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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.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXI

No. 6

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## MAN THE MEDIATOR

A dumb Inconscient drew life's stumbling maze,  
A night of all things, packed and infinite:  
It made our consciousness a torch that plays  
Between the Abyss and a supernal Light.

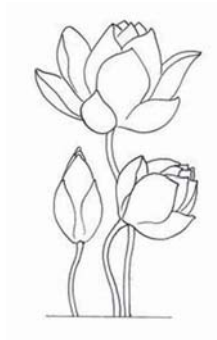
Our mind was framed a lens of segment sight  
Piecing out inch by inch the world's huge mass,  
And reason a small hard theodolite  
Measuring unreally the measureless ways.

Yet is the dark Inconscient whence came all  
The self-same Power that shines on high unwon:  
Our Night shall be a sky purpureal,  
Our torch transmute to a vast godhead's sun.

Rooted in mire heavenward man's nature grows, —  
His soul the dim bud of God's flaming rose.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 596)*



# **TRANSFORMATION OF HUMAN NATURE IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA**

## **PART ONE — SADHANA ON THE LEVEL OF THE MIND**

### **SECTION ONE THE MIND AND SADHANA**

#### **Chapter One The Mind and Other Levels of Being**

##### **The Mind and the Divine Consciousness**

The ways of the Divine are not like those of the human mind or according to our patterns and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for Him what He shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we can know. If we admit the Divine at all, both true reason and bhakti seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender.

\*

To understand divine movements one must enter into the divine consciousness; till then faith and surrender are the only right attitude. How can the mind judge what is beyond all its measures?

##### **The Mind and the Supermind**

The less pet ideas are petted and cherished, the better for the supramental Yoga. The mind is always building up ideas, some of which are wrong, some a mixture of truth and error, some true in their way, but true only in a certain field or in certain conditions or for some people, and it proceeds not only to make “pets” of them, but to try to impose them as universal and absolute truths or general standards which everybody must follow. The mind is a rigid instrument: it finds it difficult to adapt itself to the greater plasticity of the play of life or the freedom of the play of the Spirit. It wants to catch hold of either or both of these spontaneous powers and cut them into its own measures. It poses as the mediator and interpreter between life and the spirit; but it knows neither; it only knows itself and its own constructions out of life and its own deformations or half reflections of the truth of the Spirit. Only the

supermind can be a true mediator and interpreter. But if you want the supramental Light, you must not tie yourself to mental ideas, but draw back from them and observe them with an impartial equality in the silence of the spirit. When the supramental Light touches them, it will put them in their place and finally replace them by the true truth of things.

### **The Mind and Intuition**

For the human thinking mind there are always many sides to everything and it decides according to its own bent or preference or its habitual ideas or some reason that presents itself to the intellect as the best. It gets the real truth only when something else puts a higher light into it — when the psychic or the intuition touches it and makes it feel or see.

\*

It is very usual for intuitive suggestions to come like that and the mind to disregard them. It is because the mind is too accustomed to follow its own process and cannot recognise or have confidence in the intuition when it comes. The mind has to learn to look at these things when they come and give them value if experience confirms their truth.

\*

Yes, the active mind in people with a very intellectual turn can be an obstacle to the deeper more silent spiritual movement. Afterwards when it is turned into the higher thought (intuitive or overmental) it becomes on the contrary a great force.

\*

The intuitive perception or discrimination is self-sufficient — it does not need any reasoning or process of thought to justify it. The intellectual depends on data and steps, even if the steps are hurried over or the data rapidly seized and swallowed into the intelligence.

\*

It [*the perception of an intuitivised mind*] is when, instead of seeing things as they appear to the external mind and senses, one begins to see things about them with a subtler physical mind and sense — e.g. seeing intuitively what is to be done, how to

do it, what the object (even so-called inanimate objects) wants or needs, what is likely to happen next (or sometimes sure to happen), what forces are at play on the physical plane etc. etc. Even the body becomes intuitively conscious in this way, feels without being told by the mind what it has to do, what it has to avoid, what is near it or coming to it (though unseen) etc. etc.

\*

The heart has its intuitions as well as the mind and these are as true as any mental perceptions. But neither all feelings nor all mental perceptions nor all rational conclusions can be true.

### **The Mind and Inspiration**

There are different kinds of knowledge. One is inspiration, i.e. something that comes out of the Knowledge planes like a flash and opens up the mind to the Truth in a moment. That is inspiration. It easily takes the form of words as when a poet writes or a speaker speaks, as people say, from inspiration.

\*

The pure inspiration and conception is something quite different [*from ordinary thought*] — it comes from deep within or from high above. This is the lower vital mind at work making formations. When the calmness is there all sorts of things may rise on the surface — they have not to be accepted, but simply looked at. In time the calmness will be so developed as to quell the vital and outer mind also and in that complete quietude the true perceptions will come.

### **The Mind and the Psychic**

Most people begin with the power [*of Yoga*] working in the mind — it is only when the mind and vital have been changed to some extent that the psychic is ready to come forward.

\*

The chief obstacle in you is the mind. If you can quiet your mind and give the psychic being a chance, that will be your spiritual salvation. Your mind is inordinately active, too full of questionings, too shrewd, worldly and practical, too much given



to doubt and self-defence. All that is very useful in worldly life, it helps to bring success, but it is not the way to succeed in Yoga. No doubt in Yoga, the critical rational mind (self-critical as well as critical of things outside you) is an element that has its value so long as the true inner discrimination does not come; but of itself it cannot carry you on the way, it will only make your progress slow and stumbling. There must be something in you that will open itself directly to the Truth and Light. The unregenerated vital being of man cannot do that because it demands of the higher Power that it shall satisfy the vital desires, demands, ambitions, vanity, pride, etc., before it will accept the Truth. The unillumined mind also cannot do it because it refuses to recognise the Truth unless the Truth first satisfies its own judgments, ideas, opinions, critical or conventional standards, — unless in a word the Truth consents to narrow itself into the moulds of the mind's own ignorance. It is the psychic being alone that turns to the Truth directly, feels it instinctively behind all appearances and in spite of all disguises, accepts it without any egoistic demand or condition, is ready to serve it without reserve or refusal. It is the psychic being also that can at once feel and reject all imitations of the Truth, all shows, all pretences.

\*

In the West the physical mind is too dominant, so that the psychic does not so easily get a chance — except of course in exceptional people.

\*

It is the thoughts of the outer mind that have to be refused, the suggestions and ideas that end by disturbing the sadhana. There are also a number of thoughts of all kinds that have no interest, but which the mind is accustomed to allow to come as a habit, mechanically, — these sometimes come up when one tries to be quiet. They must be allowed to pass away without attending to them until they run down and the mind becomes still; to struggle with them and try to stop them is no use, there must be only a quiet rejection. On the other hand if thoughts come up from within, from the psychic, thoughts of the Mother, of divine love and joy, perceptions of truth etc., these of course must be permitted, as they help to make the psychic active.

\*

When it [*one's inner perception*] is at the heart, it is probable that the psychic or at least the psychic mental thought is replacing the ordinary mental. Yogic thought comes from two sources, the psychic behind the heart and the higher consciousness from above the head.

\*

Your nature has always been very self-centred and the mind active — in such a nature it is easier for the higher mind to act than for the psychic.

### **The Mind and the Lower Nature**

It is necessary first to found the higher consciousness in the mind and heart. To deal with the lower nature before that means to fall into the struggle and confusion and disorder of the vital, for it all comes up. With the mind and heart prepared, one can deal with the vital without all that superfluous trouble.

\*

So long as the mind is not entirely transformed, that is, penetrated and changed by the spiritual consciousness, things from below can always run into it more or less and dim the vision of the higher levels. If you can keep the vision always, even though dimmed, it is already a great progress.

\*

There is only one sadhana for all parts, not a separate mental sadhana, vital sadhana or physical sadhana — but the action of the sadhana is applied sometimes separately to each part; sometimes on the contrary the action is on the mental and vital together, or vital and physical together, or all three together. But it is the same sadhana always.

## **Chapter Two Intellect and the Intellectual**

### **Limitations of the Intellect**

Intellect is part of Mind and an instrument of half-truth like the rest of the Mind.

\*

Intellectual activities are not part of the inner being — the intellect is the outer mind.

\*

Its [*the intellect's*] function is to reason from the perceptions of the mind and senses, to form conclusions and to put things in logical relation with each other. A well-trained intellect is a good preparation of the mind for greater knowledge, but it cannot itself give the Yogic knowledge or know the Divine — it can only have ideas about the Divine, but having ideas is not knowledge. In the course of the sadhana intellect has to be transformed into the higher mind which is itself a passage towards the true knowledge.

\*

It is no use trying to decide the things of the Spirit by the power and in the light of the intellect. The intellect can only reason and infer and its reasonings are partial and its inferences vitiated by error. One has to awaken the divinations in the soul, the psychic being, and wait for a higher knowledge which comes from above.

It is not safe to listen to or be influenced by the mental of other sadhaks. The Yoga aims at union with the Divine which will bring a spiritual oneness with other sadhaks, but a oneness in the Divine, in the Truth, not in the ignorance of the mind and the vital.

\*

It is not by intellect that one can progress in the Yoga, but by psychic and spiritual receptivity — as for knowledge and true understanding it grows in sadhana by the growth of the intuition, not of the physical intellect.

\*

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

\*

What you have said is perfectly right. To see the Truth does not depend on a big intellect or a small intellect. It depends on being in contact with the Truth and the mind silent or quiet to receive it. The biggest intellects can make errors of the worst kind and confuse Truth and falsehood, if they have not the contact with Truth or the direct experience.

\*

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

\*

Intellectual statements about these things do not lead very far, for the basis of true statement is a consciousness which sees things not as the mind sees them but with a direct inner view, and unless one enters into that consciousness itself, it is difficult really to understand the intellectual statement. It is by sadhana only that one can enter into that consciousness in which one sees the divine reality behind things.

\*

The point is that people take no trouble to see whether their intellect is giving them right thoughts, right conclusions, right views on things and persons, right indications about their conduct or course of action. They have their idea and accept it as truth or follow it simply because it is *their* idea. Even when they recognise that they have made mistakes of the mind, they do not consider it of any importance nor do they try to be more careful mentally than before. In the vital field people know that they must not follow their desires or impulses without check or control, they know that they ought to have a conscience or a moral sense which discriminates what they can or should do and what they cannot or should not do; in the field of intellect no such care is taken. Men are supposed to follow their intellect, to have and assert their own ideas right or wrong without any control; the intellect, it is said, is man's highest instrument and he must think and act according to its ideas. But this is not true; the intellect needs an inner light to guide, check and control it quite as much as the vital. There is something above the intellect which one has to discover and the intellect should be only an intermediary for the action of that source of true Knowledge.

\*

There is no reason why one should not receive through the thinking mind, as one receives through the vital, the emotional and the body. The thinking mind is as capable of receiving as these are, and, since it has to be transformed as well as the rest, it must be trained to receive, otherwise no transformation of it could take place.

It is the ordinary unenlightened activity of the intellect that is an obstacle to spiritual experience, just as the ordinary unregenerated activity of the vital or the obscure stupidly obstructive consciousness of the body is an obstacle. What the sadhak has to be specially warned against in the wrong processes of the intellect is, first, any mistaking of mental ideas and impressions or intellectual conclusions for realisation; secondly, the restless activity of the mere mind, *cañcalam manah*, which disturbs the spontaneous accuracy of psychic and spiritual experience and gives no room for the descent of the true illuminating knowledge or else deforms it as soon as it touches or even before it fully touches the human mental plane. There are also of course the usual vices of the intellect, — its leaning towards sterile doubt instead of luminous reception and calm enlightened discrimination; its arrogance claiming to judge things that are beyond it, unknown to it, too deep for it by standards drawn from its own limited experience; its attempts to explain the supraphysical by the physical or its demand for the proof of higher and occult things by the criterions proper to Matter and to mind in Matter; others also too many to enumerate here. Always it is substituting its own representations and constructions and opinions for the true knowledge. But if the intellect is surrendered, open, quiet, receptive, there is no reason why it should not be a means of reception of the light or an aid to the experience of spiritual states and to the fullness of an inner change.

### **The Intellect, the Pure Reason and Knowledge**

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

\*

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

### **Intellect, Intellectual and Intelligence**

All depends on the meaning you attach to words used — it is a matter of nomenclature. Ordinarily one says a man has intellect if he can think well — the nature and process and field of the thought do not matter. If you take intellect in that sense, then you can say that intellect has different strata and Ford belongs to one stratum of intellect, Einstein to another — Ford has a practical and executive business intellect, Einstein a scientific discovering and theorising intellect. But Ford too in his own field theorises, invents, discovers. Yet would you call Ford an intellectual or a man of intellect? I would prefer to use for the general faculty of mind the word intelligence. Ford has a great and forceful practical intelligence, keen, quick, successful, dynamic. He has a brain that can deal with thoughts also, but even there his drive is towards practicality. He believes in rebirth (metempsychosis), for instance, not for any philosophic reason, but because it explains life as a school of experience in which one gathers more and more experience and develops by it. Einstein has on the other hand a great discovering scientific intellect, not like Marconi a powerful practical inventive intelligence for the application of scientific discovery. All men have of course an “intellect” of a kind, all for instance can discuss and debate (for which you say rightly intellect is needed); but it is only when one rises to the realm of ideas and moves freely in it that you say, “This man has an intellect.” Address an assembly of peasants, you will find if you give them scope that they can put to you points and questions which may often leave the parliamentary debater panting. But we are content to say that these peasants have much practical intelligence.

The power to discuss and debate is, as I say, a common human faculty — and habit. Perhaps it is here that man begins to diverge from the animal; for animals have much intelligence — many animals and even insects — even some rudimentary power of practical reasoning, but so far as we know, they don't meet and put their ideas about things side by side or sling them at each other in a debate,<sup>1</sup> as even the most ignorant human can do and very animatedly does. There too is the beginning of intellect — for the reasons you allege. Also for the reason that it is a common faculty of the race, it can be specialised, so much so that a man whom it is dangerous to cross in debate in the field of literature or of science or of philosophy may yet make a fool of himself and wallow contentedly in a quagmire of blunders and fallacies if he discusses politics or economy or, let us say, spirituality or Yoga. His only salvation is the blissful depth of his ignorance which prevents him from seeing what a mess he has made. Again a man may be a keen legal or political debater, — the two very commonly go together, — yet no intellectual. I admit that a man must have some logical intellect to debate well. But after all the object of debate is to win, to make your point and you may do that even if your point is false; success, not

1. Perhaps the crows do in the “Crow Parliament” sometimes?

truth, is the aim of debate. So I admit what you say, but with reservations.

I agree also that labels are unsatisfactory — even when applied to less developed persons; what we really do is to pick out something prominent and label with that as if it were all the person. But classification is impossible without that and man's intellect is driven always to classify, fix distinctions, set apart with a label. The philosophers have pointed out that Science does that too rigidly and in doing so cuts falsely across the truth of Nature. But if we don't do that, we can't have any Science.

\*

X asked me the question and I answered it on the basis of the current meaning of "intellect" and "intellectual". People in ordinary speech do not make any distinction between intellect and intelligence, though of course it is quite true that a man may have a good or even a fine intelligence without being an intellectual. But ordinarily all thinking is attributed to the "intellect"; an intellectual therefore is a man whose main business or activity it is to think about things — a philosopher, a poet, a scientist, a critic of art and literature or of life, are all classed together as intellectuals. A theorist on economy and politics is an intellectual, a politician or a financier is not, unless he theorises on his own subject or is a thinker on another.

Y's distinction is based on those I have made here, but these distinctions are not current in ordinary speech, except one or two and those even in a very imperfect way. If I go by these distinctions, then the intellectuals will no longer be called intellectuals but thinkers and creators — except a certain class of them. An intellectual or intellectual thinker will then be one who is a thinker by his reason or mainly by his reason — e.g. Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Wells etc. Tagore thinks by vision, imagination, feeling or by intuition, not by the reason — at least that is true of his writings. C. R. Das himself would not be an intellectual; in politics, literature and everything else he was an "intuitive" and "emotive" man. But, as I say, these would be distinctions not ordinarily current. In ordinary parlance Tagore, Das and everybody else of the kind would all be called intellectuals. The general mind does not make these subtle distinctions: it takes things in the mass, roughly and it is right in doing so, for otherwise it would lose itself altogether.

As for barristers etc., a man to succeed as a barrister must have legal knowledge and the power to apply it. It is not necessary that he should be a thinker even in his own subject or an intellectual. It is the same with all professional men — doctors, engineers etc. etc.: they may be intellectuals as well as successful in their profession, but they need not be.

P. S. Argument properly speaking needs some power of logical intellect; but it can be specialised in a certain line. The power of arguing does not by itself make a man an intellectual.

\*

X's main grievance with respect to the intellectuals is that he is cut off from all discussion of mental things and mental stimulus and so his mental energies are becoming atrophied. But a man who has a mental life ought surely not to be dependent on others for it, since that life is found within — there ought to be springs within that flow by their own force.

### **The Intellectual Man and the Emotional Man**

If the intellectual [*man*] will always have a greater wideness and vastness [*than the emotional man*], how can we be sure that he will have an equal fervour, depth and sweetness with the emotional man?

It may be that *homo intellectualis* will remain wider and *homo psychicus* will remain deeper in heart.

\*

Please do not confuse the higher knowledge and mental knowledge. The intellectual man will be able to give a wider and more orderly expression to what higher knowledge he gets than the *homo psychicus*; but it does not follow he will have more of it. He will have that only if he rises to an equal width and plasticity and comprehensiveness of the higher knowledge planes. In that case he will replace his mental by his above-mental capacity. But for many intellectuals, so-called, their intellectuality may be a stumbling block as they bind themselves with mental conceptions or stifle the psychic fire under the heavy weight of rational thought. On the other hand I have seen comparatively uneducated people expressing higher knowledge with an astonishing fullness and depth and accuracy which the stumbling movements of their brain could never have allowed one to suppose possible. Therefore why fix beforehand by the mind what will or will not be possible when the Above-mind reigns? What the mind conceives as “must be” need not be the measure of the “will be”. Such and such a *homo intellectualis* may turn out to be a more fervent God-lover than the effervescent emotional man; such and such an emotionalist may receive and express a wider knowledge than his intellect or even the intellect of the intellectual man could have harboured or organised. Let us not bind the phenomena of the higher consciousness by the possibilities and probabilities of a lower plane.

\*



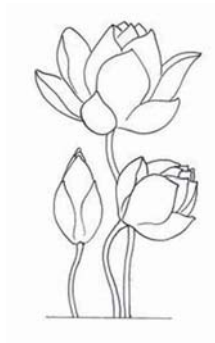
An unintellectual mind cannot bring down the Knowledge? What then about Ramakrishna? Do you mean to say that the majority of the sadhaks here who have not learned logic and are ignorant of philosophy will never get Knowledge?

\*

Ramakrishna was an uneducated, non-intellectual man, yet his expression of knowledge was so perfect that the biggest intellects bowed down before it.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, pp. 5-19)*



## EDUCATION IN INDIA UNDER THE BRITISH RULE

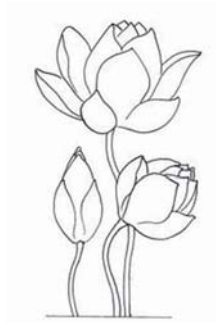
. . . Contentment with an artificial existence, the habit of playing with counters as if they were true coin of life, made the old rich flood of vitality, strong character, noble aspiration, excellent achievement run ever shallower & thinner in our veins. So we accepted and made the best of an ignoble ease.

Our education too had just the same pride in a false show of breadth and the same confined and narrow scope. In our schools & colleges we were set to remember many things, but learned nothing. We had no real mastery of English literature, though we read Milton & Burke and quoted Byron & Shelley, nor of history though we talked about Magna Charta & Runnymede, nor of philosophy though we could mispronounce the names of most of the German philosophers, nor science though we used its name daily, nor even of our own thought & civilisation though its discussion filled columns of our periodicals. We knew little & knew it badly. And even we could not profit by the little we knew for advance, for origination; even those who struggled to a wider knowledge proved barren soil. The springs of originality were fast growing atrophied by our unnatural existence. The great men among us who strove to originate were the spiritual children of an older time who still drew sap from the roots of our ancient culture and had the energy of the Mogul times in their blood. But their success was not commensurate with their genius & with each generation these grew rarer & rarer. The sap soon began to run dry, the energy to dwindle away. Worse than the narrowness & inefficiency, was the unreality of our culture. Our brains were as full of liberty as our lives were empty of it. We read and talked so much of political rights that we never so much as realized that we had none to call our own. The very sights & sounds, the description of which formed the staple of our daily reading, were such as most of us would at no time see or hear. We learned science without observation of the objects of science, words & not the things which they symbolised, literature by rote, philosophy as a lesson to be got by heart, not as a guide to truth or a light shed on existence. We read of and believed in English economy, while we lived under Indian conditions, and worshipped the free trade which was starving us to death as a nation. We professed notions of equality, and separated ourselves from the people, of democracy, and were the servants of absolutism. We pattered off speeches & essays about social reform, yet had no idea of the nature of a society. We looked to sources of strength and inspiration we could not reach and left those untapped which were ours by possession and inheritance. We knew so little of life that we expected others who lived on our service to prepare our freedom, so little of history that we thought reform could precede liberty, so little of science that we believed an organism could be reshaped from outside. We were ruled by shopkeepers and consented enthusiastically to think of them as angels.

We affected virtues we were given no opportunity of assimilating and lost those our fathers had handed down to us. All this in perfect good faith, in the full belief that we were Europeanising ourselves, and moving rapidly toward political, social, economical, moral, intellectual progress. The consummation of our political progress was a Congress which yearly passed resolutions it had no power to put in practice, statesmen whose highest function was to ask questions which need not even be answered, councillors who would have been surprised if they had been consulted, politicians who did not even know that a Right never lives until it has a Might to support it. Socially we have initiated a feeble attempt to revivify the very basis of our society by a few petty mechanical changes instead of a spiritual renovation which could alone be equal to so high a task; economically, we attained great success in destroying our industries and enslaving ourselves to the British trader; morally, we successfully compassed the disintegration of the old moral ideas & habits and substituted for them a superficial respectability; intellectually, we prided ourselves [on] the tricking out of our minds in a few leavings, scraps and strays of European thought at the sacrifice of an immense and eternal heritage. Never was an education more remote from all that education truly denotes; instead of giving the keys to the vast mass of modern knowledge, or creating rich soil for the qualities that conquer circumstance & survive, they made the mind swallow a heterogeneous jumble of mainly useless information; trained a tame parrot to live in a cage & talk of the joys of the forest. British rule, Britain's civilizing mission in India has been the record success in history in the hypnosis of a nation. It persuaded us to live in a death of the will & its activities, taking a series of hallucinations for real things and creating in ourselves the condition of morbid weakness the hypnotist desired, until the Master of a mightier hypnosis laid His finger on India's eyes and cried "Awake." Then only the spell was broken, the slumbering mind realised itself and the dead soul lived again.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram – II*, CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 1102-04)



## **EACH HUMAN BEING IS A SELF-DEVELOPING SOUL**

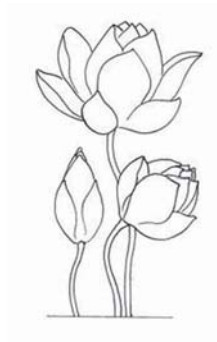
. . . Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts,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

Meanwhile, the nascent subjectivism preparative of the new age has shown itself not so much in the relations of individuals or in the dominant ideas and tendencies of social development, which are still largely rationalistic and materialistic and only vaguely touched by the deeper subjective tendency, but in the new collective self-

consciousness of man in that organic mass of his life which he has most firmly developed in the past, the nation. It is here that it has already begun to produce powerful results whether as a vitalistic or as a psychical subjectivism, and it is here that we shall see most clearly what is its actual drift, its deficiencies, its dangers as well as the true purpose and conditions of a subjective age of humanity and the goal towards which the social cycle, entering this phase, is intended to arrive in its wide revolution.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Human Cycle, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 32-34)*



## SUBJECTIVISM AND EDUCATION

The subjective stage of human development is that critical juncture in which, having gone forward from symbols, types, conventions, having turned its gaze superficially on the individual being to discover his truth and right law of action and its relation to the superficial and external truth and law of the universe, our race begins to gaze deeper, to see and feel what is behind the outside and below the surface and therefore to live from within. It is a step towards self-knowledge and towards living in and from the self, away from knowledge of things as the not-self and from the living according to this objective idea of life and the universe. Everything depends on how that step is taken, to what kind of subjectivity we arrive and how far we go in self-knowledge; for here the dangers of error are as great and far-reaching as the results of right seeking. The symbolic, the typical, the conventional age avoid these dangers by building a wall of self-limitation against them; and it is because this wall becomes in the end a prison of self-ignorance that it has to be broken down and the perilous but fruitful adventure of subjectivism undertaken.

A psychic self-knowledge tells us that there are in our being many formal, frontal, apparent or representative selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error, root of all others and cause of all our stumbling and suffering, to which man is exposed by the nature of his mentality. We may apply this truth to the attempt of man to live by the law of his subjective being whether as an individual or as a social unit one in its corporate mind and body.

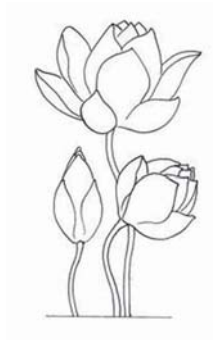
For this is the sense of the characteristic turn which modern civilisation is taking. Everywhere we are beginning, though still sparsely and in a groping tentative fashion, to approach things from the subjective standpoint. In education our object is to know the psychology of the child as he grows into man and to found our systems of teaching and training upon that basis. The new aim is to help the child to develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities, — a very different object from that of the old education which was simply to pack so much stereotyped knowledge into his resisting brain and impose a stereotyped rule of conduct on his struggling and dominated impulses.<sup>1</sup> In dealing with the criminal the most advanced societies are no longer altogether satisfied with regarding him as a law-breaker to be punished, imprisoned, terrified, hanged or else tortured physically and morally,

1. There has been a rude set-back to this development in Totalitarian States whose theory is that the individual does not exist and only the life of the community matters, but this new larger view still held its own in freer countries.

whether as a revenge for his revolt or as an example to others; there is a growing attempt to understand him, to make allowance for his heredity, environment and inner deficiencies and to change him from within rather than crush him from without. In the general view of society itself, we begin to regard the community, the nation or any other fixed grouping of men as a living organism with a subjective being of its own and a corresponding growth and natural development which it is its business to bring to perfection and fruition. So far, good; the greater knowledge, the truer depth, the wiser humanity of this new view of things are obvious. But so also are the limitations of our knowledge and experience on this new path and the possibility of serious errors and stumblings.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Human Cycle, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 44-45)*



## THE CENTURY OF LIFE

*(The Nitishataka of Bhartrihari freely rendered into English verse)*

*(Continued from the issue of May 2018)*

### ON PRIDE AND HEROISM

#### **Lion-Heart**

The manèd lion, first of kingly names,  
Magnanimous and famed, though worn with age,  
Wasted with hunger, blunted his keen edge  
And low the splendid spirit in him flames,  
Not therefore will with wretched grass assuage  
His famished pangs as graze the deer and bull.  
Rather his dying breath collects desire,  
Leaping once more from shattered brows to pull  
Of the great tuskèd elephants mad with ire  
His sovereign banquet fierce and masterful.

#### **The Way of the Lion**

The dog with a poor bone is satisfied,  
Meatless, with bits of fat and sinew greased,  
Nor is his hunger with such remnants eased.  
Not so the kingly lion in his pride!  
He lets the jackal go grazed by his claw  
And slays the tuskèd kings. Such Nature's law;  
Each being pitches his high appetite  
At even with his courage and his might.

#### **A Contrast**

The dog may servile fawn upon the hand  
That feeds him, with his tail at wag, nor pain  
In crouching and his abject rollings bland  
With upward face and belly all in vain:  
The elephant to countless flatteries  
Returns a quiet look in steadfast eyes.



### **The Wheel of Life**

The world goes round and, as returns the wheel,  
 All things that die must yet again be born:  
 His birth is birth indeed by whose return  
 His race and country grandeur's summits scale.

### **Aut Caesar aut Nullus**

Two fates alone strong haughty minds endure,  
 Of worth convinced; — on the world's forehead proud  
 Singly to bloom exalted o'er the crowd,  
 Or wither in the wilderness obscure.

### **Magnanimity**

My brother, exalt thyself though in o'erthrow!  
 Five noble planets through these spaces roll,  
 Jupiter is of them; — not on these he leaps,  
 Rahu,<sup>1</sup> the immortal demon of eclipse,  
 In his high magnanimity of soul.

Smit with God's thunders only his head he keeps,  
 Yet seizes in his brief and gloomy hour  
 Of vengeance the great luminous kings of heaven,  
 Day's Lord and the light to whom night's soul is given;  
 He scorns to strive with things of lesser power.

### **The Motion of Giants**

On his wide hood as on a painted shield  
 Bears up the rangèd worlds, Infinite, the Snake;  
 Him in the giant midmost of his back  
 The eternal Tortoise brooks, whom the great field

1. Rahu, the Titan, stole or seized part of the nectar which rose from the world-ocean at the churning by the Gods and Titans and was appropriated by the Gods. For this violence he was smitten in two by the discus of Vishnu; but as he had drunk the nectar, he remains immortal and seeks always to revenge himself by swallowing the Sun and Moon who had detected his theft. The Tortoise mentioned in the next epigram upheld the mountain Mandar, which was the stick of the churning. The Great Snake Ananta was the rope of the churning, he on whose hood the earth now rests.

Of vague and travelling waters ceaselessly  
 Encompass with the proud unfathomed sea.  
 O easy might and marvellous of the great,  
 Whose simplest action is yet vast with fate!

### **Mainak**

O child of the immortal mountains hoar,  
 Mainak,<sup>2</sup> far better had this been to bear  
 The bleeding wings that furious Indra tore,  
 The thunder's scars that with disastrous roar  
 Vomiting lightnings made the heavens one flare, —  
 Not, not this refuge in the cool wide sea  
 While all thy suffering people cried to thee.

### **Noble Resentment**

The crystal hath no sense disgrace to know,  
 Yet blazes angry when the sun's feet rouse;  
 Shall man the high-spirited, the orgulous,  
 Brook insult vile from fellow or from foe?

### **Age and Genius**

Nature, not age is the high spirit's cause  
 That burns in mighty hearts and genius high.  
 Lo, on the rutting elephant's tuskèd jaws  
 The infant lion leaps invincibly.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 327-30)*

2. The mountains had formerly wings and could move about, — to the great inconvenience of everybody: Indra, attacked by them, smote off their wings with the thunderbolt. Mainak, son of Himalaya, took refuge in the sea.

## THE MOTHER AND THE NATION

We have lost the faculty of religious fervour in Bengal and are trying now to recover it through the passion for the country by self-sacrifice, by labour for our fellow-countrymen, by absorption in the idea of the country. When a nation is on the verge of losing the source of its vitality, it tries to recover it by the first means which the environment offers, whether it be favourable to it or not. Bengal has always lived by its emotions; the brain of India, as it has been called, is also the heart of India. The loss of emotional power, of belief, of expansiveness of feeling would dry up the sources from which she derives her strength. The country of Nyaya is also the country of Chaitanya, who himself was born in the height of the intellectual development of Bengal as its fine flower and most perfect expression.

The land of Chaitanya is also the chosen home of the Mother and in Bengal she has set her everlasting seat. Immeasurable ages will pass, revolutions shake the land, religions come and go, but so long as the Ganges flows through the plains of the delta, so long shall the Mother sit enthroned in Bengal as sovereign and saviour. New forms she will take, new aspects of power or beauty, but the soul of her Motherhood will live unchanged and call to her sons to adore her. In the new age she has taken to herself a new form, she has come to us with a fresh face of beauty the full sweetness of which we have not yet grasped. When Bankim discovered the *mantra* *Bande Mataram* and the song wrote itself out through his pen, he felt that he had been divinely inspired, but the people heard his song and felt nothing. "Wait" said the prophet, "wait for thirty years and all India will know the value of the song I have written." The thirty years have passed and Bengal has heard; her ears have suddenly been opened to a voice to which she had been deaf and her heart filled with a light to which she had been blind. The Mother of the hymn is no new goddess, but the same whom we have always worshipped; only she has put off the world-form in which she was familiar to us, she has assumed a human shape of less terrible aspect, less fierce and devastating power to attract her children back to her bosom.

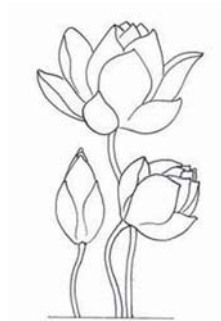
What is a nation? We have studied in the schools of the West and learned to ape the thoughts and language of the West forgetting our own deeper ideas and truer speech, and to the West the nation is the country, so much land containing so many millions of men who speak one speech and live one political life owing allegiance to a single governing power of its own choosing. When the European wishes to feel a living emotion for his country, he personifies the land he lives in, tries to feel that a heart beats in the brute earth and worships a vague abstraction of his own intellect. The Indian idea of nationality ought to be truer and deeper. The philosophy of our forefathers looked through the gross body of things and discovered a subtle body within, looked through that and found yet another more deeply hidden,

and within the third body discovered the Source of life and form, seated for ever, unchanging and imperishable. What is true of the individual object, is true also of the general and universal. What is true of the man, is true also of the nation. The country, the land is only the outward body of the nation, its *annamaya kosh*, or gross physical body; the mass of people, the life of millions who occupy and vivify the body of the nation with their presence, is the *pranamaya kosh*, the life-body of the nation. These two are the gross body, the physical manifestation of the Mother. Within the gross body is a subtler body, the thoughts, the literature, the philosophy, the mental and emotional activities, the sum of hopes, pleasures, aspirations, fulfilments, the civilisation and culture, which make up the *sukshma sharir* of the nation. This is as much a part of the Mother's life as the outward existence which is visible to the physical eyes. This subtle life of the nation again springs from a deeper existence in the causal body of the nation, the peculiar temperament which it has developed out of its ages of experience and which makes it distinct from others. These three are the bodies of the Mother, but within them all is the Source of her life, immortal and unchanging, of which every nation is merely one manifestation, the universal Narayan, One in the Many of whom we are all the children.

When, therefore, we speak of a nation, we mean the separate life of the millions who people the country, but we mean also a separate culture and civilisation, a peculiar national temperament which has become too deeply rooted to be altered and in all these we discover a manifestation of God in national life which is living, sacred and adorable. It is this which we speak of as the Mother. The millions are born and die; we who are here today, will not be here tomorrow, but the Mother has been living for thousands of years and will live for yet more thousands when we have passed away.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram – II*, CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 1114-16)



## **‘THOU ART THE MASTER OF THE WORLD, THE SOLE REALITY’**

**June 13, 1914**

First of all, knowledge must be conquered, that is, one must learn to know Thee, to be united with Thee, and all means are good and may be used to attain this goal. But it would be a great mistake to believe that all is done when this goal is attained. All is done in principle, the victory is gained in theory, and those whose motive is only an egoistic aspiration for their own salvation may feel satisfied and live only in and for this communion, without caring at all for Thy manifestation.

But those whom Thou hast appointed as Thy representatives upon earth cannot rest content with the result so obtained. To know Thee first and before all else, yes; but once Thy knowledge is acquired there remains all the work of Thy manifestation; and then there intervene the quality, force, complexity and perfection of this manifestation. Very often those who have known Thee, dazzled and rapt in ecstasy by this knowledge, have been content to see Thee for themselves and express Thee somehow or other in their outermost being. He who wants to be perfect in Thy manifestation cannot be satisfied with that; he must manifest Thee on all the planes, in all the states of being and thus turn the knowledge he has acquired to the best account for the whole universe.

Before the immensity of this programme, the entire being exults and sings a hymn of gladness to Thee.

All nature in full conscious activity, all vibrant with Thy sovereign forces, responds to their inspiration and wants to be illumined and transfigured by them . . .

Thou art the Master of the world, the sole Reality.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 171-72)*

# A NEW EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

## Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education

*(Continued from the issue of May 2018)*

*(The short notes preceding each section are by the editors of the compilation.  
This compilation was published in 1992.)*

*Invested with a rhythm of higher spheres  
The word was used as a hieratic means  
For the release of the imprisoned spirit  
Into communion with its comrade gods.  
Or it helped to beat out new expressive forms  
Of that which labours in the heart of life,  
Some immemorial Soul in men and things,  
Seeker of the unknown and the unborn  
Carrying a light from the Ineffable  
To rend the veil of the last mysteries.  
Intense philosophies pointed earth to heaven  
Or on foundations broad as cosmic Space  
Upraised the earth-mind to superhuman heights.  
Overpassing lines that please the outward eyes  
But hide the sight of that which lives within  
Sculpture and painting concentrated sense  
Upon an inner vision's motionless verge,  
Revealed a figure of the invisible,  
Unveiled all Nature's meaning in a form,  
Or caught into a body the Divine.  
The architecture of the Infinite  
Discovered here its inward-musing shapes  
Captured into wide breadths of soaring stone:  
Music brought down celestial yearnings, song  
Held the merged heart absorbed in rapturous depths,  
Linking the human with the cosmic cry;  
The world-interpreting movements of the dance  
Moulded idea and mood to a rhythmic sway  
And posture; crafts minute in subtle lines  
Eternised a swift moment's memory*

*Or showed in a carving's sweep, a cup's design  
 The underlying patterns of the unseen:  
 Poems in largeness cast like moving worlds  
 And metres surging with the ocean's voice  
 Translated by grandeurs locked in Nature's heart  
 But thrown now into a crowded glory of speech  
 The beauty and sublimity of her forms,  
 The passion of her moments and her moods  
 Lifting the human word nearer to the god's.*

(S34: 360-61)

## II. The Conversion of the Vital

The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depressions, of passions and revolts. It can set everything in motion, build and realise; but it can also destroy and mar everything. Thus it may be the most difficult part to discipline in the human being. It is a long and exacting labour requiring great patience and perfect sincerity, for without sincerity you will deceive yourself from the very outset, and all endeavour for progress will be in vain. With the collaboration of the vital no realisation seems impossible, no transformation impracticable. But the difficulty lies in securing this constant collaboration. The vital is a good worker, but most often it seeks its own satisfaction. If that is refused, totally or even partially, the vital gets vexed, sulks and goes on strike. Its energy disappears more or less completely and in its place leaves disgust for people and things, discouragement or revolt, depression and dissatisfaction. At such moments it is good to remain quiet and refuse to act; for these are the times when one does stupid things and in a few moments one can destroy or spoil the progress that has been made during months of regular effort. These crises are shorter and less dangerous for those who have established a contact with their psychic being which is sufficient to keep alive in them the flame of aspiration and the consciousness of the ideal to be realised. They can, with the help of this consciousness, deal with their vital as one deals with a rebellious child, with patience and perseverance, showing it the truth and light, endeavouring to convince it and awaken in it the goodwill which has been veiled for a time. By means of such patient intervention each crisis can be turned into a new progress, into one more step towards the goal. (M12: 6-7)

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. . . this vital is a strange creature. It is a being of passion, enthusiasm and naturally of desire; but, for example, it is quite capable of getting enthusiastic over something beautiful, of admiring, sensing anything greater and nobler than itself. And if really anything very beautiful occurs in the being, if there is a movement having an exceptional value, well, it may get enthusiastic and it is capable of giving itself with complete devotion — with a generosity that is not found, for example, in the mental domain nor in the physical. It has that fullness in action that comes precisely from its capacity to get enthused and throw itself wholly without reserve into what it does. Heroes are always people who have a strong vital, and when the vital becomes passionate about something, it is no longer a reasonable being but a warrior; it is wholly involved in its action and can perform exceptional things because it does not calculate, does not reason, does not say “One must take precautions, one must not do this, must not do that.” It becomes reckless, it gets carried away, as people say, it gives itself totally. Therefore, it can do magnificent things if it is guided in the right way.

A converted vital is an all-powerful instrument. And sometimes it gets converted by something exceptionally beautiful, morally or materially. When it witnesses, for example, a scene of total self-abnegation, of uncalculating self-giving — one of those things so exceedingly rare but splendidly beautiful — it can be carried away by it, it can be seized by an ambition to do the same thing. It begins by an ambition, it ends with a consecration.

There is only one thing the vital abhors; it is a dull life, monotonous, grey, tasteless, worthless. Faced with that, it goes to sleep, falls into inertia. It likes extremely violent things, it is true; it can be extremely wicked, extremely cruel, extremely generous, extremely good and extremely heroic. It always goes to extremes and can be on one side or the other, yes, as the current flows.

And this vital, if you place it in a bad environment, it will imitate the bad environment and do bad things with violence and to an extreme degree. If you place it in the presence of something wonderfully beautiful, generous, great, noble, divine, it can be carried away with that also, forget everything else and give itself wholly. It will give itself more completely than any other part of the being, for it does not calculate. It follows its passion and enthusiasm. When it has desires, its desires are violent, arbitrary, and it does not at all take into account the good or bad of others; it doesn't care the least bit. But when it gives itself to something beautiful, it does not calculate either, it will give itself entirely without knowing whether it will do good or harm to it. It is a very precious instrument.

It is like a horse of pure breed: if it lets itself be directed, then it will win all the races, everywhere it will come first. If it is untamed, it will trample people and cause havoc and break its own legs or back! It is like that. The one thing to know is to which side it will turn. It loves exceptional things — exceptionally bad or exceptionally good, it loves the exceptional. It does not like ordinary life. It becomes



dull, it becomes half inert. And if it is shut up in a corner and told: “Keep quiet there”, it will remain there and become more and more like something crumbling away, and finally just like a mummy: there is no more life in it, it is dried up. And one will no longer have the strength to do what one wants to do. One will have fine ideas, excellent intentions, but one won’t have the energy to execute them.

So do not wail if you have a powerful vital, but you must have strong reins and hold them quite firmly. Then things go well. (M5: 254-56)

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### **The Training of the Senses**

*To see — or to look! To hear — or to listen!*

*Where lies the difference? Perhaps in a little more “presence”, a little extra consciousness that transforms everything, adds a new dimension to our ordinary perceptions and gives them a freshness, a penetrating force, a comprehensiveness, an intuitive “something”.*

*Carried by the joy of ever new and deeper discoveries, we learn to rely more and more on a new type of perception that springs from a conscious identification with all that lives, a kind of sense-revelation that takes us straight to the heart of things.*

*Rightly pursued, the development of the senses can become a decisive means of re-apprehending the world around us.*

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*You have said: “Sensations are an excellent instrument for knowledge and education.” How?*

How? But it is through sensations that you learn: by seeing, observing, hearing. Classes develop your sensations, studies develop your sensations, the mind receives things through sensations. By the education of the senses the growth of one’s general education is aided; if you learn to see well, exactly, precisely; if you learn to hear well; if you learn through touch to know the nature of things; if you learn through the sense of smell to distinguish between different odours — all these are a powerful means of education. In fact, they should be used for this, as instruments of observation, control and knowledge. If one is sufficiently developed, one can know the nature of things through sight; through the sense of smell one may also know the value, the different nature of things; by touch one can recognise things. It is a question of education; that is, one must work for it.

For example, there is a considerable difference between the vision of ordinary people and that of artists. Their way of seeing things is much more conscious and complete than that of ordinary people. When one has not trained one's vision, one sees vaguely, imprecisely, and has impressions rather than an exact vision. An artist, when he sees something and has learnt to use his eyes — for instance, when he sees a figure, instead of seeing just a form, like that, you know, a form, the general effect of a form, of which he can vaguely say that this person resembles or doesn't much resemble what he sees — sees the exact structure of the figure, the proportions of the different parts, whether the figure is harmonious or not, and why; and also of what kind or type or form it is; all sorts of things at one glance, you understand, in a single vision, as one sees the relations between different forms.

When you have trained your eyes to see things with exactness, you can do so; it is an exercise you can quite easily do. For example, you have to put something, an object or a number of things, into a box. An ordinary person will need to take the tape-measure and measure the box to find out precisely what is needed. The man who has trained his eyes will see the things which are to be put in and at a glance will see which box is required; or perhaps, if there is a liquid to be poured, he will know the exact size of the bottle, because his eye is used to measuring things and he can, by seeing the thing, know its exact size. For instance, see another example: you have to put a ring on someone's finger. Ordinary people are obliged to take the rings and try them on one after another till they find one of the right size. He who has trained his eyes looks at the finger and then at the rings; he won't be deceived and will immediately pick up the ring which fits exactly, without making a mistake. Well, this kind of training for the eyes can also be given to hearing, in order to distinguish sounds and all the qualities of sound. It can be given to the sense of smell, to distinguish odours and the different qualities of odours; for taste, the same thing.

And if you approach things with this idea — of studying, of wanting to develop exactitude of perception and the relation between things — then, instead of living in sensations for sensations' sake (that is, "Oh, this is pleasant" or "this is unpleasant", "I like this, I don't like that" and all this kind of foolishness), you know the quality of things, their use and their interrelations through this study of the senses. This puts you in contact with the world in a completely conscious way. For everything, the least detail . . .

Well, from the point of view of forms it is the same thing, you know. You arrange a room. You place anything at all anywhere at all and then, when entering, someone who has a sense of harmony feels uneasy. He feels he is entering a chaos. But if you have the sense of colour and form, you must add to it the sense of order and organisation; but still, even without this utilitarian sense of order and organisation, if you have the true sense of form — of forms which can complement and harmonise with one another, and of colours which can complement and harmonise with one

another — when you have to arrange a room, even if you have just three pieces of furniture, you will put them in the right place. But most people do not know, it makes no difference to them. They think only of one thing: “Oh, it will be more convenient to have this here and more convenient to have that there!” And then, sometimes they don’t even think of this, they put things anywhere at all.

But when they enter their room, the place where they have to live for several hours of the day, they enter a confusion and disorder; and if they are not sensitive they do not become aware of it, they do not feel uneasy. However, this does not help to bring about an inner harmony . . . (M6: 82-87)

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The sense organs are under the influence of the psychological state of the individual because something comes in between the eye’s perception and the brain’s reception. It is very subtle; the brain receives the eye’s perceptions through the nerves; there is no reasoning, it is so to say instantaneous, but there is a short passage between the eye’s perception and the cell which is to respond and evaluate it in the brain. And it is this evaluation of the brain which is under the influence of feelings. It is the small vibration between what the eye sees and what the brain estimates which often falsifies the response. And it is not a matter of sincerity, for even the most sincere persons do not know what is happening, even very calm people, without any violent emotion, who do not even feel an emotion, are influenced in this way without being aware of the intervention of this little falsifying vibration.

At times moral notions also intermix and falsify the judgment but we must throw far away from us all moral notions; for morality and Truth are very far from each other (if I am shocking anybody by saying this, I am sorry, but it is like that). It is only when you have conquered all attraction and all repulsion that you can have a correct judgment. As long as there are things that attract you and things that repel you, it is not possible for you to have an absolutely sure functioning of the senses. (M4: 11)

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### **The Development of the Artistic Faculties**

*As the child becomes more conscious of the messages his sense perceptions convey to him, he finds it necessarily difficult to sort them out, order and evaluate them. How is he to integrate into himself the impressions that crowd upon him, wave after wave?*

*Art, or for that matter any creative activity, is precisely a means of assessing the world, appreciating it and arranging it according to our nature. Through art*

*we can create our own world, our own earth and sky.*

*As the child becomes aware of his creative potentialities, his sensitivity and his sense of beauty are awakened. This can have unexpected consequences on his way of being and thinking.*

To this general education of the senses and their functioning there will be added, as early as possible, the cultivation of discrimination and of the aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose and adopt what is beautiful and harmonious, simple, healthy and pure. For there is a psychological health just as there is a physical health, a beauty and harmony of the sensations as of the body and its movements. As the capacity of understanding grows in the child, he should be taught, in the course of his education, to add artistic taste and refinement to power and precision. He should be shown, led to appreciate, taught to love beautiful, lofty, healthy and noble things, whether in Nature or in human creation. This should be a true aesthetic culture, which will protect him from degrading influences. For, in the wake of the last wars and the terrible nervous tension which they provoked, as a sign, perhaps, of the decline of civilisation and social decay, a growing vulgarity seems to have taken possession of human life, individual as well as collective, particularly in what concerns aesthetic life and the life of the senses. A methodical and enlightened cultivation of the senses can, little by little, eliminate from the child whatever is by contagion vulgar, commonplace and crude. This education will have very happy effects even on his character. . . . (M12: 20-21)

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Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight. Art stills the emotions and teaches them the delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction [. . .] Music deepens the emotions and harmonises them with each other. Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces. (S1: 447-48)

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The system of education which, instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists, frankly introduces it as a part of culture no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education and the general diffusion of a broad-based human culture. It is not

necessary that every man should be an artist. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty and insight into form and colour and that which is expressed in form and colour, made habitually active, correct and sensitive. . . . (S1: 453)

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Art is subtle and delicate, and it makes the mind also in its movements subtle and delicate. It is suggestive, and the intellect habituated to the appreciation of art is quick to catch suggestions, mastering not only, as the scientific mind does, that which is positive and on the surface, but that which leads to ever fresh widening and subtilising of knowledge and opens a door into the deeper secrets of inner nature where the positive instruments of science cannot take the depth or measure. This supreme intellectual value of Art has never been sufficiently recognised. Men have made language, poetry, history, philosophy agents for the training of this side of intellectuality, necessary parts of a liberal education, but the immense educative force of music, painting and sculpture has not been duly recognised. . . . (S1: 449)

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The search for beauty is only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulses, desires. It is only in the middle a satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of perfect process and harmonious combination. Behind them the soul of beauty in us desires the contact, the revelation, the uplifting delight of an absolute beauty in all things which it feels to be present, but which neither the senses and instincts by themselves can give, though they may be its channels, — for it is suprasensuous, — nor the reason and intelligence, though they too are a channel, — for it is suprarational, supra-intellectual, — but to which through all these veils the soul itself seeks to arrive. When it can get the touch of this universal, absolute beauty, this soul of beauty, this sense of its revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event, a human life, an idea, a stroke of the brush or the chisel or a scintillation of the mind, the colours of a sunset or the grandeur of the tempest, it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. It is in truth seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms. (S25: 144-45)

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Delight is the soul of existence, beauty the intense impression, the concentrated form of delight . . . (S26: 254)

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### **The Enlightenment of the Inner Movements**

*To purify, master and ultimately transform the vital, one must become conscious of its movements and their origin. One must explore, discover, know oneself.*

*“The finest present one can give to a child”, wrote the Mother, “would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself.” To know oneself gives one the capacity to strengthen one’s will, change one’s character, unify one’s being.*

*The road to self-discovery is long and full of surprises. That is why the child must embark upon it as early as possible. At each step an ardent sincerity and a strong determination are required. But what unexpected gifts of joy await the inner adventurer on his way!*

The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development. Consciously or half-consciously or with an obscure unconscious groping it strives always and rightly strives at self-formulation, — to find itself, to discover within itself the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it. This aim in it is fundamental, right, inevitable because, even after all qualifications have been made and caveats entered, the individual is not merely the ephemeral physical creature, a form of mind and body that aggregates and dissolves, but a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifesting spirit. (S25: 35)

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*“To know oneself and control oneself”, what does this mean?*

This means to be conscious of one’s inner truth, conscious of the different parts of one’s being and their respective functions. You must know why you do this, why you do that; you must know your thoughts, know your feelings, all your activities, all your movements, of what you are capable, etc. And to know oneself is not enough: this knowledge must bring a conscious control. To know oneself perfectly is to control oneself perfectly.

But there must be an aspiration at every moment. It is never too early to begin, never too late to continue. That is, even when you are quite young, you can begin to study yourself and know yourself and gradually to control yourself. And even when you are what is called “old”, when you are quite aged, it is not too late to make the

effort to know yourself better and better and control yourself better and better. That is the Science of Living.

To perfect oneself, one must first become conscious of oneself. (M4: 33-34)

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All individual beings and all the little concentrations of consciousness were created to do this work. It is the very reason for existence: to be able to become fully conscious of a certain sum of vibrations representing an individual being and put order there and find one's way and follow it.

And so, as men do not know it and do not do it, life comes and gives them a blow here: "Oh! that hurts", then a blow there: "Ah! that's hurting me." And the thing goes on like that and all the time it is like that. And all the time they are getting pain somewhere. They suffer, they cry, they groan. But it is simply due to that reason, there is no other: it is that they have not done that little work. If, when they were quite young, there had been someone to teach them to do the work and they had done it without losing time, they could have gone through life gloriously and instead of suffering they would have been all-powerful masters of their destiny.

(M5: 201)

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Generally, all disciplines dealing with the vital being, its purification and its control, proceed by coercion, suppression, abstinence and asceticism. This procedure is certainly easier and quicker, although less deeply enduring and effective, than a rigorous and detailed education. Besides, it eliminates all possibility of the intervention, help and collaboration of the vital. And yet this help is of the utmost importance if one wants the individual's growth and action to be complete.

To become conscious of the various movements in oneself and be aware of what one does and why one does it, is the indispensable starting-point. The child must be taught to observe, to note his reactions and impulses and their causes, to become a discerning witness of his desires, his movements of violence and passion, his instincts of possession and appropriation and domination and the background of vanity which supports them, together with their counterparts of weakness, discouragement, depression and despair. (M12: 21-22)

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The indispensable starting-point is a detailed and discerning observation of the character to be transformed. In most cases, that itself is a difficult and often a very baffling task. But there is one fact which the old traditions knew and which can



serve as the clue in the labyrinth of inner discovery. It is that everyone possesses in a large measure, and the exceptional individual in an increasing degree of precision, two opposite tendencies of character, in almost equal proportions, which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing. Thus someone who has the capacity of being exceptionally generous will suddenly find an obstinate avarice rising up in his nature, the courageous man will be a coward in some part of his being and the good man will suddenly have wicked impulses. In this way life seems to endow everyone not only with the possibility of expressing an ideal, but also with contrary elements representing in a concrete manner the battle he has to wage and the victory he has to win for the realisation to become possible. Consequently, all life is an education pursued more or less consciously, more or less willingly. (M12: 19)

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

To give a moral law to a child is evidently not an ideal thing; but it is very difficult to do without it. The child can be taught, as he grows up, the relativity of all moral and social laws so that he may find in himself a higher and truer law. But here one must proceed with circumspection and insist on the difficulty of discovering that true law. The majority of those who reject human laws and proclaim their liberty and their decision to "live their own life" do so only in obedience to the most ordinary vital movements which they disguise and try to justify, if not to their own eyes, at least to the eyes of others. They give a kick to morality, simply because it is a hindrance to the satisfaction of their instincts.

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

In any case, the finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself. (M12: 166)

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One can have an extremely intense concentration without a single thought, and in fact it is usually much more intense when one doesn't think. (*Silence*) It's one of the most indispensable things to do if one wants to succeed in having self-control and even a limited self-knowledge: to be able to localise one's consciousness and move it about in the different parts of one's being, in such away as to distinguish between



one's consciousness and one's thought, feelings, impulses, become aware of what the consciousness is in itself. And in this way one can learn how to shift it: one can put one's consciousness in the body, put it in the vital, put it in the psychic (that's the best place to put it in); one can put one's consciousness in the mind, can raise it above the mind, and with one's consciousness one can go into all the regions of the universe.

But first of all one must know what one's consciousness is, that is, become conscious of one's consciousness, localise it. And for this there are many exercises. But one of them is very well known, it is to observe oneself and watch oneself living, and then see whether it is really the body which is the consciousness of the being, what one calls "myself"; and then when one has realised that it is not at all the body, that the body expresses something else, then one searches in his impulses, emotions, to see whether it's that, and again one finds out that it is not that; and then one seeks in his thoughts, whether the thought is truly himself, what he calls "myself", and at the end of a very short time one becomes aware: "No, I am thinking, therefore 'myself' is different from my thoughts." And so, by progressive eliminations one succeeds in entering into contact with something, something which gives you the impression of being — "Yes, that's 'myself'". And this something I can move around, I can move it from my body to my vital, to my mind, I can even, if I am very . . . how to put it? . . . very practised in moving it, I can move it into other people, and it's in this way that I can identify myself with things and people. I can with the help of my aspiration make it come out of my human form, rise above towards regions which are no longer this little body at all and what it contains." And so one begins to understand what one's consciousness is; and it's after that that one can say, "Good, I shall unite my consciousness with my psychic being and shall leave it there, so that it may be in harmony with the Divine and be able to surrender entirely to the Divine." Or else, "If by this exercise of rising above my faculties of thinking and my intellect I can enter a region of pure light, pure knowledge . . ." then one can put his consciousness there and live like that, in a luminous splendour which is above the physical form.

But first this consciousness must be mobile, and one must know how to distinguish it from the other parts of the being which in fact are its instruments, its modes of expression. The consciousness must make use of these things, and you must not mistake these things for the consciousness. (M7: 250-51)

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There is another quality which must be cultivated in a child from a very young age: that is the feeling of uneasiness, of a moral disbalance which it feels when it has done certain things, not because it has been told not to do them, not because it fears punishment, but spontaneously. For example, a child who hurts its comrade through

mischief, if it is in its normal, natural state, will experience uneasiness, a grief deep in its being, because what it has done is contrary to its inner truth.

For in spite of all teachings, in spite of all that thought can think, there is something in the depths which has a feeling of a perfection, a greatness, a truth, and is painfully contradicted by all the movements opposing this truth. If a child has not been spoilt by its milieu, by deplorable examples around it, that is, if it is in the normal state, spontaneously, without its being told anything, it will feel an uneasiness when it has done something against the truth of its being. And it is exactly upon this that later its effort for progress must be founded. (M4: 24)

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[. . .] you are born in a certain society or religion, in a particular country, and this society has a collective conception of its own and this nation has a collective conception of its own, this religion has a collective “construction” of its own which is usually very fixed. You are born into it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts on your formation — that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without even being aware of it and this forms the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious basis will act on you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to free yourself from it, you must first of all become aware of it; and the first step is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (*laughing*) and it all happened without your participating in the least in it. Therefore, it does not even occur to you that there could be something to know there, and still less something you must get rid of. (M8: 391)

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[. . .] a fundamental change of character demands an almost complete mastery over the subconscious and a very rigorous disciplining of whatever comes up from the inconscient, which, in ordinary natures, expresses itself as the effects of atavism and of the environment in which one was born. Only an almost abnormal growth of consciousness and the constant help of Grace can achieve this Herculean task. That is why this task has rarely been attempted and many famous teachers have declared it to be unrealisable and chimerical. Yet it is not unrealisable. The transformation of character has in fact been realised by means of a clear-sighted discipline and a

perseverance so obstinate that nothing, not even the most persistent failures, can discourage it. (M12: 19)

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[. . .] along with the growth of the power of observation the will for progress and perfection must also grow. This will should be instilled into the child as soon as he is capable of having a will, that is to say, at a much earlier age than is usually believed. [. . .]

Once the resolution has been firmly established, one has only to proceed rigorously and persistently and never to accept any defeat as final. To avoid all weakening and backsliding, there is one important point you must know and never forget: the will can be cultivated and developed just as the muscles can by methodical and progressive exercise. You must not shrink from demanding the maximum effort of your will even for a thing that seems of no importance, for it is through effort that its capacity grows, gradually acquiring the power to apply itself even to the most difficult things. What you have decided to do, you must do, whatever the cost, even if you have to renew your effort over and over again any number of times in order to do it. Your will will be strengthened by the effort and you will have only to choose with discernment the goal to which you will apply it. (M12: 22)

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*Mother, how can one strengthen one's will?*

Oh, as one strengthens muscles, by a methodical exercise. You take one little thing, something you want to do or don't want to do. Begin with a small thing, not something very essential to the being, but a small detail. And then, if, for instance, it is something you are in the habit of doing, you insist on it with the same regularity, you see, either not to do it or to do it — you insist on it and compel yourself to do it as you compel yourself to lift a weight — it's the same thing. You make the same kind of effort, but it is more of an inner effort. And after having taken little things like this — things relatively easy, you know — after taking these and succeeding with them, you can unite with a greater force and try a more complicated experiment. And gradually, if you do this regularly, you will end up by acquiring an independent and very strong will. (M6: 391)

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When you want to realise something, you make quite spontaneously the necessary effort; this concentrates your energies on the thing to be realised and that gives a

meaning to your life. This compels you to a sort of organisation of yourself, a sort of concentration of your energies, because it is this that you wish to do and not fifty other things which contradict it. And it is in this concentration, this intensity of the will, that lies the origin of joy. This gives you the power to receive energies in exchange for those you spend. (M4: 33)

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*How can one transform the vital?*

The first step: will. Secondly, sincerity and aspiration. But will and aspiration are almost the same thing, one follows the other. Then, perseverance. Yes, perseverance is necessary in any process, and what is this process? . . . First, there must be the ability to observe and discern, the ability to find the vital in oneself, otherwise you will find it hard to say: “This comes from the vital, this comes from the mind, this from the body.” Everything will seem to you mixed and indistinct.

After a very sustained observation, you will be able to distinguish between the different parts and recognise the origin of a movement. Quite a long time is necessary for this, but one can go quite fast also, it depends upon people. But once you have found out the different parts ask yourself, “What is there of the vital in this? What does the vital bring into your consciousness? In what way does it change your movements; what does it add to them and what take away? What happens in your consciousness through the intervention of the vital?” Once you know this, what do you do? . . . Then you will need to watch this intervention, observe it, find out in what way it works. For instance, you want to transform your vital. You have a great sincerity in your aspiration and the resolution to go to the very end. You have all that. You start observing and you see that two things can happen (many things can happen, but mainly two).

First, a sort of enthusiasm takes hold of you. You set to work earnestly. In this enthusiasm you think, “I am going to do this and that, I am going to reach my goal immediately, everything is going to be magnificent! It will see, this vital, how I am going to treat it if it doesn’t obey!” And if you look carefully you will see that the vital is saying to itself, “Ah, at last, here’s an opportunity!” It accepts, it starts working with all its zeal, all its enthusiasm and . . . all its impatience.

The second thing may be the very opposite. A sort of uneasiness: “I am not well, how tedious life is, how wearisome everything. How am I going to do all that? Will I ever reach the goal? Is it worth while beginning? Is it at all possible? Isn’t it impossible?” It is the vital which is not very happy about what is going to be done for it, which does not want anyone to meddle in its affairs, which does not like all that very much. So it suggests depression, discouragement, a lack of faith, doubt — is it really worth the trouble?

These are the two extremes, and each has its difficulties, its obstacles.

Depression, unless one has a strong will, suggests, "This is not worth while, one may have to wait a lifetime." As for enthusiasm, it expects to see the vital transformed overnight: "I am not going to have any difficulty henceforth, I am going to advance rapidly on the path of yoga, I am going to gain the divine consciousness without any difficulty." There are some other difficulties. . . . One needs a little time, much perseverance. So the vital, after a few hours — perhaps a few days, perhaps a few months — says to itself: "We haven't gone very far with our enthusiasm, has anything been really done? Doesn't this movement leave us just where we were, perhaps worse than we were, a little troubled, a little disturbed? Things are no longer what they were, they are not yet what they ought to be. It is very tiresome, what I am doing." And then, if one pushes a little more, here's this gentleman saying, "Ah, no! I have had enough of it, leave me alone. I don't want to move, I shall stay in my corner, I won't trouble you, but don't bother me!" And so one has not gone very much farther than before.

This is one of the big obstacles which must be carefully avoided. As soon as there is the least sign of discontentment, of annoyance, the vital must be spoken to in this way, "My friend, you are going to keep calm, you are going to do what you are asked to do, otherwise you will have to deal with me." And to the other, the enthusiast who says, "Everything must be done now, immediately", your reply is, "Calm yourself a little, your energy is excellent, but it must not be spent in five minutes. We shall need it for a long time, keep it carefully and, as it is wanted, I shall call upon your goodwill. You will show that you are full of goodwill, you will obey, you won't grumble, you will not protest, you will not revolt, you will say 'yes, yes', you will make a little sacrifice when asked, you will say 'yes' wholeheartedly."

So we get started on the path. But the road is very long. Many things happen on the way. Suddenly one thinks one has overcome an obstacle; I say "thinks", because though one has overcome it, it is not totally overcome. I am going to take a very obvious instance, of a very simple observation. Someone has found that his vital is uncontrollable and uncontrolled, that it gets furious for nothing and about nothing. He starts working to teach it not to get carried away, not to flare up, to remain calm and bear the shocks of life without reacting violently. If one does this cheerfully, it goes quite quickly. (Note this well, it is very important: when you have to deal with your vital take care to remain cheerful, otherwise you will get into trouble.) One remains cheerful, that is, when one sees the fury rise, one begins to laugh. Instead of being depressed and saying, "Ah! In spite of all my effort it is beginning all over again", one begins to laugh and says, "Well, well! One hasn't yet seen the end of it. Look now, aren't you ridiculous, you know quite well that you are being ridiculous! Is it worthwhile getting angry?" One gives it this lesson cheerfully. And really, after a while it doesn't get angry again, it is quiet — and one

relaxes one's attention. One thinks the difficulty has been overcome, one thinks a result has at last been reached: "My vital does not trouble me any longer, it does not get angry now, everything is going fine." And the next day, one loses one's temper. It is then one must be careful, it is then one must not say, "Here we are, it's no use, I shall never achieve anything, all my efforts are futile; all this is an illusion, it is impossible." On the contrary, one must say, "I wasn't vigilant enough." One must wait long, very long, before one can say, "Ah! It is done and finished." Sometimes one must wait for years, many years. . . .

I am not saying this to discourage you, but to give you patience and perseverance — for there is a moment when you do arrive. And note that the vital is a small part of your being — a very important part, we have said that it is the dynamism, the realising energy, it is very important; but it is only a small part. And the mind! . . . which goes wandering, which must be pulled back by all the strings to be kept quiet! You think this can be done overnight? [. . .] (M4: 247-51)

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[. . .] if you have the good fortune to be in conditions where you can receive help and guidance from childhood, try while still very young to discern between the fugitive joys and superficial pleasures life can give and the marvellous thing that life, action, growth would be in a world of perfection and truth, where all the ordinary limitations, all the ordinary incapacities would be done away with.

When one is very young and as I say "well-born", that is, born with a conscious psychic being within, there is always, in the dreams of the child, a kind of aspiration, which for its child's consciousness is a sort of ambition, for something which would be beauty without ugliness, justice without injustice, goodness without limits, and a conscious, constant success, a perpetual miracle. One dreams of miracles when one is young, one wants all wickedness to disappear, everything to be always luminous, beautiful, happy, one likes stories which end happily. This is what one should rely on. When the body feels its miseries, its limitations, one must establish this dream in it — of a strength which would have no limit, a beauty which would have no ugliness, and of marvellous capacities: one dreams of being able to rise into the air, of being wherever it is necessary to be, of setting things right when they go wrong, of healing the sick; indeed, one has all sorts of dreams when one is very young. . . . Usually parents or teachers pass their time throwing cold water on it, telling you, "Oh! it's a dream, it is not a reality." They should do the very opposite! Children should be taught, "Yes, this is what you must try to realise and not only is it possible but it is *certain* if you come in contact with the part in you which is capable of doing this thing. This is what should guide your life, organise it, make you develop in the direction of the *true reality* which the ordinary world calls illusion."

This is what it should be, instead of making children ordinary, with that dull,

vulgar common sense which becomes an inveterate habit and, when something is going well, immediately brings up in the being the idea: “Oh, that won’t last!”, when somebody is kind, the impression, “Oh, he will change!”, when one is capable of doing something, “Oh, tomorrow I won’t be able to do it so well.” This is like an acid, a destructive acid in the being, which takes away hope, certitude, confidence in future possibilities.

When a child is full of enthusiasm, never throw cold water on it, never tell him, “You know, life is not like that!” You should always encourage him, tell him, “Yes, at present things are not always like that, they *seem* ugly, but behind this there is a beauty that is trying to realise itself. This is what you should love and draw towards you, this is what you should make the object of your dreams, of your ambitions.”

And if you do this when you are very small, you have much less difficulty than if later on you have to undo, undo all the bad effects of a bad education, undo that kind of dull and vulgar common sense which means that you expect nothing good from life, which makes it insipid, boring, and contradicts all the hopes, all the so-called illusions of beauty. On the contrary, you must tell a child — or yourself if you are no longer quite a baby — “Everything in me that seems unreal, impossible, illusory, *that* is what is true, *that* is what I must cultivate.” When you have these aspirations: “Oh, not to be always limited by some incapacity, all the time held back by some bad will!”, you must cultivate within you this certitude that *that* is what is essentially true and *that* is what must be realised.

Then faith awakens in the cells of the body. And you will see that you find a response in your body itself. The body itself will feel that if its inner will helps, fortifies, directs, leads, well, all its limitations will gradually disappear.

And so, when the first experience comes, which sometimes begins when one is very young, the first contact with the inner joy, the inner beauty, the inner light, the first contact with *that*, which suddenly makes you feel, “Oh! that is what I want,” you must cultivate it, never forget it, hold it constantly before you, tell yourself, “I have felt it once, so I can feel it again. This has been real for me, even for the space of a second, and that is what I am going to revive in myself”. . . . And encourage the body to seek it — to seek it, *with the confidence* that it carries that possibility within itself and that if it calls for it, it will come back, it will be realised again.

This is what should be done when one is young. This is what should be done every time one has the opportunity to recollect oneself, commune with oneself, seek oneself. (M9: 162-64)

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Why do I insist on absolute sincerity? Perhaps the younger children don't understand what sincerity is, but the older ones surely ought to know! You have all passed through childhood and you probably remember what you were taught, what you were told when you were young. Parents nearly always tell their children, "You must not lie, it is very bad to tell a lie." But the unfortunate thing is that they lie in your presence and then you wonder why they want you to do something which they don't do themselves.

But, apart from that, why do I insist on the fact that children should be told from a very early age that it is absolutely necessary to be sincere? I am not addressing those who were brought up here, but those who were brought up in an ordinary family, with ordinary ideas. Children are very often taught how to outsmart others, how to dissimulate so as to appear good in others' eyes. Some parents try to control children through fear, and that is the worst possible method of education, for it is an incentive to lying, deceit, hypocrisy and all the rest. But if you repeatedly explain to children something of this kind: If you are not absolutely sincere, not only with others but also with yourself, if at any time you try to cover up your imperfections and failings, you will never make any progress, you will always remain what you are throughout all your life, without ever making any progress. So, even if you only want to grow out of this primitive unconscious state into a progressive consciousness, the most important thing, the one absolutely important thing is sincerity. If you have done something which you ought not to have done, you must admit it to yourself; if a less-than-admirable movement has occurred in yourself, you must look it in the face and tell yourself, "It was not good," or "It was disgusting," or even "It was wicked."

And don't think that there are people to whom this rule does not apply, for you cannot live in the physical world without having a share in the physical nature, and physical nature is essentially a mixture. You will see, when you become absolutely sincere, that there is nothing in yourself that is absolutely unmixed. But it is only when you look yourself in the face, in the light of your highest consciousness, that whatever you want to eliminate from your nature will disappear. Without this striving for absolute sincerity, the defect, the little shadow, will stay in a corner biding its time to come out.

I am not speaking of the vital, which is hypocritical, I am merely speaking of the mind. If you have a small, disagreeable sensation, a slight uneasiness, see how quickly the mind gives you a favourable explanation! It lays the blame on someone else or on the circumstances, it says that what you did was right and that you are not responsible, and so on. If you look carefully into yourself, you will see that it is like that and you will find it most amusing too! If a child starts examining himself carefully very early, observing himself honestly so as not to deceive himself or deceive others, it will become a habit and spare him much struggling later on.

Now I am addressing parents and teachers, for it is very important to teach



children that it is absolutely useless to “look” as if they were good, to “look” as if they were obedient, to “look” as if they were studying well, etc. Very often, the course parents and teachers adopt with their children is to encourage them to “look as if”. It often happens that if a child spontaneously confesses his mistake, he is given a scolding. This is one of the greatest mistakes of parents. You must have sufficient control over yourself never to scold a child, even if he has broken a very valuable and cherished object. You should simply ask him, “How did you do that?” “What happened?” For the child ought to see why it happened, so that he can be more careful next time. But that is all. In this way you will get the child to be sincere with you instead of trying to deceive you.

The greatest obstacle to the transformation of one’s own character is hypocrisy. If you always keep this in mind when dealing with a child, you can do him a lot of good. Of course, you must not sermonise or lecture him, etc. You should simply make him understand that there is a nobility in the being, a great purity, a great love of beauty, which is so powerful that even the most wicked and criminal people are forced to acknowledge a truly beautiful or heroic or selfless act.

For, in human beings, there is a presence, the most marvellous Presence on earth, and except in a few very rare cases [ . . . ] this presence lies asleep in the heart — not the physical heart but the psychic centre — of all beings. And when this Splendour is manifested with enough purity, it will awaken in all beings the echo of this Presence. (M15: 297-99)

*(To be continued)*

*(A New Education for a New Consciousness,*  
published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1992)



3. But surely the lustrous crime is more effective.
5. Yes.
6. Don't know who.

Very forcibly conceited. In its kind it is eminently successful.

26 June 1937

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[*Version from The Secret Splendour —  
Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), 1993, pp. 167-68:*]

### WHITE MURDER

A quick stiletto's smile of poignancy,  
The pang of paradise cleaves through the heart,  
Committing against our human blood's career  
A lustrous crime of immortality.  
Truth's lightning stab — and from the core of life  
Rich reveries flow to some inscrutable deep,  
While over a precipice of infinitude  
Clay-burdens drop, a trance-fall out of time.

\* \* \*

[*Amal on “White Murder” in a letter to a correspondent*]

I am convinced that one of my past births was in 17<sup>th</sup> century England — most probably as a Metaphysical Poet. Of course there are many elements in me now which exceed the metaphysical cadre; but there is enough to justify a comparison. A certain curiosity of mind and body stretching its hand into all the secret places of life and leaving no fruit of time unplucked, be it ever so tabooed, which might add some new savour to a consciousness hungry for the Eternal. A desire to weave intricate webs of thought in order to catch in them a shining simplicity of the soul — a search for striking images and ingenious implications, no love which brings a slow seduction of the invisible truth but the sudden passionate seizure which would violate the verity if at the same time an extreme intellectual skill were not combined with the heart's assault. A constant tendency, therefore, to pack much wealth in a little space, to discover unsuspected short cuts of speech to the arcana, to press with miraculous mastery out of a profane idea a sacred significance rather than tramp the

long religious way to the altar. This is the work and worth of the metaphysical poet, the precious idiosyncrasy with which he makes his mind’s meditation on life and on its infinite halo of mystery a musical apocalypse, whether with a bare pointed impulsion or an ecstasy that moves on wide pinions and sheds colour on all sides. Let me give you a few lines to illustrate the metaphysical’s mind and method:

### WHITE MURDER

A quick stiletto’s smile of poignancy,  
 The pang of paradise cleaves through the heart,  
 Committing against our human blood’s career  
 A lustrous crime of immortality.  
 Truth’s lightning stab — and from the core of life  
 Rich reveries flow to some inscrutable deep,  
 While o’er a precipice of infinitude  
 Clay-burdens drop, a trance-fall out of time.

Here you have an attempt not only at what Coleridge calls a “happy valiancy” of words but also a perilous transformation of a conceit into a revealing image. The poem is not quite typical of all my work but it offers in colourful compression a quality which plays in and out of my verse almost everywhere, a certain hold the intellect has on the imagination’s spontaneities, a hold which does not sober or soften those spontaneities so much as runs their wild warmth into an out-of-the-way yet firmly built channel of thought deepened by spiritual intuition. Where the intuition is very strong it checks the thought’s tendency to twist and turn and accomplishes a wider and quieter boldness: the direct touch, however, of strangely beautiful life is never absent, for even in what is stable and spacious the same fire and fantasy is at work though with the effect of a multiform mountainscape purple in its massive whim against the blue tranquillity of the sky. The stable and the spacious in my poetry are an addition made to the metaphysical vision and proclivity of speech by something Indian in my consciousness, the sense of the overhanging vastness of the Spirit, a large and luminous benediction, as it were, on the imaginative intellect’s curiosity and leaping cry or its wistful yet penetrative look upward. That is why the bulk of my creation does not seem to repeat the 17<sup>th</sup> century except as an undertone: a purer culture, a higher strain is lent by flashes of insight into the Eternal within me . . . And this Indian vastness and vibrancy ought to purify and elevate and harmonise my life as much as it does my poetry: all that is “dissolute” must sink into nothingness. To a certain extent the old Adam is burnt up, but something in him refuses to give up the ghost. The “mirroring depths”, therefore, are still troubled now and again as if some Aphrodite were striving to come up and proclaim with pagan perfection of

line her impulsive message. Luckily, a power mystical keeps growing, too, and succeeds often in converting the expected Aphrodite into a lotus-throned Lakshmi as soon as the waters of the soul are ruffled and rent.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

*. . . have you not somewhere a line*

*The mute unshadowed spaces of her mind?*

*That would be an instance of the concrete convincing reality of which I am speaking — a spiritual state not hinted at or abstractly put as the metaphysical poets most often do it but presented with a tangible accuracy which one who has lived in the silent wideness of his spiritualised mind can at once recognise as the embodiment in word of his experience.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 513)*

**THE PRIME MINISTER,  
SHRI NARENDRA MODI'S SPEECH  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
AUROVILLE'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

I am happy to be here today on the occasion of the golden jubilee week of Auroville. Sri Aurobindo's vision of India's spiritual leadership continues to inspire us, even today.

Indeed, Auroville is a manifestation of that vision. Over the last five decades, it has emerged as a hub of social, cultural, educational, economic and spiritual innovation.

Friends,

It is important today to remember the vast extent of action and thought of Sri Aurobindo. A man of action, a philosopher, a poet, there were so many facets to his character. And each of them was dedicated to the good of the nation and humanity. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore:

*Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!  
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,  
Of India's soul!*

Friends,

As the Mother had observed, Auroville was to be a universal town. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

The large gathering here today, is a reflection of that idea. For ages, India has been a spiritual destination for the world. The great universities of Nalanda and Taxila hosted students from all over the world. Many of the world's great religions were born here. They motivate people from all walks of life to take to a spiritual path in their day-to-day dealings.

Recently, the United Nations has declared June 21 as International Day of Yoga, recognising a great Indian tradition. Auroville has brought together men and women, young and old, cutting across boundaries and identities.

I understand that Auroville's Charter was hand-written in French by the Divine Mother herself. According to the Charter, the Mother set five high principles for Auroville.

The first high principle of Auroville is that it belongs to all humanity. This is a reflection of our ancient credo of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — the world is one family.

I am told, that the inauguration ceremony of Auroville in 1968 was attended by delegates of 124 nations. I learn that today, it has over two thousand, four hundred residents from forty-nine countries.

This leads us to the second high principle of Auroville. Anyone who is willingly in service of the Divine Consciousness is entitled to live in Auroville.

Maharishi Aurobindo's philosophy of consciousness integrates not just humans, but the entire universe. This matches with the ancient saying in the *Ishavasya Upanishad: Īsavāsyām idam sarvaṁ*. This has been translated by Mahatma Gandhi to mean "everything down to the tiniest atom is divine".

The third founding principle of Auroville is that it will emerge as the bridge between the past and the future. If one looks at where the world and India were in 1968 when Auroville was founded, the world was living in compartments and in a state of cold war. The idea of Auroville saw the world getting integrated by trade, travel and communication.

Auroville was conceived with the vision of enveloping the whole of humanity in one small area. This would show that the future would see an integrated world.

The fourth founding principle of Auroville is that it will connect the spiritual and material approaches of the contemporary world. As the world progresses materially through science and technology, it will increasingly long for and need spiritual orientation for social order and stability.

At Auroville, the material and the spiritual, co-exist in harmony.

The fifth basic principle of Auroville is that it will be a place of unending learning and constant progress, so that it never stagnates.

The progress of humanity calls for continuous thinking and re-thinking, so that the human mind does not become frozen into one idea.

The very fact that Auroville has brought together such huge diversity of people and ideas makes dialogue and debate natural.

Indian society is fundamentally diverse. It has fostered dialogue and a philosophic tradition. Auroville showcases this ancient Indian tradition to the world by bringing together global diversity.

India has always allowed mutual respect and co-existence of different religions and cultures. India is home to the age old tradition of *Gurukul*, where learning is not confined to classrooms; where life is a living laboratory. Auroville too has developed as a place of unending and lifelong education.

In ancient times, our sages and 'Rishis' would perform 'yajña' to begin great endeavours. Occasionally, those *yajñas* would shape the course of history.

One such 'yajña' for unity was performed here exactly 50 years ago. Men and women brought soils from all parts of the world. In the mixing of the soils, began the journey of oneness.

The world has received positive vibrations from Auroville, in many forms, over the years.

Be it unending education, environment regeneration, renewable energy, organic agriculture, appropriate building technologies, water management, or waste management, Auroville has been a pioneer.

You have done a lot to promote quality education in the country. On the occasion of 50 years of Auroville, I hope you can enhance your efforts in this direction. Serving young minds through education will be a big tribute to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Many of you may not be aware, but I too, have been a follower of your efforts on education. Shri Kireet Bhai Joshi, an ardent disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and the Mother, was an eminent educationist.

He was also my Education Advisor, when I was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. He is not amongst us today. But his contribution to the field of education in India, is worth remembering.

Friends,

The Rig Veda states: “आनो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः”;

*Āno bhadra kratavo yantu viśvataḥ* — Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.

May Auroville continue to come up with ideas to empower the ordinary citizens of this country.

May people from far and wide bring with them new ideas. May Auroville become the centre where these ideas are synthesised.

May Auroville serve as a beacon to the world.

May it be the guardian which calls for breaking down narrow walls of the mind. May it continue to invite everyone to celebrate the possibilities of humanity's oneness.

May the spirit of Maharishi Aurobindo and the Divine Mother, continue to guide Auroville to the eventual fulfilment of its lofty founding vision.

Thank You



## THE MEDITATION AND WATER CEREMONY

“Water is the symbol of a state of consciousness or plane.”<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo

The water ceremony after the early morning meditation of 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 was reminiscent of the soil ceremony that took place on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1968. The joining of the waters of the world symbolises unity and the unity of the waters of the world. However, the very nature of water, which transcends boundaries of nations, gave a more universal quality to the ceremony this time. Water is like the Mother’s force, which permeates into every nook and corner of the universe and is there for all.

As the water samples arrived from all over the world, they were entered into a chart, while paper cut-outs in the shape of water drops were prepared by an Auroville press and then spray painted in blue by an Auroville unit which also provided the paper and made them ready. Following this, Auroville calligraphers carefully wrote out the names of the sources. An Auroville potter diligently made 200 beautiful pots for the water samples.

Meanwhile, the Auroville schools collaborated in training and preparing the children for the ceremony, while a huge group of volunteers from Auroville and the Ashram organised themselves to receive and guide an expected crowd of 6,000 or more attendees.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, as the children carrying the water samples went up the incline leading to the Urn, came down the other side and moved across the stage to the Golden Disc used as the water receptacle, their steps traced the pictorial symbol of water that the Mother drew for the Ashram children to pray for rain during a severe drought many years ago. The water bearers then placed the paper ‘drops’ with the name of the water source on it at the edge of the stage, and exited, while the Auroville Choir sang ‘Earth’s Aspiration Chant’ as given by the Mother, and the musicians played inspired music to the large gathering. The whole ceremony was symbolic of Auroville’s aspiration not only for water but also for the ‘New World’ as described by Her.

It was a collective effort where all collaborated enthusiastically and joyfully.

We believe that the event of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 was a gift from the Universal Mother to Auroville.

She put the idea of a water ceremony into our heads, motivated us to go for it,

1. *Letters on Yoga – III*, CWSA, Vol. 30, p. 150

inspired all who heard about it to bring or send water samples from all over the world, brought together all who were meant to participate in it, galvanised the organisers into action, and finally presided over the whole event to see that everything went smoothly, serenely, beautifully. It was really She who made the difference. All who went back touched by the event did so because something in them responded to Her subtle yet all-pervading presence.

Jai MA!

THE MATRIMANDIR EVENTS TEAM

(Auroville Today, March 2018)

*How can you believe that in Auroville there will be no more suffering so long as people who come to live there are men of the same world, born with the same weaknesses and faults?*

I have never thought that there would no more be suffering in Auroville, because men, as they are, love suffering and call it to them even while they curse it.

But we shall try to teach them to truly love peace and to try to practise equality.

What I meant was involuntary poverty and begging.

Life in Auroville will be organised in such a way that this does not exist — and if beggars come from outside, either they will have to go away or they will be given shelter and taught the joy of work.

9 November 1969

The Mother

(*On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 10, pp. 268-69)

## TWO ESSAYS

[These two early essays capture something of the spirit that animates the pioneers, when something is to be created almost out of nothing, and the intense faith in the accomplishment of the ideal that is Auroville. — Eds.]

### I

#### NIGHTWATCH AT MATRIMANDIR, OR HOW I CAME TO AUROVILLE

Nightwatch at Matrimandir . . .

A cosmic spectacle; the black expanse above, the big black crater of Matrimandir's excavation carved deep into the soil. The four pillars — two of which are completed and the other two nearing completion — are four huge ships coming together from the four corners of the earth to meet at this propitious spot.

Vastness, silence, a sort of solemnity reign supreme. Being alone for half the night with Matrimandir is like being a part of some occult, worldwide initiation into things unknown. Matrimandir watches me rather than the inverse.

A part of the person may feel lost in this great world: coming from the other end of the globe and now sitting on the edge of a deep hole in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in south India. Another, more subtle part of the person knows it has been chosen to live and work at the very centre of the new world that is being born — hidden still and almost invisible, but with a sure force and a definite direction. Matrimandir is nowhere, in a sense; far from everything and everywhere. But we know it for sure to be in the very heart of everything, in the centre of a cosmic play of forces redirecting the universe towards the divine spirit which, almost palpably, seeks to manifest here and now.

So many visitors to Matrimandir are reminded, — strange sort of memory, — of the pyramids and other occult world loci. Behind the schoolbooks' kind of history of kings and conquerors there is a history of souls seeking expression in art and architecture, but remaining hidden behind symbols which can be read by those who have the eyes to see. The Greeks had their Delphi, the place where the gods expressed their opinions and wishes through the oracles of the Pythia. Delphi was for them the centre of the universe, apparently of that world behind politics, art and the ordinary movements which were embodied in Athens. They called Delphi the "omphalos", the navel, of the earth, the occult centre where the vapours emerged transmuting the ordinary into the sacred and supernatural. But it is interesting to note that if Delphi was the navel, and the navel is the seat of the vital powers, were they not the vital

gods and beings who expressed themselves in the vague and ambiguous oracles?

Matrimandir is related to a much higher principle, to the soul; of Auroville first, but undoubtedly to the universal soul as well. The Mother: "The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville and the sooner it is there the better it will be for everybody and especially for the Aurovilians."

Nightwatch at the soul of the new creation . . .

The black expanse above continues to be black, but a play of lightness and delight transforms at every moment this monument under construction into a mind-blowing centre of the three worlds. A single spotlight guides our worker from the neighbouring Tamil village, who is on night-duty to keep the recently concreted portion of the north pillar moist. Hundreds of insects of all shapes and colours and levels of evolution are attracted by the light and they fly, jump and bump without any visible pattern against the lens of the spotlight. That's how I came to Auroville too, — an insect from somewhere in the dark world, attracted by the one spotlight in the huge night, jumping and bumping around without any as yet visible pattern. The insect does not seek out the light, it is the light that draws the insect. After one and a half years in Auroville I still don't know why or how I came. I did not choose to come here; rather I feel I was chosen. When I broke away from my previous life I told my confreres of the religious order of which I was a member, "As soon as I know why I am going, I may feel ready to come back." Well, I still don't know but the more I discover something of a reason, the surer I am that I won't go back.

The possibility seldom arises to feel proud of being an Aurovillian when one knows that we are not here on account of personal merits but rather because of the difficulties each one of us represents so that these can be integrated and transformed in the evolutionary experiment of Auroville. We all bring with us a particular set of problems, forces, idiosyncracies as fuel for the cosmic fire. We also represent, each one of us, a particular aspect of the old world that has to be new-made.

I may have been chosen because I represented a strong force of the past age: religion. For fifteen years I was a member of a religious order, the Franciscans, and for eight of those years a Roman Catholic priest. In 1968 my superiors sent me, partly as a sociologist and partly as a missionary, to central India to set up an institute for community development. My old interest in yoga guided me towards a hathayoga centre, but while travelling through India for the work of the institute, I tried to come into contact with other brands of Yoga as well. One day I found myself in Pondicherry and the next day in Auroville. That was it! I thought that I left again following a ten-day visit, but I discovered more and more that it was just my body that left. After almost three years, the time I needed for the big step from religion to spirituality, I came back to Auroville and rejoined my soul. Simply, it had not left the place. It is not a nice experience to travel around India and, after my one-year's assignment was over, to Pakistan and then once more to Holland, without a soul. One lives less than half a life, one is not there, not oneself. That must be the reason

why so many people feel as if they have come home as soon as they enter the Ashram or, if it is their destination, Auroville.

I did not know why I suddenly broke away from my order and the church and the intimate circle of my confraters, who were real friends to me. I mentalised the reasons. The most comic one, though at that time I took my mind quite seriously, was to prepare a thesis on “Jesus and Sri Aurobindo” or something like “The Yoga of Jesus”. I spent my first night at the beautiful Ashram guesthouse Golconde; the next morning I took the bus to Auroville, and it “happened” to be the very day when the excavation of Matrimandir started. I joined the thirty or so people who carried red earth away from the excavation in baskets on their heads, and from that first moment I knew a lot of things.

I knew that the thesis would not be written, because the dialogue between the Great cannot be understood mentally but only by a plunge into identification. Carrying earth of Matrimandir promised to be the shortcut towards that. I also knew immediately that I would not go back to Holland; and before I knew it (it was something else in me that knew, or it was somebody else that knew for and in me), I had become an Aurovilian.

Auroville is far from being the perfect society yet, but being around here brings joy and peace on levels of the being which all the solemnities of my order and all the ordinations and celebrations of my Church never managed to touch.

I was a theologian. Theologically, I have not come anywhere near “solving” many of the mental problems involved in my transition from Rome to Auroville, from religion to “no religions”, from Jesus and St. Francis of Assisi to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But my little victory over theology is that I hardly care any more.

I had a restless nature; always searching, travelling, discovering, never settling anywhere, giving up things as soon as I thought I knew their secrets, not letting myself be tied to anything or anybody. And now I find myself in one place for a long time already and without any desire to leave or to go anywhere else. It seems a common experience of most Aurovilians that they cannot live and breathe any more in any other place. As soon as we set foot outside Auroville, we feel a strong inclination to rush back. Some of us even feel “home-sick” for Matrimandir when we are in Pondicherry!

I don’t know how and why I am here, but I know that it is a joy and a blessing to be at the cradle of a new world and safely in the arms of the divine Mother.

And the amazing thing for me is this: the more I discover Sri Aurobindo, the Integral Yoga and Matrimandir, the more I feel that I have not really broken with my past life as a member of a religious order and an official representative of religion, but I experience that I am only now slowly becoming what I then, spiritually and occultly, was supposed to be.

## II

## A CITY WITH A SOUL

Auroville is a City with a Soul.

This awareness sets Auroville apart from other cities or societies and lifts it above any known concept of town planning or human or social engineering. No norms can be applied to Auroville except norms derived from the soul, either individual or collective. No expectations or opinions can stand up with regard to Auroville unless they come as expressions from that deeper level in us which Sri Aurobindo calls the “psychic”. One cannot even say whether, after almost five years of existence, Auroville has so far failed or succeeded, unless one is able to look with the eyes of the soul. Two years before the official opening of Auroville, when there was still nothing and hardly anyone had ever heard the name Auroville, the Mother said, “Auroville is going well and becomes more and more real, but its realisation does not advance in the habitual manner, and it is more visible for the interior consciousness than for the exterior vision.” (January 1966) Auroville is a city where likes and dislikes are irrelevant and where doubts and criticisms cannot stand the test; for the soul knows no doubts, whose origins like those of criticism lie in a level of consciousness far lower than that the City wants to manifest.

It is not the Aurovilians, that group of mostly young people from all over the world, who build Auroville. There is an awareness, growing deeper all the time, that we are no more than insufficient instruments in the hands of a divine Process that is fulfilling itself in and through us. That is already a reversal of consciousness, a growth towards a new cosmic understanding, to give up relying upon one’s own means and capacities. “Who has taken the initiative for the construction of Auroville?” The Mother’s answer: “The Supreme Lord.” We will have to learn more and more to apply this wider awareness to the most concrete and seemingly trivial instances. “Who participates in the financing of Auroville?” The Mother again: “The Supreme Lord.” Then again we find things moving too slowly, money is not coming at the pace we would impose on its flow. Again and again it is we who want to set the terms for buildings to be finished, to dictate how and at what speed the city should progress; though in every single instance we can learn from what the Mother has said, “All things are as they should be just when they should be.”

Prisoners who have been in jail for twenty, thirty years seem to have great difficulty in re-adjusting to a life of freedom. Equally hard is it to live in the freedom of Auroville, to abandon worrying about the overall plans as well as the details of their execution, to realise that nothing is compulsory, to know that there is a beyond and another beyond for every aspect of life, that growth has no limits, and that the flexibility of even the most solid matter and of physical nature itself is increasing under the pressure of the Mother’s Force, so that ultimately nothing is impossible in Auroville.

All this is implied in the easy-to-say statement but most-difficult-to-attain realisation that Auroville is a City with a Soul. Creating bodies for cities — houses, shopping centres, schools, recreation facilities — has been done before and is being done now all over the world. We know the laws of execution, the mathematical, statistical and financial implications and requirements, but we also know that it does not recreate the human species. It does not open up the vistas of the beyond or the luminous countries of the soul. It remains yet another variation of the same old theme. A city with a soul does not mean a city with a body and the vague hope that somewhere in that body, a divine spark may begin to glow. On the contrary, the process seems to be the inverse: elements of the soul and psychic sparks are the first stones of the city. They grow in the play of Forces, of which Auroville is the garden of delight, into a psychic being; initially, many individual psychic beings which carry within themselves a psychic being of a new nature, a collective soul. This is the divine vehicle for the construction of Auroville.

A City with a Soul is not a human conception. It surely coincides with a need which is deeply felt nowadays for recreating the face of the earth and restructuring human society on a totally new basis; but this coincidence seems no more than a leverage of divine opportunity. When the physical, vital or mental no longer determine the nature of a project, then the accustomed ways of approach are no more applicable. Psychology, sociology, statistics, economics lose their relevance as aids as long as they themselves are not “psychicised”. Even the idea of Reality, both as a philosophical and practical concept, is upturned whenever the soul takes over the lead from the accustomed approaches. Auroville is in a very definite sense not “real”: “You say that Auroville is a dream. Yes, it is a ‘dream’ of the Lord and generally these ‘dreams’ turn out to be true — much more true than the human so-called realities!”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the ages a chain of periods, places and groups of people has existed representing and manifesting levels of being and planes of truth beyond the average and normal. They had the function of handing on insights from past to future generations or of preparing new steps in the evolution, as representatives of humanity as a whole. Mostly they were secret societies with a strictly defined and protected membership; to be admitted one had to undergo a long and difficult initiation. Auroville, insofar as it fits into any traditional pattern, may fall into this occult chain linking the distant past with a glorious future, rather than belonging to the present-day urban, social or economic planning or to regional and global politics. Only, it seems so easy to join Auroville and no lengthy initiation appears to be required. This, or . . . maybe we are without our knowing it thrown right into the midst of a most difficult process of initiation? To be guided, almost compelled to live by the categories and values of the world of the soul, rather than by the norms and customs

1. The Mother, *White Roses*, Part III, p. 8.



of our old comfortable world, can certainly be called an initiation! Maybe the present state of Auroville itself is our initiation; maybe we do not have a “book of secret knowledge” as so many groups used to have, but a “building of initiation”, the Matrimandir, the “soul of Auroville” as Mother called it.

The great polarities and oppositions in the cosmic process of growth are the cause of grief and pain, to be sure; but they are also the occasions for the divine Laughter in which we may fully participate — if we wish. Often when the evolutionary process intensifies and is being carried to the breaking point, we have a choice of either becoming as tense as the very tension between the polarities, or of escaping, at each moment, the clash of oppositions into a liberating laughter, catching a glimpse of the Divine’s wink behind the external event.

Cosmic experiments like Auroville, like the Integral Yoga itself, are one more proof of divine daring as well as divine humour. Not that He would play a bad joke on us; rather, the idea that in the greater things of creation, you have to keep an eye on everything at once because everything is always its own opposite and again the opposite of that and then all that together. In philosophy we used to learn: “Everything is what it is,” but in spiritual adventures everything is not what it is: on the contrary. But then again, it is though quite differently and again, not that but, etc. And just when you think that everything has failed, things once more appear pregnant with new possibilities; when you are inclined to think death is the end, it suddenly appears to be full of life. The real revolutionary does not shed blood but withdraws and stands back; he who wants to make great journeys must remain in his room. Matter ultimately appears to be Spirit and the more I become an ego, the less I become myself. The city that aims at being a new creation has more than any other place on earth to pass through the human pettinesses and we have first to get stuck in everything before we can start anything new. The Divine seems to love building with debris; the more you think you can, the less you can, and when you know how to give up everything, you can, it seems, do anything. “A City with a Soul” is a deadly serious proposition but the concept carries in itself the explosives of laughter — maybe until it has fully manifested, at which moment the humour will turn to bliss.

Sri Aurobindo lived the divine humour and took full part in the play of the divine child; he embodied the joy which is the ultimate basis of existence. When as our guide towards unknown heights he wants to lead us there, we cannot but go along and throw ourselves into the play, re-thinking things, seeing or setting everything upside down, laughing and enjoying throughout, surrendering without holding back anything, and then carefully observing how his Force is recreating the earth, creating a new species. And the humour of Auroville’s present situation is that it certainly is not at all what we think it is, and as long as we still think about it, it goes on escaping us — and all the plans and layouts we are able to make now seem irrelevant, because if we knew with our present consciousness how and what Auroville is, then there would be no need for an Auroville.

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In the meantime we feel something is growing in the depths, maybe just by being around the Mother's field of forces, maybe even inspite of our clumsy attempts to do yoga. Auroville is a city with a soul and that means a city of yoga. But a yoga so multi-faceted that we often feel like one who hardly knows English must feel when he stands face to face with the Centenary Edition of Sri Aurobindo's works, volume after volume of things beyond even his primary understanding. Left to ourselves we would not know where to begin with the yoga and even with all the help we receive and all the Force pressing down upon us, we still do not know; but we know that it doesn't matter too much, provided we can open ourselves and aim towards the future rather than cling to what we brought along from homes and schools and nations and natures. Simply, we must believe it can be done. "It is certain that for living at Auroville a great progress of consciousness has to be made. But the moment has come when this progress is possible." (The Mother, June 1968)

In questions of the soul there is no first and second, otherwise we would say that Auroville is a city with a collective soul first, carried by many individual souls, as it is first a collective yoga, composed of many small yogas. But to do a collective yoga consciously is much harder even than doing an individual sadhana: if it was not for the divine Master, Lover, Friend and Teacher who is the Doer of the Yoga in the collectivity, poor Nature would have to remain for many more centuries right where she is now and has been for so long. Still, if for eternity the stress is on the yoga of humanity as a whole, intensified in the yoga of a city, for our short-range consciousness we cannot but discover the laws and mechanisms of collective change through our own individual discoveries of what it is like to have a soul, and even to be one, and to live a psychic life rather than a mental and vital existence. If we are learning anything in Auroville, then it is certainly how complex man is and how difficult it is to replace the dominion of the ego with the qualities of the psychic being. We know, however, that this is why we are here — to learn to live and feel and act according to categories of the soul is, we may assume, the way to become a "true Aurovilian", for which Mother declares the first necessity to be "the inner discovery by which one learns who one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances."

By hitting our heads against the wall and repeating our mistakes we make our discoveries. We know now that we have to pass through a silence, a great big solemn silence, in order to realise in ourselves the qualities of the world of the soul which awaits us almost impatiently. By listening to the Mother, by reading Sri Aurobindo and by our first attempts at identification, we come to know the characteristics — surrender and consecration, sincerity and honesty, faith and trust, devotion and quietude, aspiration and courage, endurance and perseverance, calm and patience, equality, concentration, beauty and harmony, simplicity and spontaneity, perfection and exactitude, collaboration and sensitivity, strength and control, plasticity and swiftness, joy and delight, discipline and obedience, the freedom of

the children of God and a host of attitudes and qualities expressed by the Mother in the names of the twelve gardens of Matrimandir, the twelve meditation chambers, the names of flowers and trees and communities and projects in Auroville and in a continuous flow of messages. The vibrations of these soul-sparks all round us ultimately seem stronger than our smallness and closedness, and that is what gives us all confidence that slowly our deeper beings will open up and begin to vibrate to the intensities with which the Auroville atmosphere is charged.

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A city made up of individuals, each of whom is doing his own sadhana, is enough to deem it an experiment in human living and applied spirituality. “Auroville is an endeavour to translate into physical forms what has been determined on higher levels”; “Auroville wants to be a new creation, expressing a new consciousness, in a new way and according to new methods”; “Auroville is a model town as the beginning of a new creation”. Or the definition given by M. P. Pandit, “Auroville is a cosmic sacrifice, presided over by the Mother”. More solid achievements and profounder depths are suggested than could be reached via an individual yoga. We must assume that a city with a soul implies something of a totally new and different order; something that has never yet existed on earth, an initial attempt towards consciously realising an entirely new phase in the history of evolution. And so we slowly grow towards the awareness that we are involved in an adventure that, much more than even our personal yoga, reaches beyond our understanding; we are chosen to be the tiny cells of a larger body, on the scale of a city, that is doing its yoga, — a corporate Yoga, a collective Yoga, the yoga of Nature and of evolution intensified in the growth and blossoming of a city. “All life is Yoga,” declared Sri Aurobindo, the whole process of the self-discovery of the Spirit out of dumb matter, the whole process of hominisation and of the many cultures clustering and uniting and searching for their common depth. Auroville stands somewhere in between that huge yoga of Nature, all-inclusive, all-pervasive but slow-moving, and the individual sadhana of searching souls the world over. Auroville intensifies both movements, the cosmic and the individual and serves as a conscious link between the macro- and microcosm.

In this huge yoga it certainly is not me or my neighbour who is the Doer of the sadhana. Until there are true Aurovilians we feel it is first and foremost the Mother who carries in her Being the Soul of Auroville as a particularisation of the cosmic Soul which she personifies. It is too early to see the great lines along which this yoga fulfils itself, — it is too young, too dynamic, too fathomless. But since Sri Aurobindo indicates an identity-in-nature between the individual soul and the group-soul, we may assume that the sadhana of the group-soul will pass through stages similar to those of the individual’s sadhana, a growth pattern demarcated by the three great transformations, — the psychic, the spiritual and the supramental. The

height of this process dictates the attitudes required of us: total surrender to the One who sustains the group-soul in its flight, complete opening of all the layers of our being to the larger body, so that the Big Body becomes a “yoga of the cells” as the integral yoga on the individual level is also called. And no wax in our cracks!, like they used to do to the old Roman statues to cover up the deficiencies in the marble: an uncracked statue was highly valued and was called “wax-less” — *sine cere*, sincere. All the attitudes are required that make us into integral and flexible members of the body divine; perhaps foremost is the acute awareness of being a cell, one member, nothing more, nothing less.

Nothing is wrong with attitudes, of course, provided they find their expression in life. In the individual sadhana right thinking and right feeling must materialise in right action. So on a collective level must the sadhana find expression in forms of communal living, communal work, communal attempts to express the awareness of the group-soul in beauty, harmony, delicacy, in construction, education, agriculture, in all the fields of life. This is the difficult and often disappointing leap from the realms of Light into Matter’s obscurity, into the primitive problems of learning to live together and suffer and bear each other’s idiosyncracies, deficiencies, cultural and spiritual otherness. Just as each one has to free himself from the domination of his vital and mental, so must we all together break through the bonds of our group-vital and group-mental and come to a shared awareness of our collective inner being. It is the Lord himself who becomes aware of His identity-in-diversity in our collective yoga, it is the divine Mother who unites our separate souls into one new being, it is we and our small communities who have to raise this process, going on in the depths of our social being, above the threshold of our communal awareness. Here, as in the individual’s growth, there are no sudden leaps, no flashing miracles, but rather a spontaneous and guided process of daily, monthly growth, observable to the untrained eye perhaps only at long intervals. We are right in the beginning of a beautiful process of small groups trying to find their identity, their basis-in-depth, their communal privacy, the extent of their collective property, their unity-in-diversity. For quite some time this process will require our living in small communities where the awareness of the group-soul can materialise more easily in forms and expressions. When a first awareness comes about, most probably the small groups will quite naturally begin to form larger units, will start clustering into more inclusive totalities and richer and more varied expressions of the one soul sustaining all, until we have reached a level where the whole city can live in its one being, its one source of knowledge and joy.

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“Auroville wants to be a universal township, where men and women from all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and nationalities.” The great stress on human unity suggests an intimate link between Auroville as a City with a Soul and the universally felt need for peoples and cultures to grow together on a global scale. Again this is taking place in Auroville on two levels, the individual and the universal. As for the small-scale level, our best teachers in supra-national feeling, talking and behaving are the children living in our midst.

On the level of the cultural blending occurring in our century, Auroville seems destined for a major task. Just as it is difficult for individuals to grow towards a real unity on the basis of mere vital or mental affinities, so it goes with nations too, for whom the lower levels of being seem more often to be international battle fields than temples of divine occasion. Only in an exchange on the soul-level can world-union be achieved — by definition; for if the mind and the vital stand for division, then the soul is the principle of unity-in-diversity. And that makes this century’s greatest challenge, the world’s most important issue, into a matter more of yoga than geopolitics, economics or development aid. A yogic forum has to be created wherein each of the different cultures can find its own dharma, its soul, and then come together to an exchange of values and qualities on that highest level.

Precisely this seems to be the importance of Auroville’s international sector where nations, or maybe even groups of nations who share the soul of a similar cultural trend, can express their beings through national pavilions. Participating countries are bound to examine their cultural heritage thoroughly in order to find their soul-sparks and the psychic elements of lasting value. It is another proof of divine insight that, contrary to some trends among universalists, Auroville is meant to contribute to the integration of cultural values, not by blending them into one big artificial middle-level culture suited for general consumption, but according to the principle of the soul: diverse unity, multifarious wealth of expression. Achievements will not be exhibited to increase the image of a nation’s ego or to outdo other nations, but to contribute to the osmosis of the scattered elements of the universal psychic being. The parallel between the individual sadhana and the yoga of nations is obvious; initially this universal yoga will be more difficult because, as Sri Aurobindo writes, there is an identity-in-nature between the individual soul and the group — or nation-soul, but the latter is cruder and “more complex because it has a greater number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells.” One large sector of the City with a Soul will then be an almost palpable manifestation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision of “the luminous countries of the Soul”.

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The yoga of the individual Aurovilians, then, is taken up and carried further by the collective yoga of the group-soul; this medium-level yoga is again the basis for the yoga of nations, or the yoga of humanity. But it may well be that none of these yogas is what ultimately constitutes Auroville as a City with a Soul. For that, something even more daring, more integral, more divine is required. That culminating point of all the yogas on the various levels, higher and higher, more and more all-embracing, is termed in integral yoga the total reversal, the leap inside out, the plunge into Matter. The yoga of Matter is what finally makes Auroville. And that is why, in these early days of the town's emergence, the stress is on not the communities, not the industries, not even the international sector, but on the Matrimandir, the golden temple of Truth right in the heart of Nowhere in which Auroville is projected. We can discover soul-elements and soul-qualities in many aspects of Auroville, but Mother condenses and crystallises everything around this one symbol and expression of the divine manifestation: "The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner it is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for Aurovilians."

Matrimandir is a symbol, but like all true symbols, it brings forth the reality of what it expresses; the symbolic value coincides with the power of realisation (= making real). A structure of cement and steel is a soul; and here we are in the secret heart of the alchemy, the transformation of what is most impenetrable to the consciousness into a living dwelling place for the Divine Presence. Matter and Spirit embrace, heaven and earth unite, the Great Mother bears the Golden Child of the Supramental Age. Nowhere have we felt so keenly how simple acts such as carrying chetties of red earth away from the excavation, or erecting scaffolding and concrete forms, are charged with a multifaceted meaning, as if each single contribution to Matrimandir were an act with a body and soul — a soul of divine significance and earthly transmutation. Surrounded by twelve petals, four pillars will carry a huge sphere. It is the earth bursting open and giving birth to a new age, crystallised in the crystal at the centre of the sphere. It is the sphere of golden Light descending into the crater, into the earth enlightening the abyss. It is the Cosmic Egg from the tales of old, the beginning of a new creation. It is the descent and manifestation on earth of a jewel of the subtle physical plane of existence where Matrimandir has been planned and matured and executed for God knows how long.

Two phases have been completed: the first is the excavation of a vast crater ten meters deep, or the reaching into the collective unconscious, or both; the second, the construction of the four pillars back up to zero level, to the point where the digging began one and a half years ago. We are once again at the same level, but we feel enriched with the experience which is slowly preparing us to go higher and to expand, — very slowly, for the most difficult job is not the technical but the inner one. Right aspiration and surrender are the real pillars, the inner silence is the real secret chamber, the new consciousness is the golden sphere. In a venture that is so concretely the playball of the gods, all things are always true at the same time. Of

course the construction does not depend on raising the level of consciousness in those Aurovilians who happen to be around; but of course it does too. It is fully the Divine who realises it, it is totally the Mother who executes it, but is fully us too. It cannot be helped, for the secret Truth of God coincides with the secret Truth of Matter. But let us admit, after all, that we have no idea what we are constructing; we only know that it is a privilege to be involved, and perhaps more a challenge than a privilege. We must become aware, we must aspire, we must grow in unity, and the Divine is sure to answer in this palpable way: “Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine’s answer to man’s aspiration for perfection. The union of the Divine manifesting itself in a progressive human unity.” (The Mother, August 1970)

The smooth and easy and continuous intercourse between earth and heaven, the Divine walking and working so concretely among human beings, the happy blend of human sorrow and divine bliss, the physical presence of the universal Mother, it takes us back to mythological ages past. We are living the myth of all time, taking part in the eternal theme re-enacted in the City with a Soul. But it is a myth in the form of a spiral, waiting for its destined Hour to go one step forward towards its complete de-mythologisation. Each new chapter makes it less of a myth and more of a realisation, until the day when it will all have come true. We are at one of those Hours of God.

RUUD LOHMAN

*(A House for the Third Millennium — Essays on Matrimandir,  
published by Alain Grandcolas, 1986)*

*The ultimates of life are spiritual and only in the full light of the liberated self and spirit can it achieve them. That full light is not intellect or reason, but a knowledge by inner unity and identity which is the native self-light of the fully developed spiritual consciousness and, preparing that, on the way to it, a knowledge by intimate inner contact with the truth of things and beings which is intuitive and born of a secret oneness.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(The Human Cycle, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 171)*



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