shorn of all appendages, what are its fundamental traits?

### THE METHODOLOGY OF SCIENCE

Science may be defined as a nomothetico-experimental procedure that studies "the regularities observed in normal human sense-perceptions, thereby excluding the sub-normal and supra-normal experiences as well as judgments of value that imply non-sensual premises"<sup>4</sup>

The man of science in practising his art exercises a series of operations, *e.g.*, (a) collecting systematic and unbiased observations with precision; (b) forming hypotheses linking up these observations; (c) testing the validity of these hypotheses by logically deducing from them the possibility of new observations and seeking for

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.*

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Tome One, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 580.

<sup>4</sup> J. G. Bennett, *The Dimensional Network of the Natural Sciences*



their correspondence in further experimentation; (d) alterations being made in the hypotheses and laws already posited, in case of failures in correspondence; (e) building up of a theoretical structure with specialised concepts and nomenclatures, that will confer the status of a deductive discipline to scientific knowledge already gathered; etc.

Amongst the more important attributes of scientific enterprise mention may be made of the following:

(1) "Natural science is empirical, *i.e.* it deals **only** with what has been experienced or may be experienced under an appropriate set-up of conditions. No other data are admissible".<sup>1</sup>

(2) "Science is a search for judgments, to which universal assent may be obtained—universal, that is, on the part of those who understand the judgments and their bases."<sup>2</sup>

(3) The generalisations of science are never considered to be final or absolute: they are liable to revision as experience enlarges.

(4) The methods to be adopted in the sciences, and also their subject matter, must perforce be such as to admit of the possibility of checking the truth or otherwise of any statement made therein.

(5) Repetition is one of the most potent methods of checking for correctness of any statement. "If a situation cannot be made to repeat, it is commonly regarded as of little or no scientific interest, and none of the usual scientific methods are applicable to it".<sup>3</sup>

(6) Acceptance of authority is never tolerated as a method in science. "No report of experimental observation or theoretical deduction is scientifically acceptable unless made in such terms that it can be repeated and confirmed by any qualified individual."<sup>4</sup>

(7) The two basic assumptions of science are, according to Planck, the existence of a real outer world independent of our act of knowing, and the impossibility of having any direct knowledge of this world. "This world cannot be disclosed by mere meditation and introspection; ...the direct knowledge of the world claimed by the mystic ...has no place in a scientific discussion."<sup>5</sup>

(8) No understanding is regarded to be adequate unless and until it "can correctly anticipate what will occur under every conceivable range of circumstances, whether imposed naturally or by artifice".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1960, Vol. VIII, p. 929.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Singer, "Science" in *Encyclo. Britann*, Vol XX, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> P. W. Bridgman, "Scientific Methods" in *McGraw Hill Encyclo. of Science and Technology*, Vol. 12, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> A. d'Abro, *The Rise of the New Physics*, p. 15

<sup>6</sup> P. W. Bridgman, "Scientific Methods" in *McGraw-Hill Encyclo. of Science and Technology*, Vol. 12, p. 73

Now because of these and related characters of all scientific enterprise, men of science tend to level certain charges against spiritual experiences and realisations. And if Science has to accept Spirituality as a partner in progress, we must take note of these arguments and dispose of them, if they are not valid, only after due consideration. And in this task, in order to bring in a certain touch of authenticity, we propose to introduce the words of Sri Aurobindo who is acknowledged by universal consent as one of the greatest mystics and thinkers.

#### SCIENCE AGAINST SPIRITUALITY: CHARGES AND THEIR REFUTATION

I. *Argument*: Spiritual experiences are individual and have no general validity independent of the individual seeker's supposed testimony.

*Critique*: This statement arises out of a complete misreading of facts as they stand. For the truth is that yogic experiences run everywhere on the same lines. "Certainly, there are, not one line, but many, for, admittedly, we are dealing with a many-sided Infinite to which there are and must be many ways of approach; but yet the broad lines are the same everywhere and the intuitions, experiences, phenomena are the same in all ages and countries far apart from each other and systems practised quite independently from each other."<sup>1</sup> The substance of spiritual experience, which takes place always in the inner consciousness, is identical everywhere; only when it gets translated into the external consciousness of the seeker, difference of colour comes in because of the difference of mental language.

II. *Argument*: Yoga experiences are altogether personal and not validated by the common pool of normal human experiences.

*Critique*: Obviously it is an absurd standard of reality to assert that only what is or can easily be evident to everybody without any need of specialised training or development, is to be taken as valid, and all else that does not square with the experiences or scope of understanding of average human beings cannot be considered to be true. Such a standard of Knowledge is not accepted even in the sciences themselves. Of course, "the greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness, the inner calm of the liberated spirit, the direct effect of mind upon mind, the knowledge of things by consciousness in direct contact with other consciousness or with its objects, most spiritual experiences of any value, cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence. All reality, all experience must indeed, to be held as true, be capable of verification by a same or similar experience; so, in fact, all men can have a spiritual experience and can follow it out and verify it in themselves, but only when they have acquired the capacity or can follow the inner methods by which that experience and verification are made possible."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Part Two, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 580

III. *Argument*: Since Yogic exploration does not adopt the methodology of Science, it is unscientific and its so-called findings presumably untrue.

*Critique*: Modern man has been led to believe that "one is either in Science or outside it, just as one is either in Paradise or in Hell!"<sup>1</sup>

Thus the term 'unscientific' has almost come to acquire an abusive connotation. But what is science, after all? It is essentially a methodology devised for and successfully applied to the investigation of an arbitrarily delimited field of enquiry. Now, Yoga also devises a methodology of its own, precise and potent in its own domain. But the methods of Yoga have to be different from those of the physical sciences, since it seeks to identify our inner being with the Reality behind the appearances and see from there the workings of Nature, while Science endeavours to make us aware of the detailed workings and through them get some indirect glimpse of the Reality.

Thus the experiences of Yoga belong to an inner domain, go according to a law of their own and have their own standards of judgment and verification other than those that Science applies in its external objective field. "Just as scientific enquiry passes beyond that of the physical senses and enters the domain of the infinite and infinitesimal about which the senses can say nothing and test nothing,...so spiritual search passes beyond the domain of scientific or rational enquiry and it is impossible by the aids of the ordinary positive reason to test the data of spiritual experience and decide whether those things exist or not or what is their law and nature."<sup>2</sup> Subjective experiences and supraphysical realities must, by their very nature be investigated and verified by other than the physical or sense mind, by a method of scrutiny and affirmation applicable to their own domain. And there is nothing unscientific or objectionable in it.

IV. *Argument*: A spiritual experience cannot be scientifically demonstrated and hence lacks in concrete certitude.

*Critique*: It has been asserted that although the scientific process is in the last analysis reduced to two main activities, discovery and demonstration, "it is in the process of demonstration that we discern man's efforts as scientific. Discovery is an art, demonstration makes the science".<sup>3</sup>

Now, by demonstration the physical sciences ultimately mean "demonstration to the physical senses"—if necessary in a roundabout and indirect way and by means of mathematical and technological devices. But the final appeal in the sciences is always to sense-observation. And this because "science can treat the outer world solely on the level of phenomena ('things that appear', 'appearances') (and) these can appear only to the sense that we possess... Phenomena must (thus) ultimately be sensed,...

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Robert Lenoble

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Part Two, p. 207

<sup>3</sup> Charles Singer, "Science" in *Encyclo Brit*, Vol XX, p 115

though sense-experience may for some sciences (and perhaps eventually for all) be ultimately reducible to scale-readings.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, spiritual and supraphysical experiences cannot of course be demonstrated in this way, for, by their very definition, they transcend the order of physical facts and are not thus physically tangible. But that does not mean in any way that spiritual experiences lack in concrete certitude or are vague, amorphous and open to doubts. They are “not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by ear or eye or touch in the world of Matter; but it is a certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. . . You can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven—for of these physical things you cannot be sure but they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible.”<sup>2</sup>

*V. Argument:* The objective Reality being the only entire truth and an objective knowledge the sole entirely reliable knowledge, the value of spiritual experiences is very doubtful since they are subjective and not objective.

*Critique:* Apart from the general truth that all knowledge and experience, without any exception,—even of the so-called objective external physical things,—is at bottom subjective, we may ask if Science itself, at the end of its victorious analysis of Matter, has not come to the astonishing conclusion that “precisely beyond our natural perceptual world the very concept of *thing* can be defined only in relation to the man to whom it appears or who himself makes it... contemporary physics compels the physicist to look upon himself as a subject.”<sup>3</sup> The words of Heisenberg, the author of the uncertainty principle, are eloquent on this point:

“...We can no longer consider ‘in themselves’ those building-stones of matter which we originally held to be the last objective reality. This is so because they defy all forms of objective location in space and time, and since basically it is always *our knowledge* of these particles alone which we can make the object of science.... From the very start we are involved in the argument between nature and man in which science plays only a part, so that the common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul, is no longer adequate and leads us into difficulties. Thus even in science the object of research is no longer nature itself, but man’s investigation of nature. Here, again, man confronts himself alone.”<sup>4</sup>

As a matter of fact, subjectivity and objectivity are not independent realities; the subjective and the objective are two necessary sides of the manifested Reality and of equal value. Only they are of different orders of reality. “The objective and physical is convincing to the physical or externalising mind because it is directly obvious to the senses, while of the subjective and the supraphysical that mind has no means of know-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 114

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Part Two, p 181

<sup>3</sup> Weizsacker, *The World View of Physics*

<sup>4</sup> Heisenberg, *The Physicist’s Conception of Nature*, p 24

ledge except from fragmentary signs and data and inferences which are at every step liable to error.”<sup>1</sup> Does not the Kathopanishad point out that in men the Self-Existent has cut the doors of consciousness outward, but a few men turn the eye inward and it is these who see and know the Spirit and develop the spiritual being?<sup>2</sup>

Men of science should note that our subjective movements and inner experiences are a domain of happenings as real as any outward physical happenings, with laws of their own and their special method of scrutiny and affirmation and hence “to refuse to enquire upon any general ground preconceived and *a priori* is an obscurantism as prejudicial to the extension of knowledge as the religious obscurantism which opposed in Europe the extension of scientific discovery”<sup>3</sup>

We have come to the end of our survey of the respective standpoints of Science and Spirituality. Because of the inadequacy of space, this survey could not but content itself with the throwing out of some suggestive hints; it does not claim in any way to have disposed of all possible factors of supposed divergence between the two disciplines. But however cursory this survey may have been it has shown us that the contradictions between Science and Spirituality are most often more apparent than real and hence a luminous reconciliation between them is absolutely a feasible proposition and programme.

#### THE CO-OPERATIVE RECONCILIATION

“Half-truth is its own Nemesis. One-sided dogmatism has the opposite dogmatism latent in itself.”

The conflict between Science and Spirituality arises from a misunderstanding of each other's position, role and field of study. And it is not so much on the positive side, on the side of vindication of one's right to exist and grow; it is more often on the negative side, and therefore unnecessary and eliminable, when one tries to deny the right of existence to the other. And this is nothing but an error of misdirected enthusiasm and the folly of the presumptuous vital in man.

A positive spirituality appreciates the worth of the achievements of Science in its own domain: it does not deny the reality of the rich harvest that men of science have gleaned from an elaborate investigation and exploration of physical Nature. But Science too, on its part, should not hesitate to admit that “the material universe is only the façade of an immense building which has other structures behind it”, and that “there are in the universe knowable realities beyond the range of the senses and in man powers and faculties which determine rather than are determined by the material

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 579

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Eight Upanishads*, p. 71

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 580

organs through which they hold themselves in touch with the world of the senses.”<sup>1</sup> For indubitable inner experiences testify to the existence of supraphysical planes of existence having their “universal rhythm, their grand lines and formations, their self-existent laws and mighty energies, their just and luminous means of knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> and physical sciences should not unduly claim to pronounce anything on these matters for which it has no means of enquiry nor any possibility of arriving at any valid decision.

As a matter of fact, for a harmonious reconciliation between the pursuit of science and the practice of spirituality, it is essential never to lose sight of the fundamental truth that each of them has its own province and its own method of enquiry and each is valid in its own domain. Trouble is bound to start if there is an unwanted and illegitimate intrusion of one in the other’s arena. Science cannot dictate its conclusion to the man of Spirit any more than Spirituality has the right to impose its own on the scientist and his work in the domain of the physical. Indeed, as has been mentioned before, the physical scientist probing into phenomena erects formulas and standards based on the objective and phenomenal reality and its processes, while the Yogi or the supraphysical scientist concerns himself with the essential Reality and his deeper probing brings up the truth of Self and Spirit and all possible experiences of the subjective inner domain.

But there need not be any essential contradiction between the results gathered by Science and those obtained by Spirituality in their respective fields—if only one knows how to read and interpret them. After all, the Reality is one and unique everywhere and hence there must be systems of correspondences expressive of a common Truth underlying all the domains of manifestation. Thus the truths of the physical universe can very well throw some light on the phenomena of the inner world and *vice versa*, and the possibility of co-operation between Science and Spirituality in the pursuit after truth remains no longer a fond wish or pious hope. As Sri Aurobindo has so pointedly remarked:

“Not only in the one final conception, but in the great line of its general results Knowledge, by whatever path it is followed, tends to become one. Nothing can be more remarkable and suggestive than the extent to which modern Science confirms in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the very formulas of language which were arrived at, by a very different method, in the Vedanta,—the original Vedanta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishads. And these, on the other hand, often reveal their full significance, their richer contents only when they are viewed in the new light shed by the discoveries of modern Science.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the encouraging signs of our day conducive to the reconciliation between Science and Spirituality is the growth of a spirit of modesty in the bosom of Science itself, arising out of a sober and mature comprehension of the limited but definite role that it can play. Science has abandoned the claim to put at our disposal a final truth;

<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 12, 20

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

it knows that it has no means to decide what is the real reality of things; it can envisage only the how and the process of the operations of material Force in the physical front of things, but the essence of things eludes its grasp. Science which started with the assumption that Matter is the sole reality has come to realise its inherent impotency before the problem of the reality of things and thus, as Sri Aurobindo has put it, "the rock on which materialism was built and which in the 19th century seemed unshakable has now been shattered. Materialism has now become a philosophical speculation just like any other theory, it cannot claim to found itself on a sort of infallible Biblical authority, based on the facts and conclusion of Science."<sup>1</sup>

Gone is the presumptuous conviction that Matter is the basic and unique Reality, and that the Divine, the freedom of the Spirit, the immortality of the Soul are all myths of an unscientific temperament and *Honni soit qui trop y pense!* Science is now poignantly aware that the world-knowledge it builds up is an abstracted and therefore partial and imperfect knowledge, leaving out much that is refractory to scientific treatment, and even in its delimited field of enquiry, the formulas of Science, although pragmatically correct and governing the practical how of things, do not disclose the intrinsic how or why, "rather they have the air of the formulas of a cosmic Magician, precise, irresistible, automatically successful each in its field, but their rationale is fundamentally unintelligible."<sup>2</sup>

Evidently, present-day "Science has missed something essential, it has seen and scrutinised what has happened and in a way how it has happened, but it has shut its eye to something that made this impossible possible, something it is there to express. There is no fundamental significance in things if you miss the Divine Reality; for you remain embedded in a huge surface crust of manageable and utilisable appearance."<sup>3</sup>

Now, to help us to come out of this narrow surface crust and sound the depths and heights of inner and higher spiritual realities and bring their riches into active manifestation in our life, is one of the functions of Yoga and Spirituality. For, to reach a satisfactory solution of the problems, both individual and collective, that are besetting the life of humanity today, men must know not only what Matter is and what are its processes and potentialities, but also spirit and soul and all that is behind the material surface. As a matter of fact, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, if man is not to remain content with his ordinary status of a being of surface ignorance seeking obscurely after the truth of things and collecting and systematising fragments and sections of knowledge, and if he would like his life upon earth to take something of the hue of a life divine, his self-expansion has to proceed on more than one line. "He must know himself and discover and utilise all his potentialities: but to know himself and the world completely he must go behind his own and its exterior, he must dive deep below his own mental surface and the physical surface of Nature. This he can only do by

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*, First Series, p. 371

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 272-73

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Part Two, p. 214

knowing his inner mental, vital, physical and psychic being and its powers and movements and the universal laws and processes of the occult Mind and Life which stand behind the material front of the universe... He must know also the hidden Power or Powers that control the world... and link (himself) with the divine and in so doing sublimate the thought and life and flesh so that they may admit the rule of the soul and spirit. But this knowledge must be something more than a creed or a mystic revelation; his thinking mind must be able to accept it, to correlate it with the principle of things and the observed truth of the universe.... But all knowledge and endeavour can reach its fruition only if it is turned into experience and has become a part of the consciousness and its established operations; an opening up of the spiritual consciousness,... the building of a life and action that is in conformity with the truth of the spirit: this is the work of spiritual realisation and experience.”<sup>1</sup>

And in this all-round fulfilment of man's many-sided aspiration, Science and Spirituality can very well co-operate and offer each other their helping hands, *anyo-nyabaddhavadhu*. To outgrow their mutual mistrust and popularly supposed conflict, what is needed is the rise of a dynamic spirituality that accepts embodied Life and its all-sided opulent growth as something worthy of pursuit, also the rise of a mood of science that displays an attitude of unbiased humility before truth whenever and in whatever form it may be found, so that the sceptical folly of a so-called scientific attitude does not confront the supernormal experiences of the inner and higher worlds with “the stiletto of doubt and the bludgeon of denial.” For it cannot but be stressed to the point of monotonous repetition that what “all our mind-knowledge and sense-knowledge and suprasensuous vision is seeking, is found most integrally in the unity of God and man and Nature and all that is in Nature... A triune knowledge, the complete knowledge of God, the complete knowledge of himself, the complete knowledge of Nature, gives him (man) his high goal; it assigns a vast and full sense to the labour and effort of humanity. The conscious unity of the three, God, Soul and Nature, in his own consciousness is the sure foundation of his perfection and his realisation of all harmonies: this will be his higher and widest state, his status of a divine consciousness and a divine life and its initiation the starting-point for his entire evolution of his self-knowledge, world-knowledge, God-knowledge”.<sup>2</sup>

It is not expected that everybody will be a yogi or everybody a practising scientist. But in order that a few can be effectively the same for the welfare of all, and for the general flowering of Science and Spirituality on the sacred soil of India, it is absolutely essential that the collective mind of the nation accept the simultaneous necessity of both the disciplines for the eradication of the multipronged ills of man and his society, and the validity and truth of each of them in its own field of search.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp 766-67

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 625



That a conscious attempt is being made in India to find the reconciling base of Science and Spirituality, does the nation great credit and promises to open the still locked-up gates to the enormous vistas of the future development of man: *ayamārambho śubhāya bhavatu!*

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE RESHAPING OF MAN

*(This article is written with an eye to the layman who has a modernised mind with scientific leanings and comes to Sri Aurobindo's Vision and Work with a sympathetic yet cautious attitude posing a number of practical questions set within the world-context as well as against the Indian background.)*

### I

It is the message of Sri Aurobindo that the real call on men today in a world going wrong is not so much to reshape their machines, their technologies, their institutions, as to reshape themselves. By that reshaping, the outer face of their complex and confused civilisation will be transfigured.

It is also the message of Sri Aurobindo that nothing can help the reshaping to the full except what he calls the Integral Yoga. But how does the Integral Yoga set about its gigantic task? Perhaps the easiest approach to an answer is through a correct understanding of the common words "inspiration" and "intuition".

From very early times a number of people have claimed to be "inspired"—that is, to be the instruments of a knowledge, a power, a goodness, a beauty and a happiness greater than the human being is ordinarily capable of. Modern psychology confirms the phenomenon of inspiration. From the several recorded facts we may pick out a few to get the nature of this phenomenon into focus.

A brief account is available of how Keats came to describe Apollo in the third book of his unfinished epic, *Hyperion*. The passage arrived "by chance or magic—as if it were something given to him". He did not realise how beautiful the poetic expressions were, until after he had put them down on paper. When he read them he was himself astonished: they appeared to be the production of another person, some more gifted agency.

Mozart says of his musical compositions that they were presented to him as complete wholes. He further reports: "Nor do I have in my imagination the parts *successively*, but I hear them, as it were all at once." The difficult job of laying out in sequence the musical elements followed the ecstatic experience of the "inspired" totality.

Science no less than Art has its story of inspiration to tell. Lord Kelvin has testified how the solution of a key problem came to him quite suddenly without any direct process of reasoning. And there is the famous incident in the course of the chemist Kekulé's research. While seated on the top of a bus he visualised in an instant the structure of a molecule of benzene. What he saw in a flash was the ancient symbol of the serpent biting its own tail and immediately he evolved the chemical formula of the "benzene ring".

Inspiration that is not sustained but flashes across the mind in a revelatory moment may be named "intuition". Intuition is, as it were, a sharp edge of light from within oneself cutting through the knot of a problem. It is knowledge by a sort of instant inwardness towards—or identity with—the thing to be known. Scientists may be said to be more intuitive than inspired—though the case of Kekulé is as of a visionary poet or painter.

Possibly Darwin too "saw" the truth in the instance of which Sir Julian Huxley spoke some years ago in a broadcast: "Darwin..., in Ch. 4 of the *Origin of Species* explains at some length why natural selection inevitably produces diversification (and in his autobiography records how he arrived at the solution of this 'problem of great importance' in a flash of intuition)."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most intuitive scientist in the past was Clerk Maxwell. His most fruitful intuition is the leap of mind he made in setting forth his equation for electromagnetism. He postulated a term which nothing at the time necessitated and which was found correct by experiment later. His work on the laws of gases, too, contains a similar leap. It has provoked a modern physicist to exclaim: "Maxwell, by a train of argument which seems to bear no relation at all to molecules, or to the dynamics of their movements, or even to ordinary common sense, reached a formula which, according to all precedents and all the rules of scientific philosophy, ought to have been hopelessly wrong. In actual fact it was subsequently shown to be exactly right and is known as Maxwell's law to this day."

What is most remarkable at present in the field of science is that Einstein has given "intuition" a legitimate place at the very basis of theoretical physics. The General Theory of Relativity has not only revolutionised our ultimate concepts but also brought about a revolutionary ideal of what these concepts may be and a revolutionary method of reaching them. Although meant to explain the sense-perceived universe, they become, as Einstein says, "steadily more abstract and remote from experience". Of course, they have to be "verified" by experiment, but what is directly verified is only a number of conclusions coming at the end of a long series of deductions from those concepts: the concepts themselves are never asked to submit to experimental tests. They may well mark an extreme of the materially unpicturable, as does indeed Einstein's own theory of a "curved" four-dimensional continuum of fused space and time, in which all events past and present and future are to be plotted as co-existent, as being "all at once" like the musical compositions heard by Mozart's inspired imagination. And in the search for such theories the physicist, writes Einstein, "is compelled in an increasing degree to be guided by purely mathematical, formal considerations.... Experience may suggest the appropriate mathematical concepts, but they most certainly cannot be deduced from it". Einstein calls the fundamental axioms of physics "free creations of the mind". For, in his own words, "there is no logical path to these laws; only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them."

<sup>1</sup> *The Listener* (London), May 28, 1959, p. 937.

Now, the pertinent query arises: "If at the back of Science there is intuition and at the back of Art there is inspiration, what is the region of psychological being from which these phenomena appear?"

## 2

We are all familiar today with terms like "subliminal self" and "unconscious mind." Psycho-analysis has had to posit a complex working of mental process behind and beyond our known thoughts, feelings, desires and volitions. This process is usually called "subconscious" or "unconscious", but what is meant is that our surface being is not conscious of it. Nor is the hidden region of the mind merely individual: Jung has noted a common pool of memories and symbols, a depth of racial responses, motives and mythological attitudes preserved through the ages. And he has invented for it the expression: "Collective Unconscious". An immense range of psychological being unhindered by space or time and full of strange possibilities, brilliant or mysterious creativities, surprising supra-personal effectivities, is supposed to exist. And Jung has attempted to show some affinity between his hypothesis and the assumptions of Indian Yoga.

He is right, broadly speaking. For, Yoga is the systematised endeavour to establish contact with unknown profundities of our self by special methods. But it is not limited to what Freud and Jung and their colleagues have got hold of for their field of study. The field of Yoga is much wider, yet it is continuous with the "subliminal" of the psychologists and with their "Collective Unconscious". Modern research has, in a very practical manner, provided a jumping-board to the greater claims of this very ancient research.

Yoga chooses as a starting-point the part of one's being which is most natural to one from day to day according to one's individual constitution. Thus there are different Yogas for those who are intellectual or emotional or bent upon action—for those who have an introspective turn or such as are physically oriented. This division, pragmatically convenient and effective, has, however, its limitations.

So long as the predominant aim is to pass from the ordinary consciousness to a vaster Beyond and stay more and more absorbed there, believing that life's destiny is not on the earth but in that mysterious immensity, it does not matter how or where one starts. The moment life here is emphasised, the moment the stress on earth which modern science has given is accepted and the ideal is not only of individual development and salvation but also of collective and social fulfilment, the need arises of taking up the entirety of our being and making our Yoga integral. To cope adequately with this need is the way of Sri Aurobindo.

According to him, all the parts of our being have to combine under the awakened leadership of that in us which he considers the true soul. Our true soul is not guided by pet ideas, selfish demands, pragmatic facilities. It is the pure push in us towards what we sense as the supreme Good, what we may regard as the divinely human.

Unified by this push, all our parts have to make accessible and normal the powers which are now remote and supernormal and known only in brief occurrences labelled as "inspiration" and "intuition". The Integral Yoga, elaborated by Sri Aurobindo and set on a manifold practical basis, promises the emergence of a new state of consciousness by which every one of our persisting problems, individual and collective, will be radically solved.

The reasonableness of such a promise must strike us as soon as we look at the panorama modern biology opens up with its theory of evolution. From insensitive matter we see the emergence of active vitality. From vitality, with its instincts and desires, we see the thinking mind of man emerge, haunted vaguely by the presence of the entity he feels as his "soul". Breaking through the routine of human rationality—helped by the aspiration of that vague presence—there is the sporadic play of inspiration and intuition. A more recurrent play of them is seen in the phenomenon of "genius". Variously we are led to mark the evidence of a supramental faculty waiting to emerge and take up the whole of our existence for a new evolutionary embodiment.

"Embodiment" is an important term. For, Sri Aurobindo is all for a more dynamic earth-life in the light of a more-than-human consciousness. As his collaborator in the Integral Yoga—the Mother—puts it: "Yoga is not a contempt for matter but a means to divinise it—not a rejection of the body but a means to transform it."

No doubt, the Integral Yoga—by its very integrality—would make use of past techniques wherever necessary. But it cannot be equated simply to the old Yogas classified as Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, Raja and Hatha. Least of all is it the set of difficult exercises that is Hatha Yoga. Actually it favours physical training more along modern lines, since the psychological benefits along with extraordinary vital powers which Hatha Yoga seeks through its complex postures are sought to be compassed directly by more subtle processes. For, the Integral Yoga is essentially a dynamism of the consciousness, a mode of all-round psychological development which yet evokes hidden potentialities of physical development through the secret consciousness dwelling even in material substance and energy.

### 3

Free at the same time of an other-worldly outlook and a limited yogic practice, the Integral Yoga cuts loose still more from all fixed dogmas, rites and observances inherited from the past: it is not a revival of any religion or a synthesis of existing religions or a new religion sprouting from the same old root to replace them. It is a broad-based, constantly growing, diversely modulated way of life, which is more correctly designable as a spiritual science than a religious path. In fact, it is a perfectly secular activity inasmuch as the religion to which one may have belonged is dropped in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. And even those who have belonged to no religion are welcome here. An open mind, an aspiration for a deeper and finer living than hitherto accomplished, a flexibility of nature ready to meet the future's challenge,

a whole-hearted willingness to be made anew in the large lines of what may be called the spiritually scientific superman—these are the sole qualifications required.

Since a systematic and organised move is here towards this goal, there is a palpable curve of progress in the Integral Yoga. Concrete inner and outer results are obtained. And a general assessment is possible of the individual's research in Yoga at different stages, as well as of the level reached by the entire group of people dedicated to realising Sri Aurobindo's vision. In a broad sense, we may measure progress by four standards:

(1) With what degree of effortless efficiency is the work in hand done, as if some inner knowledge and power were automatically active?

(2) How far is the work of one person complementary to that of other persons so that an interrelated totality results as if there acted a single knowledge and power superior to the individual units and making all of them its instruments?

(3) To what extent does the participant in a work pass through it and out of it with not only a detachment from egoistic desire and anxiety but also an increase in happy awareness of the inner and superior agency?

(4) How much oneness even in the outer life does the work produce among the individuals concerned, expressing itself in a purer and profounder relationship, an efflorescence of harmonious living, an advance towards achieving the ideal of human unity?

Thus the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in which the Integral Yoga is practised, is different from other Ashrams in India. Unquestionably, they have their merits, but theirs is ultimately a refinement of religion and this refinement is turned fundamentally towards individual salvation in some other-world. What they do for this world is not organic to the Yoga and springs from conventional ethico-social motives—good and helpful motives, surely, yet not the direct issue of a super-science of the Spirit such as Sri Aurobindo has developed. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a research in a new order of existence, with a supramental fount of activity in every department. This research has a particularised aspect in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, with an eye to assimilating special academic qualification into the general inner education that is the Integral Yoga. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, researching in what may be termed a novel multi-dimensional education, strives by inner conscious self-expansion to form the nucleus of a renovated humanity.

This nucleus would stimulate the whole country and then the entire world to the highest intensity and continuity possible of a divinised life to which the phenomena of inspiration and intuition are scattered pointers in a world not yet awake to that Yoga of Nature which, through the evolution of matter, vitality and mind, drives integrally towards an earthly unfoldment as of a godhead in the soul of man.

of Education, should rouse the greatest interest and win the utmost encouragement. For, its work can be seen in intimate relation to the typical genius of the Indian people. Every country has its own basic psychological character and it can truly develop if it acts in consonance with that national personality. Historical India has been two things pre-eminently. On the outer and visible level, she has been a vast concourse of communities. India is one not by an apparent uniformity of race or by a single strain of culture. She is one by a fusion of a large variety of ethnological elements and by a synthesis of diverse lines of intellectual experiment, social combination, practical pursuit. And she has been able to blend so many outwardly differing components because her true being is attuned to that which is other than the visible forms of life and yet is the common origin of them all, that which is capable of differentiating into a myriad forms without losing its essential identity. This origin is what she has called, by inner observation and experience, the Supreme Self or Spirit, a deepmost Reality directly known as an Infinite that is One-in-Many and Many-in-One.

No doubt, India has not always or, rather, invariably been "spiritual" in the obvious connotation of the word. She has also thought and lived along lines which may be considered sceptic, agnostic, atheistic, materialistic. In fact, if she did not do so, she would not be the cultural synthesis that she is: she would be single-tracked—and when spirituality is single-tracked it becomes necessarily limitative and intolerant on the one hand, ascetic and unworldly on the other. A tendency towards that attitude which is, in Sri Aurobindo's phrase, "the refusal of the ascetic" has indeed increased from India's mediaeval age onwards and contributed to her decline. But the original Indian genius was very far from such a negative spirituality—and when spirituality is not only positive but also many-tracked, as in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Puranas, a strong impetus is given to the searching mind and the adventurous life-force to try out every kind of speculation and practice, be it ever so non-spiritual in its surface-shape. With her firm hold on what we may describe as a divine dynamism in the inner being, India could allow without any fear a complete liberty to the seeker in man. All roads, she felt, would eventually lead to that spiritual centre, and the expression of this centre would in the end be all the richer for the apparent temporary deviations.

How pervasive was the influence of this potent centre we may mark by a look at the form which the non-theistic or even atheistic trends mostly assumed in India. Materialism, in the modern sense, was never characteristic of such trends. They showed themselves typically in movements like Sankhya, Buddhism and Jainism. Judged from the ordinary point of view, these movements were non-theistic or even atheistic; and yet they were paths leading to a liberation of the consciousness from mere mind. they worked towards an inner illumination which can only be regarded as profoundly spiritual. And the very epochs most coloured by the sensuous approach, like the epoch of the poet Kalidasa, has still a deep instinct of *Dharma* and an intellectual assent to it. *Dharma* is not simply religion: it is the inherent law of things, making

naturally for collective harmony and stability as much as for individual initiative and activity, while its direction through all moods and modes of life, all formulations of thought, is towards a spiritual Truth diversely symbolised by the play of the senses.

Yes, India has been great by her essentially spiritual character. Although competent enough in other fields, the quest for the inmost Spirit as the radiating source of all existence has been her *forte*. And she can be great again by being true to her own self. She can be even greater than before. Actually, that is the demand on her by the logic of events in the modern age. For, the key to a divine fulfilment of matter was missed by her and, for all the life-affirmation in her most luminous times, she had to fix her ultimate in a Beyond. That brought about—in the long run, particularly under the impact of foreign invasions—a religious instead of a secular turn. More and more an inward withdrawal took place with a hurry to find a number of separate short-cuts to Nirvana, the Formless Brahman, the peaceful Shiva, the blissful Vishnu. In the outer realm a defensive shell was set up of rigid rites, observances and functions. The Gita was the last explicit testament of a comprehensive and conquering spirituality. Time and again the old urge of the Vedic Rishis and Upanishadic Seers that had reached its largest voice in the Gita broke through the religious turn; but the zest for a divine fulfilment on earth could not quite subdue the growing discontent and weariness to which Tagore has given tongue so memorably in his poem on the migrating cranes: “Not here, not here, somewhere afar is our home!”

To effect a switch-over to the Here and Now, an age of Science, emphasising matter and asserting evolution, had to come. And, along with it, as its inner rationale, as the total Light of which Science was just a one-sided disclosure, there had to dawn the age of an Integral Yoga such as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have discovered and developed on the basis of all that has been positive and synthesis-minded in the past. With the advent of the Integral Yoga India stands on the threshold of a most glorious future.

If she is not loyal to her own genius she will either degenerate in spite of all technological props or else be a second-rate success on the Western model, always an inferior, however hard she may try to juggle with foreign “isms” and “know-hows”. The Integral Yoga is there not only to save her but also to complete the curve of her destiny.

Hence the Sri Aurobindo Ashram should immediately commend itself to those who love this country of ours and are eager to help it achieve full greatness. The intensity and continuity of the inspired and intuitive super-life which the Ashram aims at will make India, as the Mother has hoped, “the spiritual leader of the world”. Then, by her sovereign answer to an inner need which the whole world, bewildered by its own uncontrollable complexity is coming to feel more and more, India will draw to herself an abundance of material aid to lift to the highest peak her own rightly guided prosperity.

Modern to the most efficient degree but dominating her modernism rather than dominated by it, India living illuminatedly from within outwards by means of the



Integral Yoga will lead the earth towards an era of universal concord, a self-consummation of Man at once spiritual and scientific. To elevate our country to play that happy role is a vital part of the dynamic ideal of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Ashram of all-round Educational Research they have founded. Their call to men of good will everywhere is to co-operate with them and hasten the completion of the mighty work which is proceeding here in rhythm with Nature's own secret urge and with India's supreme mission.

K. D. SETHNA

## A NEW APPROACH TO HISTORY\*

IF, as in the vision of the Seer, man has a destiny, his history should mirror the process of his growth towards that destiny.

“The history of the cycles of man is a progress towards the unveiling of the Godhead in the soul and life of humanity,”<sup>1</sup> says Sri Aurobindo.

A world movement therefore is implicit in history. And it is the history of man, his total history that alone can depict this movement—the march of man—to what awaits him in the future.

History then has to be rewritten from this vision, especially today when man has arrived at a stage in his evolution at which he is consciously to become ready for its next higher stage.

Whatever man has done so far to exceed himself, whatever he is doing today to that end, are shaping factors in his progress. All his endeavours through the ages, all his creative activities constitute the process of his growth—the growth of his consciousness, of his whole being in all its parts and planes—mental, vital, physical, spiritual and aesthetic. This means the development of his potentialities in which is inherent his future perfection. How and from where has man come to have these potentialities?

Creation is the energising of the One Supreme Consciousness into formulations of itself, the first of which is Matter, then Life, then Mind. In each of these three there is the Energy and the Force of that Consciousness. Its effort is to evolve into better forms, that is to say, to evolve out of their derivatives in the lower hemisphere of Ignorance into their originals in the higher hemisphere of Knowledge. And it is by Intuition, says Sri Aurobindo, that this upward movement takes place. Intuition is a subtle form of energy, and it is neither purely dynamic nor purely static. It is hidden in things and springs from its origin in the Creative Force of the Infinite Consciousness and does its work.

It is this Intuition that ascends from matter into life, and from life into mind, and from mind into higher ranges of consciousness. What modern Science calls ‘upward drive’ in evolution is this intuitive upward urge in Nature. It is one of those secret cosmic forces that upbear the evolutionary creative process till creation attains its perfect form.

It will be seen later how this urge has been at the root of all creative endeavour of man everywhere and in every age. Indeed, whatever progress man has so far made in art and literature, religion and mysticism, science and philosophy, has been possible

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<sup>1</sup> *Gems from Sri Aurobindo*, Third Series, p. 77

because of his intuitive inspiration just as a man of action owes his achievements to his quick decision inspired by his intuition. It is this divine faculty in man from which evolve his culture and society, and consequently his history.

"Man," says Sri Aurobindo, "is a transitional being; he is not final. For in him and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees that climb to a divine supermanhood....The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in earth's evolution."<sup>1</sup>

The process of man's preparation for this his ultimate destiny is his history. And the creative aspect of this process is his culture and civilisation, culture finding its social and organised form in civilisation.

Every civilisation has its own cycle, through which humanity in different periods and in different regions has passed, every time contributing to the total progress of the race. Even its failures have proved "the downward curve of the spiral of progress". In fact, quite a number of times in history it has been found that the deviations of man, his choosing and following wrong paths, gave him the experience he needed at that time for his onward march. They were like the Night before the Dawn—the Night preparing the Dawn. Besides, such declines and untoward conditions intensify man's aspiration and compel a fresh endeavour, a new going forth, as did the medieval darkness which ended in the dawn of reason that ushered in the modern day.

When in the later phase of the Middle Ages religion deteriorated into all forms of soulless externalia rationalism had to intervene and assert itself as the mind's solutions to the problems. And when mind developed further and became the ruling power of life, as it is today, without any corresponding inner development of man's heart and soul, the consequent imbalance demands the growth of these twin heavenly elements in man, without whose proper development he cannot hope for a happy and harmonious coherence of his collective life.

How does man, imperfect in himself, cultivate, deepen and expand his powers and potentialities the efflorescence of which manifests itself as his culture and civilisation? Behind the creation, in which man has taken the top place on earth, is the Will of the Supreme that the imperfect creation should flower into a perfect one. And whose is the strength that can bring about this consummation? It is the strength of the Supreme, the divine Shakti.

The divine Shakti is the fount and focal point of infinite energy that prevades all creation, sustains, impels, motivates all movements of universal Nature. In this driving force of the Mother lies the Consciousness and Will of the Supreme with which she carries on her work for the evolution of the earth-consciousness. The dynamic ethos in things is the ethos of the divine Consciousness that is the Mother who presides over the universal Nature.

Nature's purpose in human evolution is fulfilled when man is ready for emergence into superman. But Nature only prepares. It is the Paraprakriti, the divine Con-

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p. 59

scious Force, that is the ultimate Source, the supreme Fashioner of things. It is her Light whose manifestation in man will change his imperfect nature into the perfect Nature of the Divine.

Beyond this triple world of Ignorance are the worlds of Cosmic Knowledge, and beyond them are the supernal planes of Light from where the divine Shakti—of whom this Nature is an executive Force—creates and directs the whole system of worlds.

Indeed, the Mother stands even above all these worlds, bearing in her eternal consciousness the Supreme Divine. The Supreme is manifest in her as the everlasting Sachchidananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss—and through her in the worlds and planes which are her immediate embodiments. In her own mystery she stands as the infinite Mother of the gods and projects herself into all that forms the Great Play. All is she, because all are parcel and portion of the divine Conscious Force. This world of Ignorance and imperfection is upheld by her and it is she who guides it to its secret aim. She is here as the Mahashakti, seeking by her creative Light to build in the nescience of Matter a Godlike life—the flowering of the life, soul and mind in matter into the infinity of the Spirit. She works, through her Powers and Personalities, governing and leading the lines of development of their forces so that the world may progress towards its goal. At the same time she prepares and shapes things of the earth that “she may manifest in the physical world and in the disguise of the human consciousness some ray of her power and quality and presence. All the scenes of the earth-play have been like a drama arranged and planned and staged by her with the cosmic Gods as her assistants and herself as the veiled actor”.<sup>1</sup> And it is always her aim on this earth to create a new world of harmony and perfection and evolve out of the mental man the supramental being.

This is the way in which the Divine who has descended into the material consciousness recovers in it his own splendour in man transformed and perfected by the luminous dynamisms of his own Force. Whatever might the humanist say about the unsurpassable glory of man, however emphatic might the rationalist be about the absolute value of human reason, a deeper knowledge proves to the intuition of man that the real player in the world-drama is the divine Shakti herself—she alone is the play, the player and the playground. All are her forms which she creates, develops and leads to their highest efflorescence. And man being her chosen vehicle for a greater manifestation, she works in him through Nature that he may wake up from his sleep in the Ignorance and open to her Influence, to her Presence and Power in him, and thereby grow into his perfection—the blossoming of his inherent divinity. For, if man is God self-involved and progressively self-evolving in form, the conclusion becomes inevitable that his perfection and fulfilment can be nothing short of a full emergence of the Godhead in him. And it is only the power of the divine Shakti, not any human endeavour or *tapasyā* that can effectuate this consummation in man. Indeed, she alone “can rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 45.

of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda"<sup>1</sup>—the most perfect of things into which man in his life, mind and body, is destined to be new-born. This is the meaning of the Supreme's earthly adventure, the meaning of man's heavenward journey on earth.

The divine Consciousness-Force is infinite in her powers and personalities. But it is in her four great Aspects that she is manifest in the earth-consciousness for the accomplishment of her immediate purpose in it. The first is her aspect of calm wideness and comprehending wisdom, which in man is the inspiration behind all his spiritual enterprises, the works of majesty and greatness. She is here the Maheshwari. The second is of power and passion and force, which exhibits itself in the dynamic and heroic activities of man. This is her Mahakali aspect. The third is of beauty and harmony and rhythm, which in man is his aesthetic impulse that seeks to make the earth an abode of the beautiful. She is here the Mahalakshmi. The fourth is of practical knowledge and flawless work and exact perfection, from which come science, craft and the technique of things for the perfect organisation of all kinds. This is the province of Mahasaraswati.

Since a perfect creation is the ultimate aim of evolution, the divine Shakti is present in every human individual in order that all her powers in him may develop in everyone into what they are intended to be in the perfect civilisation of the future. But, for her immediate work and for the sake of variation—a necessary condition for souls freely to flower into their various possibilities—the Mother chooses individuals to represent one or two of her powers and concentrate on their development so that all may contribute their best to the highest cultural efflorescence of the race.

This was also the central idea behind the institution of caste. While every man has in him all the power of the divine Shakti he shows certain traits which are more prominent than others, and it is these and not his birth that determine his caste. This was how the institution existed in ancient India as an effective factor in her comprehensive social life and her all-round progress.

The Purusha-Sukta of the Rigveda gives the psycho-physical origin of the castes. The mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the Virat Purusha represent respectively the four aspects of the World-Spirit in human evolution, mouth symbolising Knowledge (brahmana), arms Strength (kshatriya), thighs Material Basis (vaisya), feet Service (sudra). This truth has its esoteric significance for the evolution of culture and civilisation when the four aspects of Virat or the universal Spirit are equated with the four powers of the divine Shakti as the universal Mother. As in individuals, so in particular nations, these powers work for their collective progress, some of them more prominently at particular evolutionary stages according to the needs of the time.

Generally these divine forces by their insistent pressure from above have not only helped the growth of man, the mental being, but they have also been sometimes sought after by him and admitted into himself and assimilated in proportion to his developing

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 84

capacity. Because they are also within him—latent, involved and steadily pressing for evolution—man feels a natural impulse, an irrepressible yearning for their discovery and possession. And in epochs of resurgent activity he has at times broken beyond the normal confines of his mind and created right out of the very heart of his experience of them. Indeed, his art and literature, mysticism and spirituality, religion and philosophy, science and politics are but expressions, plenary or partial, of these powers to which he had ever turned, consciously or unconsciously, at all stages of his evolution.

The progress of man is the progress of his evolving Spirit which is effected through his culture, the outcome of his cultivation of these powers in him of the divine Shakti. And it is for history to study this progress and portray the rise and growth of the nations and peoples of the world, unravelling the various ways in which they incarnate and give form to these powers, and thereby prepare for a greater destiny in the future.

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A proper study of the working of the divine Shakti in human history, in particular India's, would suggest that her four principal aspects are the Mother-Force in man's historic development; and they grow and expand to fulfil themselves in their harmonious, complete and perfect unfolding in the future, but that one of them which is intended to do a particular work at a particular stage comes to the fore at that stage and gives its character to it.

Thus, the first stage in India's evolution was her Age of the Spirit when came to the vision of the Vedic Rishis the eternal truths of man, God and universe, and of the spiritual forces at work preparing man for his integral perfection. The Rishis representing the Wisdom, or the Maheshwari aspect of the supreme Shakti, in human evolution, implanted these truths in the consciousness of the race through the small circles of initiates who in their turn revealed them to their disciples and thereby kept these truths alive from generation to generation. These Rishis laid the foundation of Indian civilisation and their memory is cherished for ever as the ancient Fathers of the race. It was in their visions that the soul of India was born with its intuitive bent and its undying quest of the Infinite. The quest went on deepening and expanding till it became the innate tendency of India's soul. The Rishis discovered the divine destiny of the human race and invoked the gods for the creation of "the divine race," *divyam janam*. (Rigveda, X. 53. 6).

The next stage was the Age of the Dharma ushered in by the kshatriya kings. This had its beginnings in the later phase of the Age of the Spirit. It was to this phase that belonged the earlier Upanishads in which many kshatriya kings revisioned the Vedic truths and became masters of spiritual knowledge. These kings and those that followed them during this Age represented the Mahakali aspect of the supreme Shakti, and established the tradition of how as kings they were charged by the ancient Fathers

with the sacred and responsible task of upholding and serving the cause of the Dharma—the right line of self-development towards perfection. This Dharma Ideal having its origin in the Veda became the Ideal of the race and governed all the movements of its life, both individual and collective, for thousands of years during which the Dharma Ideal with its varied connotations adapted itself to all the stages of life and became fixed in the consciousness of the race. The various ways in which this great Ideal was sought to be realised in this Age gave India her puissant intellectuality making her mind keen, capacious and masterful.

An aspect of the Dharma Ideal was the Chakravartin Ideal—the Ideal of universal kingship based on Truth and Righteousness, affirmed in the Gita and later in the life and teachings of the Buddha. This world empire symbolising the ancient Indian imperial idea envisaged the future perfect communal body and soul of humanity, the *Virāt*, “the universal Spirit”. This is the meaning of large organised human collectivities to which the Maurya empire was an early pointer. Similar universal idealism was symbolised by some forms of art of this Age, such as, the pillar and the *stūpa*.

The third stage of India’s evolution was the classical Age representing Harmony and Beauty, or the Mahalakshmi aspect of the divine Shakti. It covers a period of about one thousand years marked by a wonderful cultural efflorescence, unparalleled in human history. It produced those marvels of art and literature, religion and philosophy—all inspired by spiritual vision and aesthetic intuition—which are India’s imperishable contribution to the civilisation of mankind.

The material prosperity of the Age which made possible its widespread creative activities gave people the experience of the richness and colour of life. This Age also witnessed the mind of India expanding in its sense of harmony, which it has always had, and tending towards the synthesis that characterised the religious endeavours of the Age. What, however, distinguished this Age was that India gave a fresh form to her imperial idea, developed her life-force and became ready for the next stage of her evolution, having completed the cycle of her achievements over her long past, the achievements that gave her the round of experiences necessary for her growth into the fulness of her being which prepared her for a new Age of the Spirit.

But this age could not come into being, because there was none, as a leading pioneer, to revision and embody the ancient truths and show the path to their realisation.

Yet, says Sri Aurobindo, what the Classical Age achieved in every sphere of life over a period of one thousand years governed the cultural life of India for the next thousand years.

The last phase of medieval India was a decline of her life-force due to her mind being cramped and compressed by rigid rules and formulas which blocked the path to progress but which nonetheless preserved the ancient truths even as the saints and mystics of the period who said that “God exists not in the temple but in the heart”, preserved the innate spirituality of the race in an unconventional form.

Another notable attempt in this period was Akbar’s, that emperor-visionary who

after Asoka built up an all-India empire on the lines of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* on which had been based the Maurya empire, and who, following the Indian tradition, tried to introduce a cult of imperial idealism embodied in the Emperor. Both of his efforts reflected his vision of unity and synthesis.

The later administrative set-ups of India have been similar to Akbar's. E.B. Havell and Sister Nivedita are of the view that Asoka and Akbar were the only two emperors of India who succeeded to a great extent, in giving shape to their vision that 'India is one.'

The decline of medieval India was the Night before the Dawn the first glimmerings of which began to be visible when there came upon India the impact of the West and energised her mind into new and fresh forms of activity. The rise of rationalism made India conscious of her shortcomings and impelled the call and the need for a new Age, the next stage of her evolution, when Perfect Work and Organisation, the Mahasaraswati aspect of the divine Shakti, would inspire her children to rise and be their true selves, the children of the Light, of the Vedic Rishi's vision.

The reawakening of modern India began more prominently in the field of politics and created in the mind and heart of the people the will to freedom and greatness—the need of the hour. There is no doubt that it opened up vast possibilities of a wider awakening to a greater future.

The upsurge of India's soul that began in the nineteenth century and bore fruit in the twentieth, is a world phenomenon, a significant phase in the history of modern times. For, where in the whole world is found a short period of about thirty-six years (1836-1872) witnessing the birth of an equal number of mighty souls<sup>1</sup> the peak-points of whose pioneering activities brought about the resurgence of India towards those marvellous achievements which enriched human culture beyond measure?

Among these were poets and artists, mystics and Yogis, seers and prophets, scientists and philosophers, fearless freedom-fighters, heroic men of action, representing the four powers of the divine Shakti whose aim in them was evidently to expedite her work in India so that she might be ready to lead mankind to its destined future. That is why all that these master-makers of new India did in their respective spheres, especially in art, literature, religion and politics, tended to renew India's age-long endeavour to spiritualise life.

Almost all of them were intuitively conscious of the spiritual vision of India of her great past and foresaw her rising towards her greater future. Rammohun Roy, the forerunner of the Indian renaissance, knew India as "the Enlightener of Asia". He is the first in modern times to envisage the coming unity of the human race through a Comity of Nations and international fellowship more than one hundred years before the birth of the United Nations Organisation—a most significant prevision of great historical importance.

Vivekananda, that heaven-born awakener of souls, declared to the world the Veda-

<sup>1</sup> The author has given the findings of his study of these pioneers in his book *Resurgent India*.



dantic truth of the inherent divinity of man and his vision that "India is rising in order to spiritualise the human race". It is significant that after about twenty years of this prophetic utterance Sri Aurobindo revealed in its deeper and wider implication the Vedic truth of man's destined divine perfection and called upon humanity to prepare for it as the time for its realisation was near. He has also shown the path to that great goal.

After Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi in 1950 the work initiated by him continues under the guidance of the Mother and "the power he liberated," says Nolini Kanta Gupta, "is working through her for the manifestation and establishment of a new world and a new consciousness." This will mean the creation of a "divine race" on earth, which is India's God-appointed mission in the world, the ultimate end of her historic evolution. "India is the country of my soul," says the Mother.

In the same way the history of any civilisation can be studied, though the process may not be similar to India's in every way. Many are the ways in which the divine Shakti does her work in human evolution. For instance Wisdom embracing all pursuits of Truth and all that widens the frontiers of knowledge till divisions lose themselves in the infinitude of the Vast; Strength, all heroic endeavours to organise and develop the individual and collective life of man for its growth into perfection and to destroy the enemy of progress; Beauty and Harmony, all urges to reveal the inmost beauty and divinity of things and exalt and ennoble life and found it on peace for which wealth is a needed basis; Work, whatever the awakened man does to create a new world of freedom, happiness and justice for all; Love and Ananda upbearing the Mother's work through all her aspects to its ultimate accomplishment—the transformation of man's nature and consciousness into divine oneness.

Not that the powers of the Mother have so far fulfilled themselves in the undeveloped and ignorant human material but their very working, even through all their deformations and diminutions caused by the imperfect nature of man, has helped him grow and expand in parts and planes of his being. This is how man advances in his culture and civilisation.

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A careful study of man's historic development would show that in all his seekings and strivings he lives, no matter whether consciously or unconsciously, for the future. It is true that without his past he would not have existed today, and that his present is the immediate basis of his existence; but he is never satisfied with his present and this "divine discontent" impels him to look to the future. Whatever he does today he does for a better morrow, making him better than he is today. That is how man has been progressing since the dawn of history. It is therefore a truism that his future gives true meaning to his life. And since this future has been seen and revealed, history should show how man has prepared for it through his age-long endeavours, cultural, social, political and even economic, how the divine Shakti in her four

principal Aspects and in various ways has upborne his labour to grow in his being so as to be able to realise his ultimate destiny.

History therefore should study man's past not for the sake of the past but for the sake of its significance for his future, because we must always remember that "we do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future," says Sri Aurobindo.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the past is that it bears in itself the seeds of the future; and of even greater importance is the organic historic process of how these seeds flower through the present into the future. The great creative epochs of history—the renaissances and resurgences—are so many dawns illumining man's consciousness and his path towards the goal.

The Rigveda, which contains the seeds of man's future, is, in Sri Aurobindo's words "the high-aspiring Song of Humanity and its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension". Here is a Hymn: "Usha (Dawn) follows to the goal of those that are passing on beyond, She is the first in the eternal succession of the Dawns that are coming,—Usha widens bringing out that which lives, awakening someone who was dead ...What is her scope when she harmonises with the Dawns that shone out before and those that now must shine? She desires the ancient mornings and fulfils their light, projecting forwards her illumination she enters communion with the rest that are to come."<sup>2</sup>

In this pregnant Vedic utterance is enshrined the secret of man's historic evolution. The inner, that is to say, the true definition of history is the story of man's pilgrimage from the ancient Dawn to the High-noon of the Future. The "infinite rays" of the dawn are, indeed, the waves of an endless tide of the Light—"eternal succession of the Dawns"—flowing since "the most distant yesterdays to the most distant tomorrows" working on and preparing man all down the ages for his ultimate perfection in the Spirit when the Sun of Truth will shine for ever on man's consciousness changing him into a gnostic, Truth-conscious being and the earth into a Home of Light, Beauty and Bliss of the Heaven of the Spirit.

This is "the Everlasting Day" of the Master-Seers' vision, when man passes from his human to a divine race with more and more luminous descents of the heavens' Light into his consciousness of greater and yet greater fulfilments in the divine order of infinite progression. The pilgrimage therefore is an endless march which the soul in evolution has ceaselessly to pursue, beckoned by the eternal command of the Aitareya Brahmana: *Caraveti*, 'March on.' March on to where? To the limitless future, the ever-progressive self-deploying of the Infinite into manifestation of its own infinitude in terrestrial evolution.

Man's therefore is not only an "immense" but an endless journey. Whether we take the modern scientific or the ancient Hindu standpoint, the progress of humanity is a fact. The wheel of Brahma rotates for ever but it does not turn in the same place;

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the Gita*, Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> Rigveda, I 113. 8,10 (Sri Aurobindo's translation)

its rotations carry it forward.<sup>1</sup> Thus does Brahma's creation rise upward from its present *Kaliyuga* into the next Age of Truth, greater than the *Satyayuga* of ancient tradition, fulfilling thereby one of the infinite and ever-higher possibilities of creation.

The starting-point of the new phenomenon in our times, as declared by the Mother, was 29 February 1956 when the Supramental Light and Force manifested on earth. Since then it has been working in the subtle physical, moving towards its fuller manifestation. "It is the experience," the Mother said on 6th July 1966, "...the feeling of an irresistible Power governing all: the world, things, people, all, all.... I saw in vision the formation, the divine creation that is under way.... The Will...acts in the subtle physical...exerting a pressure upon people, things, circumstances to mould them according to its vision.... Even people who think otherwise, who want otherwise, do what is willed.... even things that oppose by their very nature are made to turn round.... For national happenings, relations among the nations, terrestrial circumstances, it acts like that constantly, constantly as a tremendous power."<sup>2</sup> This is how grows the silent "spiritual revolution" foreseen by Sri Aurobindo, preparing man for his great Future.

Sri Aurobindo has said that with the Supramental Force becoming active in earth-consciousness, harmony will more and more prevail and the world will more and more open to the Light and be transformed by it. The clashes and conflicts that persist here and there today are some angularities in international life, yet to be rounded off. They are the effects of the resistance of some still-ignorant part of earth-nature to the working of the Force.

There is the assurance from the Mother that Supreme Love and Harmony are now established on earth and that those who will quietly aspire for them will have them.... "Nothing can ultimately oppose the Divine's Love. It is the Eternal Victor."<sup>3</sup> So the future of man from now will keep on widening into its infinite glory till the New Race of Supermen arrives on the earth scene and initiates a new cycle of divine living.

The progress of man from when he began to develop his mind to what he is today is that vast process of evolutionary Nature whose finale is now out of the question because man himself is not final, but, as seen before, 'a transitional being'. History, therefore, should not stop at man. Tracing his evolution from the beginning, it should point to his future showing how his past has been developing towards the future, how his various creative endeavours have been the endeavour of evolutionary Nature—the expressions of the powers of the divine Shakti—and how their imperfect products which so far formed the fabric of human civilisation have yet to take their perfect forms in the future as foreseen by the Master-Seer, how man will achieve all this when he opens to the Truth and Light of the divine Shakti who is the real player in

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo. *Man—Slave or Free* ? p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Extracts from *A Propos*, *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1966, pp. 77-85.

<sup>3</sup> The Mother said this in July 1967.

the world-drama. Indeed, as seen before, it is she who is the play, the player and the playground. All is in her and she is in all.

When in this way man becomes a conscious instrument of the Mother in her play, he becomes one with the Truth and Light that she is, therefore, with the Truth and Light of One Consciousness, One Life, One World, all aglow with the divine splendour radiating from the infinitude of the World-Mother's breast.

At this "Hour of God", history is called upon to depict the march of the mental man, led by the kindly hand of the Divine Mother, to his Supramental Future. It is in this future that lies the true meaning of man's life on earth, the meaning as well of his chequered historic development through the ages. The revelation of this golden Future today is the assurance that the time for its realisation is come. History so far has been the history of preparation. From now on it will be the History of Fulfilment. And these two, each complementing the other, are History as the Future, of which the Divine Mother is the Mighty Maker.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

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# THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

## SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Q.1. Are any of the Indian languages sufficiently developed now for use as a medium of instruction in higher scientific education?*

A. Most of them are not, but with some dedication they can be, in a few years. Probably they are more developed, at the moment, for non-scientific subjects.

*Q. 2. Till they are developed for higher scientific subjects, what should be the medium of instruction?*

A. English should continue to be the medium for the present, for a limited period, till the regional languages are developed.

*Q. 3. Is a common link language necessary for the integration of the Indian people, and without a common language is there any danger of Balkanisation of the country?*

A. It seems that disintegration, if it ever comes, may come with or without a common language; however, people will have one less cause for feeling different from their neighbours and one less cause for disharmony.

A common language seems desirable. It cannot however be imposed. It must grow into acceptance.

*Q. 4. Should the common language be an international language such as English or one of the Indian languages?*

A. The common language is primarily meant for communication within the country. It need not be English from that point of view. However, if it is English, apart from the fact that it is there already and has the merit of not rousing interstate jealousies, it serves the purpose of international communication also. Additionally it can be used, for the time being at any rate, for higher scientific education.

The disadvantage of English is that its genius is still somewhat foreign. Even after more than a hundred years of use, it has not become quite natural to the Indian climate, and, generally speaking, the pace and level of intellectual development and originality has not been as much as it might otherwise have been.

This is a serious handicap. Also the vast majority of people do not go in for higher education, yet they may have need for communication with their neighbours in other states.

It seems therefore that both English and an Indian language (in a less agitated climate simplified Sanskrit also might be considered, because of its background), should be given the status of link languages, the option of choosing between them being left to the individual.

*Q. 5. What is the best age for learning languages?*

A. The period between 3 years and 11 years seems, comparatively, to be the best age for learning languages, the mother-tongue having naturally the predominance. During these years, a child may learn 2 or 3 languages in addition to his mother-tongue.

*Q. 6. Will such learning be of any use in later years?*

A. It will establish a contact which can be, with greater ease, renewed and extended, if necessary, in later years.

For instance, if a child learns a little of Hindi, English, and say, Sanskrit when 8 years old, and then discontinues them, he can pick up the thread more easily once more in one or more of them, should he desire to continue to study further when he is, say, 13 or 14 years of age, or even later.

*Q. 7. Should a classical language also be in the curriculum?*

A. A person will surely feel very poorly equipped if he is a stranger to the classics. It has an intimate place in an Indian's life. A classical language should be taught, may-be in later years in the school.

*Q. 8. How many compulsory languages then should a student study?*

A. A student should learn:

- (a) The Regional Language
- (b) Either English or Hindi
- (c) A Classical Language.

So a Hindi-speaking student should learn English and a classical language, and a non-Hindi-speaking student should learn English or Hindi and a classical language.

*Q. 9. What should the Central Government do in the matter of languages?*

A. The Central Government should confine themselves to specifying that, for the time being at any rate, both English and Hindi may serve as link languages, and leave the rest, such as the medium of instruction, number of compulsory languages, etc., to the States to decide for themselves.

Of course, the one language which contains the roots of many languages of India and the world is Sanskrit. If the urge is to have ultimately only an Indian language as the link language (apart from maintaining English as an international language), that language can be a rejuvenated simple Sanskrit. It was once the common language of the country and it has the potentiality to be so again.

*Q. 10. Can Sanskrit which is a dead language, that is, not in common use now, be revived? Also would it not be considered as an imposition of Hindu religion and culture over the rest of the population who are not Hindus?*

A. If it is otherwise desirable to revive Sanskrit for national use, it should be possible to do so as the Jews have done recently with Hebrew in Israel.

The day of religion and religious compartmentalism is over and these must give way to spirituality where there may be diversity but no conflict.

Use of Sanskrit would no more mean imposition of Hinduism, than English or Persian during their time as court languages of India meant imposition of Christianity or Islam.

*Q. 11. If Sanskrit becomes the National Language, and English the International Language, how many languages should then the student learn in the school?*

A. The student should learn at least:

- (a) the Regional Language
- (b) Sanskrit
- (c) English.

PRADYOT KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

## THE PROBLEM OF LOVE IN EDUCATION

If there is a problem difficult to solve for the young of both sexes, it is that of love. Sooner or later as they grow from childhood to adult age, they meet love, feel or observe the vehemence of the crises it raises in the human heart, and try to understand its nature and discover a line of conduct. Adults are hardly wiser; they are as much the plaything of the force that possesses them and seek for a compromise behaviour that would avoid disturbing too much their own existence and society's.

One of the peculiarities of the problem of love for the child is that he (or she) is left almost alone to solve it. He does not find in his class-books any indication about it, and when he turns to a parent, a teacher or an elderly person, the answers that he gets can only puzzle him more. Either he is signed to silence and told not to busy himself with such things: "the less one speaks or thinks of it the better it is." Or he is told that he will understand when "bigger"—which is a false promise; grown-ups are not wiser than children, they are only less struck by the newness and strangeness of love's manifestations. As to his talks with class-mates, it is best not to say anything!

At times, rarely, a mother or a father will try to help the child out, but the answers they give are hardly understandable by the child. They raise new questions and the child is drawn along to a strange world invisible but revealed by its effects in him and around him.

In short, it seems as if everything were conspiring to stifle or repress the silent force, a force that no one can explain or master, but with which one has to come to terms and live.

As the child grows, he realizes that the problem of love is among the greatest concerns of the world. He sees that famous writers have heaped up volumes about it, in praise of its sweetness, or in blame of its violence or simply in describing its vagaries. His teachers have been obliged to speak of it, but none understands its nature.

Later on, the child may come across a book pretending to throw some light on the problem. He is asked to analyse his dreams and make the Unconscious conscious. A dark sink opens before him; explanations do not satisfy him, they only bring him harassing and disconcerting thoughts.

Finally, the child is led to acknowledge as a fact the existence in him, as in every living being, of a secret force that seems to originate and develop from the animal world. He has to control it, as best he can, and hide away its effects, whatever storms may rage within.

And yet it ought to be relatively easy for us, disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, to give to such problems as children and adults meet in that domain an explanation which would satisfy them and throw light on what happens within them.



Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have in several places of their works spoken of Love as one of the essential aspects of the Divine and as a fundamental principle of the universe—although still in large part veiled. The fact that Love is only partly revealed hides perhaps from us the role assumed by love in the evolution of the universe and of each individual being of the universe. A small key is required.

The Divine—simultaneously One and Many—manifests himself in the universe through separate centres of consciousness. Without Love these centres would remain eternally separate. Each would evolve in its own way, without deep contact with the others. What would be lacking to it is the consciousness of its identity with the Divine and of its underlying connection with the other centres.

The aspect of the Divine that has taken upon itself the task of bridging this eternal opposition is Love. And love is, in the evolution of the universe, the hidden force that will accomplish the work.

The careful observer—and such is the child—sees manifestations of this force everywhere. He marks its elementary forms in insects and the lower animals. They are then mechanical and reflex: sexual instinct and associative instinct (ants, bees); hunger is also a manifestation of love (one devours what one loves).

Later on, his science books will teach him that attractive forces (and repulsive forces that are complementary) are indispensable to build up matter—the matter of physics and chemistry. Molecules, and even atoms and their constituents, exist only owing to the presence of certain forces that ensure their cohesion. Does not the Mother say that love exists—with consciousness—even in the stone?

In the higher animals—birds, mammals—the mechanical and reflex action is modified by a nascent psychic element (rearing of offspring, faithfulness to a mate, devotion to the pack). Between the higher animal and man, the difference in this sphere is not larger; it is in the growth of the mental element (reasoning capacity) that man differs mostly from the animal.

Separation of sexes is but a device used by Nature to reach her own ends. It is not indispensable to the propagation of the species—many species are asexual or bisexual. But this separation is convenient and efficient.

Now each human being—everyone of us—is evolving in the universe through a succession of many lives upon earth, and as the object of this evolution is the progressive awareness of our essential identity with the Divine—One and Many simultaneously—everyone of us will progressively become aware of the essential Love that is in him and of his bonds of love with other beings.

Then, instead of opposing eternally all others, each of us will feel a natural affinity with this one or that one. All throughout the ages consciousness grows as evolution progresses. One day, the individual being is at last ready to recognize in others the same consciousness that exists in him. He recognizes others as his other selves; he recognizes himself in others and in all. He can at long last understand the meaning of this passage of the Upanishad about One Self or Spirit everywhere:

“It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the *ātman*<sup>1</sup> (which is in him); it is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is dear but for the sake of the *ātman* (which is in her) .”

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*

With the help of these powerful and significant words it is possible to classify individual human beings in one or the other of two groups. Those of the first group—*the outward path*—find in an association with another individual a real help. For them, no problem; they follow instinctively the reactions of Nature in them, and it would be at once unwise and vain to try to change their reactions by advocating a higher path; they would not understand.

Those of the second group—*the return path*—are more advanced in their evolution and feel strongly the attraction of the divine pole in them. For them, a long-standing association with another individual would be contrary to their spiritual destiny and to indulge in it would cause delay in the progress of their soul. They cannot commit themselves and alienate their deep-seated freedom.

But the border line between the two groups is not clearly drawn. There is a large category of men and women evolving in a margin of incertitude. These become the seat of a prolonged and painful conflict between the two poles of their being, the human and the divine. But they have to move forward, at whatever cost.

Yoga is a process that accelerates individual evolution. Through yoga those that are treading *the return path*, and even those that are struggling in the zone of incertitude, may clear in one life a great part of the way and reach divine union. The fact of aspiring to yoga is a proof that one is treading *the return path*, or is quite close to it.

With this in mind we understand clearly why Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, speaking to all who follow yoga or aspire to it, repeat constantly that a “vital” or sexual relationship with another individual is one of the greatest obstacles on the way.

This explains also why persons from outside—who do not follow yoga—get an impression when reading the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that they reject human love, vital and sexual, for the whole of mankind. It is now clear that this is a wrong impression. If someone of *the outward path* consults the Mother in order to ascertain whether it is advisable to marry or not, the answer will in general not be negative. And her approval would hold all the more for the innumerable millions of men and women to whom the idea will never come to consult a spiritual leader about their marriage.

These explanations should enable anyone of us, if he observes and studies himself attentively, to ascertain, at least roughly, where he stands on the long scale of evolution. He will not only be able to understand his instinctive reactions, but will also know that, whatever place he has now reached, he will tread the entirety of the scale

<sup>1</sup> The Self, one with the Divine

and attain liberation. Fear drops out of him—that fear of standing forever condemned, contemptible, imperfect. He will be able to look at himself without losing strength and come to decisions accordingly.

This is the light given to us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; it is a priceless gift.<sup>1</sup>

PAVITRA

<sup>1</sup> This article is reproduced from the Preface to *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love*, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966. Readers who are interested in the problem discussed in this article are recommended the above-mentioned book. — Ed,

## HOW MUSIC WAS REVEALED TO ME

SOME twenty years ago I heard for the first time the Mother of our Ashram improvising on the organ. In the beginning the music sounded strange to me. It was neither Indian nor Western, or shall I say that it sounded like both? The theme she was playing came very near to what we know as "Bhairon," the whole closely knit musical structure expanding melodiously. Then suddenly it started: notes came surging up in battalions, piled one on top of another, deep, insistent, coming as if from a long way down and welling up inevitably: the magnificent body of sound formed and gathered volume till it burst into an illumination that made the music an experience.

Thus She revealed to me the secret of a magic world of music where harmonies meet and blend to make melodies richer, wider, profounder and infinitely more powerful...I have tried to take my music from Her.

My music is my labour and my aspiration for the Divine and what I try to convey through it are the voices of my inner experience.

My grateful thoughts are with Her, who has been my Guide, Guru, Mentor and Mother. One day it was Her Light that sparked my heart, it is Her Light that has sustained its glow, it is Her Light that I seek through my music. If this music brings some comfort, some delight or some message to someone, I have achieved that for which She has placed Her trust in me.

SUNIL KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

## MY EXPERIENCES IN ACTING

### HOW THE MOTHER GUIDED US

“...not in this living net  
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind  
Is a man’s manhood seated...”

THAT was the golden key which swung open the unknown gate to new possibilities. My teacher discovered me. Or rather, I discovered myself. I felt the thrill of creation: a deep emotion warmed my heart, the heroic nobility of Bajī Prabhou welled up in me. On the other hand, it was a joy to perceive that others had felt *with* me. The class was spell-bound for a few minutes; the teacher sat on, his head in his hands while I stood gazing forward, still lost in the strong feeling that had risen in me. That was the first day I had acted—way back in 1945. That class-room has been demolished, those surroundings are no more. Yet the semi-light, semi-darkness of the room, my corner-most seat and the benches, the teacher’s table on the platform are vivid in my mind as though I stepped out from there yesterday.

In December that year, to celebrate the second anniversary of the School, along with other items, the Prologue of Sri Aurobindo’s play *Perseus the Deliverer* was chosen. I was given Athene’s part. After we had learnt our lines—there was no one to train us—we were told that we would have to recite them in the Meditation Hall (in front of Amritada’s room). Strangely enough in a few days’ time there came a Parsee lady from Bombay who offered to train us as well as she could,—she had done some acting before. She read out parts of the Prologue to the Mother in front of all of us youngsters. (The Mother used to come at about noon to the present Darshan Room and go round giving tomatoes or flowers or sweets from a basket or dish that She would be carrying. The children used to sit in rows, one row all along the wall and two in the centre sitting back to back. It is there that she read.) The Mother approved of her teaching us. What struck me most was the change she brought out, even in her voice, when she read Poseidon’s part. The work began.

She was the first to tell us that power does not mean shouting, and increasing volume does not mean raising the pitch. So we religiously practised with her—and I would find myself repeating at odd times in front of the mirror the words “to speak low and loud” at a lower note each time. She suggested thoughts and images around the words in the text and I responded to their poetic beauty. I remember the line I loved to say most—“...till the West mingles with India”... It was to me like an unrealised dream and I loved to make it stand out differently from the rest, in a singing tone. There were several others of course which had also caught my fancy, either for their sound—

“Moloch Poseidon of the Syrian coast,  
Dagon of Gaza...”

or for the picture that came to my mind—

“He dives into the deep and with a din  
The thunderous divided waters meet  
Above his grisly head.”

The final day was nearing, but before that came a greater day. That was when the Mother heard us. In that same hall we stood—I in white, Poseidon in blue with ferns and tiny leaves round his dress (these for sea-weeds—oh, what an excitement it was to fix them so as to give the right effect!) and the Voices of the Sea—three boys in blue. The Mother came and stood at the door near the stairs and we performed at the other end of the room. After it was all over everyone filed out receiving from the Mother a flower. When I went She said in French that it was very good and that I had “*sentiment*.” I can’t recollect the exact turn of Her sentence in French because at that time ‘sentiment’ itself was a big word for me. As I walked down I wondered, “Why did She say that? Anyone saying these lines will have feeling”—for me reading poetry without feeling was quite inconceivable. Now as I look back on that day I wonder how I could have been quite oblivious to another bit of news: the room where we had acted is separated from Sri Aurobindo’s by a small corridor and I was told that Sri Aurobindo had specially sat in His room to hear us! I did not find it in the least extraordinary. I think I took Him for granted and somehow felt that we were far too insignificant for Him to express an opinion on our recitation. Whatever the motives, it never occurred to me to ask what He had thought of us. So the 2nd of December 1945 passed. The show was held in the present gymnasium hall. Only the school children, their parents and guardians and a few special guests were invited. The small adjoining room (now the tiffin room) served as the green-room for dressing and make-up purposes.

2nd December 1946: This was going to be more elaborate. The Mother Herself was training a few girls for a scene from Racine’s *Athalie* and we were doing, with Norman Dowsett as director, the scene from *Perseus the Deliverer* where Andromeda decides to free the Babylonian captives herself (Act III, Scence I). The Mother saw one of our early rehearsals in Pavitrada’s room one morning. I particularly remember Her criticism of one movement that I did—throwing the right arm straight up as an accusation to the gods. Norman said he had put that in to show the force of her feeling and then the pose would be quite Greek, he thought. The Mother smiled and said it looked rather abrupt and out of keeping with the character. Then we sat around Her feet and She read out to us the whole scene, creating in each one the right feeling for the character we were to portray and inspiring Norman with the changes he would have to work out. Nothing else was spoken. During the days that followed She would often talk to us about our parts and even read some bits with us,

With me She specially worked on the last part of the scene; there are, as you know, three main phases in Andromeda's character shown in that scene—first, her firm resolution to undertake the dangerous task whatever the results; then, her defiance of the existing deity; and finally, her faith in Athene, the giving up of all responsibilities into the hands of the Goddess. The Mother read again this last part to me. I deeply felt She was living at that moment—the childlike confidence in Athene's power, the peace, joy and strength to feel oneself Her instrument. But I could not bring out all that deeply enough. I could live through the first two phases but not the last. And it was not till much later (almost years later) that I understood how far and why I had failed to give form to the last part. However, maturity does not sprout up overnight and perfection is a relative term. Given the possibilities of that year we did give shape to our first character portrayal.

The Mother saw our final rehearsal in the Meditation Hall. This time we acted in front of Nolinida's room facing the staircase and the Mother stood half-way down the steps, Her hands resting on the balustrade. I don't remember if She made any remark but I think She liked it on the whole, only wanting Athene to be more Goddess-like and Motherlike in her speech. The performance that year took place in the Salle Jeanne d'Arc which had specially been hired for the purpose. I cannot overlook one amusing detail in my costume which again was white. They thought I should not look slim, so they wound a whole bedsheet or a saree round my waist, which added at least two inches all round my normal figure to the full satisfaction of the costume makers and the greatest indifference on my part, "It is the acting that matters and not the dress," I told myself. About the make-up I shall not say a word, we were all groping our way into a new domain and with the inveterate fascination for fair skin they painted a thick coating of white on the face so it all looked like a carnival mask. But nothing bothered either party, we were all suffused with one enthusiasm—that of doing well the Mother's work with as much of Her inspiration as we were capable of receiving.

When we went to the Mother that evening—She used to take our pranams seated midway at the stairs—She told me, "Everyone is full of praise for you people. You were heard by all." This last remark in comparison to Her French Scene which was not audible everywhere in the Hall—mind you, there were no mikes!

1st December, 1947: We were going to do the last part of Sri Aurobindo's long poem in quantitative metre, *Ahana the Dawn Goddess*. A few lines of the aspiration of the human soul and then the answer from above. It would be presented in the form of a tableau showing the different human endeavours to perceive Truth—Science, Philosophy, Painting, etc. (all personified)—and the human soul (a figure in light blue) rising out of all this to call to the Divine Force. The Help comes, embodied in Ahana and her message of joy. In our tableau Ahana would walk down a slope as if coming down the mountains painted on the back-drop...I was to play Ahana's part.

We were just starting our rehearsals when one evening we were suddenly called into the Mother's living room. She was seated on Her couch and we at Her feet while

She read those beautiful harmonious lines. Their music caught me in their snare and I almost overlooked their sense (or was it too far above my head?). However, it touched some depth of my being and I rejoiced feeling the atmosphere all around me. On our way down She gave us the flower "Radiating Purity" and asked if we had understood. A funny thing happened. I repeated the words "Par Ta Grace" (By Your Grace) just because I had heard someone say that to the Mother and thought it was a nice thing to suggest that, if we understood, it would be by Her help. Now, the Mother sees our thoughts and feelings, more than listening to the words we pronounce. She just could not hear the words I said as they did not correspond to any real movement within. When I repeated She laughed and said, "Pas tres bien?" (Not very well?). I knew those must be the real words I wanted to say, so I nodded to Her. She smiled and asked us to aspire and She assured that all would come right.

In those days everyone used to go to the Mother at least once a day and receive Her guidance and blessings, each according to his own need and capacity. One important mode of communion with Her was through flowers. It is interesting to note that to all those who acted She often gave the leaves She has named "Vital Strength" and "Quiet Strength in the Vital". One morning as I went up to Her (I think it was the final day), She said that Ahana was Her aspect of joy and that was why when I recited these lines my consciousness must be full of light with not a speck of grief there. And She gave me the Ashoka flower, that which She has called "No Grief".

Practice for *Ahana* had been real fun. Even before Norman arrived for the daily rehearsal we would start off, either trying out our positions or babbling about the décor. One day we discovered a more appropriate practice spot—our stairs—for Ahana to have a feel of walking down to earth! Hilarious over our discovery we rushed to the gate as we heard Norman enter, only to stop dumbfounded like two schoolgirls caught pilfering hot pickles. There entered behind Norman a tall blue-eyed, rather handsome, young man, quite unknown to us. We just gaped. Norman introduced us and we heard he was an actor from Hollywood who would come to our rehearsal that afternoon. When he had heard us he wondered how we had managed to give with such ease (no difficulty in breathing) these long lines in quantitative metre. He appreciated our clarity and simplicity of expression, saying that even professionals would get caught in this rhythm.

This time the performance took place in the playground itself. A temporary stage was built at the western end. Our artists worked through all November to paint the back-drop which turned out to be a masterpiece: Dawn in the Himalayas. To watch all this grow inch by inch, every day, served to prepare us for our own parts—devoted work of so many people inspired us all the more with the will to do our best. There were other items too for which other people were rehearsing, specially a French Comedy which turned out to be a great success. But on the final day, when our item started, the whole audience seemed to be meditating on Sri Aurobindo's words. Most people, wanting to appreciate better, had read or revised the passage that would



be done; so they easily responded to the words and our aspiration to feel them. It was a joy to all.

The dress was simple. We were all in sarees. But even there, a new experience was in store for me: the Mother had sent one of Her own sarees, one She had worn Herself and which was "suffused with Her consciousness". As I wore it I felt a loving peace surrounding me, a protection and a joy I had never known before. Nothing else mattered. I was lifted into another world, from where Ahana would speak.

1948: The cultural programme on the School Anniversary day was gaining in quality and importance and, moreover, we were having a stage of our own. So, for better effect and better performance, it was suggested that the programme be held in the evening. The only possibility was to have it on the 1st of December evening and the physical culture demonstration on the 2nd. We were very happy: the Mother would then be able to attend both the final performances.

This time I was chosen to take part in a French Comedy (Labiche's *Voyage de Monsieur Perichon*). I had to be the girl sought after by two young suitors, both of whom made fools of themselves trying to please their too vainglorious would-be father-in-law. I was a little concerned about the role and wondered what my inner attitude should be. Even at that young age we had learnt to lay stress on how we went about a work. One of the main reasons for this was the physical presence of the Mother. We knew instinctively that laughter, humour, fun were all permissible but not vulgarity. We tried to have no low, ugly vibrations specially while acting the love-scenes: we could deceive the world with a pretty gesture or a beautiful voice but the Mother would know what exactly was going on inside us and She would be displeased. And as our only satisfaction and reward was Her pleasure we first sought Her help to work on ourselves. For this part Mother asked me not to bother about any thing but be absolutely innocent within.

This was hint enough to show me the line on which to proceed. Gradually, through the years, I came to follow a few principles which could be summarised thus:

(1) I must have no ugly associations in my mind while doing my part, specially love-scenes;

(2) As what I say must correspond to some element in my consciousness, I must be able to form a beautiful image in my mind, the most beautiful I am capable of;

(3) I must not involve the other actor in my domain of sentiment: my imagination should be strong enough to support me.

All this, of course, got thus clearly defined much later, when I tried to analyse mentally what attitude I had intuitively considered ideal. The Mother had added a more concrete hint when, speaking in a general way about acting, She told me one day (I give my own version): For all this sort of work one must isolate oneself completely from the surroundings. Indeed, for all of us who have acted under the Mother's direct influence, acting has always been first a deep concentration drawing ourselves within and then a giving of the lines without losing the collected poise.

This year naturally there was no great problem. It was a comedy and mine was

a short part, no problem for me. But not so for others: some puritan people in the Ashram started wondering why such plays were allowed here. Moreover, seeing the Mother take full interest in the progress of the training—She never does things by halves! —they asked Her the question. And the Mother replied to this effect: These things are necessary to revive the vitality of the country.

The first reading of this play, done by all the French sadhaks here, was held in Pavitrada's room and the Mother read with them—my part. When I got to know my part the Mother called me one evening during our playground activities, as She sat with a few others around Her, near the verandah (She was sitting that evening near the third pillar from the gate and facing the ground). She first read my part with Pavitrada and then asked me to say my lines. I remember one particular correction rather well—it was an exclamatory sentence. Instead of ending it up on a high pitch, which would be very French, I would each time drop my voice to mark the end, as in English. It all ended up in a laugh as even after several trials I failed to copy the exact tone. It was, however, much better than before and the Mother said it would do.

Our regular rehearsals that year were held in one of the double-rooms at the top floor in *Golconde*. We all enjoyed them very much—I think rehearsals are after all the most wonderful part in acting. You feel a unique group spirit gradually form among the most varied people. For me it was quite an experience running onto the stage in pointed high heels! Oh yes, that reminds me of a funny incident. That was the first evening I tried out my dress and shoes at Udar's house. As soon as the necessary things were found, we decided to go off to the Mother for Her approval. Still tottering on that precarious height I started coming down the stairs but soon on a slight slope I landed gracefully on the floor. However, led by Udar, I went through the Ashram (where no one recognized me in that outfit!) and up to the corridor where the Mother was. She made me walk up and down, saw me once in one hat and then in another, deciding what I should wear in which scene. No stockings would be needed, She said, as the colour of the skin would give that impression.

Everything went off well. This was one of the easiest parts I have ever done but I enjoyed it thoroughly. The friendly laugh we used to have during rehearsals—between actors, stage managers, promptor and the specially invited critics—made a merry troupe of us and the audience caught our mood of fun when we performed on the last day.

1949: This year stands out now as a landmark in my acting because this was the first time we did an extract from *Savitri*—lines from Book Ten Canto Three: the debate between Savitri (Love) and Death.

One morning the Mother came almost running to where I used to wait for Her in the corridor. I think She was in a light blue gown and I remember how eagerly She broke to me the wonderful news: I had been chosen to take the part of Savitri. But strangely enough there was hardly any reaction from me—did I consider it an obvious birthright or was all my thought immediately directed to the work to be done? I cannot say. I have often thought afterwards that I had been a slow pig, too slow to

realise the wealth that was showered on me. Even the Mother, I think, was a little taken aback to see me receive this extraordinary Grace with no sign of special enthusiasm. But as things stood, that was perhaps for the best. I was still too immature to feel simply grateful for a special Grace; if I had got excited about it a vital reaction would have crept in and turned my head.

We were called one evening to the playground where the Mother read our parts, and gave us typed copies of the script. It was like extending Her blessings and Her help to our work. Henceforth all I did became a preparation for *Savitri*. When I would see the Mother, *Savitri* was foremost in my mind; when I went for the November Darshan my only prayer as I looked on Sri Aurobindo was: may *Savitri* be done well, as You want it done!

As things started progressing the question of décor and dress came up. Norman suggested there could be something like a bridge and flowers. The Mother said, "No." The whole presentation would be simple to the maximum. Nothing to draw away the attention from the words. The debate was not on the material plane. And *Savitri*'s dress? Gold? No, it would be white and her hair would be loose. So we stood—Death in black and *Savitri* in white—two static figures on the stage, giving the unforgettable lines of this book. The power of the words was enough to catch the audience. But a strange thing happened to me. I was aspiring with all the concentration I was capable of when something seemed to grow within me, out of me and then it spread out larger than me. The experience was so tangible that I even remember the line I was saying when it happened: "Earth saw my struggle, heaven my victory." The lines that followed up to the finale had a quality quite different from an ordinary recitation.

1950: "The Vision and the Boon", Book Three Canto Four. This year a portion of this canto was to be done. We were told that the Mother had read it to Sri Aurobindo before reading it out to us. And He Himself asked that the last description be cut, because, for recitation purposes, it would be an anticlimax on the stage.

Everyone knows how in spite of Sri Aurobindo's illness all programmes were held as usual and the Mother did not stop any of Her work. We have been told that after the performance Sri Aurobindo asked the Mother, "How was *Savitri*?" That is a precious enough gift for all of us.

1951, 1952, 1953: Now three years in succession we had different portions from *Savitri*. Each time I was chosen to take the part of *Savitri* but it always came as a pleasant surprise. I knew how sacred the role was: *Savitri* stood for the Mother and whatever Sri Aurobindo has written as coming from her is really a mantra, not to be pronounced by the impure in spirit. That is why, as soon as we heard that again a passage from *Savitri* would be presented, my mind would get quiet and I would tell myself, "Do not expect to get the part; whoever will be worthy of it this year will be chosen." And I left it to the will of the Lord. The Mother's announcement would each time come to me as an act of Grace.

In 1951 we recited parts from "The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consumma-

tion" (Book Eleven Canto One). The Mother read to us the whole passage and gave us the script with our names written by Her. That was the opening ceremony. I felt Her quietly working on my being so that I might be inwardly ready for the part. I have already said how our everyday life got influenced by the thought of doing *Savitri*. Any ugly thought I would be conscious of would immediately be thrown out, because I must be a fit instrument for doing *Savitri*. One day, I shrank from a bull that was coming towards me in the street and immediately I reproached myself: How could I transmit the power of *Savitri* if there was fear and disgust in me? Some of these thoughts may seem puerile because everyone knows that such movements do not leave the consciousness so easily, but they show the devotion with which we prepared ourselves for the work.

Norman helped us a great deal in getting the right grounding for the final day. We all knew that Sri Aurobindo's words are all-important and all-powerful; if pronounced clearly and in the right spirit of self-giving they will work their own miracle both on the speaker and the hearer. So for all training Norman made us follow a few rules:

1. Read through the passage every night before going to bed, looking carefully at the words and trying to understand them, but without making any effort whatsoever to learn them by heart—each one of us had usually a hundred to two hundred lines to say. But this method let the text take possession of us and with it Sri Aurobindo's force penetrated our consciousness.

2. Never let the mind wander during the recitation. Apart from thinking only of what we said while reciting we would listen to each word said by others at every rehearsal—remembering that they were Sri Aurobindo's words which could only thus reveal to us their secrets. This was perhaps a way of invoking Sri Aurobindo's presence in our work; it was certainly a great help to train our minds to concentrate at a stretch on one thing only without relaxing. So, by the final day, we were mentally ready to make the extra effort of concentration to receive the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's special help.

This year the Mother was very happy after the performance; *Savitri* had given Her a great joy. I, on my part, had a peculiar experience. In any case, on the final day, we never used to think of the words we were to say, but collect our thoughts and meditate, so as to be inwardly ready to receive the Mother's force. All the initial nervousness had to be got rid of, by concentration, in the green room itself, so that by the time we were on the stage nothing else mattered but Sri Aurobindo and His words.... So I stood, calm, collected, my mind a blank, with full faith in His help. It was a special year—the year after Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi. Soon after I started I felt a power above my head, a little to the right. I relaxed, it seemed someone else was speaking through me. I spontaneously took the right cues; but once, I was about to say the wrong word and that power acted, made me pause and the right word was pronounced. I shall never forget the sense of abandon, that feeling of calm trust when nothing can go wrong because He is near.

In 1952 we did a portion of *Savitri* where she comes to her father and announces her choice of uniting herself to Satyavan. Here Narad will reveal to the King and the Queen the strange destiny that awaited their daughter (Book Six Canto One).

For recording this year's events I shall only quote what I jotted down in my diary:

18.11.52. — First rehearsal in front of the Mother.

19.11.52. — The Mother told me, "Cela manque d'ampleur. Le roi, la reine et Narad sont pleins de majesté, mais il faut que la majesté de Savitri soit encore plus grande et domine le tout." (It lacks amplitude. The king, the queen and Narad are full of majesty but the majesty of Savitri has to be greater still and dominate the whole.)

20.11.52. — The Mother reads Savitri's part to me. She says, "C'était creux l'autre jour. Il faut que cela soit plus simple. Le roi et la reine, je les vois grands dans leur majesté extérieure; mais toi tu dois avoir une majesté intérieure: ce sera l'état de conscience qui le déterminera. Il sera simple mais pas familier." (It was hollow the other day. It has to be more simple. The king and the queen, I see them great in their outer majesty, but you must have an inner majesty; it will be determined by the state of consciousness. It will be simple but not commonplace.)

And again: "Quand elle dit, mon père, j'ai décidé, c'est fait. Il n'y a plus à dire. Elle ne le dira pas (déclamant!), mon père, j'ai décidé, c'est fait." (When she says, father, I have decided, it is done. There is nothing more to say to it. She will not say—declaiming!—father, I have decided, it is done.)

30.11.52. — Cyclone. The sea is mad, huge waves and terrific wind. The pier is broken. Roof-tiles of the Press have flown off. The stage has been dismantled. The Mother told me, "Il faut que cela s'arrête, autrement—" (It must stop, otherwise—) and She shrugged Her shoulders.

1.12.52. — The programme will be done after it gets clear.

2.12.52. — So it's today and the physical culture tomorrow. When I went to the Mother this morning she said: "Aujourd'hui aussi simple, aussi vaste, et aussi grande que tu peux—comme l'infini! Ne pas laisser entrer le vital, tu comprends?" (Today as simple, as vast, as great as you can be—like infinity. Must not let the vital come in, understand?) As I nodded yes, She smiled and added, "Une voix très forte, mais très calme." (A very strong voice and yet very calm.)

I remember going in a file to receive sweets from the Mother after the performance and She stopped me to say that it was exactly as She had wanted.

1953 was a difficult year for me. We were to do "The Triple Soul Forces" (Book Seven Canto Four) from *Savitri*. Here Savitri is seen to face three different powers of her being along with the resisting forces which oppose their action on earth and men. She listens to each and promises to bring back to it the final solution which will synthesise and uplift the whole creation.

Things seemed to go wrong for me right from the beginning. The day the Mother was to read to us, there was something amiss in our sitting position; I had naturally

chosen a spot from where I was made to move and sit just near the Mother, which I felt was not right. And indeed it was not how the Mother expected us to be: this feeling was verified when on a second reading by the Mother I sat where I felt like,—*i.e.*, with the three soul forces to my right and the three resisting powers to my left—and, just after entering, the Mother remarked, “Ah, that’s exactly how I have seen you.”

The rehearsals started. I wondered why I was not getting my part: was it because the mind had started questioning and analysing too much or was my attention drawn too much to technique? (I was having a few lessons in voice production.) I put my problem to the Mother. She asked me to tell Her myself but when none of my answers satisfied Her, She explained to me the cause and I took the steps which I thought would help me. But, whatever I would do, there formed a rigidity in my being. The height of the struggle came when I could not reach any depth at all on the final rehearsal and the Mother said, “I just do not know what to do with you.” And She explained, “The promise of her return must not sound like the dream of a young girl. It must leave a stamp on the audience as a certitude of victory.” Then again recalling a line, “I could not hear all the words. Every single word in Sri Aurobindo’s writing has a purpose. You slurred over ‘in all’ as you would do in daily speech. They must come out clearly: ‘There shall be light and peace in all the worlds’.”

Well, everything in me revolted. I say everything because at the moment that’s what I felt, having identified myself with that dark outburst. I said to myself, “I have often told you I cannot do these parts—how can I rise to that height, I who am a common human being? I cannot do what you ask”—and so on. I could not sleep that night as these thoughts coursed through me violently. A dark despair rose up opposing all goodwill. Only a person who has gone through such dark moments of helpless solitude will understand my condition. When I went to the Mother next morning, without any preamble or any indulgence, She simply asked, “So, you will do it?” I felt as if She had really heard all the dark monologue I had shot at Her and after a pause replied, “Yes.” Then She with Her unlimited power helped to replace my darkness with light. I remained quiet the following day, leaving Her to prepare me for the role.

One unique feature of the programme was its duration, it lasted more than six hours! There was to be an interval after three hours when refreshments would be served. And then at the end of the second half would come *Savitri*. Some fear still lurked in me—supposing I can’t be the right instrument, I’ve never as yet done it as She wants. So I went to the Mother during the interval. She assured me saying, “All will be well.” Clinging to that line as my last straw I entered the stage. This was the first year when at the opening of *Savitri* I still remembered that I was I! The first two speeches were not bad but there were still one or two thoughts darting through my mind, I could still not forget myself. But the last speech was not mine: something had suddenly opened in me and I was lifted, my voice was rich with meaning. It

took me quite some time to get back to normal after the curtain came down. The Mother was happy. The last speech was magnificent, She said.

It will perhaps not be out of place to note down here a few adverse attitudes that we had to face and, thanks to the force that was acting in us, they did us a lot of good. Some people were tired of having to hear the same voices and see the same faces, so dark and with nothing exceptional in the features or figure. When we would hear such remarks even in the green room just before the performance—well, strangely enough, they did not perturb us much, they only served to fortify our belief that the inner quality mattered more; and we concentrated all the more to attain an inner power and beauty. Another adverse attitude I had to face came from a few special people who would congratulate all but me, even when we actors would meet them together. I have not harboured any ill-will for them and am on the contrary grateful for they offered me such a concrete understanding of the fact that everyone need not appreciate all that I think beautiful. At that time I used to tell myself, "It is not for other people's praises that you do this work—it must be a perfect service to Her." But I can't overlook the fact that it all made me a little sad, because among them were people for whom I had really a certain regard. However, I had to understand that the calm luminous joy which the Mother made me experience each time I spoke in the right spirit can be appreciated only by a few: those who are not bound by the external form and who have some glimpse of rising into another world where we are pure and free and luminous, whatever our normal everyday life may be.

1954: *Perseus the Deliverer*—several scenes were chosen from this five-act play maintaining a link in the story. I was to take Andromeda's part. This was really one of my favourite roles; I have always understood this character more easily than any other of Sri Aurobindo's heroines. When asked about the essential quality of the part the Mother said, "Andromède aspire à la nouvelle connaissance qu'apporte Persée." (Andromeda aspires towards the new knowledge that Perseus brings) Sri Aurobindo had indicated in the introduction: "the subject is an incident in its (the human mind's) passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism... and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his (man's) ultimate destiny to become." So Andromeda really stood for the psychic aspiration and higher promptings which enable the greater consciousness to manifest. To give the right tone to the part I would have to feel that inner presence throughout, in spite of all the detail-subtleties of emotion.

As the rehearsals began I started working hard, for my part was long and difficult as it admitted a vast scope of expression—right from the innocence and petulance of a child to the mature depth of an experienced woman; there was sadness and joy, strength and self-giving, aspiration and nobility. I enjoyed helping Norman work out the moves and the positions. Some scenes would come so easily, there the actors supported each other with their reactions but there were others where it was more difficult. I wondered how the whole would turn out to be. I was not happy with the prospects.

And again something in me revolted—I just did not want to do the part. “Why must I be chosen? There are so many others who act better than I; they could easily do the part; why, there is this one, and the other...” and so on. Again a sleepless night. But this time the whole being did not participate. I saw through the dark trick and and tried to pray. Gradually there was more calm and someone pointed out to me, very logically and objectively, why I was the one chosen. In his interview with the Mother, Norman spoke of me and She said that it was all right now that I had understood and would do it. So it was She who had answered my prayer.

When finally we performed on the 1st nothing bothered me. I just let myself go. I did not even care how the play as a whole would stand. I simply acted out my part, regardless of the result. There was a constant glow at my heart which seemed to illumine everything and add a finishing touch of joy to all I did; so much so, that I think my sad scene, chained at the rocks, though picturesque, lacked in emotional warmth, was too restrained because I just could not despair with that glow of light and joy which always gives one the certitude of victory.

The programme went off well. Like the previous year it had extended incredibly to seven hours. When we started the last scene I remember it was a quarter to twelve!

1955: The programme was to be a grand connected whole describing “The Spiritual Destiny of India”. I did not have anything to do except walk across the stage and sit there as Savitri. And yet I learnt two very important things this year:

First of all, I learnt to see that these activities need not occupy one’s whole attention and that, in spite of having helped a great deal in my inner development, they need not remain as an indispensable prop.

Secondly, I learnt that for any creative activity, worthy of the name, no fixed ideas can determine the line of expression. In other words, whenever any convention is forming, break it and look for the true source within. This was clear when I came and stood for Savitri during a rehearsal. The Mother said it was too rigid, too conventional. And She made me walk up and sit at Aswapathy’s feet. But even that walking I could not do in the right spirit, I could not bring out all that the Mother wanted me to. I could not get the necessary concentration to reach that state of consciousness. I was not mature enough to feel on the stage without the help of word or gesture.

1956: *Conversations of the Dead*—I was to take part in one of the four dialogues as Turiu. This time the Mother did not read the passage. She was busy with Her own play *L’Ascension vers la Vérité*. The important incident for me was that I broke my right forearm about ten days before the show. The Mother said that if I did not do my role the whole item would be dropped. This could not be accepted. So I decided that I would take part in any case. She wanted me to forget the plaster and the fixed arm and act, but I could not be so natural. However much I thought of the words I was always aware of the hindrance and She did not insist, only said, “You are thinking too much of your arm.”

1957: A story based on the descent of the Supramental Light was written in French by two disciples here: *Lumière sans Obscurité* (Light without Obscurity) it was



named, after a flower with the same significance. It was then dramatised in 19 scenes with connecting links given by a commentator off-stage. Here a blind girl, exceptionally developed within, would get back her sight by the power of the supramental force. The whole story showed the search for the unknown flower which she had seen in a vision and which was to cure her. The play offered several delicate touches and had really great possibilities. I liked my part very much and worked out the in-between-lines reactions very carefully, trying to put myself in a blind person's position. But some of the other actors did not respond to this unconventional form of a play. And as no one really directed the acting, on the whole it did not stand.

After our first rehearsal in front of the Mother She almost scolded me saying, "Why didn't you tell me no one was teaching the actors? Then I would have done it myself." I just gaped. I had never noticed that the actors were not taught enough. It is true I was left to work out my part and only then did I see that in all my scenes I had chalked out the moves with my co-actors!... Speaking of the play in general the Mother said, "A cause du film, maintenant c'est cela le théâtre: les paroles ne sont qu'un accompagnement aux gestes, au sentiment; sans faire entendre aucune parole vous devez pouvoir communiquer au public tout ce que vous voulez dire; les paroles viennent ajouter un côté littéraire au mime." (Because of the cinema, drama is now more like this: the words are only an accompaniment to the gestures and the feeling. Without speaking a single word you should be able to communicate all that you want to say to the audience. The words add only a literary side to the mime.)

When I told Her, "I find the last part difficult; if it is all like a fairy tale to me how can I convince the audience?" She reacted very strongly and explained to me how the light that would cure the girl was the Supramental light, that I had to live my part, that even if actually after rehearsals I was saying the same thing for the hundredth time I should feel that it was the first time I had pronounced such a sentence in that situation. Then to distinguish my attitude in the last scene, She said, "It is the realisation, and there is a world between a promise and the realisation." And She showed me how I should feel when I would touch the flower to my eyes, "something is happening, something unusual", and then as I took it off,—it must be after a long moment,—how surprised and almost shocked I must be to see the light. I remember how well the Mother showed this almost horrified intake of breath in an "Ah!" which was also the most intense expression of joy.

I drank in Her acting and left. But as I was walking thoughtfully through the streets—still lost in what the Mother had shown—a child came running to tell me that the Mother wanted me. I could not believe my ears. I said, "But I have just seen Her." "Yes, but She has called you again." When I ran up I found Her waiting for me. She said She wanted to make me do the last part so I might understand and remember. She led me to a room apart and asked for the words. She rearranged some of them so as to give more power to the speech and made me go through the moves. After retrieving my sight I was to say twice, "Je vois, je vois"; the first, She explained, had

to be a cry of surprise, the second a statement. It all stood as a symbol of man seeking the Supramental Light which marked the beginning of a new dawn.

So our dress rehearsal came: 29th November, 1957. I speak of the dress rehearsal because the other two performances (we had an extra show on the 3rd for the outsiders) did not reach that height. I had got into the mood that night and in the last scene I caught the right spirit of it all: when the lights came up on the golden backdrop I really felt I was seeing the true supramental light. The Mother was very happy and the joyous silent communion I had with Her after the performance has left "a huge white stamp" upon my life. While leaving She said, "It was exactly as I had shown you." What greater praise could I have coveted?

1958: We did *Vasavadutta* this time. I mention this year because it was the last the Mother attended physically at the Theatre. It was also a somewhat new experience as the story had nothing deeply symbolic about it. Yet I found the means of acting it in such a way that I would be true to all I had learnt with the Mother. It was not too difficult because the poetry was after all Sri Aurobindo's. This did not satisfy everyone but it proved to me that even common themes can be acted from a height. The joy of artistic creation has the power to transmute all. The Mother came eagerly to me the next morning, almost as She had come to announce the choice of Savitri, and said, "C'était épatant." (It was splendid.) Again that communion of deep joy.

And we shall end there our long story. It must not be read as a self-glorification because the actual work was not done in that spirit. These reminiscences have only been jotted down in grateful remembrance of all that the Mother had tried to do in the field of acting through us. If we were at times successful instruments it was because She had prepared us.

May Her vision of harmony and refinement and joy in acting be realised today the world over.

AMITA SEN  
February, 1964

#### N.B.

All the comments and explanations of the Mother were in French. They have been noted down as I remembered and understood them. I have sometimes given only a free English version of Her words.

## EXPERIENCE OF A STUDENT-PROFESSOR OF SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

I AM one of those few lucky ones who have been associated with this Centre since its very early stages. If I am asked today to say what was the most striking feature in my student-life, my answer is: the utter freedom. And I repeat that this atmosphere of freedom is not particular to the Centre of Education but to the whole of life in general in the Ashram. It goes without saying that much have we abused and do still abuse the unique freedom that is given us. And to this effect many purists raise their eyebrows with consternation and ask, "Why this FREEDOM?" Indeed why this freedom? Well, this is what the Mother said to us in one of her Wednesday classes:

"...You have been given an almost fantastic freedom, my children—I do not believe that there is any part in the world where children are so free—and indeed it is very difficult to make good use of such a freedom.

"Yet the experiment was worth the trial. You do not appreciate it, because you do not know how things are when things are not so; to you here all appears quite natural. But it is very difficult to organise one's own freedom. And yet if you succeed in self-disciplining yourself—for higher reasons, not for passing examinations, making a career, pleasing your professors, getting many prizes, for all such ordinary reasons that children have—not to be scolded, not to be punished—we put aside all these reasons, and if then you succeed in disciplining yourself (each his own discipline, it is not necessary to follow the discipline of others) simply because you want to progress, you want to pull the best out of you then you become beings much superior to those who follow the ordinary school disciplines. That is what I wanted to try. I do not say, please note, that I have failed; I have still a bright hope that you will know how to profit by this unique occasion. But there is one thing that you have to find: the necessity of an inner discipline; without discipline you can go nowhere, without discipline you cannot even live the normal life of the normal man. But instead of having the conventional discipline of ordinary societies, ordinary institutions, I wanted, I want still, that you should have the discipline that you put upon yourself for the love of perfection, your own perfection, the perfection of your being..."<sup>1</sup>

Further in the same talk the Mother says: "It is not that I have a well-marked aversion for conventional discipline, social or other, and that one should abstain from all disciplines. I would like rather that everyone should find his own discipline in the sincerity of his inner aspiration and the will to realise oneself."<sup>2</sup> Mark the sentence: "I would like rather..."

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* Vol. XII, No. 4, pp. 35-37.

I solemnly believe that what is unique in our Centre of Education is not so much its academic structure, although there too it is developing certain special features, but the presence of the Divine Mother, the vibrant atmosphere, which, at one stage or another, awakens the individual here, without any outward compulsion whatsoever, to the necessity of an inner discipline, an inner perfection.

From the very beginning we were conscious that mere academic excellence is not the aim here. The Mother has said in one of her messages to the teachers:

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

Let not this be misunderstood and misinterpreted as meaning that the Mother gives no value to studies. Indeed in one of her classes she said to us:

“Now if you believe that by abstaining from all effort and study, you will become geniuses, and supramental geniuses into the bargain, do not have illusions, please; that will never happen to you. For, even if you come in touch with the higher light, by your inner aspiration or by the divine grace, you will have nothing there in your head to be able to express it. So, that will remain in quite a nebulous state and will change nothing in your external life. But if it pleases you to be like that, nobody has any right to force you to be otherwise; you must wait till you have enough consciousness to enable you to choose.”<sup>1</sup>

In *Savitri*, we have:

But how shall come the glory and the flame  
If mind is cast away into the abyss?<sup>2</sup>

I am reminded here of a heated discussion I had sometime back with some of my close friends who were also my class-mates. We were then in our early teens. The discussion was about the futility of studies. One of my friends said: “Look, my father has not studied even up to the matriculation; yet he speaks such good English and he is so successful a businessman!” Another gave the example of Sri Ramakrishna, etc., etc. The next morning I put the whole matter before the Mother. She told me at length how much Sri Aurobindo had studied and how during the vacations she herself used to study subjects other than those prescribed in the curriculum and that she would also follow the course of her brother who studied in a higher class. When I said, “But, Mother, you have allowed my friend X to leave the school!”, she smiled and said, “People come and say to me, ‘I want to do this’—I say ‘All right do it’. But if they ask for my opinion that is a different matter.”

I am also reminded in this connection of another incident. A noted film was running in the town. To be more precise, it was the Hindi film ‘Awara’. Some of my friends, who saw it, came and told me that I would be foolish to miss such a film. I

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 27-29

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book VII, Canto 3.

therefore approached the Mother and asked for her permission. She said I could go. But then I told her: "Mother, if you have the slightest objection, I will not go." Then she explained to me at length why she does not like that we should go to outside cinema halls; how the interchange of vibrations there is not beneficial to the life here, etc. Naturally I did not go; and I was happier.

This indeed is the constant experience of all of us here with the Mother. She never imposes herself, never compels anyone to do something. She shows the way. It is left entirely to the individual to follow it or not.

I shall presently conclude by recounting how I became a professor.

It was on the 16th of March, 1954. I was going to the Mother for the morning Pranam. Suddenly near the Samadhi a flower from the 'Service' tree dropped in front of me. I picked it up spontaneously and decided that this should be my offering to the Mother that day. I took no other flower. When I gave the Mother the 'Service' flower she smiled at me significantly. Later in the evening she said, "You gave me this morning the flower 'Service', would you like to do some service—take some responsibilities?" I was overjoyed and said that I had always dreamt to be a teacher of mathematics. The Mother replied, "Ah, my intuition was correct." She immediately called for Pavitra and asked him to arrange for me a class. It was a difficult job for Pavitra. Because the school was in full session, all the classes and teachers had been fixed—and to complicate the matter, I myself was a full-fledged student. It took Pavitra about a week's time to fix some suitable free hours. It was decided that I should take some extra periods of Mathematics for the students of the fourth class. My first class was on the 23rd of March. The date was specially significant to me, as it was the birthday of my mother who had passed away only five months back. The Mother asked me not to follow any text book but to make the students do some problems of intelligence, problems of the type which she herself had made me do a few years earlier.

On more than one occasion the Mother has asked the teachers not to be bound by the prescribed text-books. Once when I showed her the classes and the list of my young students for the coming year, she told me, "My child, I want you to teach them how to think. They should learn to think." She also told me how Sri Aurobindo used to teach without following any text-books.

If I am asked what is my experience as a teacher, I shall say: It is an occasion where I come to know myself better. Not only is the insufficiency of my knowledge made palpable but all the imperfections of my nature reveal themselves. One feels more and more the necessity of an inner discipline before one can discipline the students. Believe me, teaching is not an easy task. The Mother once told us. :

"Teachers who do not possess a perfect calm, an unfailing endurance, an unshakable quietness, who are full of self-conceit will reach nowhere.

"One must be a saint and hero to become a good teacher.

"One must be a great Yogi to become a good teacher.

"One must have the perfect attitude in order to be able to exact from one's pupils a perfect attitude.

"You cannot ask of a person what you do not do yourself. It is a rule.

"You must then look within you at the difference between what is and what should be, and this difference will give you the measure of your failure in the class.

"That is all I can offer to you.

"And I add, since I have the occasion, this: We ask many students here, when they are grown up and know something, to teach others. Some, I suppose, know why; but there are also those who think that it is because to serve in some way is good and because after all there is need of teachers and you are content to have them. But I tell you—for it is a fact—I have never asked any of those—who were educated here—to give lessons unless I saw that it would be *for him* the best means of disciplining himself, of learning in the best way what he has to teach and to attain an inner perfection which he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this occasion for disciplining himself, which is *exceptionally* hard."<sup>1</sup>

Well, when I look at myself in all my nakedness and consider all my infirmities in the perspective of the great ideal the Mother has put before us, I cannot help being overcome by a deep sorrow. But then I recall the words of the Mother:

"What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."

And I say to myself: surely our human frailties shall not stand in the way of the Manifestation. Then the magic mantra of Sri Aurobindo starts ringing in my ears:

In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;  
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,  
The days become a happy pilgrim march,  
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,  
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.  
A few shall see what none yet understands;  
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;  
For man shall not know the coming till its hour  
And belief shall be not till the work is done.<sup>2</sup>

MANOJ DASGUPTA

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, pp. 29-31.

<sup>2</sup> *Savitri*, Book I, Canto 4.

## THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

SPIRITUAL culture is the greatest contribution of Indian Civilisation.

The foundation of every significant endeavour of man in India has been laid in spiritual experience. It was spirituality that imparted the creative inspiration to the pursuit of philosophy, religion, education, politics, sociology, literature, medicine, science, arts and crafts, sculpture, music, etc.

For thousands of years various experiments have centred round spirituality, and directly or indirectly they have all exercised an influence, either long-lived or short-lived, upon Indian life and its activities. By natural synthesis of all views and systems, Indian spirituality has steadily progressed on the spiral of evolution towards a harmonious perfection.

But, in later times, at a particular stage of evolution, Indian spirituality tended to lay an exclusive stress upon the transcendental realisation and look down upon world-existence as something devoid of any reality or significance. This ascetic, life-negating tendency holds us still under its spell. But, to be sure, it does not represent the organic whole of Indian spirituality, nor is it its last word. The ascetic outlook was followed by fresh affirmations of the reality of the individual soul and the material world and the discovery of many a truth which helped to recover the integrality of the ancient spiritual vision. This evolutionary advance will never stop.

In Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Indian spirituality is taking a new turn under the inspiration and guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—a new order of dynamic spiritual life is being evolved. About his Yoga Sri Aurobindo says: “The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.”

This stupendous work cannot be accomplished by the unaided effort of man alone. It can be done only by a combination of his sincere aspiration and the response of the Divine Force.

It is not at all necessary to cut off all worldly relations and retire to the forest or the mountain for practising this Yoga. It can be practised even in the worldly life and in the midst of the daily round of one's activities. But it is, of course, true that a congenial environment facilitates one's progress, and it is to prepare that congenial environment and atmosphere that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has been founded. An ideal community and an ideal individual depend upon each other for the attainment of perfection. An ideal man will create an ideal community and an ideal community will provide every facility for the growth of an ideal man towards his perfect self-fulfilment.

There are no set rules in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga which everybody is called upon to follow. Everybody can begin his sadhana in his own way and in accordance with the law of his own nature. In the beginning, all can follow the fivefold psychological perfection. These five qualities to be developed and perfected are: Faith, Aspiration, Devotion, Sincerity and Surrender. They can endeavour to develop these qualities through all the activities of their day-to-day life. In proportion as they progress in this practice they will receive the direction of the Divine Force within them as to how they should advance further.

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is called the Integral Yoga or a Synthesis of Yoga. In it the sadhak advances towards the integral supramental transformation through the utmost perfection of his mind, life and body by a synthesis of knowledge, devotion and works.

The Mother says: "As we rise to this degree of perfection which is our goal we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength, and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and perfect harmony."

A musician can best give a demonstration of his skill if he gets a flawless instrument. The Divine Shakti whom we want to bring down into our mind, soul, life and body can reveal herself perfectly only if she is given this fourfold instrument developed to a high state of perfection. That is why an utmost perfection of the mind, soul, life and body is sought to be attained in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram by means of an integral education and self-culture.

The body is the base or pedestal of our terrestrial existence. Our mind, soul and life are meant to express their powers to perfection by means of our body. It is for this reason that, apart from the expression of the truth of the body itself, its condition, good or bad, bears a special significance. Besides, the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is very difficult and takes long to be accomplished. So, the longer the body can be made to live by maintaining its health, strength and active energies, the more the gain for the sadhana. It is true that, if this body perishes, one can resume the sadhana in a new body in the next life; but in a new body the whole work, though it will be comparatively easy of accomplishment, will have to be started over again from the very beginning and that will mean an unnecessary waste of time. Therefore, the greater the progress we make in this life and in this very body the better for us.

In order to preserve the body for long, in health, strength and active fitness it is essential that we should have, even while fully observing the rules of health, a sound course of physical education. With reference to the ultimate aim of physical education, Sri Aurobindo says: "The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture..." On the basic programme of physical education, the Mother says: "The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and



agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and resistant in its health and organic functions.”

A rational and well-directed system of physical education helps one to a great extent to acquire physical fitness, and at the same time to develop a “discipline and morale and sound and strong character” towards which it can help.

The follower of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo believes that, by progressively realising the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in his inner and outer life, along with the cultivation and achievement of the above qualities through physical education, he will one day reach his goal of physical perfection.

Physical fitness lays the foundation of physical perfection. If we analyse physical fitness we shall see that it is constituted by health, strength, endurance and skill. When a systematic physical education is followed in conjunction with an observance of all the rules of health, that is to say, suitable food, sleep and rest, personal and environmental hygienic conditions, activities appropriate of self-expression, and inner quietude and calm, it produces physical fitness with all its components. But each particular type of exercise and method of moving the body helps one to acquire a special quality of physical fitness, and there are as many kinds of skill as there are exercises and body movements. Physical skill or skill of the body means speed, agility, suppleness, a good neuromuscular coordination, spontaneous reflex, grace, harmony, and those special capacities which can be acquired only by special exercises and methods of body movements. Therefore, for the attainment of physical perfection, an elaborate arrangement has been made in the scheme of physical education of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, to provide as many kinds of exercises and physical activities as possible, in the present situation; and trainees are advised that, instead of participating in one or two items only, they should, as far as possible and to the extent of their capacities, build their body to the utmost perfection through an integrated system of physical education.

About 800 members of the Ashram—men, women and children of various ages, from children of six to elderly men and women well advanced in age—take part in a systematic physical education. These members have been divided into twelve age-groups according to their ages and capacities, and programmes of physical education suited to every age-group, have been given to them. Opportunities are also provided to the grown-up members who wish to practise some activities of their choice separately from their age-groups, and according to their individual liking. There is the same programme of physical education for both boys and girls. The health of each member is examined regularly—for children there are two medical examinations in a year, and for adults one; and the records of these examinations are kept with scrupulous care. Adequate arrangements are made for those who need medical treatment or a change of physical exercises.

The new session of the Department of Physical Education starts from the middle of December. The normal programme is followed from the 16th of December to the 31st of March, and from the 1st of June to the 31st of August. During

these periods coaching is provided in all sorts of physical exercises and activities and also opportunities for practising them. All boys and girls upto the age of twenty-five are expected to practise physical education activities in some form or other every afternoon. The normal weekly programme for boys and girls of twelve to twenty-five years old comprising several groups, are as follows: Games 2 days, Gymnastics 2 days, Athletic Sports 1 day, Swimming 1 day, and Combative Sports 1 day. The programme for those who are younger or older than these age-groups is not so strict. But even for them, an all-round programme is drawn up according to their requirements and capacities. All sections of the Department of Physical Education are run by qualified teachers who have been trained in the Ashram.

Apart from the normal programmes of physical education, there are different seasons for the special practice of the similar categories of activities, which begin with special coaching and end with competitions. Thus we have a special season for Games, a special season for Combative Sports, for Swimming, for Athletics, and for Gymnastics. Besides, some time is set apart for the practice of the annual physical demonstration on the 2nd of December which is the foundation day of the Ashram school. And, after that, picnics and outings of the various groups are arranged, and these bring to a close the physical education year. There are no holidays and physical education activities are carried out all seven days of the week all round the year.

This, in short, is the scheme of physical education in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In 1945 the Department of Physical Education was started with only fourteen boys in a small playground without any equipment; and it is by an uninterrupted growth that it has reached its present state in the course of these twenty-one years. But much remains still to be done. There is constant endeavour on our part to carry the work of its organisation to a flawless perfection.

Like the other parts of the human being, the body too has to pass through four stages in order to attain perfection. The being has first to be conscious, then to acquire control, then to achieve mastery and finally to effect transformation. This work has to be fully accomplished in every part of the body, in every functioning of it and even in each of its cells. Then one day, "the physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine."

PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

## **RUNNING COMMENTARY DURING THE PHYSICAL DEMONSTRATION**

2nd December 1962

(Note: On every 2nd December, a programme of Physical Demonstration is presented at our Sports Ground in connection with the celebration of the Anniversary of our Centre of Education. This programme attempts to give a wide variety of items of physical education. And very often a special theme or aspect of Physical Education is undertaken and demonstrated through various symbolic or real presentations.

What follows here is a running commentary during the physical demonstration of 2nd December 1962. As this Demonstration had the theme of presenting the normal activities of physical education at the Ashram, it will serve the purpose of giving to the readers some concrete idea of our organisation of physical education.)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are now going to present to you our full programme of Physical Education through some representative movements. This is the programme we conduct throughout the year for the physical welfare of the students and teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and for the inmates of the Ashram.

It is not the aim of our Physical Education to produce champions or famous winning athletic teams. Nor does Physical Education serve us as a pastime activity, an object of excitement or an opportunity for the fulfilment of one's ambition. We consider it as a means by which one's physical instrument may be trained and perfected, so that something higher than the physical, the "Truth Force", which seeks to manifest through the body may find it a fit instrument for its self-expression.

Under the guidance and teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo we are striving here for an Integral Transformation, for the perfection of our whole being. The body being the base of our integral existence claims a special care and attention, so that it may share in the Integral Transformation by realising its own harmony and perfection and thus be fit to express the Divine Beauty, which is its special mission. All our plannings, programmes and policies of Physical Education are based on this basic truth of our existence.

A rational and well conducted programme of Physical Education helps to produce and promote Physical Fitness with the "development of discipline and moral and sound and strong character". We believe that cultivation of these qualities through Physical Education, along with the practice of the inner programme given to us by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, will help us ultimately to reach our goal of perfection in the body.

Physical Fitness, when analysed, will be found to be basically composed of

health, strength, endurance, and skill. Any systematic programme of Physical Training when practised with the strict observance of Health Rules, that is, proper diet, proper sleep and rest, personal and environmental hygienic conditions, suitable work for one's self-expression, and an inner poise, should lead one towards Physical Fitness with all its components. But certain activities go to develop certain special aspects of Physical Fitness. And there are as many kinds of skills as there are activities. Skill includes speed and agility, suppleness, a good neuro-muscular co-ordination and a good reflex, grace, harmony, etc., and the special knack that is developed while practising a particular type of activity. So, for an all-round physical development, we have included in our programme of Physical Education all the activities that are possible to introduce in our present circumstances and advise our members to follow an all-round training, as far as possible, instead of practising just one or a few activities only.

About 800 members—men, women, and children of various ages,—from children of six to grown-ups, even persons well advanced in age, take regular part in our programme of Physical Education. These members are divided into twelve groups according to age and capacity, and programmes of Physical Education are provided to suit each group. Opportunities are also provided to the grown-up members who want to practise their activities of choice as Non-group members. Each member is kept under strict medical supervision, children twice in a year and grown-ups once in a year, and all the records of progress are kept in proper order. Follow-up treatments are given when necessary. We prescribe the same programme of Physical Education to boys and to girls.

The new session of the Department of Physical Education starts from the middle of December. The normal programme is followed from the 16th of December to the 31st of March, and from the 1st of June to the 31st of August. During these periods coaching is provided in all sorts of physical exercises and activities and also opportunities for practising them. All boys and girls up to the age of twenty-five are expected to practise physical education activities in some form or other every afternoon. The normal weekly programme for boys and girls of twelve to twenty-five years old comprising several groups is as follows: Games 2 days, Gymnastics 2 days, Athletic Sports 1 day, Swimming 1 day, and Combative Sports 1 day. The programme for those who are younger or older than these age-groups is not so strict. But even for them, an all-round programme is drawn up according to their requirements and capacities. All sections of the Department of Physical Education are run by qualified teachers who have been trained in the Ashram.

Apart from the normal programmes of physical education, there are different seasons for the special practice of the similar categories of activities, which begin with special coaching and end with competitions. Thus we have a special season for Games, a special season for Combative Sports, for Swimming, for Athletics, and for Gymnastics. Besides, some time is set apart for the practice of the annual physical demonstration on the 2nd of December which is the foundation day of the Ashram School. And, after that, picnics and outings of the various groups are arranged, and these bring

to a close the physical education year. There are no holidays and physical education activities are carried out all seven days of the week all round the year.

We shall now try to present our full programme of Physical Education. Time will not permit us to show all our activities. We shall just show what is possible in a reasonable length of time.

1. We open our programme with a MARCH PAST of all the participants who are taking part in today's demonstration.

2. BANDE MATARAM—Not to be announced.

3. Our next item is MASS EXERCISE. Every year we compose a new set of Mass Exercise and give it to our members for practice at the beginning of our session. All our members are required to learn it.

Apart from its Physical Fitness value, Mass Exercise helps to promote a collective spirit. For here, all do the same thing, at the same time, for the same purpose, and under the same command. This united effort and unity of purpose has a great effect on the development of the collective spirit.

4. Music plays a very important role in the Physical Education programme of little children. When they do movements with music and songs, they are completely lost in it, spontaneously express their inner feelings through their movements and enjoy it immensely. This has got a great beneficial value for their health. Now the members of our youngest age-group (six to seven years) will WELCOME you with their movements to music.

5. Our GAMES SEASON includes Football, Cricket, Field Handball, Basketball, Volleyball, Softball, Tennis, Table Tennis, Indian Games, and special games for children.

Games provide a great enthusiasm and enjoyment to every participant by creating opportunities to meet many new, unforeseen and unexpected situations. It absorbs all the attention of the players and makes them use all their energies to give their best efforts and thus get a thorough exercise without even knowing it. Besides, these activities are ideal for the development of the sporting spirit, which has a great value in individual and collective life. "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."

#### A) CHILDREN'S FREE PLAY:-

It provides plenty of opportunity for happy, cheerful, independent and spontaneous movements, which wake up the curiosity of the children and thereby bring forward the desire to learn and the ability to use their limbs.

#### B) TENNIS DRILL:-

Tennis is a very refined game demanding a great precision and a perfect control over the nerves, muscles and limbs. It develops a great will-power, staying

power (endurance) and a very good reflex.

In this composition all the fundamentals of Tennis such as service, foot-work, fore-hand and back-hand drives, volley, half-volley, lob and smash are shown.

#### C) CRICKET DRILL:-

Cricket is a game of patience, steady nerves and cool-headed actions. It develops "the custom of discipline, obedience, order and a habit of team work", and a spontaneous and rapid decision in the will and action.

#### D) BASKETBALL DRILL:-

Basketball is a fast game demanding plenty of endurance. It also provides control over the body and limbs, team-work and precision. It is one of the few games in which both the hands and legs are used extensively and which at the same time gives a balanced exercise to the whole body. It is played in a comparatively small area. But it can provide opportunity for the practice of quite a large number of players and hold them in a state of suspense and enthusiasm throughout the game. Skills shown in the drill are:

- a) Dribbling
- b) Chest Pass
- c) Pivot
- d) Hook Pass
- e) Drill for the defensive players
- f) Game situation

#### E) FOOTBALL DRILL:-

Football is one of the most popular games throughout the world and provides keen interest and thrill to the spectators and players alike. But to play it well one needs a good deal of systematic training and hard work.

Normally, we do finer work with our hands and use our legs for walking, running, jumping, etc. But this game develops special capacity in the legs and feet, and brings a wonderful control and precision of action in these regions also. It is a great endurance-builder, develops agility and brings a general control over the whole body. Skills shown in the drill are:

- a) Dribble forward with the ball
- b) Dribble backward
- c) Weaving between players
- d) Tapping the ball from one foot to the other
- e) Pulling the ball with the sole of the foot
- f) Deceptive footwork
- g) Dribble forward with the instep of the feet and an occasional body-serve
- h) Feinting on one side in order to move to the other
- i) Passing in twos—direct, criss-cross
- j) Shooting with the inside of the feet—trap with the inside of the feet
- k) Instep-shooting
- l) Throwing the ball and trapping with the sole of the feet

m) Heading the ball

n) Throw-in

o) Feinting in order to puzzle the opponent's tactics in game-condition

p) Diving on the opponent's feet

q) High centre from the wings

6. COMBATIVE SEASON: We have arrangements for the practice of Judo, Boxing, Wrestling, Fencing and Stick-Play.

You may perhaps wonder why Combative Sports are given importance in the Ashram where people are expected to live a quiet and saintly life. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo teach us that nothing is useless if we know how to make the proper use of it. Combative Sports develop the body into a fit fighting machine. It builds up also courage, strong will and fighting spirit. Man's life is not always easy in the struggle for his existence or for the achievement of his ideal, even spiritual ideals. These qualities, acquired through combative sports, may be successfully utilised by the theory of transfer, in his efforts towards the success in his studies, commercial enterprises, constructive projects, or even for conquering his own weaknesses and inner difficulties.

Last year we showed our Combative Sports as one of the main items. This year we shall give only a couple of suggestive pieces in order to gain time.

A) BOXING DRILL:-

Boxing is called the noble art of self-defence, very useful in saving others from danger and also for protecting oneself. The show of Boxing begins with footwork and some practice of the fundamental blows and ends with two rounds of sparring.

B: SWORD DANCE:-

Our ancient forefathers always did some combative dance before they went out to fight or to hunt. The sword dance being done today is a symbolic dance to invoke the God of Victory to come to help and destroy the enemies, inner and outer.

7. AQUATIC SEASON: During this time we concentrate on the practice of the different strokes of swimming and diving.

Swimming develops tremendous endurance, improves the general posture and makes all the muscles of the body play into action. Diving gives the thrill of a few seconds of flight in the air, develops a daring spirit and full control over the whole body.

Many critical situations will demand a knowledge of swimming, which may often save one's life and that of others.

A great scholar was once travelling by boat, and in order to pass time he started a conversation with the boatman. Very soon he learnt that the boatman had no knowledge of the three R's and made a remark that the boatman had wasted 75% of his life. Suddenly a violent storm broke out, and seeing that it was impossible to save the boat from certain disaster, the boatman asked the scholar whether he knew swimming. The scholar answered in the negative. "Well sir," said the boatman "full 100% of your life is now wasted."

### A) SWIMMING MOVEMENTS:

In this composition the following movements are shown:

- a) Breast Stroke
- b) Crawl
- c) Synchronised Swimming
- d) Back Crawl
- e) Butterfly Stroke
- f) Life Saving

### B) DIVING ON THE TRAMPOLINE:

Divers in Europe and in the United States often use the apparatus called "Trampoline" for learning and perfecting their forms of diving. We are now showing some basic movements on the Trampoline and a few diving movements.

### C) AFTER A LESSON OF SWIMMING:

We see here a group of happy children, immediately after their lesson of swimming, who in a carefree, and childlike, restless spirit, are wiping their bodies and limbs, taking out water from their ears, and doing all such movements usually seen after swimming.

8. ATHLETIC SEASON: Athletics includes running, jumping and throwing events, movements most natural to man. Everybody, some time or other, does these three movements. But when the question of superior performances comes in, "training" comes into the picture. For, the purpose of training is to provide the maximum efficiency with the minimum expenditure of energy and here comes the application of science and knowledge to Athletics. Strength, endurance and skill, all have scope in Athletics. Specially those who take up the Decathlon event (which is composed of ten items of Athletics) develop an all-round and harmonious body.

In Athletics, performance and progress can be measured by centimetres and seconds and it is therefore ideal as a self-testing activity. Here one can compete against oneself and thus can find interest and stimulation for his own progress.

We are showing the following events:

- a) WARMING UP EXERCISES: most important for a good performance in the actual event and for avoiding sudden strains and injuries during the maximum effort.
- b) STARTS FOR SPRINTING, RELAY RACES with baton changing.
- c) LONG JUMP: the tuck style, the sail style, the hitch kick style and the hang style.
- d) HOP, STEP & JUMP:
- e) HIGH JUMP: the scissors style, the Western Roll, the Straddle Jump.
- f) POLE VAULT: the beginner's lesson, advanced work.
- g) SHOT PUT: split second sequence of the complete action, standing throw, throw with glide.
- h) JAVELIN THROW: split second sequence of the complete action, ladies' javelin, junior javelin, standard javelin.
- i) DISCUS THROW. standing throw, throw with turn.



j) **HAMMER THROW:** elementary swings, full swing.

k) **HURDLING:** exercises for hurdling, hurdling.

9. **GYMNASTIC SEASON:** Gymnastics are the controlled, graduated, precise and conventional movements of the body which are rarely seen in normal activities of life. In our everyday life, there is little scope for the full contraction and relaxation of the muscles or for the full bending and stretching of all the joints. Rarely is there an occasion to hang, heave or support with the hands, or to stand on the head, shoulders or hands. Yet these movements produce a great beneficial effect directly on the body itself, either by developing grace, harmony, proportion and strength or by correcting and counteracting the defects developed from birth or from unnatural habits acquired in the course of life.

Gymnastics can develop complete mastery over the whole body and its movements, and there is a great scope for self-expression through it. It can also make the body fit for any activity and can serve as a basis for all sports.

The branches of gymnastics that we offer to our members are: Olympic Gymnastics, Educational Gymnastics, Curative, Corrective and Remedial Gymnastics, Rhythmical Gymnastics, Body Building Gymnastics, Gymnastic Tests and some forms of Indian Gymnastics such as Malkhamb, Asanas, etc.

A) **EXERCISES WITH PARTNERS:**

A teacher of children's gymnastics has often to find out ways and means of making the gymnastic lesson appealing and interesting to the children. A composition such as this one accompanied by lively music will often do the work.

B) **BASIC WEIGHT TRAINING:-**

A certain amount of strength and suppleness in the muscles and joints is essential for any kind of activity. That will bring more efficiency in one's activity of choice and prevent injuries during the maximum effort. Body-building exercises can do a lot in this respect. All our members are advised to practise body-building exercises in some form or other.

In modern times weight-training is considered to be the most popular and effective way of building the body. Weight-training must not be confused with weight-lifting. Weight-lifting is a sport, in which single attempts are made in various styles to lift the maximum possible load. In weight-training, on the other hand, weights are used to bring sufficient resistance to the movements which are practised in several repetitions consecutively.

a) *Half Snatch:* a body warming movement which gives exercise to the whole body.

b) *Two Hands Curl:* strengthens and develops the front part of the upper arms.

c) *Two Hands Press:* strengthens and develops the shoulders and rear part of the upper arms.

d) *Rowing Motion:* strengthens and develops the upper back, shoulders and arms.

e) *Deep Knee Bend:* strengthens and develops the muscles of the thighs, hips and

the lower back. It also makes the heart and the lungs work vigorously. This is a great body-building exercise.

f) *Breathing Exercise*: deep breathing exercises are recommended immediately after vigorous leg work. It helps to expand the chest cage and brings the breathing back to normal within a short time.

g) *Lying Press*: strengthens and develops the chest, shoulders and back of the upper arms. It is another great body-building exercise. The efficiency of this exercise increases tremendously when practised on a bench.

h) *Sit Up*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the upper part of the abdomen. To add resistance we recommend holding a dumbbell behind the neck.

i) *Overhead Roll*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the lower part of the abdomen. To add resistance we recommend the use of the iron boots.

j) *The Side Bend*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the sides of the trunk and the oblique muscles of the abdomen.

k) *Stiff-legged Dead Lift*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the lower back.

l) *Neck Stretch*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the neck. The pressure of the hands gives the necessary resistance.

m) *Wrist Curl*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the lower arms.

n) *Rising on Toes*: strengthens and develops the muscles of the lower legs.

C) **APPARATUS WORK**: This is the most difficult but interesting part of Gymnastics. It demands a great strength in the upper body in general and in the arms in particular. It also demands great courage, self-confidence, skill and perfect body-control. Here we have:

a) *Bars at Different Heights*, in front—an item of the women's Olympic Gymnastics.

b) *Parallel Bars* on the right side, an item of the men's Olympic Gymnastics.

c) *Pommel Horse* on the left side—also an item of the men's Olympic Gymnastics.

d) Now we show *Vaulting*—An item of the Olympic Gymnastics practised by both men and women.

D) **FREE STANDING EXERCISES**: Very good for developing Agility and control of the whole body. In this composition we have mixed-up Agility-work with Calisthenic movements for making it more interesting.

E) **MOVEMENTS WITH HOOPS**: This type of exercises are called Eurhythmics. Here body-movements, music and rhythm play a very important part. The three together become one and express grace, harmony and beauty of a very high order.

10. During the first two weeks after the Demonstration of the 2nd of Dec., the different age-groups go for **PICNICS AND OUTINGS**. This helps them to come closer to nature, gives them a change and teaches them self-help, mutual understanding and fellow-feeling. We express our happy picnic time with a bonfire.

This is all that we wanted to show you today.

We started our work in 1945 with fourteen boys and no equipment, on a small plot of ground. It has taken seventeen years for our organisation to come into its present shape.

But we do not feel we have done enough. We have yet to progress, learn many more new things and make our organisation better.

And it is our firm conviction that our Physical Education programme, along with the practice of the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in our inner and outer life, will play a great role in our efforts for the Supramental Transformation, in whose process:

“The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine.”

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
Pondicherry

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **A STATEMENT OF THE AIMS AND OBJECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM**

SRI Aurobindo Ashram is at the same time a centre for the practice of yoga, a seat of learning and knowledge, a home for students and teachers, an institution for research in those yogic and educational methods whereby the highest spiritual values can be reconciled with the utmost dynamism of life and action. Its aims are:

(a) To create and establish an atmosphere surcharged with the highest values of Knowledge, Harmony, Power and Realisation particularly on the basis of the ideal and teaching of Sri Aurobindo;

(b) To be a centre preparing for the evolutionary transmutation of man by a radical yogic change of consciousness;

(c) To provide to each student and candidate the necessary stimulus to discover through a process of psychological exploration his inmost self;

(d) To evolve and realise a system of integral education, with special emphasis on the growth of consciousness which is the master-key for unity in the world and ultimately for the evolution of the entire race.<sup>1</sup>

(e) To emphasise the unity of all knowledge and to break the artificial barriers between Humanities, Science, Technology and Fine Arts;

(f) To develop a sense of international collaboration and oneness of mankind;

(g) To discover and prepare for the role that India has to play in the formation of the new international harmony.

<sup>1</sup> Such integral education includes the harmonious training and development of the physical, the vital, the mental and the psychic. Therefore the education in the Ashram is not limited to youth. It continues for the whole of life and it is not possible to draw a demarcation line between the Education Centre and the Ashram.

## APPENDIX B

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION

THE Centre of Education had a modest beginning as a school in 1943 with about 20 students on its roll, but within a short time, it grew and developed rapidly.

In 1944, a Playground was attached to the School.

A Library of Physical Education was opened in the year 1946.

A Medical Section with a resident medical officer to look after the health of the children was opened in the year 1946.

A Laboratory for Physics and Chemistry was opened in the year 1948.

A Sports Ground having a 400 metre cinder track was opened in the year 1951.

As the students reached a high level in the Secondary Section, a need for the introduction of the University Course began to be felt. Accordingly, a Convention was held at Pondicherry on April 24, 1951, which resolved to establish an International University Centre in Pondicherry as a fitting memorial to Sri Aurobindo.

Consequently, the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre was inaugurated by the Mother on January 6, 1952.

(In the year 1959, in order to give a wider scope and meaning to the education imparted here, the Mother decided to drop the word "University" from its name, and the Centre was renamed: The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.)

A Laboratory for Science of Life (Biology) with a capacity of 6 students for an advanced course and with an attached Museum was opened in the year 1954.

There was a Library attached to the Ashram for many years, but as the need was felt for a more extensive library for the Education Centre, a special building was allotted for the purpose and was opened as the Sri Aurobindo Library in the year 1954.

A Laboratory having 2 demonstration-*cum*-lecture halls (each with a capacity of 30 students), a section of Geology, Botany and Zoology with a small Museum and a section for practical work in Physics and Chemistry with a capacity of 25 students each, was opened in the year 1956.

A 33  $\frac{1}{3}$  metre swimming pool with Olympic style diving boards was opened in 1957.

The Ayurvedic Section was opened in the same year.

Departments of Music, Dancing and Painting were gradually developing, but in order to give the necessary facilities for the expansion, special Dancing and Music Halls were constructed and opened in the year 1958.

In the same year, a Dojo for the Japanese Judo was opened.

The Studio for Painting was opened in 1964, and a Picture Gallery attached to it was opened in 1965.

As the number of students began to increase, new residential homes for them had to be opened, and they are 17 in number today.

A Laboratory for Engineering Technology was opened in 1966.

The School for Perfect Eyesight has been opened in the current year (1968).

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## APPENDIX C

### ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION OF THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION

THE governing body of the Centre of Education is called the Council. The Mother is the Founder-President of the Centre. As the Founder-President, she is the supreme authority of the Institution and she guides and directs every stage of the work. The Council consists of the President, the Director, the Joint Director, the Treasurer, and the Registrar

The Centre has also an Academic Board consisting of the Director, the Joint Director, the Registrar, the Deans of the Faculties and 3 members from other Universities of India.

The members of the teaching staff constitute the Assembly which meets at least once a year.

The Centre has the Faculties of Arts, Science, Languages, Physical Education, and Engineering Technology. Each Faculty is headed by a Dean.

No tuition fee is charged, but the student or his guardian has to meet the cost of board, lodging and personal expenses. The charges for board and lodging in the Residential Homes is Rs. 100/- per month. In some cases, it is Rs. 150/- per month.

The Centre has 17 residential homes which provide lodging and boarding facilities to the students of the Centre of Education. Each hostel is in the charge of a Guardian who looks after the wards.

The Centre has actually no vacation, but there is a break of 5 weeks in November and December during which there is a special concentration on physical and aesthetic education.

The teaching staff consists of more than 160 members. They are drawn from among the members of the Ashram who are all devoted to the work of Research in Yoga. Their educational work is a part of this basic yogic work, and they do their work in the spirit of dedication and self-consecration. They receive no remuneration. They are, however, maintained along with the members of their families on the same standard as the other members of the Ashram.

No student or teacher is invited to join the Centre of Education. The request for admission must be spontaneous and sincere, and the decision in each case rests with the Mother.

In the organisational set-up, although there is a hierarchy for practical purposes, work is sought to be done in the spirit of a joint effort, freedom and utmost good will.

## APPENDIX D

### A NOTE ON THE MEDIA OF INSTRUCTION AT THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION

THE Centre of Education is international in character, and students come here not only from the different States of India but also from foreign countries. As a result of this, there is a provision at the Centre to teach various Indian and foreign languages, and students normally pick up four or five languages of their choice. English is the medium of instruction for English, History and Geography, and French for French, Mathematics and Science. In addition, most of the students learn their mother tongues, and Sanskrit is taken by a large number of students. Hindi and Bengali are commonly spoken and understood among students, and many of them have some acquaintance with Tamil. Moreover, some students offer to learn one or two additional Indian or foreign languages.

The following Table shows the languages taught at the Centre and against each language is shown the number of students learning that language.

Indian Languages	Number of students	Foreign Languages	Number of students
1. Bengali	133	1. English	640
2. Gujarati	93	2. French	620
3. Hindi	49	3. German	23
4. Kannada	7	4. Italian	37
5. Marathi	5	5. Spanish	3
6. Oriya	19		
7. Sanskrit	515		
8. Tamil	17		
9. Telugu	18		



## APPENDIX E

### SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY

#### THE SPIRIT

THE Sri Aurobindo Library is, in its own way, an instrument of education. Just like all the other departments of the Ashram—the flower gardens and paddy fields, the workshops, the laboratories—the library tries to embody or represent that spirit of universality and integrality of all life which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the foundation of the coming age.

The library is **international**, and brings to the student the whole panorama of the different regions of the earth. No philosophy, no science, no religion is excluded. The student is confronted on the shelves of the library with all the ideas, theories and principles, the achievements, the habits, the ways of life, the dreams of the world's various peoples. The extensive pictorial material of the library is presented in a kind of continuous world exhibit, in which all the countries and viewpoints are represented in a concrete and living way.

There is no segregation between the child student and the postgraduate research scholar. Thus the student is in living contact with the future tools of his intellectual life.

**"The elite of humanity** must be ready, who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who would be at the same time prepared to embody the new force descending upon earth to transform it."

Nowhere can that be done so intensively as in a library; no school room, no lecture theatre can replace this concrete presence and availability of the accumulated treasures of mankind. The child has to learn when he is young to select what is useful, to absorb what is needed and to reject that which should find no place in him. The only place where a child can really grow in full freedom according to his own needs and inclinations is in a **free-access library**. The need of the child who accosts the librarian with: "I have to paint a picture," is as important as that of the pandit who is seeking a Vedic concordance.

A library in India is necessarily **many libraries in one**, in many different languages, Indian and non-Indian. The Sri Aurobindo Library has 55,000 books in 25 different languages. It also receives over 300 periodicals, some of general interest and others of a technical nature. In addition to its collection of pictorial and pamphlet material, maps, etc., it has colour slides and a projector, and a record collection of Indian and Western classical music. It also has a collection of South Indian bronzes.

It is **not only for reading** that children come to the library, but also for relaxation. Don't be surprised if, when you step on to the verandah, you find them listening

to music (if it is a holiday) or doing nothing at all; or if in a back room you see them painting or making dolls, or a librarian modelling clay; or if you find classes being conducted in rooms where art books are available. These are all part of the freedom, and **harmony in freedom**, which is the spirit of the library.

### HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU WANT

The first room you enter, from the front verandah with its exhibition windows and notice boards, is the Library Hall. Here are the card catalogues which tell in what room each book is located. There is always someone here whom you can ask for help if you need it. In this room are all the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There is a desk where books in the Lending Section are issued at certain hours, and sometimes a display of new books. This is the hall in which music is played on Sundays and holidays.

To the left and the right of this hall are the French Room, the English Sections of philosophy, social sciences, literature and biography, the Bengali, Sanskrit, Hindi and Gujarati Sections, where books on all subjects and for all ages of readers are located.

Behind the hall is the children's verandah with its garden and aquarium, and the T Room for the tiny tots, with books in English, French and their mother tongues.

In the J or Juvenile Section there are books, on various subjects, of interest not only to students from 10 to 18 years of age, but also to others whose knowledge of English is limited and who wish to find books of adult interest in a relatively simple vocabulary.

The stairway is our art gallery, where we display from time to time paintings and photographs by artists of different countries and periods. Here also we have museum cases containing objects of artistic and historical interest, from ancient Pondicherry to modern Africa.

The first floor verandah is perhaps the most popular place in the library. Current periodicals are kept here, and here also many readers bring their books where they can have a wide view of sky and sea. Here is a place to keep in reserve a book which you have started reading and want to finish at night or the next day.

The central room upstairs is our Art Section, with not only books on art, music, photography and the dance, but also bronzes and other art objects. Upstairs also are our Reference Room, with encyclopaedias of many kinds, atlases, and dictionaries in all languages, a history room, an Italian section, a book repair section, and books on religion and yoga. Here also we keep files of pamphlets, pictures, maps, etc., and here some of the library staff process the books and periodicals for use in the library.

### OPENING HOURS

**The Library is open** from 7.30 to 11.30 a.m., and from 1.45 to 5.00 p.m. daily except on Darshan days, and the first afternoon of each month. It is also open three

or four evenings a week from 8.00 to 9.30 p.m. when there is no special programme in the Playground or the Theatre. Sunday mornings and evenings recorded music is played in the Library Hall.

### ARRANGEMENT OF BOOKS

In order that books on the same subject may easily be kept together, each one is marked with numbers or letters that indicate what kind of book it is.

The first division of books in our library is the **language division**, so the first sign on the book label is the language sign: **be** for Bengali, **fr** for French, etc. Since English is our largest language section, books in that section carry no language sign. Abbreviations used are as follows:

ar Arabic	la Latin
be Bengali	ma Malayalam
ch Chinese	mr Marathi
fr French	or Oriya
ge German	po Polish
gr Greek	pu Punjabi
gu Gujarati	ru Russian
hi Hindi	sa Sanskrit
it Italian	ta Tamil
ja Japanese	te Telugu
ka Kannada	ur Urdu

The next division is by subject. Our system of subject **classification** is one which is used in many libraries in many countries. It is called a **decimal system** because all the subjects are divided and again subdivided by 10.... For example: since 900 is the number for History and National Cultures, all books about different countries have numbers somewhere between 900 and 999. When this is added to the language sign we have for instance, in the Bengali section, **be 942** for a history of England. The same book printed in Gujarati is **gu942**, and in English simply **942**.

### FICTION, etc.

**Fiction** is either classified as literature, in the 800's, or marked **F** (novels) or **SC** (short stories) or in some sections simply with the language sign, as **ma** or **ge** above the author's name.

Books for young people have a **J Juvenile** above the classification number. Books for **the tiniest readers** are marked **T**. **Reference books** are labelled **R** and

kept in the Reference Room. **S** books are those with special bindings or illustrations, or rare and **specially** valuable books.

### HOW TO USE THE CARD CATALOGUE

The catalogue is the index to a library. It tells us the names of all the books the library has on any subject. In our library the catalogue is in the form of cards kept in drawers, one or more cards for each book. It is called a dictionary catalogue because the cards are arranged alphabetically.

You can look for a book in the catalogue by its **title**, by its **author**, or by its **subject**. This is either the first line at the top of the card, or is underlined red.

Indian authors are most often listed under their first name. If you don't find one there, look under the last name. European authors are always listed under the last name. After you find the author, on the second line is the title, a separate card for each book by that author, arranged alphabetically by the first word of the title (except articles, like a, the, le, un, die).

If you don't know the author of a book, or the title, you can look for it by subject; for example if you want a book about space ships you can look under **AERONAUTICS**. Books on history of Europe will usually be found under **EUROPE: HISTORY**.

The number in the upper left-hand corner of the card is the **call number**, by which we can ask for the book, or can know in what room and on what shelf to look for it.

Other information on this card is also sometimes useful, for example the dates of the author's life, the edition or date of publication of the book, contents of the book, number of pages or volumes, etc.

In addition to this catalogue there are also cards in vernacular scripts arranged by title, for books in the Indian languages.

### RULES

The library is open to all students and teachers of the Centre of Education, members of the Ashram, and visitors with special permission to read there. It is not a lending library, but there is a 2,000-volume **Lending Section** available for older students and residents.

Readers may take books freely for reading from any of the open shelves or unlocked book cases. But they are asked **not** to replace the books they have taken out. There is a special shelf on which readers may put books before leaving the library.

There are no **rules** posted in the reading rooms. However, any library has its unwritten rule of **quietness, consideration** for other readers, and **careful handling of books**.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH**

THE initial aim of this department was to establish a centre of information to serve teachers and students of this institution with up-to-date material relevant to the subjects of their interest and needs. This material would be collected and collated in a systematic arrangement of reference books, files, magazines, news-cuttings, and such audio-visual aids as we could afford.

In any system of modern education, library usage is essential. It should, however, be so organised as to feed students and teachers with the immediate requirements of their studies and comparative data most necessary to stimulate an above-average interest. These comparative data can only be effective when they are the most up-to-date information possible and can be studied from various sources and countries.

The world is shrinking as quickly as the distribution and communication of knowledge is expanding. Therefore the communication media are an extremely important factor in how information is received, how it is collated and classified, and how it is to be communicated effectively to teachers and students.

It will be obvious that information collected in this organised way will supersede much of the information found in a standard text-book. In fact with subjects such as science, economics, or even modern archaeology the data so collected may not find a place in the text-books for many years to come. For this the modern student cannot wait; his reading matter far exceeds that of the student of twenty-five years ago and the pace is increasing, especially in the realms of science and technology.

It is not surprising, therefore, when we find both teachers and students making full use of this department as a source for information immediately available to their needs. If the department has also an attractive room where students and teachers can read and study between classes or in their leisure time, then it serves an even wider need, becomes a cultural and social centre, a forum for academic interest, stimulating the thirst and love for knowledge.

#### **RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**

It follows naturally that this department would be the most logical choice for collecting the data necessary to educational research. As the department grows from its small beginnings it can very well maintain the records of students and teacher-projects and experiments in methodology practised over the years. Records on comparative studies between classes and students, negative as well as positive results, can also be kept for the benefit of new teachers and those students interested in post-graduate research in education. Such research would contribute to a more perfect study of education, or more creative methods of teaching.

## APPENDIX G

### LABORATORIES OF THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION

OUR school was founded in the year 1943 and the laboratory was started in a single room in about 1946 in a very simple way with a friendly gift of Rs. 500/- Since that day, it has been growing and developing steadily.

At present, our laboratories are housed in a separate two-storey building which was originally a timber godown. This house was acquired in 1956 and was reconditioned and fitted for housing the laboratories with the addition of an extra storey.

#### *Ground Floor:*

1. Demonstration Room: This room has a capacity of 30 students. It is furnished with movable-armed chairs arranged on a step-wise gallery.

2. Film Room: This room is similar to the demonstration room. It is being used for projection of slides and fixed films. It is provided with two projectors, a daylight screen and a tape-recorder with a loud-speaker. We have a fairly good collection of more than 600 fixed films and slides on various subjects.

3. Passage: This is being used for the museum of natural science. At present our museum consists mainly of a collection of geological specimens, a few anatomical models and a children's collection of pressed flowers and natural objects.

4. Children's Natural Science Laboratory: This is specially fitted with low furniture and provides facilities for 12 children for practical work in Botany, Zoology and Geology.

### PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY

#### *First Floor:*

1. Physics Laboratory: This laboratory measures about 1000 sq. feet and provides working facilities for 25 students. It is attached with a dark room for experiments in optics. It is equipped with modern apparatus and necessary service lines.

2. Chemistry Laboratory: This laboratory also measures about 1000 sq. feet. It has a working capacity for 25 students. It is fitted with the following service lines: Gas, Water, Electricity and Vacuum.

3. Balance Room: This is a common balance room serving at the same time physics and chemistry laboratories.

### SCIENCE OF LIFE

The Laboratory for Science of Life is housed in a separate building and it consists

of a room for practical and demonstration work, a microscope-room, a museum and a lecture room.

#### ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

The Workshops, Drawing Office and House Maintenance Service of the Ashram provide most of the facilities for the practical work of this Department. The Laboratories for Physics and Chemistry too are used for the same. In addition, there is a small laboratory with the most requisite equipment and facilities for Engineering Technology. A fullfledged building for this Department has been proposed and it is hoped that it will begin to take shape in the near future.

## **APPENDIX H**

### **(a) THE STUDIO EXHIBITION HALL AND ART HOUSE**

THE Studio of the Ashram started functioning from 15th April 1964, in the spacious hall specially constructed for it.

Right from the beginning, it has been giving guidance to students who have a special aptitude for Art and who choose Art as their special/ favourite subject.

The Studio is also having a select library of Art books which is developing slowly. For the present, it has about 700 Art books and collected prints of paintings by well-known artists.

The Studio is also keeping and preserving the Mother's collection of paintings numbering about 2500.

One more activity of the Studio is to supply art materials to artists and students of the Ashram.

Attached to the Studio is also our Art Gallery. This Gallery was opened on 15th August 1965 with an exhibition of paintings, drawings and sketches by the Mother.

The Art Gallery has a permanent exhibition of 50 to 70 paintings at a time, which are changed 4 times a year. So far (*i.e.* up to August 1968) 724 paintings have been exhibited under this activity of the Art Gallery. The exhibits are chosen from the Mother's collection of paintings, and from the paintings by Ashram artists and students. The exhibits represent all varieties of subjects, schools, styles and media. (The exhibits are not normally for sale.).

The Gallery is open to visitors daily from 9 to 11 a.m. and from 3 to 4.30 p.m. (except on Sundays).

The Centre has also a separate Exhibition Hall where exhibitions of paintings, photography and crafts and other creative activities are held from time to time.

Besides, the Centre has an Art House where, in addition to various artistic works, Batik work has been developed to a high degree of excellence. Moreover, there are several other studies and classes for painting and drawing.

### **(b) THEATRE AND DANCE AND MUSIC HALLS**

The Centre provides facilities for Dramatics, Music (vocal and instrumental) and Dancing (Indian and Ballet). An atmosphere of creative music and rhythm pervades the Centre and preparations for dramatic, musical and dance programmes are constantly in operation. Apart from the Theatre and the Dance and Music Halls, there are several nuclei and centres for Dramatics, Music and Dance.

The theatre, which has a capacity of about 1200, was opened in 1956, and the Dance and Music Halls were opened in 1958.



The Centre arranges throughout the year a variety of programmes of dramatics, dancing and vocal and instrumental music. On every Saturday, students arrange, with the help of the teachers, minor or major cultural programmes. In addition, there are every year several special major programmes, and on every 1st December there is a major programme of Dramatics in connection with the celebration of the Anniversary of the Centre of Education.

### **(c) EMBROIDERY SECTION**

This section provides facilities to the students for Embroidery in its various aspects. The teaching classes in this section are actually a projection of a larger and more varied embroidery work that is being done by the members of this section. The emphasis is laid on creative and artistic perfection, and at the same time, an atmosphere of concentrated and dedicated work is provided. This section, too, arranges exhibitions of its products three or four times a year.

### **(d) A LIST OF CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL COURSES**

The Centre provides facilities for the following:

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Automobile Repair           | 12. Mechanical Works          |
| 2. Bindery                     | 13. Music: Indian & Western   |
| 3. Carpentry                   | (a) Vocal                     |
| 4. Cottage Industries          | (b) Instrumental              |
| 5. Dancing (Indian and Ballet) | 14. Painting                  |
| 6. Electricity                 | 15. Printing Press            |
| 7. Embroidery                  | 16. Tailoring                 |
| 8. Fitting                     | 17. Typewriting and Shorthand |
| 9. Foundry                     | 18. Watch Repair              |
| 10. Gardening                  |                               |
| 11. Home Science & Nursing     |                               |

## **APPENDIX I**

### **(a) THE AYURVEDIC SECTION**

THE Ayurvedic Section was opened on 22nd February 1957. This Section has a three-fold activity: (i) to rejuvenate and develop the Ayurvedic Science and to train students in the science and practice of the Ayurvedic Science; (2) to prepare completely genuine and yet less expensive drugs on Ayurvedic lines; and (3) to run a medical clinic.

One of the aims of the Centre of Education is to promote a new synthesis of knowledge, and in this attempt a synthesis of various systems of medicine forms an important part. The Ayurvedic Section is devoted to an experiment in this direction.

### **(b) THE SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT**

IN the same direction there is yet another experiment. It is the School for Perfect Eyesight which was opened on 5th May 1968. Its intention is to provide a course in Ophthalmic Science which will not be limited to any particular system of medicine but will draw from all systems and even attempt a fresh inquiry on new lines. One of the important results of Dr. Bates' experiments in the cure of the diseases of the eye was the development of methods of eye education and mental relaxation. These methods fall in line with the methods of Yoga which are directed to the quieting of the mind. This School for Perfect Eyesight proposes to explore the Yogic basis for a new method of eye-treatment and extend it to other fields of treatment.

## APPENDIX J

### NUMBER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AND THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

English	223
French	27
German	21
Chinese	12
Bengali	104
Gujarati	137
Hindi	105
Kannada	27
Punjabi	4
Marathi	23
Oriya	64
Tamil	20
Telugu	33
Sanskrit	6
<hr/>	
Total:	806

## APPENDIX K

### BULLETIN OF SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION AND OTHER ASHRAM PERIODICALS

THE Bulletin is the official Quarterly of the Centre which is published on every 21st February, 24th April, 15th August, and 24th November. It publishes writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Mother's talks to the students, articles on Art, Literature, Philosophy, Physical Education and the latest research work of the Ashram. It also gives a quarterly report of the activities of the Ashram along with some pictures pertaining to these activities.

The Bulletin has two editions: The English-French edition and The English-French-Hindi edition. Annual subscription for the former is Rs. 8.50 (or \$ 2.50; Sh. 15, F. 12) and, for the latter, Rs. 10 (or \$ 3.00; Sh. 20; F. 15).

The Ashram publishes several other periodicals in English and major Indian languages. The following is the list of these periodicals:

1. Mother India (English): Monthly.
2. The Advent (English): Quarterly.
3. Sri Aurobindo Circle (English): Annual.
4. Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir (English): Annual.  
(Published by Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir)
5. Aditi Saha Bharat Mata (Hindi): Quarterly.
6. Purodha (Hindi): Monthly.
7. Bartika (Bengali): Quarterly.
8. Purodha (Bengali): Quarterly.
9. Dakshina & Bal Dakshina (Gujarati): Quarterly.
10. Sanjivan (Marathi): Quarterly.
11. Navajyoti (Oriya): Quarterly.
12. Dipti (Kannada): Quarterly.
13. Samarpan (Kannada): Annual.
14. Arka (Telugu): Quarterly.
15. Divya Jivan (Telugu): Quarterly.
16. World Union (English): Quarterly (Published by World Union Centre).
17. =1 (English): Quarterly (Published by Sri Aurobindo Society).
18. Sri Aurobindo Society Annual (English): (Published by Sri Aurobindo Society).

## APPENDIX L

### DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

#### ANNUAL PROGRAMME

1. Regular group activities (Normal Programme)	—	Dec. 16th	to	March 31st
2. Competition Season I	—	April 1st	to	April 30th
3. Competition Season II	—	May 1st	to	May 31st
4. Regular group activities (Normal Programme)	—	June 1st	to	Aug. 31st
5. Competition Season III	—	Sept. 1st	to	Sept. 30th
6. Competition Season IV	—	Oct. 1st	to	Oct. 31st
7. Practice for the Annual demonstration	—	Nov. 1st	to	Dec. 2nd
8. Picnics & Outings	—	Dec. 3rd	to	Dec. 15th

#### PROGRAMME OF THE COMPETITION SEASONS

	Season I	Season II	Season III	Season IV
Groups A <sub>5</sub> to A <sub>1</sub> (Age-group: 6 to 15 yrs.)	Gymnastics	Games	Aquatics	Athletics
Groups B <sub>1</sub> , B <sub>2</sub> (Age-group: 16 to 18 yrs.)	Aquatics	Athletics	Gymnastics	Games
Groups C, E, G, (Ladies: Age-group: Above 18) Capt. Non-gr. Ladies	Games	Aquatics	Athletics	Gymnastics
Groups D, F, H, (Men: Age-group: Above 18) Capt. Non-gr. Men:				
	Athletics	Gymnastics	Games	Aquatics

#### NOTE:-

G & H groups may practise other activities (not mentioned) with E & F groups respectively.

Games in "Children's Courtyard" under Tejen from 5-30 to 7 p.m.

OPEN: Gymnastic Marching: every evening from 7-15 p.m. except on Mondays.

Swimming: daily in the mornings & Sunday evenings, for Non-group members of P.E.D. only.

Cricket: every Sunday under Wilfy.

Judo, Asanas & Malkhamb: timings will be arranged by Josef, Ambu and Vishnu respectively.

## NOTES ON THE NORMAL PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

*Groups A5, A4 & A3*—These groups will have their activities daily from 4.30 to 5.30 p.m. at either Playground or Tennis ground.

*All Other Groups*—will have their activities at the playground from 5.30 to 7.15 p.m. and at other grounds from 5 to 6.30 p.m. (except Parade days).

*Playground*—will remain open from 4.30 p.m. for group activities and gymnastics and from 7 p.m. for Marching. Visitors permitted only after 7.15 p.m.

*Body Building Gymnasium*—(Body building, Weight lifting, Keep fit exercises) will remain open daily from 5 to 7.30 a.m. & 4 to 8 p.m.

Timings for Asanas will be arranged by Ambu.

Timings for Malkhamb will be arranged by Vishnu.

*Children's Courtyard*—will remain open from 5.30 to 7 p.m. under Tejen.

*Tennis Ground*—(Wrestling Pit, Boxing Ring, etc.) will remain open from 5.30 to 7.30 a.m. and from 4 to 6.30 p.m.

*Tennis Courts*—will remain open from 6.30 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6.30 p.m.

*Sports Ground*—will remain open for daily practice of Athletics from 5 to 7.30 a.m. and from 4 to 5 p.m. (with certain conditions as will be explained by Prabhakar R.)

For group activities from 5 to 7 p.m.

*Swimming Pool*—will remain open from 6 to 8 a.m. on week days, and 6 to 8.30 a.m. on Sundays. In the evenings from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. in summer and from 4.30 to 6 p.m. in winter.

*Dojo Hall*—will remain open for Table Tennis from 4.30 to 8 p.m. (when there is no Judo class), and from 8 to 10 a.m. on Sundays. Judo timings will be arranged by Josef.

*Table Tennis*—in Nanteuil and Playground Godown will remain open from 4 to 8 p.m. and from 8 to 10 a.m. on Sundays.—*No Table Tennis during group hours.*

*Cricket*—will be played every Sunday under Wilfy.

*Sea Bathing*—from 6 to 7.30 a.m. In the evenings from 5 to 6 p.m. in winter and 5 to 6.30 p.m. in summer.

## UNIFORMS OF THE DIFFERENT GROUPS:—

Groups A5 to A1	Green shorts & white vest.
Groups B2 & B1	Red shorts & white vest.
Groups C & D	Grey shorts & white vest.
Group E	Khaki shorts & white vest with pink collar.
Group F	Khaki shorts & white vest.
Group G	White shorts & white vest.
Group H	Blue shorts & white vest.

## APPENDIX M

# A SHORT LIST OF THE MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PROBLEMS OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

The ALL-INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PROJECT: *DIVINISATION OF HUMAN  
NATURE*

The Present Uppermost Research Project: What is Death?

Other Research Projects and Problems:

1. What is Yoga?
2. The Systems of Yoga
3. The Synthetic Principle of all Yoga
4. Life and Yoga
5. Nature and Yoga
6. The Integral Yoga
7. Is Unifying and Harmonising Knowledge Possible?
8. The Nature of the Supermind
9. The Role of the Supermind in the Integral Yoga
10. The Idea of the Supermind in the Ancient Systems of Yoga
11. Evolution and Supermind
12. Conditions of the Descent of the Supermind on the Earth
13. Consequences of the Descent of the Supermind on the Earth
14. The Nature of the Gnostic Being
15. Yoga and the Perfection of the Bodily and Mental Life
16. The Divine Body
17. The Nature of the Divine Life
18. The New Race:
  - (i) The Divine Race
  - (ii) The Intermediate Race
19. The Asuric and Rakshasic Superman of Certain Modern Philosophies and the Divine Superman in Sri Aurobindo's Vision
20. The Integral Yoga as the Yoga of Transformation
21. The Triple Transformation: Psychic, Spiritual, Supramental
22. The Path of the Integral Yoga: Its Special Difficulties and their Remedy
23. The Validity of the Yogic Knowledge
24. The Integral Yoga and the Integral Knowledge
25. Is a Synthesis of Knowledge Possible?
26. The Synthetic Knowledge of the Ancients

27. The Veda and the Synthetic Knowledge
28. The Key Words in the Veda and their Secret Meanings
29. Interpretation of the Vedic Hymns and their Secret Meanings
30. The Idea of the Supermind in the Veda
31. The Yoga of the Veda and its Mystic Doctrine
32. The Philological Problems of the Veda and the Origins of Aryan Speech
33. The Secret of the Veda and the Superficiality of the Western Criticism of the Veda
34. The Continuity of the Veda, the Upanishad and the Gita
35. The Earlier Vedanta and the Later Vedanta
36. The Problem of Translating the Upanishads and the Gita
37. The Synthetic Teaching of the Upanishad
38. Our Need from the Gita
39. The Gita as the Book of a Synthetic Yoga
40. The Concept of the Avatar in the Gita
41. The Avatar and Evolution
42. The Concept of the Vibhuti in the Gita, and its Importance in the History of Man
43. The Message of the Gita for Modern Man
44. Yoga and Religion
45. Yoga and Morality
46. Yoga and Occultism
47. Yoga and Philosophy
48. Yoga and Science
49. Yoga and Technology
50. Yoga and World-Affairs
51. Yoga and Internationalism
52. The Trends in World-Movements Necessitating the Spiritual Transformation of Human Nature
53. The Ideal of Human Unity
54. The Psychological Meaning of Culture and its Development through the Ages
55. Subjectivism as a Hallmark of Modern Thought and Life
56. Science, Technology and Values
57. The Synthesis of Science and Spirituality
58. The Spiritual Law of Social Development
59. The Synthesis of Social and Political Philosophies
60. The Problem of World-Culture
61. International Unity and International Cities
62. The Role of Money in a Regenerated World
63. New Administration in the New World
64. New International Institutions in the New World
65. World-Literature

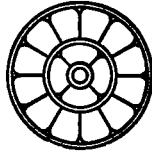


66. The Synthesis of Eastern and Western Systems of Fine Art
67. The Synthesis of Philosophy
68. The Synthesis of Psychology and the Integral Yoga
69. The Synthesis of Science, Philosophy, Fine Arts, and Technology
70. The Problems of International Living
71. Yoga and Art
72. Yoga and Music
73. Yoga and Culture
74. Yoga and Industry
75. Yoga and Dance
76. Yoga and Drama
77. Yoga and Literature
78. Yoga and Physical Culture
79. Creativity in Architecture
80. Research in Sri Aurobindo's Works
81. Research in the Mother's Works
82. Indices and Glossaries in Relation to the above
83. Translations of the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother into Various Indian and Foreign Languages
84. The Future Poetry
85. Yoga and Education
86. Education and the Aim of Human Life
87. The Science of Living
88. Spiritual Education
89. The Concept of Integral Education
90. Freedom in Education
91. The Place of Love in Man's Evolution
92. The Problems of Love and Sex in Education
93. The Development of Personality and Education
94. Modern Trends in Education
95. The Role of the Teacher in Education
96. Spiritual Values and their Distinction from Morality and Religion
97. Spiritual Values and Science-based Education
98. Indian Culture and a National System of Education
99. Spiritual Values determining the Mental, Vital and Physical Education
100. Deeper and Higher Levels of Consciousness and their Relevance to the Growth of the Student
101. Mind and Its Powers and Faculties
102. The Ideal Mental Education
103. The Choice of Books for Students at Various Stages
104. The Teaching of Various Subjects and the Growth of International Consciousness in the Student

105. Internationalism and the Problem of Languages
106. Internationalism and the Medium of Instruction
107. Internationalism and the Synthesis of Knowledge
108. Synthetic Knowledge and the Harmonisation of Humanities, Science, Technology and Fine Arts
109. New Methods of Training the Mind
110. Training of the Mind in relation to the Inner and Psychic Growth
111. Flexible Organisation of Teaching and Guidance to permit Freedom, Personality Development and the Discovery of the Inner Guiding Principle
112. Creative Thinking and its Place in Mental Education
113. Learning by Doing
114. Programming in Education
115. Work-Sheets in Programmed Education: Their Nature, Content and Utility
116. Work-Sheets and their Relation to the Lecture System
117. Work-Sheets and the Project Method
118. Suitable Topics in Each Subject for Work-sheets, Lectures and Projects
119. The Problems of Time-Table permitting each Student to Progress at his own Pace
120. An Ideal System of Examination
121. How to 'Teach' Least and yet to Ensure Maximum Progress of the Students?
122. How to Create an Atmosphere surcharged with the Ideals of Truth and Realisation?
123. Research leading to Compilation of the Best Materials from the Best and Most Inspiring Writings, Compositions, and Various Aspects of Life-expression for the Use of Students at Various Stages
124. Research in each Subject of Study for Preparation and Writing of Graded Work-sheets and Programmed Instruction
125. Study of Modern Trends in each Subject and the Ways by which they can be made accessible to the Students
126. Preparation of New Syllabi and Curricula
127. New Methods of Teaching Languages
128. Teaching of Foreign Languages
129. Teaching of Foreign Languages as Media of Instruction
130. Teaching of Grammar
131. Place of the Study of Literature in the Total Education
132. Place of the Study of Religious Books at School and Higher Levels of Education
133. Modern Mathematics and its Place in School Education
134. How to Teach Logic through Mathematics and Science?
135. How to Teach Science to Develop the Scientific Attitude?
136. The Scientific Attitude as a Preparation for Yoga
137. The Correlation of the Study of Science and Mathematics

138. Various Science Subjects and their Place in an Integral System of Education
139. Teaching of World History in School
140. World History and National History; World-History *vs* National History
141. The Concept of the Future as History
142. Research into those Periods of World History which have a Direct Bearing on the Problem of the Ideal of the Unity of Mankind; incorporation of the Results of this Research in the Teaching of World History at School and Higher Levels of Education
143. The Need to Rewrite Indian History and World History
144. History and Geography as One Subject, and as Specialised Disciplines of Study
145. New Methods of Teaching History and Geography
146. Place of Audio-visual Methods in Teaching Various Subjects, particularly, Science, History & Geography
147. Correlation of Various Subjects: Integration of Different Subjects as a Unified Search for Knowledge
148. Correlation of Academic Subjects with Fine Arts, Crafts and Manual Work
149. Exhibitions as a Method of Education
150. International Atmosphere as a Method of Education
151. Special Problems of Teaching at Various Levels: Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary, Graduation & Post-Graduation
152. Multiplicity of Subjects and the Problem of a Comprehensive *vs* Specialised Education
153. Learning by Snippets *vs* Learning by Synthesis
154. The Paramount Place of the Study of Man in Education
155. The Place of the Study of Philosophy and Psychology in School and at Higher levels of Education
156. The Idea of a Common Course in the Study of Man for all Students of Higher Education, irrespective of their Specialisation
157. Stress on Research as a Method of Education both at School and Higher Levels of Education
158. The Phenomena of Genius and Related Special Education
159. Individual Differentiation and Personal Attention and Guidance
160. Academic *vs* Vocational Education
161. Is there an Essential and Minimum Knowledge which Everyone should have in order to Live Truly and Wisely?
162. The Development of the Powers of the Senses
163. The Development of the Inner and Subliminal Senses
164. The Training of the Aesthetic Sense
165. Aesthetics and Practical Participation in Fine Arts
166. Synthetic and New Forms of Fine Arts and Students' Aesthetic Training
167. The Study of Dreams and their Importance in Education
168. Can Character be Changed?

169. Ascetic and Moral Methods of Controlling and Changing Character: Their Inadequacy
170. The Right Method of Development and Transformation of Character
171. Moral Virtues *vs* Psychic and Spiritual Qualities
172. Religious Methods of Character Building and their Inadequacy
173. The Problem of the Right Relationship between Teachers and Students
174. Example and Influence as Methods of Vital Education
175. Place of Introspection in the Vital Education
176. The Process of Discovery of the True Vital and of the Highest Aim of Life
177. Training of the Body to Form Good and Healthy Habits
178. The Place of Food in Physical Development
179. The Need of Sleep and Indispensable Relaxation for an All-round Development
180. The Ideal of Brahmacharya
181. Hatha Yoga and Physical Education
182. The Western System of Physical Training and Hatha Yoga
183. Physical Education and the Problem of the Higher Aims of Yoga
184. Physical Education and the Development of Inner Qualities
185. The Need of the Formation of National Clubs of Sports in the Country
186. The Aims of an All-round Physical Education
187. All-round *vs* Specialised Physical Education
188. The Place of Competition and Tournaments in Physical Education
189. Should Boys and Girls Have the Same System of Physical Education?
190. Massage and Physical Education
191. Illness—Its Prevention and Cure by External and Inner methods
192. Perpetual Youth and How to Achieve it?
193. How to Create Conditions to Realise the Highest Aims of Physical Education?
194. Gymnastic Marching
195. History of Physical Education
196. Systems of Physical Education in Different Countries at different periods of World History
197. An Ideal Syllabus of Physical Education
198. Organisational Problems of Physical Education
199. Administration and the Integral System of Education
200. The Fulfilment of Integral Education in the Supramental Education
201. Towards the Supramental Education



### STUDENTS' PRAYER

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

THE MOTHER