

Discourses on

The Synthesis of Yoga

Volume Two

Part – I

The Yoga of Divine Works

Chapters: I – III

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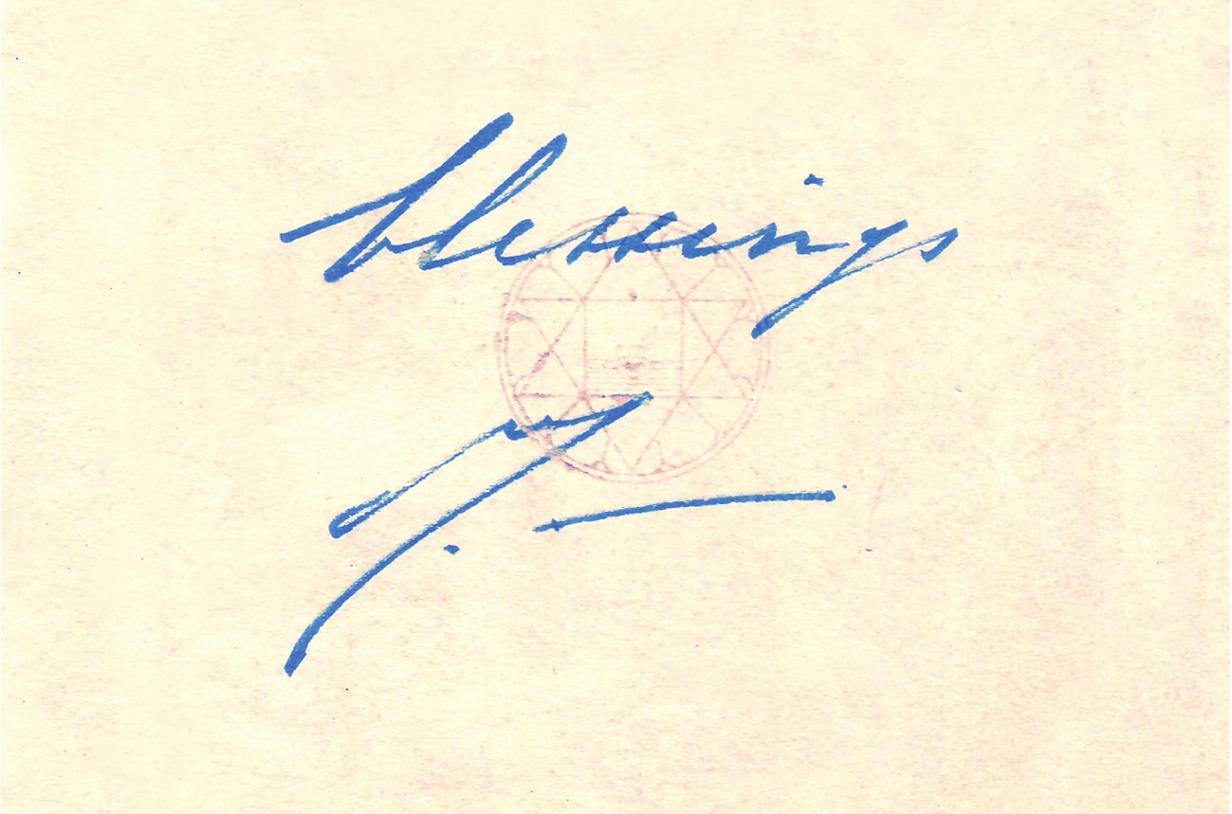
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Blessings given by the Mother to V. Ananda Reddy on his personal copy of *The Synthesis of Yoga* in 1969

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I offer this volume to Sri Aurobindo on his 150th birth anniversary.

V. Ananda Reddy

Note on Documentation

All quotes of *The Synthesis of Yoga* have been taken from Volume 23 of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) from the respective chapters. Other references have been mentioned with the quote itself.

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Chapter – I

The Four Aids

Having studied the earlier part, we now come to Part One of *The Synthesis of Yoga* — “The Yoga of Divine Works”. Let us read the text:

Yoga-siddhi, the perfection that comes from the practice of Yoga, can be best attained by the combined working of four great instruments. There is, first, the knowledge of the truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the realisation— *śāstra*. Next comes a patient and persistent action on the lines laid down by this knowledge, the force of our personal effort— *utsāha*. There intervenes, third, uplifting our knowledge and effort into the domain of spiritual experience, the direct suggestion, example and influence of the Teacher—guru. Last comes the instrumentality of Time—

kāla; for in all things there is a cycle of their action and a period of the divine movement.

This brief introduction describes the four great instruments, the four great aids, or the four pillars of Integral Yoga: *śāstra*—

utsāha—*guru*—*kāla*. Many letters were written to Sri Aurobindo regarding these different aids. When any new system of yoga is started usually the first question asked is, “which is the *śāstra* that I should follow?” If we take up Ashtanga Yoga, Patanjali’s *Yogasutra* is the *śāstra*; if we take up Bhakti Yoga or the *tri-marga*, we have the Bhagavad Gita. Each system has its book of knowledge or book of instructions. Everywhere there is a basic book because when the guru is there in the physical he guides us, but when he departs body he leaves behind instructions in the form of a book which is normally called a *śāstra*. In Integral Yoga the first question asked is, which book should I start with?

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Should it be *The Life Divine*, *Savitri*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, or *Essays on the Gita*? If you listen to any sadhak of Integral Yoga he will recommend *The Synthesis of Yoga* because that is the scripture, the *śāstra* for the Integral Yoga. It may apparently seem to be the best book for guiding us but can we accept it as the *sastra*? This is a practical and pragmatic problem that we are all faced with.

The next one is personal effort —*utsāha*. We have read much and heard the Mother talk about the importance of personal effort. The third one, apparently the most important, is *guru*. But what happens when the guru leaves his body? Those who take up the Integral Yoga, should they look for another guru? The general idea of the guru is of a person who is physically present to answer our day-to-day questions. The physical guru can help us with a personal problem in sadhana, in life or society. We feel like rushing to him whom we accept as a guru. But is that the definition of a guru? Can't there be something better? We shall discover answers to all these questions as we proceed further.

In the end, Sri Aurobindo takes up the importance and relation of *kāla*, time, in sadhana. Let us read what the Mother speaks about *kāla*.

Sweet Mother, here: "Last comes the instrumentality of Time, Kāla; for in all things there is a cycle of their action and a period of the divine movement..."
What is this period of the divine movement?"

For each thing it is different.

For each activity, each realisation, each movement, there is a definite period, which differs. There are countless periods which are entangled, but each thing is regulated by a kind of rhythm which is this thing's rhythm.

You see, for the facility of their outer existence, men have divided time more or less arbitrarily into years, months,

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weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds, etc.; it is a rhythm that's more or less arbitrary because it has been created by man, but it has in itself a certain reality, for it corresponds to universal movements... as far as possible. And that is why, by the way, we celebrate the birthday, for example: because there is a certain rhythm in each one's existence which is established by this regular return of circumstances analogous to those in which he was born.

And all movements—when you observe them, you become aware that they have a certain rhythm—the movements of inner consciousness, for example, not only from the point of view of understanding but that of personal

reactions, of the ups and downs in progress; of a fairly regular periodic return, at once of advancing and recoiling, of difficulties and of helps. But if each person is attentive he realises that his own rhythm is absolutely particular to him; it is not the same rhythm as his neighbour's.

But even as the seasons follow a certain rhythm, regular enough on the whole, so the individual life has its seasons.

And when one studies oneself attentively, one finds out that there are even certain repetitions of analogous circumstances at regular intervals. Even, very sensitive people become aware that there are certain days of the week or certain hours of the day when they can do things more easily. Some of them have particular difficulties on particular days and at particular hours; some on the contrary have better inspirations at particular moments—but every one has to find this out in himself by observation. Naturally it is far from being absolute, it is not strict, and if it is troublesome, it can be eliminated very easily simply by a little effort of resolute will. But if it helps, one can make use of it.

And all this, each thing having its own rhythm, well, it

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makes an extremely complicated criss-crossing of rhythms, which results in what we see: something which seems to have none—because it is too complicated, it is too complex.

(CWM 7: 332-33)

This is the Mother's explanation *vis-a-vis* the individual's rhythm of existence, but there is also a cosmic rhythm. It is important to note this because this is a factual reality in sadhana. Several people had written to Sri Aurobindo saying that their sadhana was not proceeding and they felt depressed and dull. And Sri Aurobindo repeatedly wrote to them that they should not be disappointed. This phase forms a part of the rhythm of our sadhana: a rhythm that could be regular or irregular. There is an acceptance of the period, and I think it is of primary importance in our sadhana. Sri

Aurobindo and the Mother have always told us to keep in mind the fourth aspect of time. Nothing can happen as a miracle, there is a time frame for progress. The reason is that we require time to mature.

Ours is not a single level of progression, it is a multiple path.

For example, if mental advancement is very fast, there will be a period when the mind gets dulled or there is a pause. It makes us think that the progression has stopped in our mind.

If one part has stopped, it is because other parts have been left undeveloped. In this Yoga all the parts—the emotional, the vital, the physical have to grow and mature almost simultaneously.

That is the beauty and complexity of our Yoga. Giving time is extremely important. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa told us that it depends on how we receive; the higher force; there could be an intensification during this dull period. In fact, we could say that time is the one thing that gets shortened in yoga. However, we must recognise its importance.

Imagine Swami Vivekananda was with Sri Ramakrishna for only five years, the last five years, and yet, what he absorbed in those

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five years was incredible! I will narrate an instance which took place towards the end of his life. Once Swami Vivekananda was resting, he was hardly 39 years old and was not keeping good health; his body was overstrained with the amount of work he had done in five years. He had not only gathered all he could from his master in that period but he had himself worked very hard for eight years and brought in a revolution. He once told one of his disciples that what he had given to mankind will last for fifteen hundred years! We cannot fathom the intensity of the work that these people do. If Swami Vivekananda could work out in a few years to last for fifteen hundred years, we can imagine what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo with their supramental consciousness have done. If a ray of Lord Shiva, the Swami, can give humanity spiritual substance for hundreds of years to come,

what about Lord Shiva coming down or Aditi incarnating upon earth for the work of transformation.

One day after lunch while Swamiji was resting at Belur Math, he asked his disciple Sharat Chakrabarty to give him a little massage. Sharat was happy for the opportunity to serve his guru; but Swamiji didn't like his massage because, out of respect, Sharat massaged him gently. Swamiji asked him to call Brahmananda, who had just then gone to rest.

When Brahmananda arrived, Swamiji said: "Raja, I don't feel good today. I asked this Bangal to give me a massage, but he did not do it well. So I have called you." Immediately Maharaj began to massage Swamiji vigorously, like an expert, and continued for a couple of hours. When the exhausted Brahmananda returned to his room, Sharat went to him and said: "Maharaj, I have come to you to resolve my confusion.

I have heard that you are the spiritual son of the Master, and I have seen how much Swamiji respects you. I don't understand why Swamiji asked you to give him a massage."

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At this Brahmananda said: "What do you say? Don't you know he is the Lord Shiva Himself!" (*God Lived with Them*: 94) Even his own companions knew this truth about Swamiji.

Here was a disciple who constantly tested his own master, and that in fact is the real Integral Yoga. He constantly tested Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa until the end of the latter's life.

Just two days before his passing Swami Vivekananda sat on the bed of Sri Ramakrishna and he had a passing thought—

Sri Ramakrishna had throat cancer, he was in a semi-conscious state—'that if he declared even now that he was God then I will believe him'. He asked that question in his mind. When the thought passed in his mind Sri Ramakrishna opened his eyes and said: "*haan re Noren, akhono bishash*

neyi?” “What, Vivekananda, don’t you still have faith?” He said, “He who was born as Rama and Krishna are in this body now”. This was not said in a Vedanti manner, it was a real self-revelation. “I am here both Rama and Krishna.” That is how their relationship of Guru and Shishya was that transparent.

I was surprised to read that towards the end of his life Swamiji told his disciples that if anyone tries to imitate him he will be reprimanded. It means that a *guru* should not be accepted just for the heck of it. The first time that Swamiji tested his master was when one day Sri Ramakrishna came late to the room. He silently placed a coin under his bed. When Sri Ramakrishna sat on the bed he jumped up as if something had pricked him. He called someone to check what was there under the bed. Then Swamiji was happy that his master was truly one who was beyond the snare of money. Sri Ramakrishna was happy that one should test his master, just as a money lender tests his coin. But the Master was also very clever; he tested his disciples, especially Swami Vivekananda. One day he wanted to give him certain siddhis. So he said that after the God realisation when

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he would work for the world these siddhis will be very useful for him. Swamiji asked, “will these powers help me to realise God?” “No, they will not help you to realise God. After you have realised God and you want to do his work for the world, these are the instruments and powers that can be used.” Swamiji said,

“no I don’t need them now. I’ll take them after I realise God, because if I have them now I may get a false ego.” He asked Sri Ramakrishna to keep all these powers away from him. Then Sri Ramakrishna laughed and said, “I was only testing you as to how much your love is for the Divine or the powers of the Divine.” These are real stories. There are many such examples of the guru-shishya relationship.

I started telling you about *kala* as to how time can be on our side or against us depending on how we use it. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have reminded us innumerable times about the time we waste.

I

The supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being.

The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us. It opens swiftly or gradually, petal by petal, through successive realisations, once the mind of man begins to turn towards the Eternal, once his heart, no longer compressed and confined by attachment to finite appearances, becomes enamoured, in whatever degree, of the Infinite. All life, all thought, all energising of the faculties, all experiences passive or active, become thenceforward so many shocks which disintegrate the teguments of the soul and remove the obstacles to the inevitable efflorescence. He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of

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the spirit; but once it is received, attainment is sure, whether conquered swiftly in the course of one human life or pursued patiently through many stadia of the cycle of existence in the manifested universe.

Mother, what is the lotus of knowledge and perfection?

What do you want to know? What it is?

You have heard of the different centres, haven't you? And these centres are usually represented as lotuses which at first are closed and which gradually open as one progresses spiritually.

The lotus of knowledge is the thousand-petalled lotus. (*To Nolini*) Is that it?... Yes, so it's the one in the head; it's the last in order, before those which are beyond the human body.

...of perfection?

It is the lotus of knowledge, the thousand-petalled lotus which blooms; as it is the highest... perfection... it depends on what perfection!...

“The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us.”

That is it. There is one above — above the head, but usually it’s not mentioned.

And in the usual order it’s the last to open. I say “in the usual order” because there are cases where it is otherwise: those below open after the upper ones. But still in the usual order, when we speak of the rising of the Kundalini, you see, from the centre of energy, well, it is as it goes on rising that it awakens the corresponding centres; and that centre is the one it reaches last. And as a matter of fact, when this happens, when it reaches that, it is the sign of perfection in the rising of the energy. (CWM 7: 334-35) This is a common Tantric ideal—opening of the centres of

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energy represented by a lotus. And in the usual order, it is the Kundalini and then it goes above, opening all the seven chakras till the *sahasradala*. But in the Integral Yoga it is the other way round, the centres start opening from above and then they travel downwards. That is the explanation for there is a “bud closed and folded up within us”.

Now, take the first sentence: “The supreme *śāstra* of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being,” is the ultimate truth. The question we posed to ourselves earlier was “which book should we follow in Integral Yoga?” It is the eternal book that is within each one of us. That is very typical of Sri Aurobindo! Sometimes when we read this we wonder about this extraordinary freedom given to the sadhaks of the Integral Yoga. We do not even have to accept Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* as the ultimate *śāstra*. I am pointing out this book in particular because of all the importance that the Mother has given to it, and yet Sri Aurobindo has given us that ultimate freedom that even *Savitri* or *The Mother* or *The Life Divine* need not be followed as the ultimate *śāstra*. If you remember, this is what Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita has said,

“It is only when there is no rain that there is the use of wells.

But when there is a flood what is the use of the wells?” So, wells are like those Vedas which are there for common humanity.

For those sadhaks who are thirsty for spiritual knowledge, the Vedas and Upanishads are useful. But when we contact the inner Divine, it is like a flood, we would have reached the very source of all water. Then there is the need of the Vedas? Similarly, the eternal Veda is in the heart of every individual. So we can start with any scripture, but regardless of their nature, they are just guidelines for those who are growing. But once one is seated in the Supreme Divinity within, nothing is necessary. Just by this sentence we can imagine the catholicity of Sri Aurobindo’s

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thinking. No master would say this, they would advise their disciples to read their literature alone, but here is one master who is giving us absolute freedom to reach the Divine within.

(17th September)

He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of the spirit; but once it is received, attainment is sure, whether conquered swiftly in the course of one human life or pursued patiently through many stadia of the cycle of existence in the manifested universe.

We had read a similar passage from the book, *The Supreme* last time where the Mother asked us to simply repeat “Mother-Sri Aurobindo” and at once she takes us over. She guarantees not only her protection and Grace and benediction in this life, but lives to come hereafter. So in this passage what Sri Aurobindo means is that once there is this inner awakening then the attainment is sure whether in this life in the cycle of existence in the manifested universe. It may take many more births but we are bound to reach the goal.

“Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature.” This is an interesting sentence where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo refer to integral education. It also relates to sadhana. This question was put to the Mother and she has answered it in detail:

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge...”

Then, does this mean that he who has no hidden knowledge cannot have...

No. It’s not altogether like that.

What it means is that all things are potentially contained

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in the substance constituting man. Only, the organisation is different according to individuals; and the degree of awakening, of the capacity to respond is also different.

And this is what makes the difference between the possibilities of individuals. But in fact, essentially each being contains in itself all the universal potentialities. To what extent he is capable of developing them... it’s a kind of hierarchy which is established among individuals and their degree of development. But, essentially, in each one there is the Divine Presence and therefore the Supreme Consciousness. Only, for some to be able to become conscious of it, it will take thousands and thousands of years, and others have by inner and outer circumstances come to the moment when they are ready to become aware of it. It is rather a hierarchy in realisation than one in potentialities.

Now in addition to this, some beings manifest something other than a purely human consciousness — but this is something additional; these are exceptional cases. But usually it’s like this: the substance itself contains all the possibilities.

It is as Sri Aurobindo says further on: If the Divine were not in you, never would you be able to know the Divine.

That's what it means. (CWM 7: 335-36)

As the Mother says everything is there in the substance, "the substance contains all the possibilities". This is where we need to think a little. "Substance", does it mean the material substance that we have? Is it that this body has all the potentialities?

But then what about mind and heart and soul? And then she says there is a hierarchy of realisation. "It is rather a hierarchy in realisation than one in potentialities". This is a very beautiful distinction. First she said everything is there in the substance constituting man. The substance is not just a physical substance.

We have seen it before in *The Life Divine*, in the chapter on

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the "Ascending Series of Substance". That is to say, there is a substance of matter and there is a mental, vital and psychic substance too. Everywhere there is substance because it is the

"sat" of *sat-chit*. Then there is the issue of the level of realisation of the person. The substance that is visible to you and me and the rest of the world through our senses is matter. Scientifically, we say that matter is substance. Spiritually there is a substance at each level of existence which varies in its subtlety, in its consciousness. Nevertheless, there is a substance right up to the level of the psychic. This is the understanding of the meaning of substance. Then we understand what the Mother says here

"substance contains all the possibilities" which is to say that from the psychic possibilities there comes a hierarchy. The psychic being in each one of us has attained a certain level of consciousness, and as she says, there is a hierarchy in those levels of realisation.

Let me explain. In each person, the psychic being, because of its past births, attains a certain state of realisation. Therefore, there are certain psychic beings which are more advanced than others.

Advanced in the sense of being more realised. For example, imagine a lotus flower, it has a bud, but as each petal opens it goes nearer to the inner realisation of the self which is the lotus. The lotus seed is hidden, imagine that to be the Brahman consciousness and the psychic being is there like a bud. With each birth, it is opening up one petal and one more petal and yet more. As it opens it is revealing more and more of the inner divine consciousness. That is the psychic hierarchy. Although we say all human beings are similar, for we all have a psychic being, there is a difference between psychic beings because of the different stages of their development or opening. That is why we have to stand by our place in the hierarchy in realisation, rather than in potentiality.

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Potentially we all have the same Brahman consciousness, but in some of us, more petals are open, and in others less.

When it comes to the substance of the mind, the substance of the heart, and the substance of the body, it is the same thing. The divine potential is hidden in each mental Purusha, vital Purusha and physical Purusha. But what happens again is that because of our individual effort, or what we call sadhana, we open up in the mental substance more or fewer petals. The mind, because of its training, purification, contact, its surrender to the Divine, opens itself up.

That is where the minds of people differ. It is not about being less intelligent or more intelligent. People can be more or less on the intellectual level, but looking from the point of sadhana, what is important is how much our mind is surrendered to the Divine, and by that surrender opens itself to her touch. That is the real mental opening. That is where the real divine potential of the mind opens. An average person may not be as intelligent as Einstein or Newton whose minds were brilliant, there is no doubt about that, but a common man's mind which is open to the Divine's touch is closer to the divine Truth than Einstein's mind which may be open to merely a physical truth. So we don't necessarily want to be more intelligent, we want to be more open on each of these levels.

At least this we can draw from the physical education we received at the Ashram: our aim is not to become Olympic champions [that doesn't mean India shouldn't get any Olympic medals], we have not been given the ideal to gain medals.

The ideal is that the physical should open itself to the divine contact and touch of consciousness. This is exactly the same in the vital and mental being also, the potential is there in each one of us. So let's not compare our intelligence or our physical abilities with each other. It is not the strength that matters, but how much by exercises we can invoke the divine contact in our different "substances". Sri Ramakrishna says the same thing

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when referring to a lazy and a hard-working person, that we are all potentially the same, but what we have done with our potential is different. We have been given a certain kind of potential, but what do we make of it? That is where the intensity of our prayer and sadhana comes in. So we see the Mother's explanations run very deep.

Now if we apply this to education, where Sri Aurobindo says

"nothing can be brought out that is not already there in the mind", which means every student is potentially the same. But here comes the difference in this educational system: the ideals, the system and freedom. Why is it that one child in our system and another in a different school grow differently? It is because this potential is brought forth in Integral Education. In the other systems of education the growth of this potential is hampered. In Integral Education one of the three important things is freedom because if we do not allow this potential to grow freely, nothing comes out. It has its own problems, and its own difficulties, but there is no compromise in the ideal. We can continue to extend this sentence into various fields of human life.

So also all perfection of which the outer man is capable, is only a realising of the eternal perfection of the Spirit within him. We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are That already in our secret nature. All

teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process.

These are wonderful and revealing sentences. One is that we can know the Divine and become the Divine because we are That already, the emphasis is on “already” the Divine. This is the same principle in the philosophy of *The Life Divine*, that what is not there can never be revealed. That is how Sri Aurobindo explains that the Supermind, mind and life are already involved in the

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matter. Therefore, in stages, it brings forth that which already pre-exists. In *The Life Divine* we were reading that Supermind is the secret of creation and the secret of evolution. Supermind is already there in creation and that is what comes down. In evolution, it is the same Supermind which evolves. So we need to understand this idea that all is already there. Once we know this we can apply it to different circumstances and life situations.

“All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding”. We can again compare this with the image of the lotus.

The usual agency of this revealing is the Word, the thing heard (*śruta*). The Word may come to us from within; it may come to us from without. But in either case, it is only an agency for setting the hidden knowledge to work. The word within may be the utterance of the inmost soul in us which is always open to the Divine; or it may be the word of the secret and universal Teacher who is seated in the hearts of all.

The Mother explains these lines:

Here it is written: “The word within may be the utterance of the inmost soul in us which is always open to the Divine or it may be the word of the secret and universal Teacher...” Why are they different, the Divine and the universal Teacher?

The universal Teacher is only an aspect of the Divine, you see. The Divine contains all the possible activities; the Teacher is only one activity, the One

who teaches. Sri Aurobindo means that either it is a direct contact with the Divine or a contact with an aspect of the Divine, the One who teaches, the divine Guru.

But the Divine is not only a Guru. (CWM 7: 341) This is of great importance and in Sri Aurobindo's discussion regarding the guru, we will see its relevance. Who is the *guru*? Is the *guru* required? In what way can he come to us?

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In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo explains how the Divine as the universal teacher or *guru* has come to most of the spiritual figures. There were occasions where Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramakrishna and others could have had direct contact with the Divine. Yet there was a phase where the Divine as a guru comes to them. Its importance will be discussed later.

There are rare cases in which none other is needed, for all the rest of the Yoga is an unfolding under that constant touch and guidance; the lotus of the knowledge discloses itself from within by the power of irradiating effulgence which proceeds from the Dweller in the lotus of the heart. Great indeed, but few are those to whom self-knowledge from within is thus sufficient and who do not need to pass under the dominant influence of a written book or a living teacher.

Ordinarily, the Word from without, representative of the Divine, is needed as an aid in the work of self-unfolding; and it may be either a word from the past or the more powerful word of the living Guru. In some cases this representative word is only taken as a sort of excuse for the inner power to awaken and manifest; it is, as it were, a concession of the omnipotent and omniscient Divine to the generality of a law that governs Nature.

Thus it is said in the Upanishads of Krishna, son of Devaki, that he received a word of the Rishi Ghora and had the knowledge.

So Ramakrishna, having attained by his own internal effort the central illumination, accepted several teachers in the different paths of Yoga, but

always showed in the manner and swiftness of his realisation that this acceptance was a concession to the general rule by which effective knowledge must be received as by a disciple from a guru.

It is a beautiful explanation: he says this Word is “a concession of the omnipotent and omniscient Divine to the generality of a law that governs Nature”. It is a concession of the general law.

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The Avatar comes down to show us the path. In showing us the path he himself follows the general path of a disciple and a guru. Otherwise, if Sri Ramakrishna did not take to these so-called *gurus* or if Sri Aurobindo did not take them we would have thought that we ourselves do not need any Teacher. He is setting the path for others to follow. In that it is a concession.

The food that the Mother was taking was not needed, it was a concession so that others would not say because the Mother does not take food we need not take it either. The Divine gives this concession and accepts this general law of nature. It was just the question of a law that matter subsists on matter: to that extent she took a few spoons of soup. This is the concession because the Divine has to follow the human path.

Sweet Mother, here: “In some cases this representative word is only taken as a sort of excuse for the inner power to awaken and manifest...” Then in this case is it the individual’s aspiration or the power of the Word?

This depends a great deal on the degree of the sadhak’s development, you see. If he is developed and conscious enough to be in direct contact with the spiritual Force which is working behind the words, then the word is only an excuse. But if for him it must pass through his mental understanding in order to have its effect, then the word takes on a much greater importance. It depends on the degree of development. (CWM 7: 341)

When the Mother would write to us, depending on our own inner state of consciousness and aspiration, her words in the letter would go straight in and were accepted by the whole being, there wasn’t any resistance anywhere. But sometimes when we got letters there was resistance in some part of the

being. That means the words are no more occasions for her consciousness to go in. When she says it is an occasion for the

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inner consciousness it means that the words carry a force to break our resistance. Sometimes, she used very strong words not because she wanted to rebuke or scold us but to give our resistance a strong whipping.

If one is capable of receiving directly, then one opens a book for instance, finds a sentence and has an illumination; because it was just the word one was waiting for in order to put himself into contact with the Force he needed to take the next step.

Otherwise one must take a book, study it, read it sentence by sentence, word by word, and then reflect and then understand it and then assimilate it and then, later, very slowly, after the assimilation and understanding, it begins to have an effect on the character and one makes some progress. (Ibid: 342)

One of the things the Mother has asked from us, informally, is to read every day something from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

This reading, this meditation, this aspiration is slow but it sinks in.

It sinks to the extent that it affects one's character. And for this there is nothing better than reading *Savitri*.

In one case it is a direct contact, you see, and just one sentence, one word... one reads a word, reads a sentence, and has an illumination. And then one receives all the Force that one needs. The other is the path of the learned man, the scholar, who is an intellectual being and needs to learn, reflect, assimilate, reason about all he has learnt, in order to make progress. It is long, it is laborious. (Ibid) Often, when I would give talks in Odisha, most of the audience wouldn't understand English but would attend the talks day after day. When I asked why they came if they did not understand, they replied that they knew I was speaking about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and hearing their name was

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enough for them. This is the directness of the contact. In the word “the Mother” there is enough for them to get illumined, to give them to lace, the contact. The rest of the words are only mental gimmicks. I feel, as the Mother would explain, that the people of Orissa are truly open in the subliminal. When there is the subliminal opening one doesn’t have to pass through the mental and vital layers, one gets the contact directly.

Sweet Mother, there’s a flower you have named “The Creative Word”.

Yes.

What does that mean?

It is the word which creates.

There are all kinds of old traditions, old Hindu traditions, old Chaldean traditions in which the Divine, in the form of the Creator, that is, in His aspect as Creator, pronounces a word which has the power to create. So it is this... And it is the origin of the mantra. The mantra is the spoken word which has a creative power. An invocation is made and there is an answer to the invocation; or one makes a prayer and the prayer is granted. This is the Word, the Word which, in its sound... it is not only the idea, it is in the sound that there’s a power of creation. It is the origin, you see, of the mantra.

In Indian mythology the creator God is Brahma, and I think that it was precisely his power which has been symbolised by this flower, “The Creative Word”. And when one is in contact with it, the words spoken have a power of evocation or creation or formation or transformation; the words... sound always has a power; it has much more power than men think.

It may be a good power and it may be a bad power. It creates vibrations which have an undeniable effect. It is not so much the idea as the sound; the idea too has its own power, but

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in its own domain — whereas the sound has a power in the material world.

I think I have explained this to you once; I told you, for example, that words spoken casually, usually without any reflection and without attaching any importance to them, can be used to do something very good. I think I spoke to you about “Bonjour”, “Good Day”, didn’t I? When people meet and say “Bonjour”, they do so mechanically and without thinking. But if you put a will into it, an aspiration to indeed wish someone a good day, well, there is a way of saying

“Good Day” which is very effective, much more effective than if simply meeting someone you thought: “Ah! I hope he has a good day”, without saying anything. If with this hope in your thought you say to him in a certain way, “Good Day”, you make it more concrete and more effective.

It’s the same thing, by the way, with curses, or when one gets angry and says bad things to people. This can do them as much harm — more harm sometimes — than if you were to give them a slap. With very sensitive people it can put their stomach out of order or give them palpitation, because you put into it an evil force which has a power of destruction.

It is not at all ineffective to speak. Naturally it depends a great deal on each one’s inner power. People who have no strength and no consciousness can’t do very much — unless they employ material means. But to the extent that you are strong, especially when you have a powerful vital, you must have a great control on what you say, otherwise you can do much harm. Without wanting to, without knowing it; through ignorance. (Ibid: 342-344)

(28th September 2000)

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In our previous class we were discussing about the word that may come from within or without. The Mother explained about the creative power of the word.

About sound, Mother, different languages have different expressions of sounds; then on what does the power of a language depend?

But when one is perceptive, sensitive enough, if someone speaks a language which one does not know at all, but he puts into it a very precise intention, the same effects are felt.

(CWM 7: 344)

The Mother explained that the sounds of the different languages reach a level where they get translated or transferred into another language. So if the Mother received a message or a prayer in a language other than English or French, then these non-English words get translated into her own language. There is this matter / issue of a precise intention.

The Mother explains this:

If someone wishes you a good day or good health in a tongue that you don't know at all and which has no relation with yours, you can feel the effect without understanding the words. Or else if someone says something violent to you or curses you in a language you are totally ignorant of, you can very well receive the vibrations. This does not depend on the understood word. In each language there are sounds which are expressive; it is not only one language that is expressive.

And there are several ways of expressing the same thing.

There are countless ways of expressing the same thing.

I remember having heard learned people discussing things, and they thought themselves very wise — and discussed with an imperturbable seriousness to find out in which language God had said: “Let there be Light.”

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Some of them said that it must have been in Sanskrit, others said that it must have been a still more ancient tongue, others said that it must have been Syrian, and so on, you see; and nobody thought that perhaps it was not any language at all!

Does the Word also follow the evolution?

That means?...

It means that what was studied before has now become mediocre.

What Word?

What had been conceived by the scholars in the written Shastras; that is, what is written here...

Of the old traditions?... Yes. But Sri Aurobindo also says that there is no reason for it not to change, for things not to be added, changed. He says... he himself answers your question.

It is very good to keep the memory of the past if it helps you, but it should not prevent you from going forward. And the teaching which was good at one time is no longer so at another, that's absolutely certain. (Ibid: 344-345) Coming back to the text, we were discussing about the inner word. As we have seen in *The Synthesis of Yoga* the need of the outer word or the word from without has been accepted even by the Avatars. Moving further, we come to a new idea regarding the written Shastra.

But usually the representative influence occupies a much larger place in the life of the sadhaka. If the Yoga is guided by a received written Shastra,—some Word from the past which embodies the experience of former Yogins,—it may be practised either by personal effort alone or with the aid of a Guru. The spiritual knowledge is then gained through

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meditation on the truths that are taught and it is made living and conscious by their realisation in the personal experience; the Yoga proceeds by the results of prescribed methods taught in a Scripture or a tradition and reinforced and illumined by the instructions of the Master. This is a narrower practice, but safe and effective within its limits, because it follows a well-beaten track to a long familiar goal.

Here we see the role or need of a written Shastra. All that comes down in the name of Shastra is helpful, but basically it is something of a personal effort; a personal effort which goes along with the help of a *guru*. So the old Shastras as we now understand them could be of use if we have a guru who is capable of guiding us, and if we add enough personal effort to it, it will help in progress. He puts it beautifully: all the old Shastras are a well-beaten track, so if you follow that track you can be sure that you are going to reach the goal. The key word is “if”: if we follow the track meaning that “we” have to do it.

The path is there, many have gone by this path, and they have gone to the other side and declared that the path is beautiful but arduous, full of dangers and difficulties, but it is sure. So the surety of the path is there in the Shastras with the proviso that we put in the necessary effort.

For the sadhaka of the integral Yoga it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal Knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture. Where the Scripture is profound, wide, catholic, it may exercise upon him an influence for the highest good and of incalculable importance. It may be associated in his experience with his awakening to crowning verities and his realisation of the highest experiences. His Yoga may be governed for a

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long time by one Scripture or by several successively,—if it is in the line of the great Hindu tradition, by the Gita, for example, the Upanishads, the Veda. Or it may be a good part of his development to include in its material a richly varied experience of the truths of many Scriptures and make the future opulent with all that is best in the past. But in the end he must take his station, or better still, if he can, always and from the beginning he must live in his own soul beyond the limitations of the word that he uses. The Gita itself thus declares that the Yogin in his progress must pass beyond the written Truth,— *śabdabrahmātivartate*—beyond all that he has heard and all

that he has yet to hear,— *śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*. For he is not the sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a sadhaka of the Infinite.

I came across a line where Sri Aurobindo says that yoga is not a decisive path but a growth by experience. There is no symptomatic path in Integral Yoga, it is a growth by self-experience. What he is saying is that we may take the help of the scripture, to begin with, like a scaffolding, but once we reach the first floor we have to get rid of the scaffolding. The scaffolding could be a scripture which is profound and catholic and we can take help from it, but all the time be aware of the fact that none of these has in fact any relevance if it is not supported by some experience. Nothing can help us in spirituality except growth by experience. As Sri Aurobindo puts it “he must live in his own soul beyond the written Truth”.

We see beyond the written Truth, but it is not hear-say. The truth of the Gita, the truth of the Upanishads, *The Life Divine* or the truth of *Savitri*, all of these are the highest written truths that mankind has ever seen. And yet he says that he must live in his own soul beyond all that he has heard.

This is one of the essential differences between religion and

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spirituality. With religion we keep on listening to all the good truth and high truth, etc., but in spirituality, ultimately we are sadhakas of the infinite and not of the mediator. That means there is no other link, nothing between us and the Infinite. This is the beauty of the spiritual life, the scriptures are there only to guide us but at the same time warn us that we have to have our own experiences. A sadhaka of the infinite means being directly related to the Infinite to every extent possible. Of course, we can have this infinite in the form of a divine teacher or a divine Avatar. Fortunately for us, the Avatar and the divine teacher are together. So that is a great help. But Sri Aurobindo writes regarding the Mother that it is important to know the outer Mother but, it is much more important to know who the Mother is in reality. They don't just say worship us or follow us. The

“us” we are to follow is not Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the

“us” is Infinite.

In our last reading, we saw how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother represent that infinite consciousness. One has to be a sadhaka of the Infinite. Nothing should be there that binds one to the externalities—neither the old, the present or the future Shastras.

As we go along in life all this paraphernalia is just there more or less, as the Mother puts it, only for the “satisfaction of the ego.”

It is a satisfaction of man’s ego to have religion, rituals, and ceremonies. The satisfaction of being able to brag about how much money has been spent on the festivals and all the outward show that goes into the ceremony.

“Well, you know, I will tell you something. In those days, when I used to give special Blessings for Pujas — Durga, Mahasaraswati, etc, at that time, Durga and the others used to come to me; besides, they used to meet me from time to time. They came by turns and even now they come for some work or the other. And I do not know if it was last year or

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the year before — moreover, time has no importance for me; in fact, there is not much difference, since I have stopped giving Blessings for the Pujas — anyway, it was close to the Pujas, and as usual Durga came to me. She was so beautiful and formidable, like all the other children. But it was an entity which possesses the cosmic force. And I told her. “Shall there be no end to these little entities and is it not time to turn towards the Supreme, leaving behind the little personal egos?”

Then you know what happened? Something marvelous and unexpected: in a humble gesture full of gratefulness she abandoned everything to the Supreme in such a joyous and spontaneous atmosphere which cannot be expressed in words but has to be lived to be seen. And She told me:

“Yes, I am Thine completely, what Thou willest, I shall do, I give myself to You.” And she prostrated herself at my feet. It was a complete surrender.

There was no hesitation. It was so beautiful. It is since then that I have stopped the Blessings for the Pujas. Because it is no longer necessary. It is over, once and for all,... oh! In such a fine act, such a charming gesture!

It is only to the Lord that we send our adoration and gratitude. The Supreme alone and nothing else! That chapter is over, the reign of the cosmic gods. Now only the Supreme exists for us. Nothing else.

And then there was another meeting earlier, that was a long time back. It was when I used to visit the playground.

One day Durga had come, and I asked her a similar question:

“How long do you want allegiance from the people? Isn’t it time we adored the Supreme?” Then She told me gently:

“I do want to; I am Thine, but you see, the people cling to me and do not want to leave me.” They are all like that (gesture), — that which goes to aggrandise their egos, that which still wants to follow the past, and the little bit which

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satisfies them — that they will never abandon, even for the Supreme. It is man who does not want to change, because he does not want to lose his possessions and his ego. It is man who creates the distinction. You see, truly She wanted to work for me in an act of surrender but She was completely tied up by the people who adored Her and sent their prayers for their personal gains and nothing more. Men do not want to give up, as they do not want to lose their support and their ego’s satisfaction. They cling and obstruct the way.

But from this beautiful experience something emerged. I could get some work done in collaboration with Her. It was the New Year prayer which I had written, the prayer that Nature will collaborate... and so on. You know it?

It was in this way that slowly She could abandon Herself completely, and now we have no need of these Pujas; She has become one with the Supreme.

And it is the Supreme alone whom we adore. Now She has entered into me.

You understand?

But there is still the resistance in other countries and in the religious entities which I am trying to transform. But here it is finished. But no one will understand what it means exactly.

They will twist and deform it because it is beyond their conceptions. They cannot imagine such an event, that the gods could surrender to me. It is something unimaginable for them... It is all right. My child, for you I am still the Supreme.”

(*The Supreme*: 6-10)

There may be symbolism behind it but in 1958 the Mother said she (Durga) has completely merged in me and now we belong only to the Supreme. As Sri Aurobindo says it is exceedingly difficult for us to sustain ourselves without the support of some paraphernalia because men like or almost need it. To take away all of these so-called Shastras, the “ism”, the formations, the

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ceremonies, one would require a great amount of courage to live without this or even to reject this—there is the family, the society, etc.—it takes a great courage take to a spiritual path.

It is not an external rejection but an inner renunciation. It is an automatic falling off. If we can go within and really go to the Supreme, the Mother, external things automatically fall off; we don't have to mentally say anything. Sri Aurobindo gave us this beautiful paragraph saying all this is one thing but we have to go beyond.

Another kind of Shastra is not Scripture, but a statement of the science and methods, the effective principles and way of working of the path of Yoga which the sadhaka elects to follow. Each path has its Shastra, either written or traditional, passing from mouth to mouth through a long line of Teachers.

In India a great authority, a high reverence even is ordinarily attached to the written or traditional teaching. All the lines of the Yoga are supposed to be fixed and the Teacher who has received the Shastra by tradition and realised it in practice guides the disciple along the immemorial tracks. One often even hears the objection urged against a new practice, a new Yogic teaching, the adoption of a new formula, "It is not according to the Shastra." But neither in fact nor in the actual practice of the Yogins is there really any such entire rigidity of an iron door shut against new truth, fresh revelation, widened experience.

The written or traditional teaching expresses the knowledge and experiences of many centuries systematised, organised, made attainable to the beginner. Its importance and utility are therefore immense. But a great freedom of variation and development is always practicable. Even so highly scientific a system as Rajayoga can be practised on other lines than the organised method of Patanjali. Each of the three paths of

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the *trimārga* breaks into many bypaths which meet again at the goal. The general knowledge on which the Yoga depends is fixed, but the order, the succession, the devices, the forms must be allowed to vary; for the needs and particular impulses of the individual nature have to be satisfied even while the general truths remain firm and constant.

You can see Sri Aurobindo is all the time fighting for this liberation, as it were. What he takes into particular consideration is that the "particular impulses of the individual nature have to be satisfied". We may be Sri Aurobindo's disciples, but each one of us has impulses of our individual nature. We cannot be starting with the same things, because each of us has different needs to fulfil, different things have to be worked out or blossom forth, and some things have to be rejected, and this too not necessarily in the same order. What Sri Aurobindo is telling us is about individual variations which are not much allowed in the old yogas. He tells us about the triple path of "aspiration, rejection, surrender" but it doesn't mean that we all have to start with aspiration and then go to rejection and then surrender.

And the very meaning of aspiration may apply to each one of us in a different manner. So he says let the general truths remain constant and firm, but the approach to it must vary according to the need of the individual.

An integral and synthetic Yoga needs especially not to be bound by any written or traditional Shastra; for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organise it anew for the present and future.

One of the extraordinary things about this Integral Yoga is that it opens the doors to the future. An Integral sadhak should never say that because it is not written in the Shastra, it should not be done. Sri Aurobindo keeps all the doors open for the future. Our own future is something we don't know at all. As we don't know

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our own future, we just need to open all the doors. We never know from which door the Divine will enter and work in us. Not only that, even as a system we don't know how the supramental consciousness will utilise this Integral Yoga, because it is one that basically opens one to the supramental consciousness. All the other yogas will open us to Nirvana, to Brahman, to Nirguna and Saguna, etc. The Mother often said that she will not tell us what will happen in the future when the Supermind comes; the Supermind itself will find its own ways. We cannot say the Supermind will, and shall and must. Even the Avatars refuse to tell us because that is the freedom of the future consciousness.

Let it find its own path and fulfillment. The beauty of Integral Yoga is that it is always open to the future; the individual future, the future of mankind, the future of the system itself. So he tells us "That an absolute liberty of the experience and of the restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation." You see how strongly he tells us "an absolute liberty of experience", and of "a restatement of knowledge in new terms", so even what the Gita has said has to be told in a new way.

The nearest example could be the rishis of the Upanishads, what they did *vis-a-vis* their experience of the Vedas. They restated the entire Vedic knowledge in a different way because they re-experienced the same truths in a new form. Similarly, the integral sadhak has to re-experience the old truths in the light of the new and restate them. That is why Sri Aurobindo took great effort to write *The Life Divine*. In the light of the supremely new consciousness he looked back and saw how the Vedas and the Upanishads envisaged the truths. All that he has written is in the light of the future. It is as if Sri Aurobindo projected himself a thousand years into the future and looked back and said this is what will happen a thousand years hence. This is what is useful

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for bringing mankind into the future for the next thousand years. He rejected all that was not necessary because he could almost see what came through to the next future. This is why he put it so strongly:

An absolute liberty of the experience and of the restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation. Seeking to embrace all life in itself, it is in the position not of a pilgrim following the highroad to his destination, but to that extent at least, of a path-finder hewing his way through a virgin forest.

“A path-finder hewing a way through a virgin forest” is a phrase the Mother has used dozens of times. The important thing is that now we don’t have to “hew our way through the virgin forest”.

She has explained it, and hundreds of times she has gone through it. That is why the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the pathfinders to the supramental consciousness. They have cleared a path in a virgin forest. Until now the forest of the old yogas have been cleared by many yogis. But this new supramental path no one has walked till now. So they have laboured, they have cleared, they have made a beautiful ‘yellow brick road’ for us. An old sadhak lamented to the Mother as to how difficult this Yoga is. The Mother agreed and said, ‘it is the most difficult, but who asked you to do it? I will do it for you, and the only thing asked of you is to “not create obstructions” in her work in you.

We are asked to do nothing else. We may have nothing to do and yet, when you close the book and go out of the door, you know how much there is to be done. To see that there are no obstructions in her work is to be constantly open to her, and to be constantly in contact with her in spite of all the pulls of the world—the pujas, family life, etc.! Are we ready for the real *bhog*, the “divine dinner” that Mother is preparing for us?

(5th October 2000)

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In the first section of this chapter, we discussed the “Shastra”.

Sri Aurobindo writes about a new kind of Shastra. It is not only the scripture but the written or traditional path that could be considered as a Shastra. The scripture is a written word, a word to guide and inspire. The path of yoga is a practical book, as we may say, that has been time tested and many acharyas and teachers have trodden upon the path because it is something safe, but at the same time, it becomes rigid. Sri Aurobindo writes about the necessity of absolute freedom in following either the scripture or the path. It is in this light that he describes the path of Integral Yoga.

An integral and synthetic Yoga needs especially not to be bound by any written or traditional Shastra; for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organise it anew for the present and the future.

This is what Sri Aurobindo has done in all of his writings—

embrace the past knowledge and reorganise it in the light of the future.

An absolute liberty of experience and of the restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation.

We may see the words—“an absolute liberty of experience”—

it is peculiar to Integral Yoga: it is not a specific system, but a growth according to the individual person. It is a growth of consciousness, a growth

of experience.

Seeking to embrace all life in itself, it is in the position not of a pilgrim following the highroad to his destination, but, to that extent at least, of a path-finder hewing his way through a virgin forest. For Yoga has long diverged from life and the ancient systems which sought to embrace it, such as those of our Vedic forefathers, are far away from us, expressed in terms which are no longer accessible, thrown into forms

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which are no longer applicable. Since then mankind has moved forward on the current of eternal Time and the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point.

This could be a fine basis for the need and purpose of the Integral Yoga. The utility of this Yoga is often debated, for, apparently, the principles and guidelines have already been provided in ancient yoga systems. But, as he puts it clearly, the forms are no longer applicable. The Vedas have said that the truth is eternal. But the forms these truths have taken over the ages have to undergo a change. So too in the present times Vedic truths could be applied in new forms. For example, take the necessity of this materialistic trend. No other yoga can really embrace this materialistic attitude of the present age except Integral Yoga. Some yoga-systems are trying to modernize themselves. But that is only a commercial venture, they have kept the same principles and embraced the modern trend and have only expanded their venues so that the modern people could be attracted to their system. Whereas Sri Aurobindo has changed the principles of yoga itself. He is not trying to attract any person for the sake of it. But he has reorganised the principles so that it automatically embraces the modern life.

He says “the same problem has to be approached from a new starting point.” Let us read the Mother’s comment on it: *Mother, here Sri Aurobindo says: “...the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point.”*

Yes. That’s exactly what I have just said. The problem remains the same...

The problem...

The problem is to find one's soul and unite with the Divine.

But, Mother, was it the same during the Vedic times also?

To find their soul and the Divine? Of course. (CWM 7: 351)

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You see the problems of life have not changed, but the solutions have changed. The solutions up till now have been more or less partial, in a sense, there has been only a solution of the real realisation the soul, not of the manifestation of the Divine upon earth—a thing that Sri Aurobindo emphasises upon.

...Sri Aurobindo says that in the Vedic age they tried to bring the spiritual life into the physical life, but he says that the means they employed, the paths they followed at that time are no longer any good now. Just imagine us before an altar making a *puja*!... It won't do now, it is not suitable.

Is their goal and ours the same?

I think so.

In any case, there were several ages in the earth's history in which there was given a kind of example, as a promise, of what would be there one day. These were called the golden ages. But certainly there were times in which a more or less complete representation of what had to be was as though lived out. Only it was just a demonstration, an example, which the world was completely unfit to take up as a realisation.

It was only to say: you see, this is how it will be, but not like this in all its details, like this in essence. And I think it did not last very long. In any case the memory of the thing is very limited, very localised and extremely short. There was an intensity, there was a great beauty in the expression, but it was something as though altogether independent of the whole of terrestrial life: an example... almost an example which is not to be followed, which cannot be followed, and which was always accompanied by a promise: "It will be

like this”...a promise which has been repeated in very different words, of the New Earth or the Divine World or a New Creation, etc. (Ibid: 352)

With reference to this we have two beautiful indications—“It

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was only to say: you see, this is how it will be, but not like this in all its details, like this in essence.” This is a nice point that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have made about the supramental world. We cannot have too many details of what the supramental world is going to be like. In fact they have refused to give the details, saying we are only giving the principles in essence of what the supramental world or consciousness will be like. They have purposely chosen not to reveal the changes that the manifestation of the new Consciousness would bring in the world, rather have left it to take over and find its own way which cannot be predicted. The Vedic rishis did exactly the same thing. They have given us the idea of the future evolution of mankind—about materialism, religion, spirituality and the coming of the supramental being. However, they have just given the essence of the future growth and not its details.

The second point is that they have always given a promise, as she says, “a promise which has been repeated in very different words, of a New Earth or the Divine World or a New Creation, etc.” Every religion has its own way of describing the new golden period. A disciple once asked Sri Aurobindo the difference between the new world that he has envisaged and the new world that has been spoken about earlier. Sri Aurobindo replied “but this time I have come to realise it”. Many times the promises have been given but this time “I have come to realise it” — the new world.

And I think it was perhaps at the beginning... not exactly the beginning of humanity but the beginning of the conscious evolution of humanity towards a realisation. We said last time that for a very long time humanity was very static and as though undergoing a preparation so slow, so invisible that it has taken perhaps millions of years. But these promises and examples were like starting-points, like the first push given to begin the evolution of the consciousness towards a higher realisation.

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I think the Vedic age was the latest. There were others before it, but of a very short duration. (Ibid: 352-353) We need to understand clearly the meaning of “the Vedic age was the latest”. For us, the Vedic age has been the first stage from which our history is traced. But the Mother said that it was the last in a series of developments that were there before this age. But they were of very short duration and therefore the Vedic rishis spoke of the *pitrus* many times. They were the last of the lineage of Vedic Rishis. So we can imagine what must have been the experiences of the peak period of the Vedic or the pre-Vedic times. If the Vedas are the remnants of an age that has gone before, then by the standard of the Vedic truths we can imagine what would have been the pre-Vedic age.

Mother, you said that the Vedic age was like a promise.

A promise to whom?

To the Earth and men.

They left a kind of oral document of their experience. It was transmitted—and this was the promise.

They used an imaged language. Some people say that it was because they wanted it to be an initiation which would be understood only by the initiates. But it could also be an absolutely spontaneous expression without a precise aim to veil things, but which could not be understood except by those who had the experience. For it is quite obviously something that is not mental, which came spontaneously—as though it sprang from the heart and the aspiration—which was the completely spontaneous expression of an experience or knowledge, and naturally, an expression which was poetic, which had its own rhythm, its own beauty and could be accessible only to those who had an identical experience. So

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it was veiled of itself, there was no need to add a veil upon it.

It is more than likely that it happened like that.

When one has a true experience which is not the result of a preliminary thought constructing and obtaining the experience by a special effort, when it is a direct and spontaneous experience, an experience that comes from the very intensity of the aspiration, it is spontaneously formulated into words. When it is total and complete enough, it is formulated into words. (Ibid: 354-55)

Those of you who have read *The Future Poetry* would have noted that all great mantric poetry is a spontaneous overflow of an experience. What we have seen even on our own human level is that the poetry of the great devotees like Mirabai, Surdas, etc. are not “thought-out” poems. Their experiences have taken the form of a song or a poem, whereas poetry in modern times seems to be more of a conscious mental exercise. There is hardly any spiritual or deeper experience in the poems. Oftentimes, the poet feels one single line, and then he expands it with mental imagery. I am speaking this out of my personal experience.

Long ago I used to write poetry, and I showed them to Amal Kiran. He generously went through my poems and indicated a line or two carrying the experience; the rest he said was mental imagery. So a poet could catch the truth of the experience in a line. Because that line is definitely different from the other lines in the same poem for it carries the vibration of truth. The other lines are imitation or imagination or a borrowed truth, not an experienced truth. This is what most of them do. One or two lines containing the truth makes them famous, the rest of the poem has not much significance.

Now can we apply this to *Savitri* where each line is an experienced truth—nothing imagined, nothing forced, nothing mental or comparative. Each line is a crystallisation

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of Sri Aurobindo's experience. Therefore, *Savitri* carries the very essence of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness; it is as if his consciousness is crystallised in it. Therefore, reading *Savitri* is a direct link with his consciousness. This is what the Mother was explaining *vis-à-vis* the Vedic poets. They were the great *kavis*, the seer-poets. But as she explains it was a common practice that they used a particular language so that the uninitiated could not understand it. Similarly, in a spontaneous manner that Sri Aurobindo uses such terminology of the eternal, the infinite, the consciousness, etc. would mean that we call *Savitri* a veiling just because we don't understand it? But from the point of view of the poet it is the absolute truth of his own experience.

So also the Vedic poets expressed what they felt naturally and spontaneously. But they could not be understood in their own times, nor in our time.

When it is total and complete enough, it is formulated into words... which are not thought out, which are spontaneous, which come out spontaneously from the consciousness. Well, it is more than likely that the Vedas were like that. But only those who have had the experience, had the same state of consciousness, can understand what it means. (Ibid: 355) No wonder then that no one except Sri Aurobindo could interpret the Vedas in this unique manner because he had a complete experience of the Vedic truths! It has nothing to do with scholarship. There have been great scholars like Sayana and Maharishi Dayanand who have tried to interpret the Vedas, and they have managed to interpret it in a partial manner. It is not a matter of taking out the dictionary meaning and trying to link up the words. As the Mother says, you have to contact the original consciousness in order to understand the meaning. It is the same regarding *Savitri*. It cannot be understood by means of any external source; this is why the Mother has said to remain calm

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and read it quietly. Because only in the quietness is there a chance of linking ourselves with Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. And it is that link that reveals the meaning. So the contact has to come first and then the meaning follows. No amount of explanation of *Savitri* can be given satisfactorily because even if someone has the grace of contact for some time and is able to explain it, but if the listener is not able to tune himself to the consciousness, the words spoken by the speaker would not make any impact on him.

Thousands of people have tried to speak about the Gita and other scriptures, but very few have really been able to get into the full consciousness of these books.

So let us be clear about *Savitri*: no individual can explain it.

Sometimes when I read or speak about it, it is all crystal clear to me, but you may say it is not clear to you for it is not a question of one person explaining and the other understanding. It is a question of both of us tuning ourselves to the consciousness of the scripture. That is why *Savitri* should be read in small groups with the concentration of consciousness and more than paying attention to the speaker's words, maybe a subtle ear has to open somewhere that would make sense in understanding. It is a difficult exercise indeed. So what we are attempting is to invoke her grace. That is why on the days of *Savitri* class, we really have to invoke her presence and be quiet before we begin trying to establish contact. Perhaps then she can reveal *Savitri* to us.

There are those sentences which seem absolutely banal and ordinary, in which things seem to be said in an almost childish way and which are written out or heard and then noted down, like that. Well, when read with an ordinary consciousness, they seem sometimes even altogether banal.

But if one has the experience, one sees that there is a power of realisation and a truth of expression which give you the key to the experience itself.
(Ibid)

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This is just what we were discussing—if there is no inner contact then what the speaker is saying is very banal, very ordinary. Even in *Savitri* there could be some sentences which look extremely un-poetic to the extent of banality if it is not supported by that inner experience.

But it seems obvious that the modern equivalent, at present, of the Rishi of the olden days... even his spontaneous Vedic expression will be very different in its formulation. For the terrestrial development and human development change the conditions of expression. The way of saying of

those times and the way of saying today cannot be the same; and yet the experience can be the same experience of something which cannot be thought about but comes as its living expression. (Ibid) Try to apply this to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother themselves.

What the Mother speaks about the Vedic rishis and their experience is equally applicable to them. As she says, “and yet the experience can be the same experience of something which cannot be thought about but comes as its living expression.”

Note that in 1914 Sri Aurobindo began to write all the major works in the *Arya*. Prior to that year he covered and conquered and achieved all the major spiritual living experiences. So a man who had achieved what the Vedas had achieved, what the Gita had promised and Upanishads had realised came out with his experience in the *Arya*. (In the jail, he had the Gita experience, in Kashmir he had the experience of the Vedas, at Baroda he had the experience of the Upanishads.) Until then there were all these political writings but not one major work. Why? Exactly because of this. The experience had to be gathered, then only expression could blossom. Otherwise it would have become another reinterpretation like a scholar sitting at the table instead of a record of one's experience.

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Mother, were the Vedic Rishis men who had evolved to that state or were they special manifestations?

What do you mean? Whether they were evolutionary beings or involutory beings?

They were probably... no... they were surely involutory beings. But the body was the result of evolution.

But it is absolutely certain that they were involutory beings, that is, beings who had come down from higher regions and used these bodies, who had identified themselves with these bodies.

This is it, what I said the other day, you know, that what has changed the course of terrestrial and human development totally is bodies becoming

perfected enough to be able to serve as instruments for beings of higher regions who have come to incarnate in them in order to use them. And it seems obvious that the Rishis were of these—if not all at least those who were the leaders, those who were at the head. But very probably they formed a group which must have had its own realisation, very independent of the surroundings. They lived, besides, quite isolated, if what is reported is correct. (Ibid: 355-356) (12th October 2000)

We read from the Mother's explanation that the same problem has to be approached from a new starting point. It was interesting to see that from the Vedas until now the human problem, in reality, seems to be the same. The problem will remain perennial until we find the solution which is to find the soul and manifest the Divine. This was recognised by the Vedic rishis, and since then mankind has been trying innumerable ways to find the solution. All other problems of human existence are only corollary to this problem. Humanity has been pursuing all different paths — religion, mysticism, science, etc, in order to find a solution to the problem. Every pursuit, conscious or

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unconscious, has been directed towards finding one's soul and manifesting the Divine. The Vedic rishis had found a solution, in fact, the best solution to all our problems, but it was incomplete; incomplete not because of the incapacity but because humanity was not ready or mature enough to take to this solution.

So we had to go through a whole cycle of maturation of the mind, emotions, body, and psychic before Sri Aurobindo could complete the solution that the Vedic rishis had put forward. His answer is that the problem has to be approached from a new starting point.

By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life. Therefore the Shastra of our Yoga must provide an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul.

We can see here the difference given by the Vedas and Sri Aurobindo; it is that the Vedic rishis called for the help of the gods. That is why they prayed to so many different godheads.

Basically, the idea was the same, that we can realise the Divine and the soul only by the help of the godheads. That is why there are so many invocations to Agni, Indra, Mitra and other gods.

Sri Aurobindo also has this as the essence of his Yoga that it cannot be done without the Shakti herself taking up our Yoga.

What he says here, “call upon the Infinite to unfold himself”, means calling upon the Mother to take up our Yoga. So there is a similarity in solution. The Vedic rishis said “godheads” and Sri Aurobindo says Shakti, the Mother. Where is the difference?

The difference is that these godheads of the Vedic times helped one to achieve the immortal Atman, and also that the Vedic rishis gave a lot of external paraphernalia, ceremonies and rituals for connecting with the godheads. In those times they were helpful for mankind. In the present time Sri Aurobindo takes away all those external support systems as they become

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crutches and we forget the essence. At one go Sri Aurobindo dismantled the external props. He has seen that as long as we are given external supports we prefer to lean on them rather than be dependent on our own strength. Therefore, the difference between the Vedas and Sri Aurobindo is precisely the fact that he does away with all the external supports for yoga. In a way that makes the Integral Yoga rather difficult for the common person, which is why we don't see large number of people turning towards Sri Aurobindo. Even if there is a growing number, they are reluctant to get rid of the scaffolding because it is indeed difficult for people to walk a path without any physical support.

Therefore the Shastra of our Yoga must provide for an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul.

If we take away the support, then each one of us must stand on one's own feet with all of one's strengths and weaknesses.

Otherwise, if we have a support of an "ism", of religion, of a sect, telling us to do this puja, that ceremony, then all the people can lean upon that. When that is not there, and the common platform has been taken away, we have to stand upon our own strengths and weaknesses. Each becomes an independent sadhak. He says we have "an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul."

A free adaptability in the manner and the type of the individual's acceptance of the Universal and Transcendent into himself is the right condition for the full spiritual life in man.

This method without an external support may take a long time, the individual may get lost for a while, but Sri Aurobindo finds it to be a beneficial one than advocating any physical support.

It is better that a person annihilates himself for a while, even becomes an atheist, if necessary, than be a theist with all the external supports who gets lost in it forever. This infinite liberty

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and absolute adaptability are the essence of Integral Yoga. This must be applied not only in the Yoga, but in education, politics, society and everywhere else. He would rather accept a great failure than success with supports.

Let me tell you of an experience I had as a child in the Free Progress system at the Ashram school when it started. Pavitra-da, the Registrar of the School, came to our class, which had been selected as the experimental class. We were told about the principles of working and the new system. At the end of one year the reports went to the Mother. Out of approximately 100 students perhaps, seven of them really made use of this system in a beneficial manner. The Mother did not mind it for she did not seek success in the old system. Even if seven souls are born out of this new system, it is a great

success. Perhaps what she said and meant was that out of an absolute freedom given to the students, only seven had taken advantage of the free inner growth, which was grand and great for her. She gave a message on that occasion “It is not a number that we want—it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.” (CWM 12: 118) This is the freedom that she has given to all of us here – in the school, in the Ashram or at work. Out of this absolute freedom even if five per cent of the inmates can realise their soul then any spiritual institutions existence can be justified. That is why you can see in all the autonomous departments in the Ashram absolute liberty, and absolute freedom. And out of this if a person or a student or a sadhak can feel the responsibility towards the Mother, the better for him.

Let us now take up our reading:

Vivekananda, pointing out that the unity of all religions must necessarily express itself by an increasing richness of variety in its forms, said once that the perfect state of that essential unity would come when each man had his own

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religion, when not bound by sect or traditional form he followed the free self-adaptation of his nature in its relations with the Supreme. So also one may say that the perfection of the integral Yoga will come when each man is able to follow his own path of Yoga, pursuing the development of his own nature in its up surging towards that which transcends the nature. For freedom is the final law and the last consummation.

A frequently asked question on my lecture tours is, can you tell us about this Yoga in a nutshell? Or can you tell us ten do's and don'ts about this Yoga? It is very discomfoting to answer such questions because it shows the person is least interested in this Yoga. If he wants it in a nutshell it is purely a commercial attitude. And even if I were to tell him in a nutshell to find his soul through absolute freedom—then he would ask what it means. Sri Aurobindo emphasises on “pursuing the development of his own nature in its up surging towards that which transcends the nature”. This is the absoluteness of this Yoga—that each one finds his own path. I was asked how to meditate. Can anyone in this Yoga instruct you how to meditate?

There is no one pattern or system. I told him, just feel the inner intensity. Try to feel a central presence in the heart region.

Once you feel that presence, you are on your own individual path. From the point when we feel the intensity of the Mother's presence our paths bifurcate. There are a million paths but the only common point is to sit quietly and feel in the heart region the presence of the Mother. Once that feeling is focused then she will lead us because we really don't know what will happen to each one of us. Sri Aurobindo said: "upsurging towards that which transcends the nature". If there is this kind of an upsurge then it is wonderful.

Sri Aurobindo says,

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Meanwhile certain general lines have to be formed which may help to guide the thought and practice of the sadhaka.

But these must take as much as possible the form of general truths, general statements of principle, the most powerful broad directions of effort and development rather than a fixed system which has to be followed as a routine.

At most we can have some general lines given in the book *The Mother* – aspiration, rejection, surrender. They are very general broad outlines, accompanied by powerful broad general directions of effort rather than a fixed system that has to be followed as a routine.

All Shastra is the outcome of past experience and a help to future experience. It is an aid and a partial guide. It puts up signposts, gives the names of the main roads and the already explored directions, so that the traveller may know whither and by what paths he is proceeding.

The Shastra is like a map which tells us which way people have gone earlier. Which are the paths that have been explored? If we want to follow one of them, we are welcome. If we want to take a new path, we are still welcome.

The Shastra is nothing but a map of the past and an indication, a help towards future experiences; future in relation to the individual who wants to take the decision to follow the past or take a new path. That is what Sri Aurobindo had done when he came to India from England. He first dipped himself into the ancient paths of India, and learned the methods taken up by the ancient Vedic rishis, but did not follow any of their paths. He learned the old ways, but then he set out on his own road. It is important to know the old map so as not to repeat what the others have done.

That is why learning our ancient law, ancient scripture, ancient mythology, and ancient yoga as a study is important if you are serious about sadhana.

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Then Sri Aurobindo concludes by saying, “The rest depends on personal effort and experience and upon the power of the Guide.”

With this, we complete the “Shastra” section. That has been the very first pillar of Integral Yoga.

II

Regarding the second pillar of the Integral Yoga, personal effort, Sri Aurobindo begins with these lines: The development of the experience in its rapidity, its amplitude, the intensity and power of its results, depends primarily, in the beginning of the path and long after, on the aspiration and personal effort of the sadhaka. The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the Transcendent and Universal can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it.

Let us read how the Mother explains these lines:

“The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances...” I did not quite understand “the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances...”

People are occupied with outward things. That means that the consciousness is turned towards external things—that is, all the things of life which one sees, knows, does—instead of being turned inwards in order to find the deeper truth, the divine Presence. This is the first movement. You are busy with all that you do, with the people around you, the things you use; and then with life: sleeping, eating, talking, working a little, having a little fun also; and then beginning over again: sleeping, eating, etc., etc., and then it begins again. And then what this one has said, what that one has done, what one

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ought to do, the lesson one ought to learn, the exercise one ought to prepare; and then again whether one is keeping well, whether one is feeling fit, etc. This is what one usually thinks about.

So the first movement—and it is not so easy—is to make all that pass to the background, and let one thing come inside and in front of the consciousness as *the* important thing: the discovery of the very purpose of existence and life, to learn what one is, why one lives, and what there is behind all this.

This is the first step: to be interested more in the cause and goal than in the manifestation. That is, the first movement is a withdrawal of the consciousness from this total identification with outward and apparent things, and a kind of inward concentration on what one wants to discover, the Truth one wants to discover. This is the first movement.

Many people who are here forget one thing. They want to begin by the end. They think that they are ready to express in their life what they call the supramental Force or Consciousness, and they want to infuse this in their actions, their movements, their daily life. But the trouble is that they don't at all know what the supramental Force or Consciousness is and that first of all it is necessary to take the reverse path, the way of interiorisation and of withdrawal from life, in order to find within oneself this Truth which has to be expressed.

For as long as one has not found it, there is nothing to express. And by imagining that one is living an exceptional life, one lives only in the illusion of one's exceptional state.

Therefore, at first not only must one find one's soul and the Divine who possesses it, but one must identify oneself with it. And then later, one may begin to come back to outward

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activities, and then transform them; because then one knows in what direction to turn them, into what to transform them.

One can't jump over this stage. One must first find one's soul, this is absolutely indispensable, and identify oneself with it. Later one can come to the transformation. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere: "Our Yoga begins where the others end." Usually yoga leads precisely to this identification, this union with the Divine—that is why it is called "yoga". And when people reach this, well, they are at the end of their path and are satisfied. But Sri Aurobindo has written: we begin when they finish; you have found the Divine but instead of sitting down in contemplation and waiting for the Divine to take you out of your body which has become useless, on the contrary, with this consciousness you turn to the body and to life and begin the work of transformation—which is very hard labour. It's here that he compares it with cutting one's way through a virgin forest; because as nobody has done it before, one must make one's path where there was none. But to try to do this without having the indispensable directive of the union with the Divine within, within one's soul, is childishness. There.

I am speaking of yoga. I am not speaking of your life, of you all, you children here. That's different. You are here to develop yourselves. And when you are developed and have a precise thought of your own, a vision of your own, when you have enough knowledge to be able to choose freely what life you want to lead, then at that time you will take a decision.

(CWM 7: 349-351)

This was spoken to the children and students. She did clearly say that the children are not here for yoga. They are here to develop themselves. After finishing their education, they may decide for themselves what they desire to do or become. Then

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comes the real decision. Otherwise, one may always say my parents have put me here. After the student days one has to oneself choose this path.

But those who have already taken the decision, well for them it is first of all indispensable to find their soul and unite with their psychic being, and with the Divine who is within it.

This is an absolutely indispensable beginning. One can't leap over that bridge; it is not possible. It can be done very quickly if you know how to use the help that's given to you; but it has to be done. (Ibid)

In a conversation I had with the Mother,—I had done for my birthday a Chinese ink sketch of the four aspects of the Mother, four different sketches. They were modest copies, but still as a child my effort was to do the four aspects. I did some pencil sketches in Chinese ink and on top was the painting of the Mother's symbol and in the center of the symbol I had sketched the Mother's face. That was the first sheet and then the four sheets followed giving the four aspects. I took it to the Mother and she saw all the four aspects and returned to that of Maheshwari again and concentrated on that. She then looked at the sketch of her face. I requested her to sign the top sheet containing her sketch. She looked at it for a while and then said,

“you have not caught my soul”. In the sketch there was no soul of the Mother—it was more a sketch, a semblance of Her picture in the calendar. What we do see in the Mother's sketches—a few strokes and there emerges more the soul of the person than the physical form. I told Nolini-da about what had happened; he smiled and said it only means “you have to go deeper into yourself to catch Her soul”.

I recently found an old painting, and it was the only painting that I had done. In those old days our teachers would encourage us to paint something with a quotation from the Mother, and

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the painting would be sent to the Mother. I chose the quotation

“Go deep inside the temple and you will find me there.” And this time the Mother signed on my painting.

Another time she said at the end of her conversation you try to find your soul—it is worth it. “*Essayer de trouver ton ame...*

ca vaut la peine”. I am relating this because right from our childhood she had stressed on only one thing “to find your soul”. That is the starting point and that is the only way. A turning of the human soul to the divine! A turning is required because we are much absorbed in the outer appearances.

As a child I read Sri Aurobindo’s works in Higher Course (UG program in Ashram), and had come to know mentally the truth.

But I needed to turn towards the soul which takes a long time and needs more Grace. Without her Grace it is very difficult to turn away from the outward appearances and the external consciousness. Sri Aurobindo says this is the very first step, the turning within.

The first determining element of the siddhi is, therefore, the intensity of the turning, the force which directs the soul inward. The power of aspiration of the heart, the force of the will, the concentration of the mind, the perseverance and determination of the applied energy are the measure of that intensity. The ideal sadhaka should be able to say in the Biblical phrase, “My zeal for the Lord has eaten me up.” It is this zeal for the Lord,— *utsāha*, the zeal of the whole nature for its divine results, *vyākulatā*, the heart’s eagerness for the attainment of the Divine,—that devours the ego and breaks up the limitations of its petty and narrow mould for the full and wide reception of that which it seeks, that which, being universal, exceeds and,

being transcendent, surpasses even the largest and highest individual self and nature.

This is one of the most beautiful secrets of yoga. Going

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beyond ego is well analysed. But I suppose one cannot do that so easily. The best way perhaps is that of *vyākulatā*: the heart's eagerness for the attainment of the Divine.

There is an old legend about cleaning the stables. Hercules was asked to clean 100 stables overnight. The task was impossible, so the hero went to the nearby river and cut a channel to the stables. The water gushed in and cleared all the muck in the stables at one go, and everything was cleaned up. So these hundred stables are like the channels of the ego.

You cannot clean them one by one. There has to be a gush of divine strength and Grace which can come by this *utsāha*, by this eagerness “that devours the ego and breaks up the limitations of its petty and narrow mould”. That is why personal effort, *utsāha*, is needed, and if that is lost then this Yoga will become dull and dreary. Once things become dull we sink back into a very dreary outer consciousness. At the same time we know how difficult it is. Even if for a day we can get that spring of *utsāha* a lot of the muck of this ego gets washed away.

(October 19th 2000)

The four aids: *śāstra*, *utsāha*, *guru*, *kāla*— are the four pillars of Integral Yoga. We have read what Sri Aurobindo has said about Shastra. Usually when one takes up yoga or sadhana one usually requires a scriptural help or as it is said, a word from without.

It is a help given by the scripture, the Shastra, or a word, a direction or help given by a living *guru*. In India we have been following this since time immemorial. In fact, that is how Indian spirituality has survived. There is the *parampara* of *gurus* who have passed on their own personal experience as

well as the word of the scripture to the disciples. What is important here, for the Integral Yoga, is the yoga of transformation. Sri Aurobindo would tell us that any Shastra, however sacred it may be, is only a partial expression of the eternal knowledge that is seated

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within each individual. An absolute and eternal authority cannot be given to any scripture. An external word or Shastra could be only a starter, but as we go deeper into our own being we will find the origin of all the Shastras. We have to remember that the inner divinity, the inner knowledge, is the true Shastra for the Integral Yoga.

The disadvantages of the external scripture are that it binds the sadhak to a particular path and narrows the experience of the individual. It even tends to make the experience uniform, however great the path may be—that all of us must follow this path and have a certain set of experiences. In the Integral Yoga where we accept the inner Divine as our Shastra, the inner knowledge, a liberty in the path to the Divine is given. There is no one particular path, because in each the Divine chooses what is suitable for the individual. That is why in this Yoga there is an absolute liberty of experience. But there are still some broad general outlines that have to be adhered to. It is not that everything and anything we do is part of the Integral Yoga or a process of sadhana. There are general outlines and how one goes about it depends on one's personal effort and openness to the guidance received.

Now we have come to the second aim of Integral Yoga and that is personal effort. It is not enough that we know what is to be done; mental knowledge is like a lamp lit in the darkness.

And with that lamp in our hand we know the road. But it is not sufficient; we have to tread the path. When you start walking what is required is personal effort. Sri Aurobindo tells us,

“the process of Yoga is the turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the transcendent and universal can pour

itself into the individual mould and transform it.” This is the very first step. In the long

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explanation I read from the Mother, she emphasises on what ordinary people are occupied with. It is a graphic description of the common routine of life — sleeping, eating, talking, working

— and most of us are there. Sri Aurobindo tells us, the very first step for the sadhana is to turn away from all this. Mostly, everyone spends their time in routine matters. And the Mother and Sri Aurobindo emphasise that the first movement is that of the withdrawal of consciousness from the total identification with outward and apparent things, and a kind of inward concentration on what one wants to discover. The truth one wants to discover, this is the first movement. As long as one has not found this inner truth, says the Mother, there is nothing to express. And by imagining that one is living an exceptional life, one lives only in the illusion of one’s exceptional state. “Therefore,” says the Mother, “at first not only must one find one’s soul and the Divine who possesses it, but one must identify oneself with it. And then later, one may come back to outward activities, and then transform them; because then one knows in what direction to turn them, into what to transform them.”

We should really give deep thought to this because in working for the Mother, how much of her will can we manifest—because working for her is to manifest her will. But is it possible to manifest her will before we unite with our own psychic being?

As she says, first we have to have the identity with the inner being, then only can we manifest the will of the Divine. These are two different experiences: one is an inwardness, one has to go towards one’s psychic being, and to the extent one goes inward, it reflects in the outer being. But otherwise if one is, as she describes, deeply identified with the external world, then it has nothing to do with the Mother’s will. To do the Mother’s work is to manifest her. “The first determining element of the

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siddhi is, therefore, the intensity of the turning, the force which directs the soul inward” says Sri Aurobindo.

This is the first step—the inward look, the inward step. And it is this intensity of the inward turn that Sri Aurobindo calls *utsāha*, the enthusiasm. And there must also be the *vyākulatā*,

“the heart’s eagerness for the attainment of the Divine,—that devours the ego and breaks up the limitations of its petty and narrow mould.” The very first step is the heart’s eagerness, what the poet Shelley called “a desire of the moth for the star.” If we have that kind of a desire for the Divine then alone one can turn around. Otherwise, “the family-life” is so very bewitching that it is difficult to come out of it. The human relations are so very sweet and endlessly complicated that unless one has this desire as the moth for the Divine, one cannot even turn towards him.

And once one turns there begins the personal effort. The turning has got to be a kind of instantaneous turning; we cannot plan it.

Planning to go to the Divine after the daughter is married and the son is settled, that would never work.

But this is only one side of the force that works for perfection. The process of the integral Yoga has three stages, not indeed sharply distinguished or separate, but in a certain measure successive. There must be, first, the effort towards at least an initial and enabling self-transcendence and contact with the Divine; next, the reception of that which transcends, that with which we have gained communion, into ourselves for the transformation of our whole conscious being; last, the utilisation of our transformed humanity as a divine centre in the world.

These are the three stages of which the first one is the “initial and enabling self-transcendence and contact with the Divine.”

The initial stage, the initiation to Integral Yoga, is not a guru telling us to follow certain rituals. There is no external initiation.

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The initiation to Integral Yoga is to fall in love with the Divine.

The moment our heart eagerly calls for the Divine, and the Divine alone, that is the point of initiation. And the first step that the Mother explains is to turn away from outward appearances and get deeper into one's self. Sri Aurobindo calls it a "self-transcendence and a contact with the Divine." This turning-in ends in the contact with the Divine.

Next comes "the reception of that which transcends, that with which we have gained communion, into ourselves for the transformation of our whole conscious being". At this stage we want to realise our soul, we are eager, we pray for it and initially we go pretty fast. We have only to look at the meaninglessness of life around to find another truth, something deeper. If there is an intensity of feeling then we turn around and go forward.

Sri Aurobindo says that the second step is the reception of that which transcends, transcends the soul.

After a part of the journey has begun then is the need of purification, of rejection. The first step he has called as aspiration. In the euphoria of the newness there is an intensity, one goes very far, very deep. But at a point it is as if with a vengeance that the external nature comes in to block the path. All the vital desires and mental habits say

"we are being neglected. You are going too deep within yourself and neglecting us." It is Prakriti revolting, and then the whole problem comes up. That is where a lot of sadhaks get stuck up, after years of intensive inner movement there is suddenly an upsurge of the Prakriti. Right from the beginning Sri Aurobindo warns, there has to be aspiration and rejection.

Rejection is nothing but another facet of the reception of that which transcends. Rejection is not only a pushing out of the negative vibration consciously, but also, to put it in another way, a reception of the inner. It is like emptying the cup and

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the moment we empty “three drops” of venom there are “three drops” of *amrita* inside. It is a simultaneous movement. The more we purify and empty ourselves the more is the vacuum filled up by the inner force. This does not mean that once a force is rejected it does not come back. It does, but what one has to do is this simultaneous movement of emptying the being of the negative attitudes and praying for the positive to occupy the vacancy that has been created. That is the second step of the reception of that which transcends.

That which we have gained as communion is nothing but gaining a communion with one’s psychic being. When we are in communion with the psychic being we begin to listen to the inner voice. It will tell us that all these outward concerns are flimsy and unimportant, to come out of it and find the truth. We must listen to the inner voice and not snub it, by saying ‘I have obligations in my outer life’. We will be faced with insurmountable logical arguments that will pull us to the external life, but we should try to cut this knot that binds us to the external life. It is not always possible to do so because there is always one more issue to take care of. But at a point one has to say ‘Keep quiet, I have other priorities.’ It is a shifting of priorities: ‘The world will go on, the problems will be there but, let them be; I have a deeper work to do.’

Let us remember that the fourth aspect is *kāla*, time. Time always seems to be against us. If we want to spend time with worldly problems then we have a limited time to act inwardly; we are not immortal. We have been given a specific time to sort out this imbalance. So the faster we turn inward, the better it is for us. The first priority is the inwardness. The Mother says if the priority is corrected in our life then all the secondary things get beautifully harmonised. If each one of us is inwardly turned towards the Divine, then these social problems can be handled

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in a better manner. What is the ultimate aim of an integral sadhak? It is to become a centre of the divine Consciousness in the world. He says each one of us must become like a dynamo of force and consciousness which is directly linked with the Supreme Dynamo. We are to be a divine centre of action, not just one of bliss. The word “centre” is applicable to all the centres we have in the world. The Sri Aurobindo centres must be places of action and not just places of retreat. A divine action means first an inner contact, then transformation. The second important thing is that the divine centre is in the world and not just in the Himalayas, away from life.

So long as the contact with the Divine is not in some considerable degree established, so long as there is not some measure of sustained identity, *sāyujya*, the element of personal effort must normally predominate. But in proportion as this contact establishes itself, the sadhaka must become conscious that a force other than his own, a force transcending his egoistic endeavour and capacity, is at work in him and to this Power he learns progressively to submit himself and delivers up to it the charge of his Yoga.

The question of relying on the Divine is not that easy an issue for the Westerners. To depend on something else or someone else is looked down upon in Western psychology. As I have been touring the West I understand that their understanding of surrender to the Divine and dependence on him is not like ours. It is a matter of having total trust on the divine. The more we turn to the Divine we are discovering the real truth, that it is He who is doing all of this. That is the realisation. It is not

the Mother helping you, it is the Mother herself doing it. This is the knowledge that one gains and gets convinced. This is what one realises in yoga, that it is not dependence on the Divine but rather that he is the source of all your thoughts and feelings and

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actions. But in proportion as this contact establishes itself, the more inner communion we experience with the psychic being and begin to understand that it is he who is doing everything. It is no longer a mental ego saying that the Mother is helping me.

In the beginning our ego says no, it is I who have done it. But as we go on the path we start seeing her hand, and it is no more a lip service but a conscious living.

In the end his own will and force become one with the higher Power; he merges them in the divine Will and its transcendent and universal Force. He finds it thenceforward presiding over the necessary transformation of his mental, vital and physical being with an impartial wisdom and provident effectivity of which the eager and interested ego is not capable. It is when this identification and this self-merging are complete that the divine centre in the world is ready. Purified, liberated, plastic, illumined, it can begin to serve as a means for the direct action of a supreme Power in the larger Yoga of humanity or superhumanity, of the earth's spiritual progression or its transformation.

Always indeed it is the higher Power that acts. Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force.

What I was alluding to is that our imperfection, our ignorance,

“comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way” . When it was asked to the Mother, she explained this in great detail.

Mother, I don't understand “Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force.”

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What is it that you do not understand? The sentence or the idea?

The idea, Mother.

It can be put in very familiar terms. The individual being, and particularly the mind in it, have an instinctive repulsion to admitting that it's another

force than their own small personal one which does things. There is a kind of instinct which makes you feel absolutely convinced that the effort of aspiration, the will to progress are things belonging to you by your own right and, therefore, that you have all the merit.

From the man of art or of literature or of science, who produces something, studies something, and is absolutely convinced that it is he himself who is doing it, to the aspirant yogi who is convinced that it is the ardour of his own aspiration, his personal need for realisation which push him—if someone tells these people (I have had this experience), if someone tells them a little too soon, “Why, no, it is the Divine who aspires in you, it is the divine Force which produces in you...”, they no longer do anything, they fall flat, it doesn’t interest them at all any longer; they say, “Good, I have nothing to do then, let the Divine do it.”

And this is what Sri Aurobindo means—that the mind is something so egoistic and so proud that if you take away from it the satisfaction it seeks, it no longer collaborates; nor the vital either. And as the physical is very obedient to the vital and the mind, it too collaborates no longer. Then one is before an inert mass which says, “Good, if it isn’t I, well, let the Divine do what He likes, I am not going to do anything at all any more.”

I knew people who had truly made a lot of progress, who were very close to the moment when one emerges into the truth of things, and who were held back simply by this.

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Because this need to be the source of the action, to have the merit of the effort, this need is so deeply rooted that they cannot take the last step. Sometimes it takes years. If they are told, “No, it isn’t you, this energy which is in you, this will which is in you, this knowledge which is in you, all this is the Divine; it is not what you call yourself”, this makes them so miserable that they can’t do anything any more. That’s what Sri Aurobindo wants to say in this sentence.

There are people who have such a need to keep the sense of their separate personality that if they are forced to admit that all that springs upwards is

inspired by the Divine or even done by Him, they keep for their little person the whole side of defects, faults, errors, and they cherish their defects, so that at least something remains theirs, which is indeed their own, their personal property: “Yes, all that is beautiful, luminous, is the Divine; all horrible things—that’s myself.” But a self... a big self; one must not touch it! (CWM 7: 358-359) (20th December 2000)

While dealing with the second aid, that of personal effort, Sri Aurobindo writes of the three stages: contact with the Divine, reception of the Divine force, and becoming an instrument of the Divine. Then he gets into the psychological truth of personal effort. We should understand that these statements are confusing, for example ‘it is the Divine who does everything’, and yet we are asked ‘to make a personal effort’. How are these two reconciled? First Sri Aurobindo tells us the truth about the personal effort:

Always indeed it is the higher Power that acts. Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force. It persists in applying to experience on a supernormal plane the ordinary terms of

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mentality which it applies to its normal experiences in the world. In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal will, wisdom, force, virtue the selective, formative, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and body.

In reality there is a higher power that acts within us, but we have a tremendous mental and vital ego which tells us that it is we who are acting. We are constantly saying, ‘I have succeeded!’, ‘I have failed!’, ‘I have suffered!’ Especially in Yoga the Mother tells us that the moment a sadhak is told that ‘you are not the actor, there is someone else who is acting behind you’, if this kind of a truth is told too early, it may be a bit dangerous for the sadhak.

If the ego satisfaction of success is taken away the sadhak may go to the other extreme and say ‘Let the Mother do everything.

If I am not the actor I will go to sleep and let her do it’. This is a psychological and metaphysical truth which cannot be revealed when the sadhak has not come to a particular stage of maturity.

That’s why unless and until we comprehend both the inner and the outer truth it could be confusing and even dangerous.

Complacency may set in sadhana and the sadhak may ask ‘Who am I and what have I got to do’? This is where we have to be careful, even though he says that we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own, which is a wrong thing.

Enlightenment brings to us the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our supreme and integral Self, one with the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. Our limitations and distortions are our contribution to the working; the true power in it is the Divine’s.

What is the real liberation that a sadhak would get? Perhaps as the first stage of liberation — to the extent that we begin to get

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convinced — to act and react with the sense that the ego is only an instrument. It is a quieting and calming experience if we can experience it in our day to day life, especially when the ego claims success. We immediately need to pull ourselves back and say no, it is not my success, it is She who has done it. Often we are waylaid by our ego who says ‘it is my success, my doing’. Real enlightenment is when we see that after all I am only an instrument. It would be the first blessing of sadhana to begin to see everything as the Divine’s doing. We may take success as a first step of conquering, reminding our ego that it is due to the working of the Mother. Then it would slowly extend to failures. That means it will extend to our dark periods. Then if we can feel that it is the Divine who is doing all of this we would achieve equanimity.

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by “Our limitations and distortions are our contribution”? Is it a positive or negative contribution? How can our distortions be a contribution to the work? He explains,

When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant’s groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation.

There is a saying about Socrates, that when he was told by the oracle that he is the wisest man, he thought about it for a long time. Why did the oracle say he was the wisest man in the kingdom? He then came to this conclusion, after testing the prophesy by talking to people of different types and statures of people, each of whom thought they knew the answers, they were so convinced of their knowledge. No matter what their field, they knew they had the answers. Ultimately Socrates said,

‘I know that I do not know’, and therefore I am the wisest. It is an important saying, a philosophical conclusion, that only the man that knows that he does not know is the wisest one. On

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the spiritual level Sri Aurobindo says that if we claim to know it is ignorance and childishness, pretentious and impure; when we know that we do not know, that is the first sign of wisdom.

The apparent freedom and self-assertion of our personal being to which we are so profoundly attached, conceal a most pitiable subjection to a thousand suggestions, impulsions, forces which we have made extraneous to our little person.

Our ego, boasting of freedom, is at every moment the slave, toy and puppet of countless beings, powers, forces, influences in universal Nature.

The Mother gave a beautiful description of this idea: ‘You are a public square: things enter, go out, make you move’ (CWM 7: 360). Sri Aurobindo analyses our psychology and observes that when we boast of freedom, our

freedom to think, act, behave, do anything the way we want it is not true freedom. Do we really have freedom? Not only are we puppets in the hands of the universal forces, but the Mother takes it a step beyond. She says, It is the condition of the world, the state of matter, the state of physical life. And it enters you, makes you act; it's like something pulling the strings of the puppet. All these desires, all these impulses, all these currents of force are things which pass through you, which you obey without even being aware of it, and which you take for yourself. (Ibid: 360) This is really what we are with all of our sense of freedom of which the West boasts so much. That is why we in India are always telling that there is no freedom of this sort. It is only when we go beyond these desires, as Sri Krishna has said, that we taste the first freedom. Otherwise we are only a market place.

The self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment; its surrender to that which transcends it is its liberation from bonds and limits and its perfect freedom.

An entire paper could be written in psychology on this

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paragraph. I was asked, on our human level why don't we find out the reason for our quarrels, disharmony, etc. It is a sad plight that there is still this kind of a thinking regarding what Sri Aurobindo has said about change of consciousness. This is exactly where there is a gap in understanding. Sri Aurobindo has not said that the need for change of consciousness is only for advanced sadhaks, in fact, it is the basic ABCs of life.

We cannot discuss these problems and arrive at any other solution but the one that he has given: "unless and until there is a self-abnegation of the ego", unless there is a self-sacrifice and surrender of the ego nothing can be done. We have to understand the psychological angle of this. What does surrendering of the ego, self-abnegation of the ego mean?

It is the hub of desires which we need to put at the feet of the Mother. If this hub is sacrificed, given up, given away, then this hub which attracts the universal forces and desires is going towards the Mother. In return we get freedom, because the Divine is taking up those desires of our ego and

absorbing and absolving them, and simultaneously giving us the protection against these universal forces which make us a puppet out of ourselves. It is not to give up one's personality, but it is the dependence upon the Divine which gives true freedom to us.

But still, in the practical development, each of the three stages has its necessity and utility and must be given its time or its place. It will not do, it cannot be safe or effective to begin with the last and highest alone. It would not be the right course, either, to leap prematurely from one to another.

For even if from the beginning we recognise in mind and heart the Supreme, there are elements of the nature which long prevent the recognition from becoming realisation.

But without realisation our mental belief cannot become a

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dynamic reality; it is still only a figure of knowledge, not a living truth, an idea, not yet a power.

That is why it is called the Integral Yoga; there are steps of progress. Even though we are devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, there are clashes in our lives and the reason is precisely because though from the beginning we recognise in mind and heart the Supreme, that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the Divine, that recognition is in only one part of our being.

There are other elements of our nature that prevent us from recognising them, especially the vital, or even the mind. The mind brings in its doubts, its own interpretations, mind-sets and all this prevents the inner contact from becoming a reality. To put it a little differently, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and their philosophy are not yet a mental realisation in us which is why we face problems. That means the mind is divided into many parts and it is only one part, the higher mind that has recognised the Mother. There are other parts of the mind through several layers which are in conflict and have not yet been transformed.

If I can interpret a little of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, mental realisation could be facilitated by a constant reading of their works. It is their force which penetrates the mind with constant and regular reading. It is not by talking about them or listening about them but by our own reading that we get the contact. If you read daily and regularly, the resistance in the mind decreases. We may not be able to understand the major works, none of us can, but somewhere by daily reading the mind becomes like a sponge and starts absorbing their consciousness.

And as it absorbs more and more the understanding enlarges, but more than that the mind itself becomes a greater instrument. And then there is enhanced capacity to work. There is no questioning; there is direct action. Otherwise if the mind is split we have allegiance to this philosophy and that ideology etc.

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All these allegiances get cut off and we get aligned only to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

And even if realisation has begun, it may be dangerous to imagine or to assume too soon that we are altogether in the hands of the Supreme or are acting as his instrument. This is what we, as children of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who claim to do Yoga, begin to say too soon: 'I am an instrument of the Mother'. This "too soon" is dangerous and if we assume we are instruments, that assumption may introduce a "calamitous falsity".

That assumption may introduce a calamitous falsity; it may produce a helpless inertia or, magnifying the movements of the ego with the Divine Name, it may disastrously distort and ruin the whole course of the Yoga.

This perhaps is leading to the next section which is precisely where devotees begin to feel like and become gurus. In the Divine's name, in the name of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, they claim guruhood. And this is the "calamitous falsity", the disastrous distortion that comes and wipes out all the progress made in Yoga. It is because half knowledge is dangerous. We read a little of their works and we think that we understand and begin to answer everything that comes in their names.

We would never say that we do not know this answer; we even fabricate answers. This is how falsehood creeps in.

There is a period, more or less prolonged, of internal effort and struggle in which the individual will has to reject the darkness and distortions of the lower nature and to put itself resolutely or vehemently on the side of the divine Light.

Not until one puts oneself “exclusively” on the side of the Divine can one be completely safe. Exclusively is a very big word and is not physically connected to Pondicherry Ashram only or the meditation room. We must really know that all the external paraphernalia is just a little help, the real thing is within.

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Exclusively towards the Divine means a lot, to reject the darkness and distortions resolutely and vehemently in each act and thought and affiliation and allegiance.

The mental energies, the heart’s emotions, the vital desires, the very physical being have to be compelled into the right attitude or trained to admit and answer to the right influences. It is only then, only when this has been truly done, that the surrender of the lower to the higher can be effected, because the sacrifice has become acceptable.

Playing fool with the Divine is not acceptable. These are the stages of preparation when we are still far from the truth. We know some of these things, but what are the conditions? When there is this exclusivity, when there is a fullness of mental energies, then all that we do in the name of art, in the name of philosophy, work, business, education, all have to be offered to her—the heart’s emotions, the higher ones including our bhakti, our karma, everything. And also the vital’s desires for every little thing, and the very physical being, the consciousness of the body’s upkeep. You are healthy not for yourself, for trying to be beautiful, not for the ego’s sense of beauty, all this attachment has to be offered to her, then only is it accepted.

The personal will of the sadhaka has first to seize on the egoistic energies and turn them towards the light and the right; once turned, he has still to train them to recognise that always, always to accept, always to follow that. Progressing, he learns, still using the personal will, personal effort, personal energies, to employ them as representatives of the higher Power and in conscious obedience to the higher Influence. Progressing yet farther, his will, effort, energy become no longer personal and separate, but activities of that higher Power and Influence at work in the individual.

Here we get the real synthesis between personal effort and

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the divine Power. “Progressing, he learns, still using the personal will, personal effort, personal energies, to employ them as representatives of the higher Power”. This is the combination by which we know that it is the higher Power that is moving, inspiring, and acting through us, and yet one must put in the personal effort. With this consciousness we become a representative of that higher Force for the work in this world. We are not yet an instrument, but a formation of that same divine Force for His work. As a formation we have to try to be on his side. As Sri Aurobindo says, “always recognise, always accept, always follow”: this is the true combination.

When Sri Aurobindo was sent the Cripps’ proposal, he accepted it, and when later he was asked if he did not know if the proposal would be rejected, his reply was in the positive and yet he sent it because in the divine plan such actions also contribute to the ultimate result. Therefore, seeing that an action is going to fail should not stop us from acting because our own positive will can have an effect in the due course of time.

Surely, the will of an Avatar’s consciousness cannot go to waste.

Perhaps time and human consciousness may delay the process, but his will will manifest. Similarly, we have to put in our own personal effort even if we think it is going to be a failure. Even if we know that we may not succeed, if we truly believe that it is the Divine that is acting within us, and we are convinced of that, then we should act because after all the result is not ours.

But there is still a sort of gulf or distance which necessitates an obscure process of transit, not always accurate, sometimes even very distorting, between the divine Origin and the emerging human current. At the end of the process, with the progressive disappearance of egoism and impurity and ignorance, this last separation is removed; all in the individual becomes the divine working.

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That is the fourth stage. The first stage is when the personal will seizes on the egoistic energies and turns them. At this stage we are egoistic and start with our own egoism, we cannot act without the ego. Most often, it is too early to say we should not have the ego, for then we cannot do anything. We must start off from where we are; we are egoistic people. So the Divine says, fine, keep your ego but turn it towards the Light. Do what you want with whatever you are working on, whatever success you want, what you want to achieve egoistically, and say “I am doing it”, all that is fine, but only offer it to the Divine. That is step one. Step two, this effort that you are putting is the effort of the Divine. There is a divine Power behind it. First the ego is turned towards the Light, in the second step it is the divine Light and Power which are doing the whole thing.

“Progressing yet farther, his will, effort, energy become no longer personal and separate, but activities of that higher Power”. The third level is that in which the Divine has taken over the activities. The last stage is that there is no separation between you and the Divine. That means we are a full and complete instrument. These are the levels of progression. One could make an entire thesis on that. One can see the gradual stages of evolution. Through this we can really gauge where we are in our sadhana.

There has to be a transition from one level to the next. If right from day one we think we have become a divine instrument we are likely to fall on our nose. You cannot straight away think that you are an instrument of the Divine.

III

As the supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every man, so its supreme Guide and Teacher is the inner Guide, the World-Teacher, *jagad-guru*, secret within us. It is he who destroys our darkness by the

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resplendent light of his knowledge; that light becomes within us the increasing glory of his own self-revelation. He discloses progressively in us his own nature of freedom, bliss, love, power, immortal being. He sets above us his divine example as our ideal and transforms the lower existence into a reflection of that which it contemplates. By the inpouring of his own influence and presence into us he enables the individual being to attain to identity with the universal and transcendent.

This is the statement regarding what is a guru or the guide in the Integral Yoga. Just as no external Shastra—the Veda, the Upanishads, Gita, or the Bible—is the Shastra for an integral sadhak, the real Shastra is within “In the heart of every Man”, there is no external guru, there is only the Jagad-guru, the world teacher within. A sadhak wrote to the Mother that he was so grateful that she had sent him a blessing. The Mother wrote back that it is not as a guru that I am blessing you but as the Mother. It is a very simple answer but a very deep one:

“It is not as a guru that I am blessing you but as the Mother who loves you without any demand.” The Mother says I bless you as the Mother — what does it mean? She did not want to be represented as an outer guru, but she wanted us to take her as the inner guide, the eternal Jagad-guru, the world teacher. Did she not say ‘go deep within yourself and you will find me there?’

All the time she was training us to find that inner Mother.

Once I wrote to the Mother complaining that now that she has retired to her room we are not able to go to her as freely as before. She wrote back suggesting that it was a training for seeing her within. There is a difference between the external guru and the internal guru. The difference would be that we begin to depend on the external. Nothing of the outer should be our

permanent support. They have always encouraged us to go deep within. It may be in the form of Shastra or in the form of guru. In

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the early times sadhaks would take the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as gurus. But she always told them “I am your Mother, a Mother who is within, find me within”. They never asked to be worshipped outwardly, only within. Actually, this is the ultimate truth. Sri Aurobindo says by the “inpouring of his own influence and presence into us he enables the individual being to attain to identity with the universal and transcendent.” The inner guru says always try to feel the inner presence of the Mother.

If we take the Mother and Sri Aurobindo only as *gurus* then the universality and the omnipresence become narrow. If someone is living outside of Pondicherry and feels that their guru lives in Pondicherry, then they don't have the same kind of intimacy with the Divine. That intimacy, that omnipresence can come only if I feel that she is here within me. Then it doesn't matter where we are in the world, if we know the Mother is within us, intimacy develops much more easily, and it is this intimacy which will really guide us.

Sri Aurobindo says, “It is he who destroys our darkness by the resplendent light of his knowledge”. Now we can combine both the Shastra and the inner guru. If the Shastra is something within, how is that there is also a superimposition of the guru within? It is this eternal presence of the Supreme who radiates his knowledge, and this radiating knowledge is the Shastra. Now we see why he is telling us to go within. The extent to which we find the inner guru he enlightens us, and that becomes the Shastra. Shastra does not mean a scripture; it is what would give us freedom, love, power, immortality.

There is the eternal guide and the inner Shastra, but then what is the psychic being? We are always asked to go towards the psychic being. The answer is that the psychic being within us is the Mother herself. It is the supreme

transcendental Mahasakti which has become the psychic in each one of us.
When the

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Mother says ‘I am within you’, or if she says ‘go within and find the psychic’, it is exactly the same thing. So to find the psychic being or Atman, is to find the Mother and vice versa. For some it may be easier to find the Mother because of her beautiful form to which we get attracted, the psychic being may be a little confusing because it is a little abstract. But for the devotees to feel the Mother within may be a little easier. It is the same psychic or same the Mother which gives the same knowledge, and this knowledge “destroys our darkness by the resplendent light of his knowledge”.

The inner Knowledge comes from the Divine within and destroys our ignorance and darkness. But in our day to day action we may get an outer knowledge which can guide us to that inner Knowledge. External reading can be a great help, and as the Mother would say, to read *Savitri* is to do Yoga. These readings can lead us to that inner source. Sri Aurobindo, in *Savitri*, has poetically etched and painted that inner Mother.

Reading it takes up our whole being and elevates it, and this elevation also affects our emotions and thoughts. Ultimately the result is that we fall more and more in love with the Mother so that from within she can radiate that inner Knowledge.

Their work in us is done through an inner influence and presence. This is the method they have used. If a person cannot read, it does not matter because the main thing is to feel their presence and that will open up the inner doors. The next question Sri Aurobindo asks is what is his method and his system? We will discuss that next time.

(4th January 2001)

We had finished the first two of the four aids, *śāstra* and *utsāha*, and have been discussing the inner guide, the guru or the world-teacher. Now I’d like

to read a passage from *The Yoga and its Objects* about the method of the inner guru:

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It is said in the “*Sanatsujatiya*” that four things are necessary for Siddhi — *sāstra*, *utsāha*, *guru* and *kāla*— the teaching of the path, zeal in following it, the guru and time.

Your path is that which I am pointing out, the *utsāha* needed is this *anumati* and *nitya smarana*, the guru is God himself and for the rest only time is needed, That God himself is the guru, you will find when knowledge comes to you; you will see how every little circumstance with you and without you has been subtly planned and brought about by infinite wisdom to carry out the natural process of the yoga, how the internal and external movements are arranged and brought together to work on each other, so as to work out the imperfection and work in the perfection. An almighty love and wisdom are at work for your uplifting. Therefore never be troubled by the time that is being taken. Even if it seems very long, but when imperfections and obstructions arise, be *apramatta*, *dhīra*, have the *utsāha*, and leave God to do the rest. Time is necessary. It is a tremendous work that is being done in you, the alternation of your whole human nature into a divine nature, the crowding of centuries of evolution into a few years. You ought not to grudge the time. There are other paths that offer more immediate results or at any rate by offering you some definite *kriyā* you can work at yourself, give your *ahankāra* the satisfaction of feeling that you are doing something, so many more *prānāyāmas* today, so much longer a time for the *āsana*, so many more repetitions of the japa, so much done, so much definite progress marked. But once you have chosen this path, you must cleave to it. Those are human methods, not the way that the infinite Shakti works, which moves silently, sometimes imperceptibly to its goal, advances here, seems to pause there, then mightily and triumphantly reveals the grandiose thing that it has

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done. Artificial paths are like canals hewn by the intelligence of man; you travel easily, safely, surely, but from one given place to another. This path is the broad and trackless ocean by which you can travel widely to all parts of the world and are admitted to the freedom of the infinite. All that you need are the ship, the steering-wheel, the compass, the motive-power and a skillful captain. Your ship is the *Brahmavidyā*, faith is your steering-wheel, self-surrender your compass, the motive-power is she who makes, directs and destroys the worlds at God's command and God himself is your captain.

But he has his own way of working and his own time for everything. Watch his way and wait for his time. Understand also the importance of accepting the Shastra and submitting to the Guru and do not do like the Europeans who insist on the freedom of the individual intellect to follow its own fancies and preferences which it calls reasoning, even before it is trained to discern or fit to reason. It is much the fashion nowadays to indulge in metaphysical discussions and philosophical subtleties about Maya and Adwaita and put them in the forefront, making them take the place of spiritual experience. Do not follow that fashion or confuse yourself and waste time on the way by questionings which will be amply and luminously answered when the divine knowledge of the *vijnāna* awakes in you. Metaphysical knowledge has its place but as a handmaid to spiritual experience, showing it the way sometimes but much more dependent on it and living upon its bounty. By itself it is mere *pānditya*, a dry and barren thing and more often a stumbling-block than a help. Having accepted this path, follow its Shastra without unnecessary doubt and questioning, keeping the mind plastic to the light of the higher knowledge, gripping firmly what is experienced, waiting for light where things are dark

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to you, taking without pride what help you can from the living guides who have already trod the path, always patient, never hastening to narrow conclusions, but waiting for a more complete experience and fuller light, relying on the Jagadguru who helps you from within. (CWSA 13: 87-88)
This is the essence of today's class. We are discussing the word guru and

how he acts and have taken up his method and system of working on the human being. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo writes:

What is his method and his system? He has no method and every method. His system is a natural organisation of the highest processes and movements of which the nature is capable. Applying themselves even to the pettiest details and to the actions the most insignificant in their appearance with as much care and thoroughness as to the greatest, they in the end lift all into the Light and transform all. For in his Yoga there is nothing too small to be used and nothing too great to be attempted. As the servant and disciple of the Master has no business with pride or egoism because all is done for him from above, so also he has no right to despond because of his personal deficiencies or the stumblings of his nature. For the Force that works in him is impersonal—or superpersonal—and infinite.

The full recognition of this inner Guide, Master of the Yoga, lord, light, enjoyer and goal of all sacrifice and effort, is of the utmost importance in the path of integral perfection.

It is immaterial whether he is first seen as an impersonal Wisdom, Love and Power behind all things, as an Absolute manifesting in the relative and attracting it, as one's highest Self and the highest Self of all, as a Divine Person within us and in the world, in one of his—or her—numerous forms and names or as the ideal which the mind conceives. In the

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end we perceive that he is all and more than all these things together. The mind's door of entry to the conception of him must necessarily vary according to the past evolution and the present nature.

We read from Sri Aurobindo how this path of Integral Yoga is compared to an ocean, a trackless ocean which you can travel widely. Human methods are not the way the infinite Shakti works, which moves silently, sometimes imperceptibly to its goal. When we put these things together we understand that the Integral Yoga has no particular method. It is the working of the Divine Shakti in us. It does not prescribe following any one particular path, but rather the one that is suited to the individual. As he says, the movements

of which the nature in us is capable, with all of our problems and drawbacks, the Shakti starts off from there. What is suitable to one may not be suitable to others. That is why he calls it a trackless ocean. It is not one track that has been given since time immemorial, it is a thing that starts when one starts. The path begins with you and ends with you. There is nothing called a common path, “it is a natural organisation of the highest processes and movements of which the nature is capable”.

There is nothing too small and nothing too great to be attempted. This is a wonderful thing about Integral Yoga. That is why there are no do's and don'ts. When we have do's and don'ts, then these rules acquire greater importance. If he would say do this type of asana, pranayama, or meditation, then what would happen is that these activities would gain a focus in our life and we would start judging our progress by the intensity and progress of those activities alone. These external measuring rods would become very important, that at one time we did five thousand japas and now we can do five thousand and five. Then we would have a false inflation of our ego. This is why he does

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not want to give us any specific work, nothing small or nothing big. Even the sweeping of our house could be Yoga, or reading *The Life Divine* or any of his other works, or meditating at the samadhi too can become Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is absolutely in line with Nature's own force, there is no demarcation anywhere. That is why he says that all that is small and big can be parts of Yoga. For this effort it is essential to recognise the guru, to take a guru. When we say to take or recognise a guru is where the problem comes in. Who is the guru of an integral sadhak? This is what we need to discuss at length. That is one question that needs to be solved by the end of the chapter. Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is of greatest importance. Yoga means the recognition of this inner guide. If psychology as a science does not recognise the inner guide, then it is not useful for the integral sadhak. Integral Yoga is inseparably connected with the inner guide and therefore Sri Aurobindo is insisting that this master of yoga must be recognised. What

kind of guru, what kind of guide can we have? He has left us wide options. But we must take the Divine as our guide and not depend on the analysis of our external being with our mental knowledge because, as he puts it, such, “artificial paths are like canals hewn by the intelligence of man.” This could be applied to modern psychology; it is an artificial path hewn by the intelligence of man, nothing more than that. Once we realise this then God himself can become the guru. He continues: This inner Guide is often veiled at first by the very intensity of our personal effort and by the ego’s preoccupation with itself and its aims. As we gain in clarity and the turmoil of egoistic effort gives place to a calmer self-knowledge, we recognise the source of the growing light within us. We recognise it retrospectively as we realise how all our obscure and conflicting movements have been determined towards

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an end that we only now begin to perceive, how even before our entrance into the path of the Yoga the evolution of our life has been designedly led towards its turning-point.

Most of us have had this experience. After all that has happened in our life, we see now, with a retrospective vision the guiding hand. We see junctions in our lives that brought us to these alleys and lanes, to these pleasures and discomforts, it is She who has turned us towards this Light. She has not guided us only in this birth, but our souls have been guided in our past lives to arrive at this moment where there is a consciousness turning to the Divine.

Let us be clear about the conscious turning to the Divine — it does not mean that others who are on different paths have not turned to the Divine. The Divine has many forms and he will be accepted in all forms. But when I say this I have something in mind. Coming to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is not only turning to the Divine, which many may claim in different forms, but our turning to the Mother is specifically to that aspect of the Divine which is working for the transformation of the Earth, of matter, whereas other aspects of the Divine are not working for the transformation. They may be preparing the soul, on the way, to eventually come to this turning point where the soul recognises the Mother. This Divine aspect is a specific aspect, it is not less divine or more divine than other divine aspects, but it definitely has a

specific role that is of transformation of nature. There is an immense difference in following Integral Yoga and other systems of yoga.

For now we begin to understand the sense of our struggles and efforts, successes and failures. At last we are able to seize the meaning of our ordeals and sufferings and can appreciate the help that was given us by all that hurt and resisted and the utility of our very falls and stumbling.

We will see how every little circumstance within and without us has been subtly planned. It was brought about by infinite

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wisdom to carry out the natural processes of Yoga. There has been that beautiful, loving and wise hand always taking us through our successes and failures.

We recognise this divine leading afterwards, not retrospectively but immediately, in the moulding of our thoughts by a transcendent Seer, of our will and actions by an all-embracing Power, of our emotional life by an all-attracting and all-assimilating Bliss and Love.

We have to recognise what is the turning point. Maybe we have not yet arrived at it. It is not just coming to the Ashram and physically putting up their photos and doing pranam at the Samadhi. That is not a turning point. Turning to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is not putting their photographs on display as we see in several shops around Pondicherry and in various homes.

Turning is when we recognise what was behind that thing in the past that brought us here, and from that moment onwards we begin to see and live consciously, emotionally, intellectually how their hand is behind everything that I am doing today. That means there is a constant living in their consciousness. Only to the extent that we are able to do that consciously, we may say, we are turning, not yet turned, it is a present continuance.

But there will be a moment when we sadhaks who have lived in this consciousness would know that the very moulding of our consciousness and

thoughts is done by the transcendent Seer. There is a past that has brought us to the present and the present is a long preparation, because during the whole day our being may be full of emotions and we may not feel that it is the Mother who is giving them to us. We still feel that it is “I” who am doing it. There are just little spaces of time when we think that it is the Mother who is doing it, and we kind of credit the Mother mentally, but we don’t really feel it in the cells of our body. It is still a mental notion, it is not a part of our life-breath.

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When it becomes a part of our breath and thought process, then it may be said that one has turned towards the Divine.

We recognise it too in a more personal relation that from the first touched or at the last seizes us; we feel the eternal presence of a supreme Master, Friend, Lover, Teacher. We recognise it in the essence of our being as that develops into likeness and oneness with a greater and wider existence;...

This is what the Gita calls *sayujya mukti*. This is to become one with the nature of the Divine, to be united with him, to unite with his state of existence. There is a developing into his likeness. These are beautiful words, “likeness” and “oneness”.

“Oneness” is *sayujya*, we become one, grow more and more into his consciousness and *sadharmya mukti* is likeness with the dharma of the Lord into which one grows. This is a kind of growth that is demanded of the sadhaka. The movement towards his likeness is a specific feeling, a vibration, a quietness.

Just dip in to the quiet of the moment and we may be able to feel it. It is a million miles journey but by this dipping in, just as we differentiate between the fragrances of a rose and a jasmine, we can recognise the difference in vibration between the outer nature and this inner nature.

...for we perceive that this miraculous development is not the result of our own efforts: an eternal Perfection is moulding us into its own image. One who is the Lord or Ishwara of the Yogic philosophies, the Guide in the

conscious being (*caitya guru or antaryāmin*), the Absolute of the thinker, the Unknowable of the Agnostic, the universal Force of the materialist, the supreme Soul and the supreme Shakti, the One who is differently named and imaged by the religions, is the Master of our Yoga.

He has given the full sweep of all the aspects of the Divine.

Instead of calling it all this he has given a beautiful phrase, “an

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eternal Perfection is moulding us into his image.” This is such a beautiful truth, if only we could live it every day, even if just for a little.

To see, know, become and fulfil this One in our inner selves and in all our outer nature, was always the secret goal and becomes now the conscious purpose of our embodied existence. To be conscious of him in all parts of our being and equally in all that the dividing mind sees as outside our being, is the consummation of the individual consciousness.

To be possessed by him and possess him in ourselves and in all things is the term of all empire and mastery. To enjoy him in all experience of passivity and activity, of peace and of power, of unity and of difference is the happiness which the Jiva, the individual soul manifested in the world, is obscurely seeking. This is the entire definition of the aim of integral Yoga; it is the rendering in personal experience of the truth which universal Nature has hidden in herself and which she travails to discover. It is the conversion of the human soul into the divine soul and of natural life into divine living.

Let us read the Mother’s explanation of these lines: *It is this: “To enjoy him in all experience of passivity and activity, of peace and of power, of unity and of difference, is the happiness which the jiva, the individual soul manifested in the world, is obscurely seeking.”*

Yes. But you are not told anything about the love of riches or the love of power or the love of knowledge. You are told about the divine Love; it is not altogether the same thing.

Nothing is said about enjoying ambition or desire or even aspiration; what is spoken of is the enjoying of the divine Presence. That's completely different; there is no similarity.

(CWM 7: 36-368)

This is an extraordinary and beautiful clarification. "To enjoy

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him in all experience of passivity and activity": what does it mean? What does the word "to enjoy" really mean? We could have easily gone into this vital feeling that in my desires I feel him, in my love for power I feel him, etc. It is not that: it is to enjoy his presence, the divine presence. To continue...

I admit that I don't quite catch the meaning of your question. I think you are mixing up the Divine with growth and increase and development, no? perhaps at best with progress. But it is not the same thing. Progress is perhaps the base upon which the present world was constructed, one can take it like that; but it is not the Divine.

What were you trying to say?

For each being there is a thirst for something.

That the thirst for something is the Divine? No, my child.

It can be quite simply a desire. How can the thirst for something be the Divine?

I see clearly what you are trying to say, but truly you do not say it: that is, this inner flame of aspiration is what you call the Divine; this inner flame of aspiration which never dies out, which always burns, burns more and more; what in India is called Agni, you know, the will to progress, the power of aspiration; this is what you call the Divine. It is an aspect of the Divine, that's true, but it is not the Divine. It is only one aspect, that is, a divine way of being.

Sweet Mother, in the individual do the past evolution and the present nature always decide the final intervention of a higher plane which brings about a change?

What kind of question is this, I don't understand it very well.

Past evolution?...

And the present nature...

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And the present nature? It is not the same thing, they are two different things.

No, Mother, because here it is written: "The mind's door of entry to the conception of him must necessarily vary according to the past evolution and the present nature."

Yes, these two things are completely different. That is, the evolution in former lives and the present nature, that is, the nature of the present body, determine one's approach to the Divine. We can take a very... an over-simple example. If one is born in any particular religion, quite naturally the first effort to approach the Divine will be within that religion; or else if in former lives one has passed through a certain number of experiences which determined the necessity of another kind of experiences, quite naturally one will follow the path which leads to those experiences. (Ibid: 368-369) What this means is that if you are born a Hindu you may not necessarily follow Hinduism. If perchance the soul has had in former lives other experiences of a religion, then it may try to get a Christian or an Islamic experience because of the effects of the past births. The Mother further explains: You see, the life of the psychic being is made up of successive experiences in successive physical existences. So, it may be put a little childishly or romantically: you have a psychic which for some reason or other has incarnated so as to be able to have all the experiences which royalty gives—for instance, supreme power. After it has had its experience, has had what it wanted, it can, before leaving the body, decide that in the next life it will take birth in obscure

conditions, because it needs to have experiences which can be had in a modest condition and with the freedom one feels when he has no responsibilities, you see, responsibilities like those the heads of states have, for instance. So quite naturally, in its

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next life it will be born in certain conditions which fulfil its need. And it is in accordance with this experience that it will approach the Divine. (Ibid)

This example is from the Mother's own life; this experience of the royal life and wanting to experience a very simple life.

In many of her past lives she was born into a royal family.

Many times she has been a queen or princess. But she got tired of being in those restrictions. Therefore she decided that in her subsequent incarnation she would be born in obscure conditions. This is a very personal example of the Mother. To read further,

Then, in addition, it is the product of the union of two physical natures, you know, and sometimes of two vital natures. The result of this is more or less a kind of mixture of these natures; but it brings about a tendency, what is called a character. Well, this character will make it fit for a certain field, a certain category of experiences.

So with what has been determined, decided in former lives or in a former life, and then the environment in which it is born—that is, the conditions in which its present body has been formed—its approach to and search for the Divine will be in accordance with a definite line which is its own, and which, naturally, is not at all the same as that of its neighbour or any other being.

I said a while ago: each individual is a special manifestation in the universe, therefore his true path must be an absolutely unique path. There are similarities, there are resemblances, there are categories, families, churches, ideals also, that is, a certain collective way of approaching the Divine, which creates a kind of church, not materialised but in a more subtle world—there

are all these things—but for the details of the path, the details of yoga, it will be different according

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to each individual, necessarily, and conditioned physically by his present bodily structure, and vitally, mentally and psychically, of course, by former lives. (Ibid: 369-70) This present body that has been conditioned by the present environment and the conditions in which we grow up carries influences and effects of the vital and mental beings of past lives, as well as what the psychic being wants to experience now. And each psychic being, because it wants to experience something in a special way, follows the Divine in its own way.

(We are speaking here of the search for the Divine. We are not speaking of the common ordinary life.) “There are categories, families, churches, ideals also, that is, a certain collective way of approaching the Divine”.

This is how she has explained that a family of devotees of Sri Aurobindo have all met in previous lives. This tells us that we have been a collective family, in different parts of the world, in different times and places. We have always been one family, in the sense that there are souls which generally take to one kind of evolutionary path. All souls evolve towards the Divine, but in this evolution they each take up one particular path. There is this family of souls which has taken the path of self-transformation.

So these souls will always work towards the transformation of the earth. And we shall always come back to work for the Mother. In this life we have recognised the Avatar the Mother, and my psychic being and your psychic being will follow this path where it will work for the change of earth. This is what is called one category of souls, or one collectivity of souls. There would be another collectivity of souls that would come perhaps for social help, a social change, helping certain parts of the world, the society or manifesting the Mahalakshmi, Mahakali, or Mahasaraswati aspects. So each of these group souls manifests one of the aspects of the Mother, and this is so sempiternally. As

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if right from the beginning of our own creation our souls have selected the category to which it wants to belong. That is why the Mother says “we have all met in previous lives” (CWM 3: 3). It is not this Mother whom we have met. However, there are some individual souls who met the Mother in this life, died, were born again and came to the Mother. They were indeed a few rare cases.

Otherwise it is the Mother Shakti whom we knew in past lives.

The present structure, Mother, is it that which decides the intervention of the higher planes or not, in order to work miracles?

That is to say, whether it is predestined that the higher planes...

The other day you said that it can change completely.

Yes

Then, if the present remains like this...

But look here! Let us take an altogether ordinary example which is very partial and very superficial. You are born in India. Being born in India you are born with a certain religious and philosophic attitude. But if for some reason or other you want to free yourself from this atavism and influence, if you begin to follow, study, practise the religion or philosophy of another country, you can change the conditions of your inner development. It is a little more difficult, that is, it asks for a greater effort for liberation, but it is very far from being impossible. In fact there are many people who do it, who love to free themselves from what comes to them from their present birth; by some sort of special taste they like to seek elsewhere what they think they won't be able to find at home. And in this way you change the consequences of your birth completely. (Ibid: 370-371)

This sentence makes me think of the Aurovillians. You can

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imagine that they are trying to shift not only from their place of birth to a different country but also to liberate themselves from those atavistic feelings and tendencies of their culture and thinking. As the Mother says, it asks for a greater effort of liberation. That is why if they don't understand certain things, it is very difficult. For the Indian born it may be natural, but they (westerners) have to make a tremendous effort because being born in a foreign country is to carry the atavism and influence of that country. You have to break the barriers. A lot of foreigners came to India to find something... which they would not be able to find in their own Western countries. It is a great challenge and effort indeed.

Now you may tell me that this taste for the new or the unknown can come to you from a former life; this is probable.

But it depends on what dominates in your being: whether it is the result of former psychic lives and psychic resolutions or whether it is the immediate consequence of your present constitution.

But sometimes these present structures are contradictory to what was...

Contradictory? In what way contradictory? To former influences? It is never contradictory. It can be only complementary.

When things seem contradictory to you, it is always because you have remained on too low a plane. If you know how to climb up a few rungs of the ladder, all contradictions disappear, everything becomes complementary.

But what prevents me from going on is the nature, isn't it?

What prevents you?...

It prevents many people. It is not very easy.

This is a part of the liberation. Liberation is obtained

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through austerities, we know that. But there are certain austerities which people refuse to practise, for example this (*Mother puts her finger on her lips.*) They talk, talk, talk—much too much. (Ibid: 371-372)

(11th January 2001)

This section describes the need, necessity and meaning of the guru. In our last class we discussed the entire definition of the aim of Integral Yoga, that is, to enjoy the Divine in all experiences: of passivity and activity, of peace and of power, of unity and of difference. This being the aim, is it feasible or possible to experience him so easily?

The surest way towards this integral fulfilment is to find the Master of the secret who dwells within us, open ourselves constantly to the divine Power which is also the divine Wisdom and Love and trust to it to effect the

conversion. But it is difficult for the egoistic consciousness to do this at all at the beginning. And, if done at all, it is still difficult to do it perfectly and in every strand of our nature. It is difficult at first because our egoistic habits of thought, of sensation, of feeling block up the avenues by which we can arrive at the perception that is needed. It is difficult afterwards because the faith, the surrender, the courage requisite in this path are not easy to the ego-clouded soul.

Sri Aurobindo does give our nature this concession, that one cannot turn towards the Divine entirely at the beginning, or at one go: because in “every strand of our nature” it is not possible to turn towards the Divine right away. We can clearly experience how some parts of our being accept the Divine, want to surrender, whereas there are other parts which are very clever in the sense that they hide behind a mask and don’t want to give in. “Our egoistic habits of thought, of sensation, of feeling”

are on every level: the mental, vital, and physical. This is where

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we build up our own personality, by saying this is my thinking, my habits, the way I want to see. All this is a habit only, and it is difficult to get rid of it because that would be like getting rid of our own personality. We are afraid of losing our personality and don’t want to give it up. In the name of good habits, traditions, culture or other ways we defend our habits of thinking, feeling and sensation. The path is difficult afterwards, as we go along, because “faith”, “surrender” and “courage” are required to tread this path. See the word “courage”. To give up oneself requires a great courage. I suppose this is one thing the ascetics had when they really gave up the world, all their relationships and material comforts, even though it may have been a kind of negative direction that they had taken. We who are in the thick of material life can only imagine that if someone were to tell us that tomorrow you give up everything, everybody, and just walk out and walk on, it would require great courage. That is the kind of courage for giving up what I am referring to here. However, it also requires courage to give up one’s ideas, thoughts, and sensations. That is again as difficult.

Perhaps in a moment of *vairagya* one may give up material luxury, but it is difficult to give up one's own fixed notions.

The divine working is not the working which the egoistic mind desires or approves; for it uses error in order to arrive at truth, suffering in order to arrive at bliss, imperfection in order to arrive at perfection. The ego cannot see where it is being led; it revolts against the leading, loses confidence, loses courage. These failings would not matter; for the divine Guide within is not offended by our revolt, not discouraged by our want of faith or repelled by our weakness; he has the entire love of the mother and the entire patience of the teacher. But by withdrawing our assent from the guidance we lose the consciousness, though not all the actuality—not, in

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any case, the eventuality—of its benefit. And we withdraw our assent because we fail to distinguish our higher Self from the lower through which he is preparing his self-revelation. As in the world, so in ourselves, we cannot see God because of his workings and, especially, because he works in us through our nature and not by a succession of arbitrary miracles. Man demands miracles that he may have faith; he wishes to be dazzled in order that he may see. And this impatience, this ignorance may turn into a great danger and disaster if, in our revolt against the divine leading, we call in another distorting Force more satisfying to our impulses and desires and ask it to guide us and give it the Divine Name.

Let's take up the sentence "The divine working is not the working which the egoistic mind desires or approves". This sentence is explained by the Mother:

He explains it at great length afterwards. He says that human mind would accept to have faith only if the Divine acted in accordance with its conception; and man's ordinary conception of what is divine is that of a perpetual miracle —

what he calls a miracle, that is, something that takes place without rhyme or reason.

We are habituated to what occurs as it occurs; it is simply a matter of habit, for from the first breath we drew upon earth we have been accustomed to see things in this way, and so it seems quite ordinary to us, because it occurs in this way.

But if we could manage to get out of this habit, if we could see things from another point of view, we would immediately be able to feel that kind of impression of the miraculous, because we would no longer see the logic of events with the habitual sense.

We have a certain habit of a particular logic of cause and effect, of the consequences of all things, the relation

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between all movements. It is for us a fact which we accept, even without thinking about it, because we have always lived inside it. But if we had not always lived inside it, we would see it in another way... if we go out of all that (we can do it), if we rise above the physical, material world as it is, and enter another consciousness, we perceive things totally differently.

And then we see that behind these appearances which seem to us absolutely logical and extremely natural, and almost necessary, there is an action which if perceived in one's ordinary consciousness, would seem all the time miraculous.

There is an intervention of forces, consciousness, movements, influences, which is invisible or imperceptible for our ordinary consciousness and constantly changes the whole course of circumstances...

At present you see only the result of the action of the forces, and this seems to you natural, logical. And it's only when something a little abnormal occurs — or it's a little abnormal for you — that you begin to feel surprised. But if you were in another state of consciousness, what seems abnormal to you now would no longer be so. You would see that it is the effect of something else, of another action than the one you perceive.

It is the ignorant, limpid, egoistic consciousness which demands miracles. As soon as one is enlightened, one knows that everywhere and always there is a miracle.

And the more faith one has in this miracle and this Grace, the more capable one becomes of seeing it, or perceiving it constantly at every place where it is. It is ignorance and lack of faith, it is blind egoism which prevents one from seeing.

(CWM 7: 379)

I will reread the paragraph from Sri Aurobindo: The ego cannot see where it is being led; it revolts against

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the leading, loses confidence, loses courage. These failings would not matter; for the divine Guide within is not offended by our revolt... not discouraged by our want of faith or repelled by our weakness;...

This is the crux of the entire paragraph. We may have all kinds of weaknesses, all kinds of egoistic desires, but in spite of all this the Divine Grace is with us. What happens is that this state of consciousness does not recognise the Divine Grace. It is like when we are driving a car in heavy rain, the inside windshield gets fogged and we cannot see anything outside. It is because of this film of moisture on the inside which makes it impossible to see; so one has to wipe the moisture off from the inside to be able to see. It is like this kind of moisture that comes upon our eyes and consciousness and we do not see the Divine Grace anymore and think that it is not there. It is not that the Grace has withdrawn, the light is always there, but it is our windshield that has gotten murky due to our egoistic consciousness.

But by withdrawing our assent from the guidance we lose the consciousness, though not all the actuality—not, in any case, the eventuality—of its benefit. And we withdraw our assent because we fail to distinguish our higher Self from the lower through which he is preparing his self-revelation.

This is the kind of egoistic murkiness that comes, and our vision gets blurred, and we cannot see with clarity. The damage done by the egoistic consciousness is a double damage in the sense that not only do we suffer with the lower consciousness and the consequences of the lower consciousness, but also we fail to see the Grace that is behind which is the real harm done to the individual. When we cannot see the Divine anymore, we may withdraw our assent from the guidance.

“As in the world, so in ourselves, we cannot see God because of his workings and, especially, because he works in us through

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our nature and not by a succession of arbitrary miracles.”

There is an interesting sentence, I don't have the exact quote, where Sri Aurobindo says that the world is not God, but God in manifestation. That is a sentence which can answer a number of questions such as why there is ignorance and why there is suffering. It can answer many “whys” about this world. If we say that the world is a manifestation of Brahman, why is there still all the suffering and pain? The answer is that the world is not Brahman, it is Brahman in manifestation. It is not God actually but God as he is revealing himself in evolution. It is not yet the manifest divinity. It is divinity in the process of manifestation. Obviously in the process of manifestation things are not yet fully Brahman. So here he says that we cannot see God because of his workings. God is hidden in his manifestation, so we cannot see him fully.

The second part is that he works in us through our nature and not by a succession of arbitrary miracles. If each time we expect a miracle then that is not God's working. Then God would be giving you a short-cut and that is not the way of transformation.

Let us be clear that most of Sri Aurobindo's explanations have this angle of transformation. He tells us that the Divine is not going to give us a miraculous revelation. He says the supramental consciousness has absolute

power but it withdraws its absolute power and allows things to work themselves out.

When we used to go to the Mother there were a lot of things that were reported wrongly, or, to be blunt, lies were spoken in front of the Mother, thinking that She did not know. The Mother knows, but there is a kind of test, through our actions, our degree of transparency that gets revealed; our sincerity and honesty get tested.

Moreover, she does not point out when we are telling a lie. If she were to do so then this possibility of transformation gets postponed. In a sense it is by a silent pressure of consciousness

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within that she works in us. As the Mother would say, when someone comes to her, she would go into his being through his eyes; she would get into the psychic and see what is necessary for his inner growth. What the Mother is constantly doing is trying to bring out a transformation from within us. If externally she would reveal all of our weakness it wouldn't help, although she knew them. It is an inner pressure she puts so that we realise our weakness. Then when the realisation comes from ourselves we can work more positively. Even if the Mother were to tell us that we have to work on this—the vital being, or the mental being, some parts may reject it. As I have told you, this is the problem of the transformation. It is not that we did not know the Mother was the supreme Divine. When we sat before her we knew who She was, yet our being is so complex. Things within us could reject the Mother, oppose the Mother, question the Mother. Therefore, she worked from within. That is what the egoistic refusal of the Divine means. That is why he says here that we don't want a succession of arbitrary miracles.

“Man demands miracles that he may have faith; he wishes to be dazzled in order that he may see”. This is what the Mother has elaborately explained about why we want miracles. We say

‘show us a miracle and we will have faith’. She tells us that these external things are not necessary, at every moment there is this miracle, and because

we have got used to it mentally we don't see it. She says it is a kind of weakness to ask for miracles. A lot of gurus utilise this human weakness to attract disciples, which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were against.

And this impatience, this ignorance may turn into a great danger and disaster if, in our revolt against the divine leading, we call in another distorting Force more satisfying to our impulses and desires and ask it to guide us and give it the Divine Name.

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This is the real tragedy of the soul, when the human being barter the soul for the sake of some human benefits. There is a well-known poem, *Dr. Faustus* by Marlow, in which the protagonist sells his soul to Satan. There is a long dialogue and for all the material pleasures the anti-divine demands only one thing. He says, "I will give you everything only you must sign on this paper for one thing: "you give up your soul to me". This is the exchange, and this is what Sri Aurobindo is referring to. This kind of distorting force would be most dangerous when it gets wrapped in scriptural sayings. There are some spiritual works and sayings originating from this distorting consciousness.

Although the words may be divine in their origin, even they can have a wrong influence because of this force that has been utilised. The devil quotes scriptures in the poem, and these words acquire a negative force.

This was the case we have seen with Hitler. He utilised an anti-divine force and gave it a divine name; he thought it to be some divine Being. This "divine Being" was all the time satisfying his impulses, his desires, his ambitions. It gave him all that he wanted, but what happened was the greatest harm and disaster. It is as if Hitler bartered his soul to the satanic forces. This happens on our own level also. It is not just Hitler, but even we, the common people, can go to lower godheads.

You know the story of Notre dam de Paris, where the Mother had seen in the church a huge black spider. A spider which was granting all the desires

of the aspirants. It was giving, but just as a spider sucks a fly, it was sucking the life force of the disciples.

This is what happens, it gives you on one hand and takes from the other. That is the strange relation between the occult forces and our life. There is a beautiful exchange with occult beings, they require our energies for their subsistence, and we require material things for our sustenance. If we cannot get certain

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material items, they say they will give or fulfill our desires, but the subtlest truth is that in every fulfillment of a vital desire it is not we who get satisfaction and enjoyment as much as they get nourishment from us for their self-existence. So imagine how very detrimental it is for us to satisfy a desire. It can be anything — ambition, anger, desire, revenge, etc. all the lower vital emotions — from which they create a kind of a dinner for themselves. Out of a huge quarrel they gain a lovely dinner of violent feelings.

But while it is difficult for man to believe in something unseen within himself, it is easy for him to believe in something which he can image as extraneous to himself. The spiritual progress of most human beings demands an extraneous support, an object of faith outside us. It needs an external image of God; or it needs a human representative,—Incarnation, Prophet or guru; or it demands both and receives them. For according to the need of the human soul the Divine manifests himself as deity, as human divine or in simple humanity—using that thick disguise, which so successfully conceals the Godhead, for a means of transmission of his guidance.

This is the first time Sri Aurobindo emphasises upon the need to have a guru. There is a spiritual necessity behind it because,

“it is easy for him to believe in something which he can image as extraneous to himself.” He started the section by saying that it is best “to find the Master of the secret who dwells within us”, but now he adds that in the beginning it is easier to find the divinity outside. We are orientated

towards the external life, so we also want the Divine outside. This Divine outside is given different names — either of an incarnation, a prophet or a guru. We have incarnations such as Sri Ram, Sri Krishna, we have prophets and great Rishis, and on the human level we have gurus. What is interesting is the next sentence: “For according to the need of

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the human soul the Divine manifests himself as deity, as human divine or in simple humanity”. It is the Divine who comes to him once a person turns consciously towards the spiritual life. That is why he said that it is not the disciple who chooses the guru, it is the guru who comes to the disciple. That is why I feel when one is searching for a guru, if you have a deep faith that you will find your guru, he will come.

There is a beautiful instance of Yogananda. Right from the beginning he said he would find his guru. He went to several of them, but after sometime he would leave them feeling that they were not his gurus. He knew he couldn't sit at home, so he ventured out and met a lot of spiritual stalwarts —some of them even said they were not the guru he was looking for, the one he wanted was elsewhere. A true guru recognises if the person should be his disciple or not. It is only a false guru who will take everyone and looks for numbers. After some searching, once while he was walking in a market where there were many small lanes, he crosses the lane, goes ten steps and suddenly he was unable to walk any further. His feet became leaden, heavy, he dragged on for a few more steps, but they became so heavy that he was unable to walk. Then he retreats, comes backwards, his legs become alright. He feels fine, then goes forward and the same experience. So a couple of times when he did that he knew that something was happening. Then he looks on the left side and there at the end of the street was standing a very tall slim figure. And he walks towards him, he could walk, if he tried walking away he could not do that. So he understood that there is some force that is attracting him, and he walks towards that person. That person reveals that he is his guru waiting for him.

This is a true story of how Yogananda found his guru.

There are many instances when you read about gurus and yogis and disciples where you see how the master is waiting

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for the disciple. This is why this sentence “For according to the need of the human soul the Divine manifests himself as deity, as human divine or in simple humanity—using that thick disguise, which so successfully conceals the Godhead, for a means of transmission of his guidance.” So masking his own divinity, he comes as a guru to the disciple. And if a soul is not yet evolved enough, perhaps the Divine comes to him as simple humanity.

He uses the word “simple humanity” because sometimes an ordinary human being can be our guru. It is not necessary to have a spiritual person.

There is an interesting story based on a true incident quite famous in Bengal. A prince was walking on the streets when he hears the cry of a mother calling to her son, at dusk, saying *badi chole aesho, bela hoye gache* — “come back home, it is time”. A casual sentence uttered by a common woman, calling her son brings in a great realisation to this Prince. He sees a greater depth in it, “it is time that I returned home.” That home for him is the Divine. He feels that it is a divine call for him to return home. He felt it was his soul’s call to go to the Divine. So immediately he returns home and gives up all his wealth, and walks away into the forest. This is that simple humanity which comes as a guru; we never know from where or when it comes. But if we are alert and conscious and open it does come. It may come by way of the human or the divine guru. Whatever the means it is He who comes to us in the form needed for our growth.

The Hindu discipline of spirituality provides for this need of the soul by the conceptions of the Ishta Devata, the Avatar and the Guru. By the Ishta Devata, the chosen deity, is meant,—not some inferior Power, but a name and form of the transcendent and universal Godhead. Almost all religions either have as their base or make use of some such name and form of the Divine. Its necessity for the human soul is

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evident. God is the All and more than the All. But that which is more than the All, how shall man conceive? And even the All is at first too hard for him; for he himself in his active consciousness is a limited and selective formation and can open himself only to that which is in harmony with his limited nature. There are things in the All which are too hard for his comprehension or seem too terrible to his sensitive emotions and cowering sensations. Or, simply, he cannot conceive as the Divine, cannot approach or cannot recognise something that is too much out of the circle of his ignorant or partial conceptions. It is necessary for him to conceive God in his own image or in some form that is beyond himself but consonant with his highest tendencies and seizable by his feelings or his intelligence. Otherwise it would be difficult for him to come into contact and communion with the Divine.

It is a very simple but deep explanation for the Ishta Devata, for its need and necessity. We can find the Ishta Devata in temples in Pondicherry. But who are they and why are they there? In India there are a thousand and one objects that we worship, sometimes there are trees we go around. We worship the trees. We worship the four directions, and in all this hierarchy of images, what is their necessity, or what is their use, how do they come to us? He has given us two reasons. One is that the supreme All, the *nirākār*, cannot be worshiped. We need some *ākār*, some form. And secondly, we cannot see the Divine as a whole. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna cannot look at that form of the Divine which is Time the destroyer; he cannot swallow that terrible vision. So Arjuna says, ‘Lord come back to me in your sweet form’. Humanity requires something that it can really accept, which is in consonance with its own consciousness.

For example, in Bengal we have Kali, a terrible form of Kali, which no other culture has got. This was the courage that the

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Indian culture had—they were ready to see the other side of the sweet divinity also. Otherwise all the other images are like sweet Sri Krishna, sweet Sri Rama, sweet Ma Durga, etc.

So this takes courage, and as he put it, “It is necessary for him to conceive God in his own image or in some form that is beyond himself but consonant with his highest tendencies and seizable by his feelings or his intelligence.” Each one of us seeks a divinity which is in consonance with our imagination, mental preparedness, and inner acceptance. If I cannot accept Kali, or any other god, it is because it does not appeal to my imagination or inner feelings. This is the Ishta Devata, and he is telling us the necessity. Please note that the Ishta Devata is not an inferior power. They are not lower powers, they are the same Aditi, the same Shakti who has taken different forms to reach different levels of man’s consciousness. Today it is one thing, but as we evolve, there is a seeking for higher, nobler forms, more beautiful, powerful, and omniscient forms. Then we go where forms are no longer required. This is the Divine using a thick disguise to come to us only to attract us towards his own greater self. That is the Ishta Devata. Next time we will see what is the Avatar, what is the prophet, and ultimately we will come back to who is the guru.

(18th January 2001)

In our search for the guru Sri Aurobindo tells us the surest way towards this integral fulfillment is to find the Master who dwells within us. That is the central truth, but at the same time Sri Aurobindo recognises that it is difficult for us in the beginning, to contact that inner Master or inner Guide. So he says that mankind would rather begin with an external form which he would consider as the guide, the master, the guru, whatever shape this external form would normally take. In fact, when humanity awoke to the religious sense it created the Ishta

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Devata. This is a form that humanity imagines in his own light, and gives it a shape as one of the forms of the Transcendent.

Ishta Devata is not necessarily an inferior power, it reflects and is consonant with humanity’s higher tendencies, and is perceptible by its feelings and intelligence. This is important because, in the beginning, when humanity’s

consciousness awoke to the reality of the higher spirit, its intelligence was not sufficiently awakened to receive the higher forces, and its feelings were not sufficiently refined. The vital and physical being was still crude. At that time, in ancient civilisations, whatever forms were given to the gods and goddesses were less aesthetic if not crude but it did not matter. These gods and goddesses by present aesthetics may not have much appeal but for that stage of vital development they were accepted as the supreme godheads. At the same time, the vital consciousness requires a god who can really control its vital anarchy. Therefore they chose gods who had the forms of a master or ruler, or judge, one who would punish. As Sri Aurobindo says, “we are made in His image”. (CWSA 12: 335) That is quite important.

Thus the image of humanity’s gods also evolves along with the evolution of human consciousness. That is why there is an evolution of gods and an evolution of religions.

However, Sri Aurobindo says that the age of religions is over and we have to move towards a new consciousness, that of the spiritual. The image of the Divine conceived by a spiritual consciousness is absolutely different from the one conceived by the human being at the mental-vital level. However, evolution always moves ahead first with the elite, not with the masses.

What Sri Aurobindo says is now that mankind is moving towards a truer conception of the Divine, it is forged by those pioneers who reach a spiritual consciousness and it is they who invoke a new image of the Divine. So at present we still

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do have all the different images of different religions, but at the same time there are some who are breaking away. Those whose consciousness has sufficiently developed don’t require pujas or ceremonies, or worship of gods, or any of these old paraphernalia. Their consciousness is different and they think of the Divine differently.

We need no longer to look up to the past godheads of the different religions and creeds, especially in India with its many different cultures. Each region

of the country has developed one or many of these deities, but those who have gone beyond no longer take the support of any deity. Without being anti-religious, one should be beyond religion. We should not be

“anti” any godhead or any Ishta Devata, because the Ishta Devata is also a form of the Transcendent, and is useful for humanity at that level of evolution. It is a reflection of one’s state of consciousness.

We have had instances where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have written letters to the sadhaks which seemed self-contradictory. To some they have written that no other godheads, no other gurus, no other images should be kept or worshiped. However, regarding others they have said ‘do not disturb their faith, if they worship a particular godhead, let them’. Sri Aurobindo’s new thought can be introduced without disturbing people’s faith. With a common populace, when we give a talk, we cannot reveal some of these things because it would sound fanatic. For those who are truly turning towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, they must do so spontaneously, when they feel the necessity to go beyond religion without any disruption in their own feelings. This is what is referred to as the evolution of God in religion.

Even then his nature calls for a human intermediary so that he may feel the Divine in something entirely close to his own

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humanity and sensible in a human influence and example. This call is satisfied by the Divine manifest in a human appearance, the Incarnation, the Avatar — Krishna, Christ, Buddha.

Still we may wish to have a relation, to be able to talk to the Divine, hence the need for human form; someone we can touch and talk to. That brings us to the concept of the Avatar, the Incarnation.

It is a truth that Avatars have come, Incarnations of the Divine are there. Modern civilisation may not accept it, because they may not find it rational,

but reason is not the ultimate judge. However, this need of mankind is being fulfilled through Avatars such as Sri Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Sri Rama, etc. But at the same time there is a little danger in this. When we call someone an Avatar, there is again a tendency in modern times to call our own guru an Avatar.

We have to be cautious about proclaiming gurus as Avatars. For that we have to refer to *Essays on the Gita*, the two chapters on Avatarhood. Sri Aurobindo gives a clear definition on what is an Avatar and who can rightly be called an Avatar.

Or if this is too hard for him to conceive, the Divine represents himself through a less marvelous intermediary,—

Prophet or Teacher. For many who cannot conceive or are unwilling to accept the Divine Man, are ready to open themselves to the supreme man, terming him not incarnation but world-teacher or divine representative.

This also is not enough; a living influence, a living example, a present instruction is needed. For it is only the few who can make the past Teacher and his teaching, the past Incarnation and his example and influence a living force in their lives. For this need also the Hindu discipline provides in the relation of the guru and the disciple. The guru may sometimes be the Incarnation or World-Teacher; but it is sufficient that he should represent to the disciple the divine wisdom, convey

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to him something of the divine ideal or make him feel the realised relation of the human soul with the Eternal.

This is a beautiful classification—from the supreme formless transcendent to the absolute personal form in the form of a guru. This is the gradation that mankind has evolved till now.

This is particular to India. In other countries and cultures we may find some concept of the formless. There is this concept in Islam and Judaism. There is also the concept of the prophet in other cultures. The concept of Avatar

and guru are primarily contributions of the Hindu culture. We can see that these are the missing steps. Without the Avatar, human evolution cannot be explained. An Avatar is the missing link between the Transcendent and the prophet, for the prophet, whom we call a vibhuti in India, is too close to humanity.

So conceptually and by necessity we have the Avatar in between. The Transcendent, the Avatar, the vibhuti, the prophet, and then the guru. Even the prophet or the vibhuti, like Swami Vivekananda or Napoleon, are too rapid and sometimes too distant in their consciousness and their work to sit with and communicate our problems. They are there to give a push to the Avatar's work. They may not look at the individual sadhak's or aspirant's problems.

We realise how Indian civilisation has brought the godhead so close to the individual; once again, this is the genius of Hindu culture. It has not only conceptually brought the human being closer to the Divine by saying that there is the Transcendent, the Universal, and the Immanent, at the same time it has brought us closer by giving the concept of the guru. This *guru-shishya parampara* is close to the essence of Indian spiritual culture, and it has sunk deep into it. There is not only a spiritual *guru-shishya*, but in every discipline we have this relation, it may be a carpenter, dancing master, or educator, almost every

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discipline depends on this *guru-shishya* relation. If you want to see the essence of the social pattern of Hindu culture, it is this *guru-shishya parampara*. We can see its necessity and how it gives us a double knowledge. All of us here are Indians and we understand the psychology. When we get a guru we try to obliterate our own ego. The training begins right at the beginning of surrendering one's ego. There is the famous Sanskrit verse,

tvameva mātā ca pitā tvameva |

tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva ||

tvameva vidyā draviṇam tvameva |

tvameva sarvam mama deva deva ||

You are my mother and you are my father.

You are my family and you are my friend.

You are my wisdom and you are my wealth.

You are truly my all, my true God.

(<https://tfti-store.com/tvameva-mata-cha-pita-twameva-shloka-meaning/>)

The concept is to surrender to that higher authority. This sense of surrender comes in Indian culture right from childhood. When we are taught, in sadhana, that we must surrender to the Divine, it is nothing new for us. We have been trained in surrendering our ego to a higher authority. In modern thinking we question the need to surrender to our parents, or to a teacher. There are many “whys” and they are rational, we don’t deny that. However, surrender has its own benefits. In spirituality, first of all, we learn to be humble, and humility is essential in yoga and especially in our yoga. It is important to subdue this “I”, it is very essential in spirituality. Indian culture has trained us since ages to learn humility and recognise the Grace endowed by one’s master.

The Grace could be from the master who could be our own parent, or teacher or prophet, whoever. So the “master” term is applicable on every level. How do we teach that to a young

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child? When he goes to school at the age of three or so, we tell him, he is your guru—the child is essentially taught to surrender to the guru. However, the question is when we surrender to a person, is that guru the Absolute? Is he a perfect guru? Here are some letters from Sri Aurobindo on this topic: I had the same kind of violent objection to Gurugiri. But you

see I was obliged by the irony of things or rather by the inexorable truth behind them to become a Guru and preach the Guruvada. Such is fate. (CWSA 35: 398) Because through it [surrender to the Guru] you surrender not only to the impersonal but to the personal, not only to the Divine in yourself but to the Divine outside you; you get a chance for the surpassing of ego not only by retreat into the Self where ego does not exist, but in the personal nature where it is the ruler. It is the sign of the will to complete surrender to the total Divine, *samagraṁ māṁ mānuṣṭīm*

tanum āśritam. Of course it must be a genuine spiritual surrender for all this to be true. (CWSA 29: 193) The Guru should be accepted in all ways — transcendent, impersonal, personal. (Ibid: 190)

All true Gurus are the same, the one Guru, because all are the one Divine. That is a fundamental and universal truth.

But there is also a truth of difference; the Divine dwells in different personalities with different minds, teachings, influences so that He may lead different disciples with their special need, character, destiny by different ways to the realisation... (Ibid: 194)

Sri Aurobindo tells us here that all true gurus essentially are the same — they all represent the Transcendent. It is the same Sachchidananda guiding and pervading through different gurus as well as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and others in different forms. There is the same consciousness working in other gurus and

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Sri Aurobindo, but there is a difference in personalities, teachings, and influence. It works in different forms because the disciples are at different levels of receptivity. Therefore Sachchidananda, the supreme Brahman, comes to us in different forms suitable to our own level of consciousness. That is why the gurus are different, but the consciousness behind them is the same.

Because all Gurus are the same Divine, it does not follow that the disciple does well if he leaves the one meant for him to follow another. Fidelity to the Guru is demanded of every disciple, according to the Indian tradition. "All are the same"

is a spiritual truth, but you cannot convert it indiscriminately into action; you cannot deal with all persons in the same way because they are the one Brahman: if one did, the result pragmatically would be an awful mess. It is a rigid mental logic that makes the difficulty but in spiritual matters mental logic easily blunders; intuition, faith, a flexible spiritual reason are here the only guides. (Ibid: 194)

Now, this next letter refers to the defects of the guru: I do not know if his Guru falls short in any respect, but with the attitude he has taken, the deficiencies, if any, do not matter. It is not the human defects of the Guru that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence and surrender. The Guru is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine that one opens in opening to him; and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple

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an inferior spiritual source, and the rest will grow up in the sadhak or itself by the Grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the Guru cannot give it. It is this that Krishnaprem appears to have done perhaps from the first; but in most nowadays this attitude seems to come with difficulty after much hesitation and delay and trouble. In my own case I owe the first decisive turn of my inner life to one who was infinitely inferior to me in intellect, education and capacity and by no means spiritually perfect or supreme; but, having seen a Power behind him and decided to turn there for help, I gave myself entirely into his hands and followed with an automatic passivity the guidance. He himself was astonished and said to others that he had never met anyone before who could surrender himself so absolutely and without

reserve or question to the guidance of the helper. The result was a series of transmuting experiences of such a radical character that he was unable to follow and had to tell me to give myself up in future to the Guide within with the same completeness of surrender as I had shown to the human channel. I give this example to show how these things work; it is not in the calculated way the human reason wants to lay down, but by a more mysterious and greater law. (Ibid: 201-202) This letter throws a lot of light on the subject. As we have seen, gurus are not perfect, and can be inferior in education or social conduct or certain capacities. What is more essential is the recipient, the way the disciple looks up to the guru. Even if he sees that there are deficiencies in the guru he must accept what is behind the guru. If this is very clear in the disciple's mind, that it is not to this external form of the guru, but to the Power behind that he surrenders, then the guru becomes a channel to a certain extent. Otherwise in a normal guru relationship, what happens is the guru may take us to the extent of his own

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individual capacity. It is then left to the disciple to understand the instrumentality of the guru and look for the inner guidance in an advanced stage.

No [*surrender to the Divine and surrender to the Guru are not two different things*]. In surrendering to the Guru, it is to the Divine in him that one surrenders—if it is only to a human entity, it would be ineffective. But it is the consciousness of the Divine Presence that makes the Guru a real Guru, so that even if the disciple surrenders to him thinking of the human being to whom he surrenders, that Presence will still make it effective. (Ibid: 193-194)

This is the crux of the guru-disciple relationship. That is why the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have been careful to say that beyond their form we should see the supreme Sachchidananda, the supreme Aditi. Even for us there is this warning note; even behind the form of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother there is the Supreme. Here the guru, the teacher, the Avatar are all incarnated in one. The basic idea is not to get stuck to the external form of

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There are dangers to this, as too much adherence to the outer form leads to the formation of a cult and a creed. We must be cautious that there are people who are only waiting to label Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teaching as a creed. If it is labeled as one of the creeds and cults, then other creeds would feel safer, otherwise it is a big threat. There is this tendency, just as we have on other levels, like Christianity when it came to India it first labeled Hinduism as a religion. Before the foreigners had come we never had the word "Hinduism". They put it on level with Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. So too Sri Aurobindo is a threat to most of these creeds that have established themselves for ages. When we go out in public we have to be careful not to present him as a creed or as an "ism". As Sri Aurobindo says,

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The sadhaka of the Integral Yoga will make use of all of these aids according to his nature; but it is necessary that he should shun their limitations and cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, "My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru," and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation.

This is a very important thing we realise when we meet different kinds of people. This claim of "my God, my Guru, my Sri Aurobindo" opposed to others must be avoided consciously.

Otherwise when the general public first hears about the Integral Yoga they will be blocked by the limitation of the egoistic "my".

Sri Aurobindo has to be accepted for his comprehensiveness. It is a tricky thing, you can have all the devotion and admiration but if it gets translated into "my" or "what Sri Aurobindo says is the truth" then we are digging the same grave that all the other religions have done. That is the warning he gives.

On the contrary, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception,

seen his own Ishta Devata in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom.

This is what Sri Aurobindo has done—he has harmonised all teachings into a harmony of eternal wisdom. In *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* he has harmonised many teachings.

The Mother explains:

I did not understand the last part very well.

Which last part, my child?

“...the sadhak of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until

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he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception...”

Yes.

Why? It says what it means. What is it that you don't understand there? What don't you understand?

I don't understand the meaning.

(Silence)

But my child... You are told: there is only one reality and all that is only a multiple expression of a single reality. Therefore, all the divine manifestations, all the forms it has taken in the course of time, all the names which men have given it, are only manifestations, forms and names of one sole, unique Godhead.

As human beings are very limited, it is usually easier for them to follow one path rather than another. But that is just a tiny little beginning; and if one wants to attain the heights, one must be able to find the Divine equally through all the paths, and understand that it is the sole and same Divine, whatever the different appearances may be.

This is what Sri Aurobindo tells you: that you cannot stop, you cannot be satisfied until you have felt *absolutely concretely* that there is only one *single* Divine, there is only one *single* Reality, and that, from whatever angle It is seen or whatever path is taken to attain It, it will always be one sole and same thing which you will meet. So one who is developed enough, vast enough to be able to follow what we call the Integral Yoga, must have the capacity to approach the Divine by all possible paths. If he doesn't want to follow them himself because it takes time... though there is a certain degree of development which enables one in a few days or

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a few hours to follow a path which would otherwise take a whole lifetime...

Don't you catch it?

It is only the mind and the limited human consciousness which make distinctions. And through these differences you get into a confusion. You distinguish only by differences, and differences mean just the illusory outer consciousness.

As soon as you really enter within, you immediately have the sense of a total identity and all these divergences seem absolutely ridiculous to you. (CWM 7: 374-375) We have been given the idea that it is only the mind that differentiates and separates in order to have a precise understanding of things. In order to understand something we select a few things. The Mother clarifies that the supramental consciousness basically is the consciousness of oneness and unity. There is no abrogation of the individual differences. Just as the mind has divided things to understand, the supramental vision also has this precise understanding of things, but without division. The Mother said in the early 60s that this is what was happening to her. That living in a single human body is a limitation, and at

present what is happening is that in this limited body there is a limited mind. It suits the limitation of the body and the limitation of the mind, they correlate. However, when the supermind comes, the body consciousness has to expand, this happens on the subtle physical level. The Mother says that even when there is this individual body, the supramental consciousness can be there with that unitary consciousness.

We have a tendency to think that if we have a unitary consciousness we will lose our vision of precision which is the strength of the mind. The Mother says that on the contrary, it will have the strength of the mind's precision and also the unifying vision of the Supermind. This is how the Mother and

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Sri Aurobindo have been working. When any individual went to the Mother, it did not mean that the Mother did not know this X standing in front of her. She knew the person fully, all his problems, difficulties, aspirations, etc. and at the same time the Mother had her unified consciousness. If the Mother were living solely in anandamaya bliss, she would have lost the sense of this individual reality. That is what happens to many great rishis and sages who live in a blissful consciousness, they do not bother about these individuals in humanity. However, the Supermind has the advantage of this precision of an acute mind and the vastness of the supramental consciousness. That is the possibility being worked out in the Mother's physical body.

Nor should he forget the aim of these external aids which is to awaken his soul to the Divine within him. Nothing has been finally accomplished if that has not been accomplished.

It is not sufficient to worship Krishna, Christ or Buddha without, if there is not the revealing and the formation of the Buddha, the Christ or Krishna in ourselves. And all other aids equally have no other purpose; each is a bridge between man's unconverted state and the revelation of the Divine within him.

Regarding the guru, the external worship of Krishna, Christ, Buddha or himself and the Mother is not enough. One has to find the same consciousness within. Each of the gurus or prophets or Avatars is only a bridge, a channel. And again he is hammering on the essential point of the inner guru. As Sri Aurobindo mentioned earlier, “the surest way towards this integral fulfillment is to find the Master of the secret who dwells within us.” We must open ourselves constantly to the divine power, the divine wisdom, and the divine love.

To summarise, all these external supports that religion has talked about, that the Divine has given us, show that in order

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to elevate mankind to a higher consciousness, the supreme Sachchidananda has come down in different forms and with each descent is coming closer to humanity. The last image, the closest form to humanity that he takes is that of the guru because he can be in a one to one relationship with us, and that is needed because when we are in trouble we need a shoulder to cry on. This guru, in spite of his defects, could be a real channel if the disciple sees in him the form that is beyond, and not only his external form as it is. If there is the psychic awakening and there is the inner effort, then there is the Supreme beyond the guru who will guide you and perhaps come to you in dreams in the name of your guru, but it is the Supreme who will be guiding. We have to march through all these forms towards that inner guide. He is there eternal within us as the immanent godhead. As Sri Krishna said, “I am there”. The Mother too says,

“I am there”. It only means Sachchidananda is there in us. That is the essence of our sadhana.

(25th January 2001)

Today we shall take up the second part of our discussion about the guru. After explaining the need and necessity of the guru, we now get a description of the method and function of a true guru. This is where a lot of questions regarding the guru get clarified. Even after listening to the need of the guru we may still have our own mental notions about how to approach a

guru and what a guru will do for us etc. This first paragraph gives us the essence.

The Teacher of the integral Yoga will follow as far as he may the method of the Teacher within us. He will lead the disciple through the nature of the disciple.

The true guru or teacher follows the method of our inner teacher. This tells us a lot, because this inner teacher is not one who has a form, and without a physical form how does he

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guide us? The more true the guru, the more he gives the type of guidance given by the inner teacher. Now just what is this inner guidance, the method, the way? One is teaching, but the inner guru cannot teach us, in the sense that he cannot talk to us like a physical person. Second is by example, but the inner guru cannot be an example. Example means someone whom we see in front of us in the physical. Then what is the way the inner guru really takes hold of our life? It is his presence. The inner guru's way of guiding us is by influencing us through his presence. The inner guide makes himself felt. This is the crux of the real guru that we always feel his presence. That is the highest mode of a true guru's teaching.

Again, for the sake of mankind and his external limitations, there are three grades of gurus. One who is a teacher, another who is an example and yet another who is the presence. The commonest gurus are those who teach and there are scores of gurus in this category who can talk and teach without being an example or realizing anything. So in the lowest category of gurus there are plenty. And that is where the false guru and the right guru must be discriminated. There are the three categories, and in them there are many levels, and all three categories can also be in one person.

Teaching, example, influence,—these are the three instruments of the Guru. But the wise Teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is

productive and sure as a seed which will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion.

If we want to judge one guru from another, these are the parameters for finding if the guru is a true one or not. It is one

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who does not impose himself. If in any ashram, or any place, the guru says, 'you must do this as it is the only way to salvation, or for your growth', that guru may not be true. The disciple goes to the guru thinking he will get something, so he is ready to receive. But just because the disciple is there asking for help, the guru should not impose himself or his opinion. The true guru will only say "what is productive and sure, as a seed which will grow under the divine fostering within".

The true guru is one who will "awaken, more than instruct".

You will see the philosophy of integral education has the same principle. Sri Aurobindo says, the teacher is not one who teaches, he is only a helper, a guide, a friend, a facilitator and this is exactly the same with a spiritual guru. He doesn't impose, give opinions, tell us what to do, but gives that kind of advice where there is a response born from within us and we ourselves decide. For example, when a person wrote to the Mother for advice for going to the US for higher studies, the Mother responded by saying if he wanted to go for comfort and success he could go and try his best. But she also revealed to the person that this is the time for the new creation, the new world, for the new consciousness is coming down. If he wants to participate in this new world, he should stay here. She gave both the choices: she didn't say, 'don't go to America, it is a bad thing', or say

'stay here, it is a spiritual discipline', She gave both options and it was left to him to choose. That is the way the Mother sought to awaken our own conscience, our own inner response. What happens is if a guru imposes a rule of conduct, one part of the disciple may accept the order, because he is

surrendering to the guru, but another part of the instruction may not be accepted.

However, when the decision comes from the disciple then it becomes an integral part of his being.

Sri Aurobindo says, “he will aim at the growth of the faculties

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and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion.”

These are very important words, “growth of the faculties”. The true guru does not try to snub a person and say ‘don’t do art, dancing, music, etc. these won’t be helpful, only meditate and do spiritual things’. The person may like to serve the guru in his own capacity as an artist or a carpenter. Sri Aurobindo says the flowering of the natural faculties are facilitated by a true guru.

In true progress is the real joy. If the disciple is not allowed to progress in his expansion of faculties, of consciousness, if he is boxed into one single item, then he doesn’t feel he is progressing. Inner progress alone is not enough, there must be an external progress also. In true progress there is a great joy.

He will give a method as an aid, as a utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine.

This is the beauty of this Ashram. There aren’t any fixed formulas or fixed routines. Of course that doesn’t mean one can come and go from their departmental work as per their whim. There is a material-physical discipline. But we should not take it as a routine. It is there as a physical discipline because it is convenient for everyone to work together. It is not like the system of “punching” a time-clock, as is done in factories: a purely mechanical process whereby you punch in at a certain time, do your work, and punch out at the end of the day. This does not serve a spiritual

institution because in the spiritual work we are all supposed to be harmoniously together. If we come together at a given time to work together, there is a sharing and a sense of participation. There are rules of discipline yet there is no imperative formula. And the guru will give a method as an aid. This is perfectly suitable for any teacher, as Sri Aurobindo says, a teacher is a helper and he gives the student different possibilities, or utilisable devices.

And he will be on his guard against any turning of the

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means into a limitation, against the mechanising of process.

His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force of which he himself is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel.

The example is more powerful than the instruction; but it is not the example of the outward acts nor that of the personal character which is of most importance. These have their place and their utility; but what will most stimulate aspiration in others is the central fact of the divine realisation within him governing his whole life and inner state and all his activities.

These are the parameters we can use for a guru. Is our selected guru an example because living in the ashram or place of the guru, we can find this out quite quickly. An example would be the way the guru is living. Is he fanciful, guided by the lower vital, enjoying money power or any kind of spiritual power?

If we observe these, we will understand. Sri Aurobindo says that outward acts and character have their importance as an example, which as external parameter can help us judge. But there are some gurus who can really bewitch us by their talk and external behaviour. Sri Aurobindo cautions that there is a deeper example, wherein a divine realisation governs the entire life, inner and outer.

An example would be Sri Ramana Maharshi, a person whose divine realisation showed in every move that he made. When he went to feed the

cows or the crows or as he sat quietly, answering the few questions or while watching others, every move, every gesture showed his inner divine realisation. That is not to speak of his philosophy and thought, which of course was also very profound. But why I am mentioning philosophy and thought is because there could be many fake gurus who speak even better philosophy than Ramana Maharshi. The speech aspect is not sufficient in itself, there must be something

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deeper within. Let us not be swayed by talks. Now on television there are plenty of gurus giving Sunday lectures. But you can see so much of their ego. The person is speaking about himself, projecting himself, advertising himself. This kind of hypocrisy cannot be hidden. Normally, people like these kind of lower gurus who are teaching, put a “Swami” in front of their names.

That is why you see thousands of people gathering around Swami X, Y and Z because he is a good speaker and orator.

This is the universal and essential element; the rest belongs to individual person and circumstance. It is this dynamic realisation that the sadhaka must feel and reproduce in himself according to his own nature; he need not strive after an imitation from outside which may well be sterilising rather than productive of right and natural fruits.

The sadhaka, the disciple must feel this universal element in the guru. And very often if the sadhaka is very sincere and fervent in his aspiration he will discover that the guru is a false one, that an inner vibration somewhere does not come forth.

People who come to the Ashram, go to the samadhi, there is no thinking. Those who are hit are hit by a bolt, on some level, either in the heart or the mind. This is what Sri Aurobindo refers to as the universal aspect. If this universality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hits a person he is done for.

Otherwise one can have all kinds of approaches. The third instrument of the guru is the highest one:

Influence is more important than example. Influence is not the outward authority of the Teacher over his disciple, but the power of his contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into it, even though in silence, that which he himself is and possesses. This is the supreme sign of the Master. For the greatest Master is much less a Teacher than a Presence pouring the divine

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consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss into all who are receptive around him.

And it shall also be a sign of the teacher of the integral Yoga that he does not arrogate to himself Guruhood in a humanly vain and self-exalting spirit. His work, if he has one, is a trust from above, he himself a channel, a vessel or a representative. He is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul wakening souls, at highest a Power or Presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine.

These last two paragraphs are of great importance. This is the way that the inner teacher guides us, and this is the way the Mother guides us too. In the Mother we have all the three examples perfectly harmonised, and used in different occasions: sometimes influence, sometimes example, sometimes instruction, in order to awaken the inner light.

In Integral Yoga there is no guru. The only one guru, teacher, inner guide, Avatar, is the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. No one can have this vanity of being a guru. The essence of Integral Yoga does not allow a human guru. In other paths there could be a guru, basically because it is still under the human dimension. A guru can realise something and pass it on. The whole parameter is a human mental consciousness and something to do with the higher realisation. However, if we understand the essence of Integral Yoga it will be clear that there cannot be a human guru.

The essence is the transforming Shakti, and without it, without the Mother, there is no Integral Yoga. If you take out the Mother from the Integral Yoga, it is not the Integral Yoga anymore.

Even if you keep, for argument sake, only Sri Aurobindo, it is not the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo alone does not make up for the Integral Yoga. There is this element of the transformative power of the Mother. And who can claim to be an incarnation

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of the Mother? There are a few tormented souls throughout the world who claim such an incarnation. It pains deeply when someone says that they are an incarnation of the Mother. It is only the arrogance of the vital ego that obliterates all mental understanding. Now let us see how the Mother has been guiding and is guiding and will guide. Then you will understand what Sri Aurobindo means by “the presence”.

You must remove two falsehoods from your mind.

1) What you get from me has nothing at all to do with what the others have or have not. My relation with you depends on you alone; I give you according to your true need and capacity. Even here, already you were alone with me; if there were no others you would receive nothing more.

2) It is a great mistake to think that physical nearness is the one thing indispensable for the progress. It will do nothing for you if you do not establish the inner contact, for without that you could remain from morning to night with me and yet you will never truly meet me. It is only by the inner opening and contact that you can realise my presence. (CWM

13: 77-78)

It is their own mental and vital formation of me that they love, not myself. More and more I am confronted with this fact. Each one has made his own image of me for himself in conformity with his needs and desires, and it is

with this image that he is in relation, through that he receives the little amount of universal forces and the still smaller amount of supramental forces that manage to filter through all these formations. (Ibid: 81)

This is a beautiful clarification. Her description is psychologically important and relevant to us. Hardly anyone of us really loves the Mother as she is. We have all got filtering images formed of her. Each one has painted the image

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according to his own needs and desire. An example would be of Kali—in Bengal the terrible image of Kali, a figure with the red tongue, and a garland of skulls! She was frightening and meant to be a goddess for the warriors — warriors needed a warrior goddess. So we see how human psychology has created an image, with blood and death around her to represent a fierce warrior. Similarly, when we say we love the Mother, do we really love the Mother as she really is? Others approach the Mother as Saraswati. If I want to have some pleasing things then I approach her as Lakshmi. Everyone has formed an image and fortunately through that image one is able to receive a little amount of her universal forces.

Unfortunately, they cling to my physical presence, otherwise I could withdraw into my inner solitude and do my work quietly and freely from there; but this physical presence is a symbol for them and that is why they cling to it, for in fact they have very little real contact with what my body truly is or with the tremendous accumulation of conscious energy that it represents. (Ibid)

I take the greatest care to open the door within all of you, so that if you have just a small movement of concentration within you, you do not have to wait for long periods in front of a closed door that will not move, to which you have no key and which you do not know how to open. The door is open, only you must look in that direction. You must not turn your back on it. (Ibid: 82)

I am not eager to be the Guru of anyone. It is more spontaneously natural for me to be the universal Mother and to act in silence through love.

But as you put the question, I shall answer.

From the time you started using a mantra, I had put in it the power to make it effective. Now that you have stated

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what is the word of this mantra, I am confirming the power into it. (Ibid: 83)

Until now, my spontaneous attitude was that of the supreme Mother who carries the universe in her loving arms, and I was dealing with each one as with the child from whom she tolerates everything equally; and all that the people here were doing to please me I was taking as a token of their love and I was very grateful for it. Today I have learnt that many, if not most, are looking at me as their Guru and that they are eager to please me because to please the Guru is the best way to acquire merit on the path. And then I have understood that the duty of the Guru is to encourage from each one only that which can lead him quickly to the Lord and serve His Divine Purpose,—and I am very grateful for the lesson. (Ibid: 83)

When *I* say that I have initiated someone, I mean that I have revealed myself to this person, *without words*, and that he was capable of seeing, feeling and knowing What I am.

(Ibid: 84)

It seems that you are far too complex and complicated to understand my straight direct simplicity. When I say, “this is the best” I mean that it is *the best* and consequently that it is the thing to be done. And what I call surrender is not to make a counter-proposal in answer to my arrangement but to accept it full-heartedly.

You ask for peace as if I was withdrawing it—but when I wrote to you with the best feelings of kindness, trust and consideration, “this is the best thing to do”, if you had answered at once “Yes, Mother, let it be done”, you

would have certainly felt a greater peace in you and even a sweet joy. (Ibid: 84)

Nobody ever thought of forcing you to do yoga. If you want

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to do it in order to acquire the power over the circumstances, it is not a very noble or high motive, and you cannot count upon me to help you there. I can help you only if your motive is to *discover* the Truth (not to postulate *a priori* that what you think is the truth) and to surrender entirely to the Truth.

So the decision is in your hands. (Ibid: 86) Now I am obliged to tell you that I neither approve nor disapprove—no like and no dislike, no desire and no personal will. Each case is seen individually, and the answer given for the best of each one from the spiritual point of view. (Ibid) Evidently, according to human laws I was wrong in telling you that I would see you every month, since I was not sure of being able to do so, even while not forgetting what I had said.

In truth, I live from moment to moment, according to the supreme Guidance and, consequently, am incapable of making plans. I know that this is not comfortable for the human mentality which believes it can decide everything in advance. But from the spiritual point of view it is inevitable.

(Ibid: 91)

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

We want to give the example of an action that is undertaken in accordance with a vision of truth, but unfortunately we are still very far from realising this ideal, and even if the vision of truth expresses itself, it is immediately distorted in its implementation. (Ibid: 92)

My way of seeing is somewhat different. For my consciousness the whole life upon earth, including the

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human life and all its mentality, is amass of vibrations, mostly vibrations of falsehood, ignorance and disorder, in which are more and more at work vibrations of Truth and Harmony coming from the higher regions and pushing their way through the resistance. In this vision the ego-sense and the individual assertion and separateness become quite unreal and illusory.

When some *extra* confusion is created in the already existing confusion I direct upon it some special vibrations to restore as much as possible a better harmony. It is not the individuals as such that feel the “blow”, it is their clinging to or siding with the disharmony... In such cases there is never one side right and one side wrong, but all are to blame in the measure of their adhesion to falsehood and confusion. (Ibid: 92-93) I remember in the beginning days of Auroville when there were quarrels and divisions the Mother had said that truth does not lie on any one side. So no one could claim being right and the other wrong. Truth lies on both sides when they come together, but the moment there is a division she says, truth does not lie there. Therefore, she says here in a similar manner that

“all are to blame in the measure of their adhesion to falsehood and confusion.”

You don't understand the way of my working. You can as well say, “You have the supramental force, why don't you use it and finish all this muddle?” But it is not like this that the work can be done. The world is not ready for the supramental force and if it is used without preparing the base, things will shatter completely. I have to prepare the base and then bring down the force. (Ibid)

The Avatar not only brings the new realisation and consciousness, but he has also to prepare the humanity to receive it. It is this kind of double work that we see brilliantly

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in *Savitri*: How humanity is prepared by Satyavan for Savitri to bring down the new force. Both are the works of the Avatar.

Your human vision sees things in a straight line. For you it is either this way or that way. For me it is not like this.

I see the whole thing as a mass of consciousness moving towards its end or goal. For every small movement I have to see what its reactions will be on the whole mass, what repercussions may follow.

When I say something should be done in this way or that way, your human mind takes it as a principle and tries to apply it rigidly in all cases. (Ibid)

We can learn a lot from these sentences. When we say, “the Mother said” and that becomes an eternal law or because the Mother said, I am doing this, what happens is that I feel I am on the Mother’s side and the other is not on her side. I am on truth’s side and the other is on the side of the falsehood. I am right and you are wrong. You can see from where the whole argument has begun: “the Mother said”. She has made it very clear that the human mind makes it a principle and tries to apply it rigidly in all cases. But the Mother never applied it that way herself. When students would ask if they could go to their homes during the holidays, to some she said yes and to others she said no. There was no rule.

For me it is not like that. For me there are no rules, no regulations and no principles. For me each one is an exceptional case, to be dealt with in a special way. No two cases are similar.

In the movement of this mass of consciousness I know that a certain point should move in a certain direction for reaching the goal more easily. With this point in view I declare that this should be done or not done, but I find that sometimes there is a big obstruction in the way. Now, it can be dealt

with in two ways: either I should allow the point to change its direction and leave the barrier alone for the time being till more and more light falls upon it and it gets changed, or I should break the barrier. (Ibid)

Like the water when it falls on the rock, it doesn't crush the rock but it goes to the side and lets the barrier remain. The Mother too, when she gives us an answer and guides us to do something, she says, shall I break the barrier within the person?

It could be very painful and our vital might get very depressed.

So she might say you can do what you want, and the block within may remain as it is.

As I have said, every small movement has its reactions and repercussions on the mass, so this breaking also will cause a chain of reactions which may affect a much larger field. I am no respecter of persons, but I have to see at every moment the changing circumstances due to the change of the person or persons concerned and the change of time and the channel through which the thing passes. I have to see with all these changes how best the thing can be done so that it may help the progress of the mass. I have to see whether it is worthwhile to break the barrier and have all the resulting consequences or whether it would not be better to leave it for the moment and tolerate the human stupidity. What appears to you to be contradiction is not contradiction when the whole thing is seen as one. There are various ways to reach the same end. So if I find that breaking will cost much more than what it is worth, then I allow you to go the way you like. But that does not prevent me from condemning the obstruction and saying that it ought to go.

After all, sooner or later each and everything in this mass of consciousness has to move towards the same goal. But to lead the consciousness towards that goal I have to allow

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human beings to move with me and I have to appear in their own form and speak in their own language. I have to adopt a crude expression. I can see the stupidity of the way in which I have to speak and lay down rules and

regulations, but this is a concession that I must make to humanity; otherwise it would not be able to understand anything. Even when I speak in their own language, people misunderstand me and make a mess. If I were to speak in the language of the light, then the whole thing would pass over their heads and they would be left gaping without understanding anything.

X has a very well-developed mind. I can say that his mind is very open towards the light. Twice I tried to speak to him in the language of what Sri Aurobindo calls the mind of light, but even he could not understand it. He could catch a little, but the fullness of the sense escaped him.

With the others it is still worse; they fail to understand anything and look dazed. For the sake of these people I have to make a compromise. I say that a certain thing is stupid, but I see that you cannot remain without doing it, so I have to tolerate it. I see the relative value of things and adopt the way that may be helpful in making the progress. In your interest and in the interest of the progress of the whole mass of consciousness, I may have to allow a good many things, but it does not mean that I am blind to them and cannot see their stupidity. Sometimes it is necessary that you should have an experience and so the thing is allowed. But when I say No definitely, it is dangerous to oppose it. There can be many reasons for the same action; but it is not possible to explain them to your mind.

In this particular case I had said No. Then Y intervened.

Now Y is a very nice person and he is very sincere in some parts. I know that he is weak and has the habit of grabbing

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and possessing. I could have refused. But that would have given a big shaking to him. It would have been difficult for him to adjust himself. As I told you, I see the relative values and I saw that the thing was not worth the shaking and so I have given my permission. But that does not prevent me from saying that it is not the right thing. (Ibid: 93-95) How many concessions the Mother has given to people who have wanted to do things

that they thought correct and yet she knew was wrong for them. But that is what human mothers do.

They know that chocolate spoils their teeth, but it makes the child so happy to eat the candy that she gives it.

I don't know if it is luck or Grace or what? But we have in one human body the total image of the Ishta Devata, the Prophet and the guru. Such a human figure earth may never see again.

As Sri Aurobindo would say, woe to those who have “not kept the lamps trimmed”!

(1st February 2001)

IV

The last paragraphs of “The Four Aids” deal with Time. And it is interesting that in *The Life Divine* also we are studying the truth of Time, in relation to metaphysical knowledge, but here in *The Synthesis of Yoga* it is seen in its relation to sadhana. It is a psychological angle of looking at Time, and becomes a relevant part of our life.

The Sadhaka who has all these aids is sure of his goal.

Even a fall will be for him only a means of rising and death a passage towards fulfilment. For once on this path, birth and death become only processes in the development of his being and the stages of his journey.

This is a very beautiful paragraph and I think many true sadhaks have to realise this truth. Or otherwise one may have a sense of disappointment, disillusionment or even a kind

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of depression may set in. Because we have seen that in our sadhana, as Sri Aurobindo says, if you have all these ‘aids’, we have the assurance of reaching very far. These aids will take us to heights though it will be in relation to our own effort. But without realizing the factor of Time, the

sadhaks may suffer a sense of urgency and even get disheartened on the way.

However, when one reaches a little height or distance one realises a whole new concept of Time. Sri Aurobindo would tell us that in the beginning Time is the enemy, because we feel that we don't have enough time to realise what we have set out to realise, and therefore we feel a bit frustrated. I have met with some senior sadhaks in whom the concept of Time has changed.

We need to remember this sentence that "birth and death only become processes of the development of the being." Then death does not count, births do not count, because we know that the greater the consciousness one develops, the greater the heights of realisation. In Integral Yoga one knows very well that we want to come back more and more, so birth and death become passages, they become steps in the procedure. I have heard people say that only if that great sadhak who had reached such spiritual heights was alive today... But for that person who has reached that state of consciousness prolongation of physical life does not matter because he realises the immortality of his Self. Once one shifts into that inner consciousness then birth and death become processes. They are no more a barrier.

Psychologically the tension of time is released.

The tension of time is there on two kinds of persons, one who has taken to sadhana very seriously and in the beginning he feels a pressure of time. Days come and go and one feels what have I done on the path? And for an ordinary man there is another kind of tension of time that I am losing life. What have I done materially to pass on to my children? For those who have

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no aim in life, especially if they have no spiritual aim in life — for them the life can go on without any tension.

I think for us, in the beginning at least, we have to realise the value of time. The value of time not what we have gained or achieved, that cannot be gauged. It cannot ever be gauged, we may be fifty years in sadhana but we cannot say thirty years means so many steps or so much height. Yet I feel there must be somewhere a pinch within us, otherwise about our sadhana we can be very easily given to a kind of lethargy, and we do not much bother. Otherwise, life can go on very smooth. But I think if we are not very conscious of the time factor, we will be losing valuable time. Often the Mother has told the children not to waste time for it is a very valuable thing. So it is in this light that we take this sentence that the past birth and death only become a process of the development of this being.

Time is the remaining aid needed for the effectivity of the process. Time presents itself to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, a medium or an instrument. But always it is really the instrument of the soul.

Time is really always the instrument of the soul. It is the instrument of the soul in that it utilises time for different births.

At a deeper level time is used by the soul, it knows in its deeper consciousness how many births and centuries it requires. But even at the life level, someone may be wasting his time in sadhana, but somewhere the psychic being is getting some benefit out of that lethargy in the sense that when one gets very lethargic or forgetful (if our aspiration is true and we have really initiated ourselves in this sadhana), the time factor is let loose and the soul watches. But at this particular time the soul will call out. Call out in a sense that it will bring out such a situation in life where again one is awakened. So it uses the wastage of time and the pressure of time for its own advantage. At certain times outwardly

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the person may be all quiet, and we may be thinking, what could that person be doing? Is he really progressing? We don't see him doing anything. We have seen some great sadhaks lying in the Nursing Home for years. We wonder what has happened to this paralyzed vegetative body? But we know that this period of time is utilised by the soul for its own purposes, perhaps for consolidation. What it has done all of its long life, it consolidates.

For patients in the Nursing Home, I think the doctors and nurses must look at them with this attitude. It is not the time for the physical being alone to be cared for.

Let us take a deeper attitude, that the soul is consolidating its experiences. Often the soul may purposely withdraw into a Nursing Home—otherwise it could have left the body long back, because the body is quite useless. But it may need time to bring all its experiences together. There are some incidents given by the Mother in which a person was in the hospital, but the Mother said within that time the person has evolved so much in his spiritual consciousness or that he has gained a detachment from this world which he could not do in all the previous years of his life. So we don't know. We think a person in the hospital is just a vegetable, but at least in our Nursing Home they are cared for and it is something else there that is happening which we do not know. But this much let us be sure that somewhere somebody is doing some particular work. There was a person who lived here but was never a serious sadhak. But that sadhak turned his entire consciousness within those seven days in the hospital. And he got such a beautiful material detachment and he was almost liberated. This is where I feel the soul really uses time. Sometimes, when one is too hectic and busy and gets into a self-forgetful activity, that might be when the soul puts him into a kind of respite.

As the Mother would say, illnesses do not just come. There is

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a cause. Sometimes it could be a cause of other forces attacking but at other times it could be a conscious decision of the soul to withdraw. When the person doesn't collaborate it puts the person into a kind of a fever or something. Therefore, time could be utilised by the soul for its own purpose.

How is Time a friend?

It depends on how you look at it. Everything depends on the relation you have with it. If you take it as a friend, it becomes a friend. If you consider it as an enemy, it becomes your enemy.

But that's not what you are asking. What you are asking is how one feels when it is an enemy and how when it is a friend. Well, when you become impatient and tell yourself,

“Oh, I must succeed in doing this and why don't I succeed in doing it?” and when you don't succeed immediately in doing it and fall into despair, then it is your enemy. But when you tell yourself, “It is all right, I didn't succeed this time, I shall succeed next time, and I am sure one day or another I shall do it”, then it becomes your friend. (CWM 7: 380) This is what we were discussing—that Time is really eternity, then it is no more merely a length of a time relevant to this bodily life. When Time becomes eternity then it becomes a friend. One has to contact the eternal within us. It is not just a psychological thing like believing in rebirth. It could be a very negative psychology if you take it as if you have thousands of lives to work out one's life's problems. If rebirth is taken as a process of soul's growth, then only rebirth has a positive meaning. It is perhaps good that the Westerners don't have a strong concept of reincarnation. It seems it was there long back in Christianity, but slowly the Church deleted this concept in order to give Christians more responsibility for this present life. And because we in India emphasised the concept of rebirth, we have not given as much importance to this life. You

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see the balance: because we have not understood it rightly we have taken advantage of the concept of rebirth, that is, we have used it to our disadvantage. The right advantage is that rebirth is meant for the growth of the psychic, not to waste time and indulge in pleasures and say next birth I will get down to business. This is where time comes in as a friend or enemy.

Time is a field of circumstances and forces meeting and working out a resultant progression whose course it measures.

To the ego it is a tyrant or a resistance, to the Divine an instrument. Therefore, while our effort is personal, Time appears as a resistance, for it presents to us all the obstruction of the forces that conflict with our own. When the divine working and the personal are combined in our consciousness, it appears as a medium and a condition. When the two become one, it appears as a servant and instrument.

One can see very clearly the three stages of sadhana, and the three attitudes towards time. One when the personal effort is there, strong, then time is our enemy. When you have the sense of “I am doing the sadhana and have been doing it for many years,” then time is an enemy. Time becomes our friend in the second stage when one is aware that it is not oneself who is doing sadhana or work, but that one is only an instrument of the higher force. Please remember that we can cheat and dupe ourselves very easily and we do it very often. Very quickly we pass ourselves into the second level and proclaim we are now the instrument. It is a nice self-flattery to the ego, that I am the Mother’s instrument in her work. That is why it is better not to speak of all these things either personally or publicly. In reality we are far, far from being instruments.

An instrument is when the Divine working and the personal will are combined in our consciousness; when the ego is almost obliterated, and the cup of the human consciousness is almost

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empty, and the divine consciousness fills it. When the flute reed is empty and it plays the Divine’s raga: that is the instrument.

Let us be honest, humble and frank and say ‘yes, I am not an instrument at all, I am a doer. Because the ego sense of the

“I” is still very strong’. But in order to admit that in itself is a great thing because then if I know I am the ego at least I can offer myself consciously, telling the Mother that ‘I am not your instrument yet’. At least I am conscious that ‘I am the ego,’ that

‘ambition and desire is within me’ and all that forms an egoistic nature is there, so ‘let me offer them to you’. So to be frank and to offer is better than to be a hypocrite and say ‘I am an instrument’ and put a false feather in the cap. That would only increase one’s ego. Sadhana is a slippery thing, and if complete sincerity and honesty are not there, instead of moving an inch forward we move back by miles. Honesty and sincerity will open greater doors in the divine consciousness than any pretension.

That is the second step of the instrument where Time appears as a medium and condition. The last level is when the two become one. We are neither the doer nor the instrument, we become complete children of the Mother. The third and highest stage is becoming a child of the Mother. First is the doer, then the instrument, and last stage in our sadhana, the highest, is that of becoming the child. At that time, Time appears as a servant and instrument of our soul.

The ideal attitude of the sadhaka towards Time is to have an endless patience as if he had all eternity for his fulfilment and yet to develop the energy that shall realise now and with an ever-increasing mastery and pressure of rapidity till it reaches the miraculous instantaneousness of the supreme divine Transformation.

This is the attitude one has to keep. The sadhaka has to have endless patience as if he had all eternity for his fulfilment. But

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there is a negative way of taking rebirth. We can say ‘I have all eternity in front of me to realise the Divine, so let me earn and enjoy. I have worked hard, given to my children, so let me enjoy my money in this life. I have all of eternity, so why be in a hurry to progress?’ That is not the ideal. The true attitude of the eternal now is this that we must realise and develop the energy that is in the present moment. It is not to waste time, but to put in all the energy now with an ever increasing mastery and pressure. It can be done, as the two are combining in the sadhak. He knows he has more lives, but now is the greatest moment to go into that Eternity, that eternal consciousness; it is the present moment that will lead me there. There is a beautiful combination of the now and the eternal. So too the Mother always

insisted on this now. She says the present moment is the most important in your life. It is the attitude and the stance with which we deal with the present. What is the way we have to deal with the present?

Let us read what the Mother tells us about the past, present and future:

The Past

The very memory of the past experience has sometimes to be swept away from the thoughts that it may not impede the work of perpetual reconstruction which alone, in this world of relativities, permits the perfect manifestation of the Divine.

(CWM 15: 70)

Beware of the charm of memories. What past experiences leave behind is the effect they have had on the growth of the consciousness. But when you try to relive a memory by putting yourself in similar circumstances, you soon realise that they are empty of their power and charm, for they have lost their usefulness for progress. (Ibid) Sentimental remembrance: only those circumstances which

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helped us in our seeking for the Divine must be the object of this remembrance. (Ibid: 71)

Too often we remember what this one said or did. Our minds are always filled with conspiracies and ill thoughts.

For each person, everything depends on knowing whether one belongs to the past that perpetuates itself, to the present that is exhausting itself or to the future that longs to be born.

(Ibid)

To do yoga, one of the most important things to achieve is to get rid of all attachment to the past. Let the past be past and concentrate only on the progress you want to make and the surrender to the Divine you have to achieve.

My blessings and help are always with you.

With love. (Ibid)

To forget the past and to lose habits of thinking is indeed a difficult thing and generally requires a strong “tapasya”. But if you have faith in the Divine’s Grace and you implore it full-heartedly, you will succeed more easily. (Ibid: 72)

Let the waves of the past flow far from you, carrying away with them all attachments and all weaknesses. The luminous joy of the divine consciousness is waiting ready to take their place. (Ibid)

Complete consecration to the Divine wipes out what one has been in the past. (Ibid)

This is a beautiful short message especially with regard to karma. A lot of us ask the question about our past karma? And the answer is that complete consecration to the Divine wipes out what one has been in the past.

My dear child,

Your prayer has been heard. Your past has disappeared.

Prepare to grow in consciousness, in light, in peace.

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Our blessings are always with you. (Ibid) **The Present**

There are unique moments in life that pass like a dream.

One must catch them on the wing, for they never return.

(Ibid: 73)

The present is the most important moment in life. (Ibid) What is the most important moment in life? The present moment. For the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist. (Ibid)

The Future

The future is necessarily better than the past. We have only to push forward. (Ibid)

From step to step, from truth to truth, we shall climb ceaselessly until we reach the perfect realisation of tomorrow.

(Ibid: 74)

The future is full of possibilities for those who know how to prepare themselves for it. (Ibid)

I propose that we should simply do what is right and fair, without thinking too much of the future, leaving it to the care of the Divine's Grace. (Ibid)

Mother, are Time and Space particular only to the physical world or to other worlds also?

As there are forms, there is necessarily a Time, a Space, but it is not at all the same as the physical. It is neither the same Time nor the same Space.

For example, as soon as you come to the vital there is a Time and Space which are similar to the physical but without that fixity and hardness and irremediability which are here.

That is, for instance, in the vital a strong intelligent will has an immediate action; here, in the physical, it takes sometimes extremely long to be realised, an entire process has to be

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followed. In the vital it is direct, the will acts directly on the circumstances, and if it is truly of a very strong kind, it is instantaneous. But there is still a Space, that is, one has the impression of moving to go from one place to another, and that necessarily, as one moves, a certain time intervenes; but it is an extremely short time compared with physical time.

On the mental plane the notion of Time disappears almost totally. For example, you are in your mental consciousness, you think of someone or something or of a place, and immediately you are there. There is no need of any time between the thought and the realisation. It is only when the mind is mingled with the vital that the notion of time is introduced; and if they go down into the physical, before a mental conception can be realised a whole process is necessary. (CWM 7: 216)

We may perhaps begin to understand the meaning of Time and Space. It is linked with the Time and Space as given in *The Life Divine*. Time and Space of the physical level begins to lose fixity, hardness, irremediability as we go into higher consciousness. There is one example of Time on the mental level: if I have a class for one hour, on the mental level that one hour can seem to pass in one minute because already it is on a different level than the physical consciousness. There is also the example of dreams: in the dream consciousness we can think we have taken a long time but on the physical level it is very short, and sometimes it is vice versa. As we get away from the physical the substance becomes thinner, and the rigidity becomes lesser, so time goes faster.

You do not have a direct mental action on matter. For instance, if you think of someone who lives in Calcutta, well, physically you have to take a plane and some hours must pass before you can be there; while mentally if you are here

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and think of someone in Calcutta, instantaneously you are there with him. Instantaneously, you see. But if you go out in the vital from your body and want to go somewhere, well, you have the feeling of moving, and of the time it takes you to reach the place you are going to. But it is incomparably

fast in relation to the physical, to the time necessary to do things physically. (Ibid: 216-217)

This is an experience we have all had, moving

“instantaneously”; it is as good as the speed of light. So there is a tremendous difference between physical time and mental time. Now we can extend our imagination and see how time works beyond the mental level itself.

Only right at the top of the ladder, when one reaches what could be called the centre of the universe, the centre and origin of the universe, everything is instantaneous. The past, present and future are all contained in a total and simultaneous consciousness, that is, what has always been and what will be are as though united in a single instant, a single beat of the universe, and it is only there that one goes out of Time and Space. (Ibid)

This is a beautiful explanation as to how the supramental consciousness will work.

A good example is when the Mother told us about India's independence, what She saw in an instantaneous moment. She said India is free because in that supramental consciousness the past, present and future are one. She saw this some time in 1920. However, that consciousness of time translated into physical reality only in 1947. This is a fine example to tell us how they work in the supramental plane and how once a vision is seen there, it translates into a physical reality in the human time and space. By the time it comes into the mental it takes some time, but the physical takes the greatest time. What the

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Mother and Sri Aurobindo have foreseen about the new race, it is not that it “will come”, it is already there. This coming is slow as it passes through the mental time, the vital time and then the physical time.

She says, “there is a single instant, a single beat of the universe and it is only there that one gets out of Time and Space.” One has to go out of the clutches of physical time—the fright, the tension, the fear—and one of the best ways is to go into a higher consciousness. There are asanas that help us to relax or meditate. They bring relaxation and take out tension. There is a connection with a higher consciousness, then only can the tensions of physical time be cut off. Those moments of release from the physical time tensions bring relaxation to the body. We get into a silence zone which decreases our physical and mental tension to a great extent. Meditation has a practical value and it is becoming more and more popular in management groups and schools because it produces a temporary lifting into a different consciousness which gives relaxation. The doctors would give us a sedative to relax us but that doesn’t get us into a higher consciousness. Sedatives give the drowsiness of the subconscious, but meditation gives the trance of the superconscious. The doctors can relax us but it has a negative effect. The idea behind it is the same, to suspend the mind’s mental consciousness. But in one there is an effect of drowsiness and in the other there is enlightenment.

On the psychic plane is there a past, present and future?

In the psychic? Yes, you have even the consciousness of all the lives you have lived. When you enter into contact with the psychic you become conscious of all the lives you have lived, it keeps the absolutely living memory of all the events in which the psychic took part—not the whole life, not that one can tell little stories to oneself: that first one was a monkey and then

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later something a little higher, and so on, the cave-man... no, no stories like that. But all the events of former lives in which the psychic participated are preserved, and when one enters into conscious contact with his psychic being this can be called up like a sort of cinema. (Ibid: 217-218) The memory of the past births is not in the form of an interesting story that you were this or that. Those things are thrown out and what remains as active memory are those events in which our psychic participated in that life. With this phrase try to extend your imagination: “ if in the sadhana one

participates more and more in the psychic being!” It means that if these moments of contact with the psychic increase—if you think that a particular sadhak has been mostly living in the psychic, what happens? — when he leaves his body and the psychic goes into its own region, a great percent of his memories are about times he evolved towards the Divine. These are the moments that the psychic being kind of gathers and that is the treasure it takes up from every life. The rest is burnt up in the mental, vital, physical planes. These are all external paraphernalia that are of no importance in the next life. What we have to wean out from this life are those moments of divine contact. If I want to grow in the psychic, or become richer here, what do I do?

I can increase my bank balance, the physical thing, to become richer. Similarly, the psychic has to increase in its intensity and size. It increases by the addition of more divine contacts, that is how it becomes bigger. These are the moments by which it grows. This is why the Mother tells us to remember her more and more. It is purely this. It is to increase the size, the intensity, the love, purity and bliss of the psychic being. Going through the movements of life no matter how great or small has no value unless it has brought you moments of contact with the Divine.

Work done for one’s own ego satisfaction is dust; if the work has

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been offered sincerely and humbly to the Mother, then only it has all its worth.

But it has no continuity except in lives in which the psychic is absolutely conscious, active, permanently active, that is, constantly associated with the consciousness; so naturally, being constantly associated with the consciousness, it consciously remembers everything that has happened in the real life of the person, and the memories—when one follows these things—the memories of his psychic being are more and more coordinated and closer and closer to what could be a physical memory if there were one, in any case of all the intellectual and emotional elements of life, and of

some physical events when it was possible for this being to manifest in the outer consciousness; then, at these moments, the whole set of physical circumstances in which one was is kept absolutely intact in the consciousness. (Ibid: 218) This psychic memory can percolate to the physical level also.

Say an artist is doing a beautiful painting and that artist captures a moment of beauty, not necessarily what we see as beautiful, but something of an inner joy in that painting. That moment as an artist will be remembered by the psychic because we have manifested that psychic joy in the physical. That can happen for an artist, a poet, a teacher, a worker, even when we do washing in the dining room. Every moment can be a sadhana if it is done rightly. Otherwise it is complete dust. As she says, there are two ways. One is by remembering the Mother. But if my instrument is not yet up to the mark, I can still bring down a kind of beauty and perfection, cleanliness and care into the work that helps in contacting the psychic. The Mother would say when those four aspects are in the work, those are the moments where the psychic will say 'yes, there was my consciousness'. This is how work can be a medium for contacting the psychic being.

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We see the psychic memory can be on all different levels. It can come down even to the physical level, and these are the only moments where the psychic really grows. The rest of our life has no value at all. If it is not for the sake of the growth, it is complete dust. I think the purpose of these classes is at least collectively if we can remember the Mother, invoke Her with whatever little understanding we have, I am sure our psychic beings will have the joy of the contact with the Mother. As the Mother always says if we can invoke her collectively it is much more intense. The reason for coming here is not for my class or your class, it is a kind of collective effort to invoke her. While reading her works, invoking her becomes a little easier.

(8th February 2001)

Chapter – II

Self-Consecration

We have had a philosophical understanding of the integral Yoga. Now, Sri Aurobindo would take us on the actual path and practices. What is to be done, and how to go about it? These ideas are to be realised from within, and it is only by putting them into practice that one can benefit from them.

All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No Yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence.

This is where the Mother explains in a different context this phrase, “awakening to the necessity of a long spiritual existence”. Unless and until one gets an awaking to this

“necessity”, unless and until we get disillusionment, in the positive sense, we will not get this “awakening”—awakening, especially, to “the necessity of that larger spiritual existence”.

One may go on living, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, a “mentalised material life” and not feel the necessity for a larger spiritual existence. It could be for multiple reasons, of which one could be that perhaps the time is not yet ripe for the individual for this awakening. Some things have to be worked out or a maturation needs to be developed in the mental, vital, and physical consciousness.

The spiritual call is only for some, there has to be a preparation that comes through previous lives or from other circumstances.

They could be of many forms depending on the value we put on

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things. There could be calamities in relations, wealth, positions, and all kinds of things. Often these calamities bring “an awakening to the necessity” to turn towards that which is higher.

Often these are the things which will bring us to the brink of necessity. “Necessity” has a profound meaning. We do not turn to anything higher as long we think we can pull on without taking to a spiritual life. Some people believe that escapism or living in an environment that is pleasing to them will work, but they are deceiving themselves. These experiences will bring them to the conclusion that nothing works, no outer path is a solution. That reminds me of the poem by Francis Thomson,

“The Hound of Heaven”. We may pursue many paths—human love, human relations, comforts of material things, social position or with drawing into Nature. However, unless and until we realise that all these paths are futile to bring one a deeper inner solace, one may not turn to the higher spiritual existence.

The soul that is called to this deep and vast inward change, may arrive in different ways to the initial departure. It may come to it by its own natural development which has been leading it unconsciously towards the awakening; it may reach it through the influence of a religion or the attraction of a philosophy; it may approach it by a slow illumination or leap to it by a sudden touch or shock; it may be pushed or led to it by the pressure of outward circumstances or by an inward necessity, by a single word that breaks the seals of the mind or by long reflection, by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence. According to the nature and the circumstances the call will come.

Each of us who has turned towards the spiritual life has had at least one of these experiences. As Sri Aurobindo says, “by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence”. Many of us have this distant example of one

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who has trod the path of Integral Yoga. The senior sadhaks in the Ashram have given this great impetus to the youngsters that this path can be trodden upon. There are shining examples in our Ashram. Then there is this contact and daily influence of the Satsang. It means to keep company with spiritual

persons who are on the path. Each one gets a call according to his nature and inner need.

But in whatever way it comes, there must be a decision of the mind and the will and, as its result, a complete and effective self-consecration. The acceptance of a new spiritual idea-force and upward orientation in the being, an illumination, a turning or conversion seized on by the will and the heart's aspiration,—this is the momentous act which contains as in a seed all the results that the Yoga has to give.

The mere idea or intellectual seeking of something higher beyond, however strongly grasped by the mind's interest, is ineffective unless it is seized on by the heart as the one thing desirable and by the will as the one thing to be done.

Indeed, there is first a decision of the mind to turn to a higher life. Circumstances in life usually bring upon this, and people start reading. There are cases in Auroville of people attracted by Sri Aurobindo's new philosophy. However, this intellectual seeking of something beyond is perhaps the first step. That is why it is often said that even a good amount of reading has no value unless it touches something within. It can turn us on to a seeking, but what is of greater importance is when it is seized by the will and the heart's aspiration as the one thing desirable. The intellectual pursuit has to be supported by emotion, by bhakti.

The intellect is like a torchlight that shows us the path. Then the heart is attracted by the destination. And then, there has to be the will to move on. We must try to give our life to it, because nothing can be done without that.

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For truth of the Spirit has not to be merely thought but to be lived, and to live it demands a unified single-mindedness of the being; so great a change as is contemplated by the Yoga is not to be effected by a divided will or by a small portion of the energy or by a hesitating mind. He who seeks the Divine must consecrate himself to God and to God only.

He is saying here that single-mindedness of the being is necessary for Yoga. It cannot be that simply the mind is attracted to Yoga while the vital and physical have other interests. Or some parts may only pay lip service to it and proclaim it to be devotion. He says it cannot succeed with a divided will or a small portion of the being. A small portion of the being means, for example, that one views it as an external duty that helps fill the day. What this Yoga requires is the involvement of the whole being. As the Mother said, we must take to this life when we are young. It is quite paradoxical because while one is young, the mind and heart usually have different interests, and the body, of course does not obey; it has its own agenda. However, in the last line, one “must consecrate himself to God and to God only”: these are the blessed ones: those without any other attraction or distraction can only dedicate themselves “to God and God only.”

If the change comes suddenly and decisively by an overpowering influence, there is no further essential or lasting difficulty. The choice follows upon the thought or is simultaneous with it, and the self-consecration follows upon the choice. The feet are already set upon the path, even if they seem at first to wander uncertainly and even though the path itself may be only obscurely seen and the knowledge of the goal may be imperfect. The secret Teacher, the inner Guide, is already at work, though he may not yet manifest himself or appear in the person of his human representative.

Whatever difficulties and hesitations may ensue, they cannot

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eventually prevail against the power of the experience that has turned the current of life. The call, once decisive, stands; the thing that has been born cannot eventually be stifled.

Even if the force of circumstances prevents a regular pursuit or a full practical self-consecration from the first, still the mind has taken its bent and persists and returns with an ever-increasing effect upon its leading preoccupation. There is an ineluctable persistence of the inner being, and

against it circumstances are in the end powerless, and no weakness in the nature can for long be an obstacle.

The chosen ones have come with some preparation from past births. As he puts it here, "...the change comes suddenly and decisively." Various books describe how some sadhaks came to the Ashram. We see in them dozens of instances where a sudden decision is taken by many sadhaks. Some left their families, spouses and children, everything, and suddenly came away to the Ashram because there is "an ineluctable persistence of the inner being, and against it, circumstances are in the end powerless." People have come away leaving their suffering families, and nothing could make them return; their families were powerless to call them back. It is because these are the ones in whom "the secret teacher" is already at work. It can almost be visualised as the chicken in the egg. There is a long preparation, but something happens in this birth, and they come out.

So the secret Divine teacher, although he may not be found, he is already teaching those who belong to a chosen category.

You can look around in our Ashram and see who these people were in the past and if there are any in the present. This is interesting: "Even if the force of circumstances prevents a regular pursuit or a full practical self-consecration from the first, still the mind has taken its bent and persists and returns with an ever-increasing effect." I have known many people how they went

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out—of the Ashram, how they meander into a different kind of life and yet somehow keep this inner flame alight. Even if the external circumstances seem to take them away from the path, the pull of the inner strings is very strong. This is the reason why they came back; even if they went out, they returned with a renewed zeal. It is like the rubber ball which when thrown out returns with a greater force. However,

...this is not always the manner of the commencement.

The sadhaka is often led gradually and there is a long space between the first turning of the mind and the full assent of the nature to the thing towards which it turns. There may at first be only a vivid intellectual interest, a forcible attraction towards the idea and some imperfect form of practice. Or perhaps there is an effort not favoured by the whole nature, a decision or a turn imposed by an intellectual influence or dictated by personal affection and admiration for someone who is himself consecrated and devoted to the Highest. In such cases, a long period of preparation may be necessary before there comes the irrevocable consecration; and in some instances it may not come.

This long preparation may sometimes be very long. This is the second category of people for whom, at first there may be “only a vivid intellectual interest, a forcible attraction”, but there must be a long preparation in these people. There may be some advance, there may be a strong effort, even much purification and many experiences other than those that are central or supreme, “but the life will either be spent in preparation or, a particular stage having been reached, the mind pushed by an insufficient driving-force may rest content at the limit of the effort possible to it”. Or there may even be a recoil to the lower life—what is called in the ordinary parlance of Yoga, a fall from the path.

This is quite a typical fall. Mind’s contentment arrests many

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sadhaks. Many people feel that they have ‘arrived’. There is a kind of satisfaction that ‘I am doing Yoga’, ‘I have got this inner quietness’, but Yoga is an endless journey. This kind of self-contentment is one of the most significant pitfalls in Yoga, and the reason for this is lack of effort. I have had contacts with some elders who reached an inner state, but with advanced age lacked vital energy, the vital in the true sense; without vital energy there cannot be any spiritual activity. It is the vital’s transforming energy that is required to aid Yoga.

The body's old age pulls down the will to make an effort. It takes a significant amount of our concentration and distracts our attention on the spiritual path to the extent that it takes all our attention to itself. So I can see that advanced age often does deter people. Then they start to compromise by saying this is the best they have done, and then they retire. This is one of the problems of ageing. This is why the Mother has said it is best to start Yoga when young. One of the advantages is that the body doesn't draw all attention. It is there naturally collaborating with our endeavours. So out of the three parts of the being, one-third of our being doesn't even call for our attention, whereas in old age, the body always wants greater attention. However, when one is young, the most powerful distracter is the vital being. The mind may be attracted to Sri Aurobindo's ideals of Yoga or higher life, but the vital being requires discipline. Youth is full of the vital, and by the time the vital is controlled or weakened often the body is getting deteriorated, so it looks like a constant battle.

This lapse happens because there is a defect at the very centre. The intellect has been interested, the heart attracted, the will has strung itself to the effort, but the whole nature has not been taken captive by the Divine. It has only acquiesced in the interest, the attraction or the endeavour. There has been an experiment, perhaps even an eager experiment, but not

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a total self-giving to an imperative need of the soul or to an unforsakable ideal. Even such imperfect Yoga has not been wasted; for no upward effort is made in vain. Even if it fails in the present or arrives only at some preparatory stage or preliminary realisation, it has yet determined the soul's future.

We can say my body is weak, my mind is destructive, my vital is ambitious, but none of these things matters if we are taken captive by the Divine. In my conversation with Nolini-da that I had with him in his later years, I had asked him what the best way to do Yoga is. He simply said "love the Mother". Now I can see why that is important because if we do not become captives of the Divine through bhakti, then all these defects will aggrandise.

I have also noticed that bhakti increases through knowledge and work. There is the solace given by Sri Aurobindo. “Even such imperfect Yoga has not been wasted...” This is an important thing about life. All spiritual efforts, no matter your age or the intensity of effort put in, is one type of experience that is never wasted.

All things can be forgotten — wealth, money, emotions, status, everything..., but spiritual experience and advancement is the only thing that goes as a credit balance to the next life. That is why if we take to Yoga at any age, no matter how little progress we achieve, it will carry over to the next life.

But if we desire to make the most of the opportunity that this life gives us, if we wish to respond adequately to the call we have received and to attain to the goal we have glimpsed, not merely advance a little towards it, it is essential that there should be an entire self-giving. The secret of success in Yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the one and only aim, not as an important part of life, but as the whole of life.

This is the central problem with all of us. Yoga is still not the whole of our life; it is only a part. Self-consecration to Yoga is

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also self-giving which means giving oneself willingly and with devotion. Self-consecration is much more than surrender, for surrender could be passive whereas self-consecration is more active and dynamic.

And since Yoga is in its essence a turning away from the ordinary material and animal life led by most men or from the more mental but still limited way of living followed by the few to a greater spiritual life, to the way divine, every part of our energies that is given to the lower existence in the spirit of that existence is a contradiction of our aim and our self-dedication. On the other hand, every energy or activity that we can convert from its allegiance to the lower and dedicate to the service of the higher is so much gained on our road, so much taken from the powers that oppose our

progress. The difficulty of this wholesale conversion is the source of all the stumblings in the path of Yoga.

He makes it clear that every part of our energy that is given to the lower existence in the spirit of that existence is a contradiction of our aim or self-dedication. We must understand that the meaning of every part of our energy given to the lower existence is a contradiction. That could be a parameter to see how far we have progressed: every act, thought, word, feeling, how much of it goes towards the lower existence and how much towards the Divine? We can all be honest and ask if we are doing that. It could be from eating our favorite dish on our table to sitting in the meditation hall in front of the Mother.

These are all energies; how much are they given to the lower existence, and how much are they offered to the higher life? He says the difficulty of this wholesale conversion is the source of all stumblings.

For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self, are full of habits and of influences

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that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth and work against the wholeheartedness of our endeavour. In a certain sense we are nothing but a complex mass of mental, nervous and physical habits held together by a few ruling ideas, desires and associations,—an amalgam of many small self-repeating forces with a few major vibrations. What we propose in our Yoga is nothing less than to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary material and mental man and to create a new centre of vision and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature.

This is a peep into pure psychology. Each of us has small and deep habits, ideas; it is all a kind of bundle we have been carrying from our past. Remember, we are not just individual human beings: we have the entire history of humanity in us. Just as the moon's surface is made of volcanic holes and has been hit by meteors, our being has been hit by these external forces, and each of these forces is constantly making an impact and leaving

behind a kind of scar on our being. These scars and lacerations become part of our personality. This is the function of Yoga: to break up this whole formation. This habit of retaining scars has become so deep that it has become as it, a part of the human cells.

We had a scientific talk last night about the cell, structure and workings. With all that the scientists have learned, the cells are only an expression of the consciousness. Each thing that a cell does is a habit gathered over centuries. Why does a cell act in a particular manner? It is all a habit gathered in its evolutionary process. And the cell structure is essentially the same from a plant to an animal to a human being. It shows that all our habits are there right from the level of the cells. Therefore, death is also a habit ingrained on the level of life. We can now imagine that

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when Life first sprouted in Matter, in that first sprouting of life in the cell, there is ingrained also death.

Since the millennium, the cell has been the same with its habits of life and death. All its characteristics are not just characteristics of the physical form but habits that have been gathered.

And now imagine what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have attempted. They have changed the very habits of the cell. Death is not just for this human body; it has been there for millions of years. As there are sixty trillion cells in the human body, it is mind-boggling to think of a transformation of the body to the extent that it becomes deathless. Imagine that the nucleus hides behind it the supramental force! The Mother is trying to burst that nucleus, the outer wrapping of a deeper consciousness. The scientists are amazed at the secrets in the cell they see through that fabulous microscope that can enlarge maybe two hundred million times, yet he would not see the supermind there. For that, we need no electronic microscopes but a high spiritual vision. This is what is required in order to reveal the secrets of the cell and its habits.

Sri Aurobindo says Yoga is nothing less than “to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary material and mental man and to create a new centre of vision and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature.”

This is not only a new birth in the individual but the birth of an entirely new race. Imagine if this cell that has come from time immemorial has changed due to the process started by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for initiating a new universe of activities. Obviously there has got to be a new race. It cannot be done with this body; it cannot be transformed simply by tinkering with its parts.

When the call comes to each individual, and he feels the

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necessity of the spiritual urge, perhaps when “someone” in him is ready for the call or has the opening, it may come in many different forms. It takes into account our nature and circumstance. Of course, blessed are those who can change their lives decisively; as he says, some are caught up centrally.

This central decision may have something to do with the past life. Because when a person at an early age decides to turn to a higher spiritual life, his soul must be carrying within it that decision for a spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo says that once that central decision has taken place, other circumstances may detour the person and delay the person, but ultimately neither the mind nor circumstances can withhold him from spiritual life. The inner guide is already at work though he may not yet manifest himself. These are the first type of devotees, but not all are lucky to have this kind of sudden internal change. For most, it is a gradual taking up of the spiritual life, gradual in the sense that a longer inner preparation is required. This slower preparation often makes a dent and shows itself when there is sorrow or suffering. Then the person slowly begins to realise that there is something more beyond the outer material life.

Sri Aurobindo says, “a long period of preparation may be necessary before irrevocable consecration. But life will either be spent in preparation or a

certain stage has been reached...

may rest content at the limit of the effort possible. Or there may even be recoil to the lower life,... a fall from the path.” This second class of devotees, if we can say, usually has a swinging back and forth, a rising and falling back, because the whole nature has not been taken captive by the Divine. As he says,

“the secret of success in Yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the whole of life.” You can see the difference between category one and category two. For the devotees of category one, Yoga becomes their whole life, and in

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category two, it is a development process. It is not the central aim but one of the interests. He may want to and be willing to take up Yoga, but somewhere the whole being is not yet ready.

Sri Aurobindo describes this very succinctly, “It is the difficulty of the wholesale conversion that is the source of all the stumblings in the path of Yoga.” It is the extent of dedication that is important which makes all the difference. Until the wholesale conversion takes place we are neither in Yoga nor in life.

It is the difficulty of this wholesale conversion that is the source of all the stumblings in the path of Yoga. For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self, are full of habits and of influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth and work against the whole-heartedness of our endeavour.

Let us read what the Mother explains,

What is our universal being?

And I have often told you, haven't I?, that the first state of your being is a state of an almost total mixture with all things from outside, and that there is almost no individualisation, that is, specialisation which makes you a different being. You are moved—a kind of form which is your physical being is moved—

by all the common universal forces, vital forces or mental forces, which go through your form and put it in motion.

So that is the universal being.

And all that you have wrested from this general semi-consciousness, and have crystallised into a more or less independent being, conscious of itself and having its own qualities, and all this is your individual being. And this individual being is full of all the movements of obscurity, unconsciousness, and of limitations of ordinary life, and that's... and that's what you must gradually open to the divine

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influence and bring to the consciousness and undesigning of things. That's what Sri Aurobindo says. (CWM 7: 402) The first step that she is asking us to take is to have this kind of individuality which is no more a marketplace of the universal forces. Usually, we have a diffused personality, and we are not ourselves. We think that 'I am so and so'. However, in reality, this 'I am so and so', even from the standpoint of egoistic personality, we are not even that. His amorphous personality, which the Mother calls the universal, is only a form. It is a body that distinguishes me from others, but how much of our mind is our own thinking? Ideas, influences and prejudices are constantly bombarding from others. As she says, it is these forces that play with us. Similarly, how much are we in control of our emotional being? It is also being bombarded from outside by other persons and events in daily life. The Mother is saying that we are an individual body, but otherwise, the mind and emotions are more or less a playfield. It is when we begin to take control and say, 'no, I don't want these emotions; I don't want to be influenced', that the actual individual begins to take shape.

In the early days of the Ashram, when the Mother and Sri Aurobindo would write to sadhaks, they often said, “do not listen to others’ opinions”. They wanted the sadhaks to stop acting according to others’ opinions of the correct thing to do.

Interestingly, our nature is being moulded by the pressure of others. It is as if someone says something about us, and we want to live according to that image. There is a beautiful novel, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, that illustrates this double personality that we have. A vision of ourselves built by outside forces, which is not truly ourselves. Unless we begin to control ourselves, reject outer influences, live according to our true inner aspiration and not through the eyes of others, even if the image is good,

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and push away all these external thoughts, we do not begin to have an individual personality.

It is the same spiritual thought: we must find our inner being.

Otherwise, we are a marketplace of all the forces in the world.

They may be good forces, evil forces, occult forces, divine forces, etc. This is why she says that this is the problem. This self is full of habits and influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth.

This is the wonderful play of all the anti-divine forces constantly pulling us back. And these forces take the form of habits, which can pull you back from a spiritual rebirth and work against the whole of our endeavour. These are precisely those mental habits or emotional habits which become a mould for our actions. All Yoga is essentially a new birth. Our habits pull back our rebirth and new birth, and we become our enemies. We cannot break away from our habits; we cling to them, not only physical habits but mental ones that are very dear to us. The thoughts that we think and the emotions we feel are all nothing but habits. So everything can be a rosy picture, but it can also be a golden cage. As Sri Aurobindo says, “Yoga is

nothing less than breaking up the whole formation of our past and present, which makes up the ordinary material and mental man”.

The first necessity is to dissolve that central faith and vision in the mind which concentrate it on its development and satisfaction and interests in the old externalised order of things. It is imperative to exchange this surface orientation for the deeper faith and vision which see only the Divine and seek only after the Divine.

The first step is to dissolve the central faith and vision in the mind. This gigantic task is to dismantle the old externalised order of things. This kind of order of something that has been given to us through religion, family, nation, and culture, is still

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the external order. How difficult it is to move from this! Then he says, orient yourself and seek only after the Divine.

“The next need is to compel all our lower being to pay homage to this new faith and greater vision”. Frankly, this is where most of us are fortunate. It is not that we have broken the old formation of life’s order. But at least we are fortunate to have found this new faith and greater vision in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Although our change is not integral, some part of our being in the mind and heart pays homage to this new vision. But we are not yet converted; we are still far from being transformed, but still, there is a deep commitment to the ideal.

All our nature must make an integral surrender; it must offer itself in every part and every movement to that which seems to the unregenerated sense-mind so much less real than the material world and its objects. Our whole Being—soul, mind, sense, heart, will, life, body—must consecrate all its energies so entirely and in such a way that it shall become a fit vehicle for the Divine. This is no easy task; for everything in the world follows the fixed habit which is to it a law and resists a radical change. And no change can be more radical than the revolution attempted in the integral Yoga. Everything in us has constantly to be called back to the central faith and will and vision. Every thought and impulse has to be reminded in the

language of the Upanishad that “That is the divine Brahman and not this which men here adore.” Every vital fibre has to be persuaded to accept an entire renunciation of all that hitherto represented to it its own existence. Mind has to cease to be mind and become brilliant with something beyond it. Life has to change into a thing vast and calm and intense and powerful that can no longer recognise its old blind eager narrow self of petty impulse and desire. Even the body has to submit to a mutation and be no longer the

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clamorous animal or the impeding clod it now is, but become instead a conscious servant and radiant instrument and living form of the spirit.

This is what he means by this single sentence: “And no change can be more radical than the revolution attempted in the integral Yoga.” It is not just one or two things, but you can see how he elaborates on what he means by the revolution of Integral Yoga. It is a total revolution, a total change of every fibre of the vital, every thought and impulse, and even the body submitting itself. This is one of those central sentences explaining what is the Integral Yoga.

The difficulty of the task has led naturally to the pursuit of easy and trenchant solutions; it has generated and fixed deeply the tendency of religions and of schools of Yoga to separate the life of the world from the inner life. The powers of this world and their actual activities, it is felt, either do not belong to God at all or are for some obscure and puzzling cause, Maya or another, a dark contradiction of the divine Truth. And on their own opposite side the powers of the Truth and their ideal activities are seen to belong to quite another plane of consciousness than that, obscure, ignorant and perverse in its impulses and forces, on which the life of the earth is founded.

This is the reason why, until now, no one has attempted the Integral Yoga. It is the difficulty of the task. This total conversion has been difficult for humanity even to think of. Perhaps the vision given in the Vedas and Upanishads gave the sense of its impossibility, so no one even attempted it.

They found it better to compromise. The totality of this approach is so very hard that humankind finds ways to bypass it. Religions and various schools of Yoga made the path easier by saying that all this is undivine and allowing only one part of the being to pursue the Divine. In

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contrast, the other parts were suppressed and neglected. They put on the side of the undivine ninety per cent of our activities, took only ten per cent as divine, and lived very comfortably without any compunction.

They said we are religious, spiritual and moral-ethical beings.

But what has happened to the ninety percent? Fifty per cent was taken out when they said women were not permitted to spiritual practices. Similarly, they debarred all wealth and material possessions. Then what do we have? They said everything that they found difficult to do was anti-divine. Then they built a theory of the Devil versus the Divine and said all this is Satanic.

There appears at once the antinomy of a bright and pure kingdom of God and a dark and impure kingdom of the devil; we feel the opposition of our crawling earthly birth and life to an exalted spiritual God-consciousness; we become readily convinced of the incompatibility of life's subjection to Maya with the soul's concentration in pure Brahman existence.

The easiest way is to turn away from all that belongs to the one and to retreat by a naked and precipitous ascent into the other. Thus arises the attraction and, it would seem, the necessity of the principle of exclusive concentration which plays so prominent a part in the specialised schools of Yoga; for by that concentration we can arrive through an uncompromising renunciation of the world at an entire self-consecration to the One on whom we concentrate.

It became very easy in those days to be called a sannyasi or a saint because you had to follow only ten per cent of human activities practised in the monasteries and ashrams. This is how they cut life by concentrating on the spiritual part and neglecting the material.

It is no longer incumbent on us to compel all the lower activities to the difficult recognition of a new and higher

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spiritualised life and train them to be its agents or executive powers. It is enough to kill or quiet them and keep at most the few energies necessary, on one side, for the maintenance of the body and, on the other, for communion with the Divine.

It is very easy when you bifurcate life like that, and you avoid the pitfalls of life and sadhana. Of course, this had the advantage of having an exclusive concentration on Brahman, and many did reach a high level of realisation. But that Sri Aurobindo will not accept because cutting such a division of life between the Divine and undivine activities. He takes all the activities of life as suitable to yoga.

The very aim and conception of an integral Yoga debars us from adopting this simple and strenuous high-pitched process. The hope of an integral transformation forbids us to take a short cut or to make ourselves light for the race by throwing away our impediments. For we have set out to conquer all ourselves and the world for God...

Now we understand what Integral Yoga means. We are being asked to take the baggage of material life upon our shoulders and run the spiritual race. That is why he said it is difficult, but our aim is to conquer ourselves and the world for God.

...we are determined to give him our becoming as well as our being and not merely to bring the pure and naked spirit as a bare offering to a remote and secret Divinity in a distant heaven or abolish all we are in a holocaust to an immobile Absolute. The Divine that we adore is not only a remote extra-cosmic Reality, but a half-veiled Manifestation present and near to us here in the universe. Life is the field of a divine manifestation not yet complete: here, in life, on earth, in the body,— *ihava*, as the Upanishads insist,—we have to unveil the Godhead; here we must make its transcendent greatness,

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light and sweetness real to our consciousness, here possess and, as far as may be, express it.

He tells us that the Divine is a half-veiled manifestation. He still needs to unveil Himself fully. The full unveiling will come perhaps in the supramental consciousness. But until now, in the process of evolution, he has only unveiled himself halfway.

Sri Aurobindo insists that we must work out and unveil the Godhead here on this earth, in this life.

Life then we must accept in our Yoga in order utterly to transmute it; we are forbidden to shrink from the difficulties that this acceptance may add to our struggle.

Our compensation is that even if the path is more rugged, the effort more complex and bafflingly arduous, yet after a certain point we gain an immense advantage. For once our minds are reasonably fixed in the central vision and our wills are on the whole converted to the single pursuit, Life becomes our helper.

He does tell us that in the beginning, our path is quite rugged and our effort more intense because of our complex nature.

We, humans, are not a simple being; we are a multiple, complex being and to work on each part of our being—the subliminal and the outer body, mind and life—is a difficult task. Therefore, he says it is all “bafflingly arduous, yet after a certain point we gain an immense advantage... once our mind is fixed in the central vision, and our wills are on the whole converted to the single pursuit”. Until and unless we turn our life into that single pursuit of Yoga, things will remain challenging.

At that point, these difficulties, these “bafflingly arduous”

problems, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, become our helper. This is really the beginning of Yoga: when the arduous difficulties turn into opportunities for

progress, we thank life. Each problem becomes an occasion to remember the Mother and to offer. If

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we can be sincere, each insult, each prejudice, each difficulty that comes to us from the outside can be turned into an offering to her. Then life becomes beautiful. Until that reorientation takes place, life is a big challenge.

Intent, vigilant, integrally conscious, we can take every detail of its forms and every incident of its movements as food for the sacrificial Fire within us. Victorious in the struggle, we can compel Earth herself to be an aid towards our perfection and can enrich our realisation with the booty torn from the Powers that oppose us.

Every opportunity, difficulty, criticism can be offered consciously to the Mother. If we know what has struck our ego, if we are intent, vigilant, and integrally conscious, we can offer these to the Divine. Emotionally I may be hurt, and it immediately has a clouding effect. With this kind of vigilance you can find out what is making you cloudy, and once we know we can just put it at her feet. That becomes the fuel for the sacrificial Fire within us. The Mother explains: *What is this booty?*

All the adverse forces at work in the world.

The world as it is today is in its greater part under the influence of the adverse forces. We call them adverse because they do not want the divine life; they oppose the divine life.

They want things to remain as they are, because it is their field and their power in the world. They know very well that they will lose all power and all influence the moment the Divine manifests. So they are fighting openly and completely against the Divine, and we have to tear away from them bit by bit, little by little, all the things they have conquered in the outer life. And so when it is torn away from them, it is so much gained.

On the other hand, if, as was done formerly, we try what is

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called clearing the ground, that is, if we let go all the things we consider as not capable of being transformed, then it is so much lost for the divine realisation.

All the realisations of Nature in the outer life, all that it has created—for example upon earth all this vegetable and animal kingdom, you see, and this ordinary human world which it has created—if we give up all this as an illusion incapable of expressing the Divine, then this is so much left in the hands of the adverse forces which try to keep it, no doubt, for their own ends. Whereas if we consider that all this may be at present deformed but that in its essence and origin not only does it belong to the Divine but is the Divine Himself, then we can work consciously, deliberately at the transformation and wrest all these things from the hostile influence which now governs them. (CWM 7: 401) We have said that in the past, humanity has made the path easy by rejecting ninety percent of life's activities by saying it is anti-divine. We have sold this much of our lives to the anti-divine forces, bargained with them by saying, I will give you this but don't come in my remaining ten per cent where I would like to practice. So the anti-divine forces were pleased not to disturb or bring temptation because they were enjoying ninety percent of life. But this has given sway to the anti-divine forces in this world.

That is why in the chapter on money, Sri Aurobindo tells us that we have to deal with money because it is in the hands of the anti-divine forces. We have to bring it back for the divine's use.

It has nothing to do with building schools, institutions or massive projects or becoming famous. All of these things are to be wrested from the hostile forces. So this is where our work is. Why are you asked to be so vigilant and conscious? Because this is the Mother's work. Of course, we have to go towards the psychic. Otherwise we can't survive against these forces. The

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psychic being is required because in these moments when outer nature is dealing with the world, we can camouflage ourselves in an ego sense, saying, 'I am all good and doing this for the Mother'. But she wants us to offer all the prejudices, passions, and emotions that arise in us at the altar of the inner fire. Until we know what this inner fire is, we have to endeavour to find it. It is easy to go to the Samadhi and pray, but we can't go to the Samadhi every hour of the day, can you? The power of the Samadhi is here within us, in the psychic being. If life has to be a constant inner offering to the inner self, we have to have the experience of the inner being. Only then can the *ghee*, the sacrificial fuel, be poured into it. These acts take away things from the adverse forces, bit by bit.

We are not great conquerors of continents, but each of her children conquering these small egoistic acts would add to her victory. We are all ordinary people, not those that belong to the elites, the spiritual monks and saints. We are the common public of this world so that we can give the Mother a little bit of this outer work. Inner works, many people have been offering.

But we are not here for personal enjoyment. Hence, she has put all of us into a vortex of work. Work is the field where we can gather our energies with our hands and offer them to her. Now, I understand, why the Mother has advised this perennial work.

You see, for everyone in the Ashram, whatever work he or she is doing, this preoccupation with the work is given so that we could offer something to her. Of course, those actions have their consequences. People ask what do we have to do in this Yoga. I don't think about that myself because she has taken charge of our inner being; we have nothing to bother about. Let us be her instruments. To be her instrument is like a spade that digs into the ground and gives that earth to the Mother. That, I suppose, is the best way we can be her children. We don't want to be

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saints, or great luminaries; we want to be her children. And to be her children is to give some of this earth mud to her.

(15th March 2001)

The revolution sought in the Integral Yoga is very radical and difficult. Humanity is not ready for this and has compromised by dividing the inner and outer worlds. Concentrating exclusively on the inner world, some persons did attain great heights of spiritual consciousness. But that is a more accessible and perhaps an unnatural path because it is not the aim or purpose of this creation to only experience an inner life and get realisations. The Integral Yoga says that we have to make the conquest of all of ourselves and the whole world for God. That being the aim of our Yoga, we can understand how very difficult it is. The compensation for the sadhak is that whatever little he or she can conquer back from this outer world and give it to the Divine will come in contact with the divine consciousness.

Therefore the sadhaks of the Integral Yoga have a stupendous task, but one that is much more lasting and useful for the world.

Two shortcuts that humanity has made was first the division between the outer and the inner life and the second was to simplify or narrow down the approach to the Divine. This latter means to select only one path— *bhakti*, *karma*, *jnana*, etc.—out of the many paths. It then becomes simpler for the sadhaka to follow that one path, but this is also denied to the Integral Yogin.

There is another direction in which the ordinary practice of Yoga arrives at a helpful but narrowing simplification which is denied to the sadhaka of the integral aim. The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being, the stimulating but also an embarrassing multiplicity of our personality, and the rich endless confusion of Nature.

This relates to the second aspect. The first was the division

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between the inner and the outer being, and again an over-simplification of our complex being. Now he takes up a description of ordinary life. And then, he explains the difference between ordinary life and the life of a sadhak.

To the ordinary man who lives upon his own waking surface, ignorant of the self's depths and vastnesses behind the veil, his psychological existence is fairly simple. A small but clamorous company of desires, some imperative intellectual and aesthetic cravings, some tastes, a few ruling or prominent ideas amid a great current of unconnected or ill-connected and mostly trivial thoughts, a number of more or less imperative vital needs, alternations of physical health and disease, a scattered and inconsequent succession of joys and griefs, frequent minor disturbances and vicissitudes and rarer strong searchings and upheavals of mind or body, and through it all Nature, partly with the aid of his thought and will, partly without or in spite of it, arranging these things in some rough practical fashion, some tolerable disorderly order,—this is the material of his existence.

This is a perfect sketch of our everyday ordinary life: a few desires, some intellectual cravings, some aesthetic tastes, some vital needs, some joys and griefs, some physical health and disease. Our life is beautifully described as a “tolerable disorderly order”!

The average human being even now is in his inward existence as crude and undeveloped as was the bygone primitive man in his outward life. But as soon as we go deep within ourselves,—and Yoga means a plunge into all the multiple profundities of the soul,—we find ourselves subjectively, as man in his growth has found himself objectively, surrounded by a whole complex world which we have to know and to conquer.

This is the path Sri Aurobindo has set upon: to find out the nature

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of this complex subjective world. He tells us that inner life is just as complex as the outer life. It is only that we have simplified it by a lack of

understanding, a lack of sufficient discovery, and perhaps tremendous ignorance. Saying that we have a mind, body, and a heart is only to say the least. That we are something more is a modern psychological discovery. Before modern psychology came in, most Westerners believed that the body-mind relation was made of just a few emotions. Some philosophies claim that everything is the body and that: the mind, heart and the soul are only an extension of the body. But thanks to psychology, we have come to discover that the body is not the only thing and that we have different levels of existence. And thanks to integral psychology, we realise the complex gamut of the inner world. And Sri Aurobindo is out to conquer that inner world.

The most disconcerting discovery is to find that every part of us—intellect, will, sense-mind, nervous or desire self, the heart, the body—has each, as it were, its own complex individuality and natural formation independent of the rest; it neither agrees with itself nor with the others nor with the representative ego which is the shadow cast by some central and centralising self on our superficial ignorance.

We usually talk about conquering the ego through control and detachment. As you see, there could be separate ego-selves on all these levels: the ego of the mind, the ego of the will, the ego of the sense-mind, the ego of the heart, and the ego of the body. Each is an individual being and level of existence. Imagine all these egos, which are dominating factors in our being and with the millions of cells we have in us, each with its own demands and differing nature.

It is not simply the question of trying to bring harmony between two persons or parts of our being; there are innumerable personalities within us, each one as strong and demanding and

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individualistic as the other, and it neither agrees with itself nor with the others. Look at the complexity! The intellectual ego is not only in conflict with the sense mind and heart, but within the intellectual level, there are

conflicting ideas. This is to say that we are a disharmony to the core. Precisely this is our being.

We find that we are composed not of one but many personalities and each has its own demands and differing nature. Our being is a roughly constituted chaos into which we have to introduce the principle of a divine order.

Moreover, we find that inwardly too, no less than outwardly, we are not alone in the world; the sharp separateness of our ego was no more than a strong imposition and delusion; we do not exist in ourselves, we do not really live apart in an inner privacy or solitude.

It is more complex than talking about ourselves by saying my emotions, life, fears and joys. Externally we know that we are not alone; we must depend on society and other individuals for our well-being and sustenance. Sri Aurobindo now draws our attention to the fact that even within, we are not alone.

Our mind is a receiving, developing and modifying machine into which there is being constantly passed from moment to moment a ceaseless foreign flux, a streaming mass of disparate materials from above, from below, from outside.

From above there is the higher consciousness, the higher levels of mind which influence us, from below there is the subconscious which pressurises us, and outside there are people, notions, opinions that are constantly impacting us.

Much more than half our thoughts and feelings are not our own in the sense that they take form out of ourselves; of hardly anything can it be said that it is truly original to our nature. A large part comes to us from others or from the environment, whether as raw material or as manufactured imports;...

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We take ready-made ideas and notions, and we call them our own; we sort of steal them and own them, or we take a raw ideal from here and an idea

from elsewhere and synthesise them from the different sources and say, “this is me speaking”.

Even thinking that this is “my” opinion is like indulging in vanity, for there is nothing called “my” idea. It is a beautiful exercise to take any random opinion, even the most minimum opinion, for example, “I like this dish”. Take the statement and analyse it and see how much it is our own. If we are honest, we will realise that we have gathered this taste from so many people, parents, friends, from watching television—all sorts of external inputs have given us this opinion of liking a particular dish. It was developed in our subconscious, and now we call the opinion our own.

...but still more largely they come from universal Nature here or from other worlds and planes and their beings and powers and influences...

Sri Aurobindo has explained all the different planes of consciousness interacting and influencing us each moment.

These levels include the vital worlds, mental planes, the subconscious, the subtle worlds, all those worlds which exist in a hierarchy as described in *Savitri*. There are two ways in which these planes and worlds interact with us: as vibrations and as living beings. We call the vital or adverse forces non-divine beings. Sometimes they may not necessarily be adverse because they have a vitality that can help us in our lives. However, they have a constant influence on this world. We now realise what a constant battle is going on on this earth. We, fortunately are not given that vision. If we had a subtle vision and could see the forces around us, we would perhaps go insane!

...for we are overtopped and environed by other planes of consciousness, mind planes, life planes, subtle matter planes, from which our life and action here are fed, or fed

on, pressed, dominated, made use of for the manifestation of their forms and forces.

The Mother narrates that when this earth was made, it was with a particular concentration of the Divine. Because it is of this specific divine consciousness, it contains all the difficulties in these universes. The Divine has come only upon this earth as a psychic being. In all the other universes, he is there as spirit, as a presence. In no other worlds there are psychic beings, but if we could meet a being on one of those planets after a hundred years, he might see an individual with a psychic being.

The Mother did not deny that there could be forms of a psychic being in other worlds. However, all those psychic beings were born first upon this earth, and once they are liberated, they may choose to dwell on other planets. Definitely, if it is a being with a psychic, its origin is planet earth. So we can see the amount of ideas Sri Aurobindo covers in a single paragraph.

The difficulty of our separate salvation is immensely increased by this complexity and manifold openness and subjection to the in-streaming energies of the universe. Of all this we have to take account, to deal with it, to know what is the secret stuff of our nature and its constituent and resultant motions and to create in it all a divine centre and a true harmony and luminous order.

That is to merit only the mind. Sri Aurobindo tells us that our mind is a receiving, developing, and modifying machine of all these universes, planes, beings, powers, and vibrations. Imagine that the same thing happens on the body and heart levels. What a tremendous and horrendous complex world and complex individual we are. This secret was seen and discovered by the Upanishadic rishis, and having seen it, they said it was perhaps impossible to deal with such complex things.

In the ordinary paths of Yoga the method used for dealing

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with these conflicting materials is direct and simple. One or another of the principal psychological forces in us is selected as our single means for attaining to the Divine; the rest is quieted into inertia or left to starve in its smallness.

This was the second simplification by the older spiritual traditions: to follow only one path.

The Bhakta, seizing on the emotional forces of the being, the intense activities of the heart, abides concentrated in the love of God, gathered up as into a single one-pointed tongue of fire; he is indifferent to the activities of thought, throws behind him the importunities of the reason, cares nothing for the mind's thirst for knowledge. All the knowledge he needs is his faith and the inspirations that well up from a heart in communion with the Divine. He has no use for any will to works that is not turned to the direct worship of the Beloved or the service of the temple.

Here we see the simplification of the approach. One may only be a Bhakta, devoted to the Lord, and need not bother about works or knowledge.

The man of Knowledge, self-confined by a deliberate choice to the force and activities of discriminative thought, finds release in the mind's hushed inward-drawn endeavour.

He concentrates on the idea of the self, succeeds by a subtle inner discernment in distinguishing its silent presence amid the veiling activities of Nature, and through the perceptive idea, arrives at the concrete spiritual experience.

There is another extreme with the man of knowledge, who concentrates only on this indrawn attitude, and finds a spiritual experience.

He is indifferent to the play of the emotions, deaf to the hunger-call of passion, closed to the activities of Life,—the

more blessed he, the sooner they fall away from him and leave him free, still and mute, the eternal non-doer.

It is a wonderful way in which Sri Aurobindo has explained it.

We seek knowledge alone and do not bother about emotions, life, relations, communications and work, be it in devotion, meditations, or thirst for knowledge. These have been sharply divided paths that there was no place for anything else.

The body is his stumbling-block, the vital functions are his enemies; if their demands can be reduced to a minimum, that is his great good fortune. The endless difficulties that arise from the enviroing world are dismissed by erecting firmly against them a defence of outer physical and inner spiritual solitude; safe behind a wall of inner silence, he remains impassive and untouched by the world and by others.

For this, it was best to go to a cave and not only mentally but also physically isolate oneself.

To be alone with oneself or alone with the Divine, to walk apart with God and his devotees, to entrench oneself in the single self-ward endeavour of the mind or Godward passion of the heart is the trend of these Yogas. The problem is solved by the excision of all but the one central difficulty which pursues the one chosen motive-force; into the midst of the dividing calls of our nature the principle of an exclusive concentration comes sovereignly to our rescue.

But for the sadhaka of the integral Yoga this inner or this outer solitude can only be incidents or periods in his spiritual progress.

There is here a small hint. Among our sadhaks, there may be a need of withdrawal occasionally, but these are for periods of spiritual progress. One may need to withdraw for a few weeks, or a couple of months, for a seclusion where you can concentrate on some of your inner workings, but not with the attitude of

rejecting society or life in general. There could be short periods of solitude as part of the journey. However, withdrawal as the philosophy of life is not acceptable.

Accepting life, he has to bear not only his own burden, but a great part of the world's burden too along with it, as a continuation of his own sufficiently heavy load. Therefore his Yoga has much more of the nature of a battle than others; but this is not only an individual battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. He has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world. Their representative character gives them a much more obstinate capacity of resistance, an almost endless right to recurrence.

Often he finds that even after he has won persistently his own personal battle, he has still to win it over and over again in a seemingly interminable war, because his inner existence has already been so much enlarged that not only it contains his own being with its well-defined needs and experiences, but is in solidarity with the being of others, because in himself he contains the universe.

As Sri Aurobindo says, in the Integral Yoga, reaching higher in consciousness becomes a double battle. A rise in consciousness brings specific changes in our complex nature. The unthinkable complexity is brought to some harmonisation. For example, it is like a magnet that draws all the scattered bits and pieces of iron into one central area. It holds them and if the magnet is moved, there is a little reorientation of all the pieces. That is what the first step of our Yoga and sadhana is like. By bringing forward the magnet called the psychic being, we could reorient and harmonise these different elements of our nature around that psychic charging.

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Centering the outer being around the psychic is the first step.

The second step is, as we are conquering the beings within, the arena of our work increases outside of us. For example, when walking on the street, we may see people on the road walking from one end of it to the other end. We may see a hundred or two hundred people, but if we stand on top of a building, we can see people on several streets at once. Then from a mountain top, we can see a still more extensive area. What happens is that as we are individually growing, we are consolidating our being as well as extending it. These are two simultaneous processes that occur in the Integral Yoga. As we develop our vision of things, our contact of consciousness with others also increases, and others' difficulties and problems also come into our camp.

As Sri Aurobindo says, therefore this Yoga has much "more of the nature of a battle than others... it is a collective war waged over a considerable country", and even after winning his battle,

"he has still to win it over and over again."

The difficulties of others keep coming into us, and the battle never ends. An the Integral sadhak's inner being's existence may become so vast that it can be in solidarity with the Mother's consciousness. Here is the Mother's explanation: *Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo has said: "He [the sadhak of the integral Yoga] has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representative as the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world."*

Listen my child, I am sorry, but you don't listen when I am speaking? This was exactly Tara's question and I have explained everything to her. Then how do you ask a similar question?

You did not understand? I have explained everything.

Mother, you said that each one represents an impossibility.

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In this case, each one should concentrate on solving this impossibility, shouldn't he?

Not necessarily concentrate on that. But he has to face it, whether he knows it or not—an aspect of the problem.

I have already said this once. When you represent the possibility of a victory, you always have within you the thing contrary to this victory, which is your perpetual trouble.

Each one has his own difficulty. And I have given the example already once, I think. For instance, a being who must represent fearlessness, courage, you know, a capacity to hold on without giving way before all dangers and all fights, usually somewhere in his being he is a *terrible* coward, and he has to struggle against this almost constantly because this represents the victory he has to win in the world.

It is like a being who ought to be good, full of compassion and generosity; somewhere in his being he is sharp, sour and sometimes even bad; and he has to struggle against this in order to be the other thing. And so on. It goes into *all* the details. It's like that.

And when you see a very black shadow somewhere, very black, something that's truly painful you know, you can be sure that you have in you the possibility of the corresponding light in you. (CWM 7: 414-415)

Once when I was sitting in front of the Mother I had a dark experience. It was so strange, not only mentally unbelievable but emotionally unacceptable. I wrote to the Mother and told her of my experience. She replied with more or less the same message, that now that you are aware of it you can now work it out. It was her grace that showed me this darkness within me, to make me aware that which I have to conquer. The conversation continues: *Why does it increase instead of diminishing?*

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What does that mean, “it increases”?

Here it increases? Yes. Because this is the place of the Realisation.

In life you are unconscious, you pass all your life in an absolutely vague semi-consciousness, you know nothing about yourself, except just an appearance, nothing more.

And you will always be incapable of fulfilling your mission and therefore you do not meet the obstacle in the heart of the difficulty, only an appearance; you are all in the midst of appearances. It's simply that. So your faults are small, your virtues are small, your capacities are mediocre and your difficulties are mediocre, you are entirely mediocre, constantly.

It is only when you begin to walk on the path of Realisation that your possibilities become real, and your difficulties become much greater—quite naturally. Things become intensified.

This is the way I tell people, “If you can't find peace and solitude in yourself, can't isolate yourself sufficiently to enter within yourself, if you can't do this in the conditions of ordinary life, it is certainly not here that you will be able to do it, because your first difficulty will be that you will feel invaded by everything and everybody, and will be absolutely unable to isolate yourself. It will be good if you learn to do it before coming here. But if you don't know how to do it, you will find it very difficult to do so here.”

And for everything it is the same way. People who are ill-natured, those who have no control over their anger, for instance, are much worse here than in the ordinary world, because in the ordinary world they are controlled by all the necessities of life and because, for example, when they go to an office, if they get into a temper against the boss, they are thrown out. While here, we don't throw them out; they are simply, “Try to control yourself.” (Ibid: 415-416)

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That is the beauty of this place, you can do what you want, and there is no one to stop you. No boss to tell you to get out, and you have the legal and spiritual freedom to do what you want.

This is probably the most challenging place in the entire world!

(22nd March 2001)

In the chapter on “Self-Consecration”, Sri Aurobindo compares the essentials of the Integral Yoga with other yogas. He describes the tremendous complexity of the individual nature of human beings. Apart from the difficulties within us, he brings to our notice the forces from the other worlds and planes that constantly influence us which compounds the complexity.

Where do we stand as individuals? We may take pride in our individuality, but how much are we individuals, insulated from other forces and influences? Because of this immense complexity of the individual being, the old yogas chose only one aspect of the human being to work upon, be it the intellect, devotion, or karma and will. In this manner, they tried to simplify the human effort. They effectuated an over-simplification, though it has served its purpose until now. But Sri Aurobindo has come not to simplify the human effort but to fulfil Nature in its attempt.

Nature takes an integral view, so Sri Aurobindo brings back humanity to the path of Nature, with the difference that there is a hastening, a *tapasya*, an effort which shortens what Nature would take aeons to do. Otherwise, his Yoga is Nature’s Yoga.

That is why he can declare that “All life is Yoga”.

Apart from the difficulty of the complexity of human Nature, Sri Aurobindo also points out the need for the expansion of the individual consciousness to the collective. The more one advances in Yoga, the more one has responsibility for others, which makes it more difficult. That is why we are sometimes at a loss to understand if we are doing any Yoga! It is very difficult to gauge one’s progress because there is no single barometer. For

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example, in the Yoga of Knowledge, one can say, ‘I have gained the status of the silence of the mind; I am living in a kind of nirvanic peace.’ There

are some parameters where other yogas could be judged; there are steps of progress in other yogas. But here, it becomes challenging.

What happens is that we enter a zone where we don't know if we are progressing. We keep going ahead. There is hardly time to, look back, and question what we are doing. Some people may get into the wrong idea that he is doing Yoga, but that is also a falsity. Sri Aurobindo tells us that this is a great, interminable war. We have to win it repeatedly in a seemingly interminable war.

It may sound as if only one person is responsible for doing the Yoga for others, and that only one would make the efforts and others would reap the fruits. However, it is not like that. The Mother clarifies this and explains the process. In the Ashram, if there are fifty people, it is not that there is one person doing Yoga for all. She says if out of the fifty, all their work, then it becomes one person doing yoga for one person only. Try to understand these statistics. If twenty people out of fifty are doing Yoga and thirty are not doing it, then these twenty have to share the burden of the thirty. Then it becomes one to one and a half. But if all the fifty are trying and making an effort, then it is not a burden on any one person. Although I am connected with the other forty-nine, I will not be much burdened. It is this kind of group that is called in her vocabulary a group consciousness.

She had explained and expresses in the early years that the Ashram has a significant number of people, but it is not yet a group soul. Out of the many people there, only a few are making an effort and the rest are still preparing. That creates a tremendous drag on the few and the process becomes slow.

Here is a sentence that is very important: "Their representative

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character gives them a much more obstinate capacity of resistance and an almost endless right to recurrence." Remember, when she said that each one of us represents a difficulty to be conquered, this is what she means. Each one of us has one problem to be conquered and mastered. And if that is done within us, this will act like a penicillin for those other representative characters. The world has within it groups of such specific problems of

which a specimen has turned to the Mother to work out that difficulty. This is the intricacy of this Yoga: Each of us is a chemical laboratory in which the Mother is trying to work out a particular difficulty. It means to keep ourselves open to the Mother because most of us don't even know which difficulty we represent. We do our work and meditation and call the Mother, but can we say which difficulty we mean to represent in the world? Yet if we turn to her, she will see "the black spot" within us and correct it. That is why, as we discussed previously, a change in our nature is essential. The changing of one defect in one person will have the hundredth-monkey effect: if one thing changes at one place, there will be a complete change at the other end of the world.

On one of the Japanese islands there were monkeys who were taught to wash the fruit before eating it. In the beginning one monkey washed it in the river, the second one did likewise and it went up to the ninety ninth monkey. And by the time the hundredth monkey did that, monkeys started washing their fruit all across Europe! This is called the hundredth-monkey phenomenon. This is exactly how spiritual things work. This Ashram may be a little spot in this universe, but what is worked out here will work out as the hundredth-monkey phenomenon.

The responsibility that we share for the world is that if we can be open to the Mother and this little defect of our external nature can be corrected it will help others to correct the same defect in themselves. The existence of the Ashram per say is to transform

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the external nature. It is a lab where each difficulty conquered is a difficulty conquered in the world.

Nor is the seeker of the integral fulfilment permitted to solve too arbitrarily even the conflict of his own inner members. He has to harmonise deliberate knowledge with unquestioning faith; he must conciliate the gentle soul of love with the formidable need of power; the passivity of the soul that lives content in transcendent calm has to be fused with the activity of the divine

helper and the divine warrior. To him as to all seekers of the spirit there are offered for solution the oppositions of the reason, the clinging hold of the senses, the perturbations of the heart, the ambush of the desires, the clog of the physical body; but he has to deal in another fashion with their mutual and internal conflicts and their hindrance to his aim, for he must arrive at an infinitely more difficult perfection in the handling of all this rebel matter.

This is the last stage. We have seen the individual versus other human beings, the individual versus other worlds, now the individual versus himself. It is the conflict of his own inner members which is the last stage. It is the mind versus the heart, the gentle soul of love versus the need, the greed, the hunger for power, passivity versus activity. They are all within us, and this is the great battle.

Accepting them as instruments for the divine realisation and manifestation, he has to convert their jangling discords, to enlighten their thick darknesses, to transfigure them separately and all together, harmonising them in themselves and with each other,—integrally, omitting no grain or strand or vibration, leaving no iota of imperfection anywhere.

An exclusive concentration, or even a succession of concentrations of that kind, can be in his complex work only a temporary convenience; it has to be abandoned as soon as

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its utility is over. An all-inclusive concentration is the difficult achievement towards which he must labour.

The difficulty is that of “leaving no iota of imperfection anywhere.” This kind of work can begin with an exclusive concentration. That is only the beginning, but if we want to change some part of our being, we can concentrate on it for some time. That is what we have to begin with, but at the same time, it should not land us in the problem of excluding other works. If I am a mental being, I should not only concentrate on the issues of the mind but also attend to the issues of the vital and physical.

Concentration on one part is good, but here he is speaking of the all-inclusive concentration. The Mother explains:

...a concentration which is open to all that exists; it is a concentration which does not oppose anything. It is a concentration which is open. It means that one must not reject certain things from himself and practice an exclusive concentration on a particular point while neglecting all the others. All the possibilities should be admitted and pursued.

(CWM 7: 417)

Now we have a new concept: to begin with this sadhana, we need concentration.

Sri Aurobindo writes,

Concentration is indeed the first condition of any Yoga, but it is an all-receiving concentration that is the very nature of the integral Yoga. A separate strong fixing of the thought, of the emotions or of the will on a single idea, object, state, inner movement or principle is no doubt a frequent need here also; but this is only a subsidiary helpful process. A wide massive opening, a harmonised concentration of the whole being in all its parts and through all its powers upon the One who is the All is the larger action of this Yoga without which it cannot achieve its purpose. For it is the consciousness

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that rests in the One and that acts in the All to which we aspire; it is this that we seek to impose on every element of our being and on every movement of our nature. This wide and concentrated totality is the essential character of the Sadhana and its character must determine its practice.

We usually say sadhana requires aspiration, rejection, and surrender. Now we learn that concentration is the first condition of any Yoga. Obviously, taking up any study, research, or work requires concentration.

Concentration is the base of any good action. It is an everyday reality in our life that concentration is the first thing. But in Integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo says, “an all-receiving concentration” is necessary.

First, let us define concentration. In the dictionary, the meaning is to focus our attention on a particular thing. The Mother's definition is as follows.

What is concentration?

It is to bring back all the scattered threads of consciousness to a single point, a single idea. Those who can attain perfect attention succeed in everything they undertake; they will always make a rapid progress. And this kind of concentration can be developed exactly like the muscles; one may follow different systems, different methods of training. Today we know that the most pitiful weakling, for example, can with discipline become as strong as anyone else. One should not have a will which flickers out like a candle.

The will, and concentration must be cultivated; it is a question of method, of regular exercise. If you will, you can: But the thought "What's the use?" must not come in to weaken the will. The idea that one is born with a certain character and can do nothing about it is a stupidity. (CWM 4: 5)

What is the difference between meditation and concentration?

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Meditation is a purely mental activity, it interests only the mental being. One can concentrate while meditating but this is a mental concentration; one can get a silence but it is a purely mental silence, and the other parts of the being are kept immobile and inactive so as not to disturb the meditation. (Ibid: 7)

Meditation is another name for mental concentration. That means you are concentrating on one specific idea, object or deity. And you are focused so much on that mental being that you have suppressed the rest of the being — the emotions, the body, everything is suppressed or suspended.

You may pass twenty hours of the day in meditation and for the remaining four hours you will be an altogether ordinary man because only the mind has been occupied—the rest of the being, the vital and the physical, is kept under pressure so that it may not disturb. In meditation nothing is directly done for the other parts of the being.

Certainly this indirect action can have an effect, but... I have known in my life people whose capacity for mediation was remarkable but who, when not in meditation, were quite ordinary men, even at times ill-natured people, who would become furious if their meditation was disturbed. For they had learnt to master only their mind, not the rest of their being.

Concentration is more active state. You may concentrate mentally, you may concentrate vitally, psychically, physically, and you may concentrate integrally. Concentration or the capacity to gather oneself at one point is more difficult than meditation. (Ibid: 7-8)

Remember it is more challenging to gather oneself at one point because meditation is mental, but concentration is on different levels. It is more difficult to bring down the forces on all

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three beings and put them under the control of one point. She further adds,

You may gather together one portion of your being or consciousness or you may gather together the whole of your consciousness or even fragments of it, that is, the concentration may be partial, total or integral, and in each case the result will be different.

If you have the capacity to concentrate, your meditation will be more interesting and easier. But one can meditate without concentrating. Many follow a chain of ideas in their meditation—it is meditation, not concentration. (Ibid: 8) These are important ideas. Meditation can be without concentration because there are different types of meditation.

One is to concentrate on a particular being and idea. Another type of meditation is to follow a chain of ideas. This kind of meditation concentrates not on a single idea but on a chain of thoughts coming. Swami Vivekananda describes that as we follow the chain of ideas, our mind gets exhausted and falls into silence. That is one method of mentally exhausting oneself. But that is a long, long journey. We will see one thought leading to

another and another—it is endless because the thoughts can travel for hours on end. Eventually, either the mind or the body gets exhausted, and you fall asleep may be.

Is it possible to distinguish the moment when one attains perfect concentration from when, starting from this concentration, one opens oneself to the universal Energy?

Yes. You concentrate on something or simply you gather yourself together as much as is possible for you and when you attain a kind of perfection in concentration, if you can sustain this perfection for a sufficiently long time, then a door opens and you pass beyond the limit of your ordinary consciousness—you enter into a deeper and higher

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knowledge. Or you go within. Then you may experience a kind of dazzling light, an inner wonder, a beatitude, a complete knowledge, a total silence. There are, of course, many possibilities but the phenomenon is always the same.

To have this experience all depends upon your capacity to maintain your concentration sufficiently long at its highest point of perfection. (CWM 4: 8-9)

To open to the universal energy, one can “concentrate on something or gather together as much as is possible for you when you attain a kind of perfection in concentration.” This would be an ingathering, to sit quietly with that in-gathered poise. It is not any one thing that is the focus of the concentration. We are not seeking mental silence, an emotional quietude, or the body’s immobility. I am sure you have experienced that at some time or the other, there is a moment of the day when you come out on the terrace or the seashore, and it is quiet, and there is a vastness, and you feel suddenly ingathered. There may be hundreds of people on the road, honking and much noise, but somewhere the being has shut itself in and is alone with the sky, and you will experience this ingathered moment.

Here is a graphic description from the Mother about this experience:

You concentrate on something or simply you gather yourself together as much as is possible for you and when you attain a kind of perfection in concentration, if you can sustain this perfection for a sufficiently long time, then a door opens and you pass beyond the limit of your ordinary consciousness—you enter into a deeper and higher knowledge. Or you go within. Then you may experience a kind of dazzling light, an inner wonder, a beatitude, a complete knowledge, a total silence.

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To have this experience is it necessary to concentrate every time?

In the beginning, yes, for you have not the capacity to keep what you have acquired, to maintain your concentration at its maximum—you slip back and lose even the memory of the experience you have had. But if you once follow a path, it is easier to follow the same path a second time and so on. The second concentration is therefore easier than the first one.

You must persevere in your concentration till you come to the point when you no longer lose the inner contact.

From that time onward you must remain in this inner and higher consciousness from where you can do everything. You see your body and the material world and you know what is to be done and how to do it.

That is the first aim of concentration, but naturally not the last. (Ibid: 8-9)

You have caught the idea of the first time and the second time. This is why she asks us to have a particular time for meditation. And this is one of the values of collective meditation either in the Ashram or the Playground. We may not be able to concentrate during meditation, but the atmosphere, the silence, makes us ingathered. We may be restless, our mind wandering, but even for those two to three minutes, sometimes our mind falls pretty silent. It is not the silence of the mind but the silence of the being. And a regular movement of this meditation going every day at the same time, the same place has its impact on us.

Then these moments increase—after the first one, the second becomes easier.

That is the advantage of the specific hours of meditation in the Ashram's Playground. Otherwise, at home, we may have a different time for meditation. Something or another happens: the phone rings, someone comes to the door, etc. But if we have

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this external discipline, some formatting of our external life, it is easier and better. Left to ourselves, our mental and vital may be so indisciplined that they become disobedient. This rhythm is a beautiful arrangement; it is not compulsory, but once one tastes this kind of rhythm of meditation, one would like to follow it.

The first aim of concentration is this, “but naturally not the last.”

To attain that concentration much effort is necessary; an immediate or even a quick result is rarely possible. But if the inner door has once been opened, you may be sure that it will open again if you know how to persevere.

As long as the door has not been opened, you may doubt your capacity, but once opened, no more doubt is possible, if you go on willing and aspiring.

This experience has a considerable value. (Ibid) Even before we can have aspiration, rejection and surrender, on the pragmatic side of the do's and don'ts, this concentration is an exercise we could follow. In another conversation with the Mother, this question came up:

I begin to meditate and pray ardently and fervently, my aspiration is intense and my prayer full of devotion; and then, after a certain length of time—sometimes short, sometimes long—the aspiration becomes mechanical and the prayer purely verbal, What should I do?

This is not an individual case, it is extremely common.

I have already said this a number of times, but still it was in passing—people who claim to meditate for hours every day and spend their whole day praying, to me it seems that three-fourths of the time it must be absolutely mechanical; that is to say, it loses all its sincerity. For human nature is not made for that and the human mind is not built that way.

In order to concentrate and meditate one must do an

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exercise which I could call the “mental muscle-building” of concentration. One must really make an effort—as one makes a muscular effort, for instance, to lift a weight—if you want the concentration to be sincere and not artificial. (CWM 8: 227) What the Mother is against is making meditation a mechanical practice. Each time it should be a fresh effort. How beautifully she links up the effort with sincerity. Sitting at a fixed time is not sincerity; it is more an image. But if we make an effort, then it becomes sincere. How subtle is this sadhana that you cannot claim anything? You have to be sincere. And the other name of sincerity is perhaps “perfect effort”.

The same thing for the urge of prayer: suddenly a flame is lit, you feel an enthusiastic *élan*, a great fervor, and express it in words which, to be true, must be spontaneous, This must come from the heart, directly, with ardour, without passing through the head. That is a prayer, If there are just words jostling in our head, it is no longer a prayer. Well if we don't throw more fuel into the flame, after a time it dies out. If we do not give our muscles time to relax, if you don't slacken the movement, our muscles lose the capacity of taking strains. So it is quite natural and even indispensable, for the intensity of the movement to cease after a certain time. Naturally, someone who is accustomed to lifting weights can do it much longer than one who has never done it before. It is the same thing; someone who is accustomed to concentration can concentrate much longer than one who is not in the habit. But for everybody there comes a time when one must let go, relax, in order to begin again.

Therefore, whether immediately or after a few minutes or a few hours, if the movement becomes mechanical, it means that you have relaxed and that you need no longer pretend that you are meditating. It is better to do something useful.

If you cannot manage to do a little exercise, for instance,

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in order to neutralise the effect of the mental tension, you may read or try to note down what happened to you, you may express things. Then that produces a relaxation, the necessary relaxation. But the duration of the meditation is only relatively important; its length simply shows how far you are accustomed to this activity.

Of course, this may increase greatly, but there is always a limit; when the limit is reached, one must stop, that's all. It is not an insincerity, it is an incapacity, What becomes insincere is if you pretend to meditate when you are no longer meditating or you say prayers like many people who go to the temple or to church, perform ceremonies and repeat their prayers as one repeats a more or less well-learnt lesson.

Then it is no longer either prayer or meditation, it is simply a profession. It is not interesting. (CWM 8: 228) When one cannot meditate, it is better to accept one's incapacity and relax. That relaxation is to come out of your poise and meditation. Do something more practical; note some of the things you have observed. Just read a few pages of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo, or go out and do your everyday work. She gives a beautiful example of the physical body: Since I cannot do weight lifting all twenty-four hours, I do just half an hour and then relax. This alternation of effort and relaxation and effort is better.

Similarly, when concentration slackens, this can be accepted.

Don't keep pressurising yourself with a fixed and rigid rule for meditation. This clarifies the difference between concentration and meditation and how to do them in a balanced way.

The point that Sri Aurobindo is making is this: A wide massive opening, a harmonised concentration of the whole being in all its parts and through all its powers upon the One who is the All is the larger action of this Yoga without which it cannot achieve its purpose.

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We often think that reading *The Synthesis of Yoga* is easy, but it is very intricate. “A wide massive opening” means there has to be a concentration in the different parts of the being. This concentration is the focus of our being, of the different parts of the being, on one particular object. That object must be that one Supreme Consciousness. If our whole being is ingathered around that supreme power that we call the soul or psychic being, only then can we follow what is written in these books.

For it is the consciousness that rests in the One and that acts in the All to which we aspire; it is this that we seek to impose on every element of our being and every movement of our nature.

In simple words, the ideal situation is that we always act in an ingathered mode. This is the meaning of Yoga. It is not just living in the mental consciousness but stepping within and living deeper. If one can maintain this poise of consciousness which directly reflects the inner psychic consciousness, then the way you respond to the outer world becomes that of a Yogi.

Earlier, she said that the mind is like an open bazaar of influences: from other people, from other planes, of vital forces, both good and evil, etc. Now, if I am ingathered, and my contact with the Divine is fortified, these influences cannot reach me, and when I respond to the world, my actions and my words (in the sense that it comes out of this inner being, there is nothing

“mine” per se) will have meaning, will have love, will have understanding and will vibrate the peace which many have felt with great yogis with whom they had personal contact. This is why when you approach certain

people, you feel that vibration of love, peace and joy. They may not speak much philosophy or much about anything, but they are ingathered, and every word spoken is beautiful, full of love, harmony, and blessings. This can

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be done on a human level; you can imagine what happens with the Mother, who is the centre of that ingathering!

This wide and concentrated totality is the essential character of the Sadhana and its character must determine its practice.

To the extent that we act from this ingatheredness, we are sadhaks. In the manner we respond from our external being, we are normal ordinary human beings. It is thus required to step in and live within. Our understanding always keeps increasing and changing and improving. *The Synthesis of Yoga* is a thing to be experienced and not just read through and say, ‘we have taken twelve or fifteen years to study it; spending even twelve or fifteen minutes every day practising would be more valuable.

To experience even a little of what we read today would be excellent for us.

(5th April 2001)

In the chapter on “Self-Consecration”, the last paragraph we dealt with the requirement of the Integral Yoga that there must be “a harmonised concentration of the whole being in all its parts and through all its powers upon the One.” A fine example of this is the Mother’s own concentration. When in Paris, she was in this mode, her whole being was held together with tremendous concentration. In that mode of concentration she was crossing the road, and a tram was coming down the road, which she hadn’t noticed. As the tram came close, the Mother suddenly felt it, and she was pushed back. It is that kind of concentration where one almost loses touch with the outer world. Of course, people say it is not practical, but if one is in contact with that supreme One, he takes care of you. It is perhaps the same kind of concentration that the Mother had when she was given the

Bhagavad Gita and was asked to concentrate on Sri Krishna, the immanent Divine.

It was this harmonised concentration of the whole being that

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enabled her to achieve the realisation of the immanent Divine within one single month!

Sri Aurobindo stresses that concentration is the first condition of any Yoga. In his own life, we have a magnificent example of his tremendous concentration during his first few years in Pondicherry from 1910 to 1914. Those who have gone through his *Record of Yoga* will see the real meaning of concentration.

Every minute and hour of the day, he knew exactly what he wanted to do. He maintained diary notes of his practice of concentration on each of the elements of Yoga, which he called the *sapta chatustaya*, the seven tetras. Sri Aurobindo concentrated on each aspect of the Yoga, not necessarily one after the other, but he focussed on one point. He kept his notes like Einstein or any other scientist who sits in the lab and observes the changes in the chemistry or other aspect upon which they are experimenting. Sri Aurobindo did the same thing every day. He would write, for example '7 a.m. I achieved this, 8 a.m. I achieved this', and so on, throughout the day, and sometimes he foretold what his next day's achievements would be. Then the next day, he would note, 'yes, I have achieved what I foresaw'. We would be amazed at the things he jotted down! Sometimes he would look at a bird and note all its simple movements. Often he would note an ant's actions, how it was moving, and then he would predict its next direction. He did the same for the birds he saw out of the window.

It is not that concentration necessarily means living in a higher consciousness cut off from the outer circumstances something divine. He developed a contact from the smallest ant movements to the divine ones. He lived most of his time in the Brahma Jnana, in the eternal consciousness,

while he was doing outer works all along. He would have normal conversations with those few disciples who were with him. One day he asked his

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disciple what was there for lunch. He was told there was a bit of rice, green chilli, oil and salt. He accepted it with all detachment and without getting disturbed.

I have often asked myself why he recorded all he has done.

For whose sake? Was it for his own achievement or attainment?

The answer came later when the ashramites grew in number, and more devotees came, and they asked him questions of all kinds. In *Letters on Yoga*, every question is addressed, and he could answer each one with absolute authenticity of experience because during those four to six years of intense tapasya, he went through all those experiences himself. It is a remarkable thing how these Avatars went through all the problems first themselves and only then asked us to face them.

It is quite interesting that during the same years starting in 1912 up to 1920, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother maintained a record of their Yoga. The Mother wrote it in the form of a diary, *Prayers and Meditations*, and Sri Aurobindo wrote the *Record of Yoga*. Theirs was a great tapasya which they did simultaneously.

It is an interesting study if one can compare the similarity of experiences between the *Prayers and Meditations* and *Record of Yoga*. A strange bond of mystery ties Sri Aurobindo and the Mother even when they were apart. And earlier, even though physically they did not know each other until 1910, on another level there was a bond.

When we read this, it is not just a reading of Sri Aurobindo telling us to concentrate. Every word he has written is a word that has arisen from his experience, and it carries tremendous consciousness and strength. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, an incomplete book, is a systematisation of his own

Yoga. Here he has written it as a kind of systematic philosophy but exactly based on his *Record of Yoga*. It is a point-to-point reflection of his own practice of the *sapta chatushtaya*. Thus this book is

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based on his own personal Yoga; it is not a thesis or a theory.

We should keep that in mind when reading this book. It is his first-hand experience.

But even though the concentration of all the being on the Divine is the character of the Yoga, yet is our being too complex a thing to be taken up easily and at once, as if we were taking up the world in a pair of hands, and set in its entirety to a single task. Man in his effort at self-transcendence has usually to seize on some one spring or some powerful leverage in the complicated machine that his nature is; this spring or lever he touches in preference to others and uses it to set the machine in motion towards the end that he has in view. In his choice it is always Nature itself that should be his guide. But here it must be Nature at her highest and widest in him, not at her lowest or in some limiting movement.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that this kind of concentration of all the parts of the being may not be possible initially. We have to take up one aspect, one spring or powerful leverage. This spring or leverage is one's *swabhava*. We start the Yoga based on our own *swabhava*. That becomes the starting point. If one is an intellectual or a worker, one may begin with that. That strongest point "must be Nature at her highest and widest in him." We start Yoga where we stand but with our strongest points.

In her lower vital activities it is desire that Nature takes as her most powerful leverage; but the distinct character of man is that he is a mental being, not a merely vital creature. As he can use his thinking mind and will to restrain and correct his life impulses, so too he can bring in the action of a still higher luminous mentality aided by the deeper soul in him, the

psychic being, and supersede by these greater and purer motive-powers the domination of the vital and sensational

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force that we call desire. He can entirely master or persuade it and offer it up for transformation to its divine Master. This higher mentality and this deeper soul, the psychic element in man, are the two grappling hooks by which the Divine can lay hold upon his nature.

He has used a wonderful expression, “two grappling hooks”.

Man is a mental personality who can achieve a higher state of mind and also some deeper entity within him called the psychic being. What are these two and why is Sri Aurobindo bringing in these two suddenly? Only to tell us that our *swabhava*, whether mental or vital or physical, says, ‘let us start with this *swabhava* but remember that we have our two strongest points

— our inner psychic being and the levels beyond the mind’. For an intellect, he would go beyond the mind and bring in those high levels of forces. For a Bhakta, he would go into the deeper psychic levels and bring out a psychic power. And these are the two, as he calls them, the “two grappling hooks” by which the Divine can lay hold upon his nature.

The higher mind in man is something other, loftier, purer, vaster, more powerful than the reason or logical intelligence.

The animal is a vital and sensational being; man, it is said, is distinguished from the animal by the possession of reason.

But that is a very summary, a very imperfect and misleading account of the matter. For reason is only a particular and limited utilitarian and instrumental activity that proceeds from something much greater than itself, from a power that dwells in an ether more luminous, wider, illimitable.

The true and ultimate, as distinguished from the immediate or intermediate importance of our observing, reasoning, inquiring, judging intelligence is

that it prepares the human being for the right reception and right action of a Light from

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above which must progressively replace in him the obscure light from below that guides the animal.

We usually say that humans are rational beings. We have reason and intelligence to guide us. But this can lead to a misunderstanding if we say that we are always rational and only rational. Sri Aurobindo says that reason or intelligence is our highest expression at present. That could be true. But what is this Reason? It receives a light from above. So it guides by reflecting a higher light. This “us” is a selected “us” because maybe ninety percent of humanity is not guided by reason but by animal instincts and desires of the vital. The reason is only an instrument of higher consciousness. That is why he says, “a Light from above which must progressively replace in him the obscure light from below.” Gradually this higher light must replace reason. This higher light could be from the higher mind, intuition, Overmind or Sachchidananda.

More specifically, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother refer to the intuitive level, that reason is a reflection of the intuitive mind.

One may ask, “is it not of Supermind?” Well, originally, that is its origin, but we are concerned with the next step. The next step is the intuition. It is intuition that must replace reason. Above the ordinary mind, there is a higher mind, an illumined mind, intuition and an Overmind. We are skipping the higher and illumined mind because intuition is a kind of knowledge which is a conclusive revelation of something. An example would be if we had a problem in mathematics, engineering or anything that is the first thing reason does is to take steps to reach the conclusion. Step one, step two, etc., and after some step, we conclude that this is the answer to this problem. The difference between reason and intuition is that intuition gives me direct knowledge, and reason gives me step-by-step acquired

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knowledge. The Mother would tell us as children to replace reason with intuition.

The latter also has a rudimentary reason, a kind of thought, a soul, a will and keen emotions; even though less developed, its psychology is yet the same in kind as man's.

Human psychology and animal's are similar to each other.

Although humans are supposed to have a reason, our primary responses are similar to that of animals. This shows that we are still partly at the animal level.

But all these capacities in the animal are automatically moved and strictly limited, almost even constituted by the lower nervous being. All animal perceptions, sensibilities, activities are ruled by nervous and vital instincts, cravings, needs, satisfactions, of which the nexus is the life-impulse and vital desire. Man too is bound, but less bound, to this automatism of the vital nature. Man can bring an enlightened will, an enlightened thought and enlightened emotions to the difficult work of his self-development; he can more and more subject to these more conscious and reflecting guides the inferior function of desire. In proportion as he can thus master and enlighten his lower self, he is man and no longer an animal.

Where the animal is bound by his psychological limitations, man need not be. Basically, they start from the same bases. My emotional response to a situation and the animal's response to the same situation is similar. But if I utilise my reason, then my response could be different. For example, the animal, if it is hurt, becomes angry. But if I have a reasoning capacity, I can say 'no, I should not be angry; I should control my anger'.

Therefore Sri Aurobindo says that it is to the proportion that I can control the emotions that I am a man. Otherwise, if I cannot control these basic emotions in my mind I am, the same animal in a different form.

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When he can begin to replace desire altogether by a still greater enlightened thought and sight and will in touch with the Infinite, consciously subject to a diviner will than his own, linked to a more universal and transcendent knowledge, he has commenced the ascent towards the superman; he is on his upward march towards the Divine.

This is a criterion to be a superman. People ask if they can become a superman, and the answer is 'yes'. Here is a beautiful clarification, "When he can begin to replace desire altogether by a still greater enlightened thought and sight and will in touch with the Infinite, consciously subject to a diviner will than his own" then he could move towards supermanhood. The animal is distinguished by being ruled by desire; mankind is distinguished by using reason. To go towards superman, we have to do two things: first, replace desire; second, go beyond reason. If we go beyond reason, then we become more and more universal and transcendent in knowledge; as Sri Aurobindo says, "he has commenced the ascent towards the superman". The key word is

"commenced". There is a far-off link here between this criterion for going towards the superman and the Bhagavad Gita's injunction to practice desireless, *nishkama karma*.

It is not only to be the true human being that we need to go beyond desire; it also involves our journey towards supermanhood.

With one movement, we are going further away from the animal and approaching the superman. To become desireless, to move towards *nishkama karma*, is to do divine work; it is not just to be a better person. It is to commence one's journey towards Superman.

Supermanhood is a possibility; it is not an impossible goal but within our grasp. It is not somewhere out there but is in every action we do. How do we do it? Move away from the animal desire to the higher levels of mental consciousness.

With these two yardsticks of action, we can commence

our journey to superman. It is a very encouraging thought.

Otherwise, we may think that superman is not for me; let me be a good human being. There is no good human being. There may be a moral human being, but spiritually there is no good human being. Spiritually you are moving towards super manhood and away from animalhood.

It is, then, in the highest mind of thought and light and will or it is in the inner heart of deepest feeling and emotion that we must first centre our consciousness,—in either of them or, if we are capable, in both together,—and use that as our leverage to lift the nature wholly towards the Divine.

The concentration of an enlightened thought, will and heart turned in unison towards one vast goal of our knowledge, one luminous and infinite source of our action, one imperishable object of our emotion is the starting-point of the Yoga. And the object of our seeking must be the very fount of the Light which is growing in us, the very origin of the Force which we are calling to move our members. Our one objective must be the Divine himself to whom, knowingly or unknowingly, something always aspires in our secret nature. There must be a large, many-sided yet single concentration of the thought on the idea, the perception, the vision, the awakening touch, the soul's realisation of the one Divine. There must be a flaming concentration of the heart on the seeking of the All and Eternal and, when once we have found him, a deep plunging and immersion in the possession and ecstasy of the All-Beautiful.

There must be a strong and immovable concentration of the will on the attainment and fulfilment of all that the Divine is and a free and plastic opening of it to all that he intends to manifest in us. This is the triple way of the Yoga.

He says, "Our one objective must be the Divine himself whom knowingly or unknowingly something always aspires in our

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secret nature.” How can that be? Is it possible that unknowingly something aspires within us? The Mother explains: *What is this something which aspires, Sweet Mother?*

It is a part of the being which is not always the same in everyone, and which is instinctively open to the influence of the psychic.

There is always one part—sometimes indeed quite veiled, of which we are not conscious—something in the being which is turned to the psychic and receiving its influence. This is the intermediary between the psychic consciousness and the external consciousness. (CWM 7: 417) This is important—we should analyse and see how it applies to us. These points are not just to enlighten ourselves but also to help us in our daily sadhana.

It is not the same thing in everyone; in each one it is different. It is the point in his nature or character through which he can touch the psychic and where he can receive the psychic influence. It depends upon people; for each one it is different; everyone has a point like this.

You may also feel that certain things suddenly push you, lift you above yourself, open a kind of door upon something greater. It can be many things; and it depends upon each one’s nature. It’s the part of the being which enthuses over something; it is this capacity for enthusiasm. (Ibid) Here is an obvious hint. It can be many things—a sunrise, watching children, etc. Something that does not just bring you the joy of the vital, but something that suddenly pushes you, lifts you above yourself, and opens a kind of door upon something greater. I am sure each one of us has this little window to the infinite. If this window can be consciously discovered, then maybe we could make that window our escape point into the infinite.

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There are two principal things. This, the capacity for enthusiasm which makes one come out of his greater or lesser inertia in order to throw himself more or less totally into the thing which rouses him. As for instance, the artist for his art, the scientist for his science. And in general, every person

who creates or builds has an opening, the opening of a special faculty, a special possibility, creating an enthusiasm in him.

When this is active, something in the being awakens, and there is a participation of almost the whole being in the thing done.

(Ibid: 418)

Some activity takes our whole being—it is not a duty like going to the bank, and while sitting there, our mind is elsewhere. It is not the Western idea of doing our duty. It is not our Indian ideology at all to perform duties. We say, ‘do your dharma’. Duty is often half-hearted work. Dharma is *swabhava* plus *enthusiasm*, where the whole being feels enthusiasm, feels oneness, and is elevated towards ananda. Therefore it could be an excellent path towards sadhana. There is this. And then some have an innate faculty of gratitude, those who have an ardent need to respond, respond with warmth, devotion, joy, to something which they feel like a marvel hidden behind the whole of life, behind the tiniest little element, the most minor little event of life, think feel this sovereign beauty or infinite Grace which is behind all things.

Sometimes we feel that sadhana is very close and possible, and other times we wonder whether all this sadhana is possible, within our grasp. Unfortunately, the way that we have divided sadhana and non-sadhana is one of the greatest hurdles. That action done with enthusiasm, with the response of the whole being, can be followed with a touch of gratitude to That which is beyond. It could be the smallest action. Someone gives you a greeting, and suddenly you feel the joy and thank the Mother

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for that person who smiled at you and said a beautiful “good morning.” This constant gratitude itself is another great window to the Divine.

I knew people who had no knowledge, so to say, of anything. Who were hardly educated, whose minds were altogether of the ordinary kind, and

who had in them this capacity of gratitude, of warmth, which gives itself, understands and is thankful.

Well, for them, the contact with the psychic was very frequent, almost constant and, to the extent that they were capable of it, conscious—not very conscious but a little—

in the sense that they felt that they were carried, helped, uplifted above themselves.

These two things prepare people the most. They are born with one or the other; and if they take the trouble, it develops gradually, it increases.

We say: the capacity for enthusiasm, something which throws you out of your miserable and mean little ego; and the generous gratitude, the generosity of the gratitude which also flings itself in thanksgiving out of the little ego. These are the two most powerful levers to enter into contact with the Divine in one's psychic being. This serves as a link with the psychic being—the surest link...

Sweet Mother, does something aspire even in the most nasty people?

In the most nasty people? ...yes, my child—even in the Asuras, the Adversaries, and even the monsters, there is something.

There is always a corner, a kind of rift, a sensitive point, which is usually called a weakness. But this actually is the strength of the being, the point by which it can be touched.

(Ibid: 418-419)

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I often remember Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play. She is an ambitious, treacherous woman who encourages her husband to kill the King so they can occupy the throne. She manipulates the entire play, and when you accost her, you are almost afraid to meet her. And when her husband is hesitant to kill the King, she says, I will do it. And after some time, she

returns to Macbeth, and he asks her if she has done it. She says no. Then she says, “Had he not resembled my father, I would have done it”. You see, the weak point in her was her love for her father. Had the King not resembled her father when she saw him sleeping, she would have killed him. Shakespeare, in a single beautiful line, “Had he not resembled my father I would have done it”, points out her weakness through which the Divine enters. This is what the Mother means when she says even the wickedest of persons has one slight weakness (such as love for one’s father) which saves them. Lady Macbeth doesn’t commit the murder actually, but the intended act gets into her mind so much that she becomes insane. In the end, you see Lady Macbeth in her huge dark palace walking down the stairs carrying the candle stick and crying: “Here’s the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, Oh, Oh!”

We see how the Divine has acted in her: her sense of guilt and remorse saved Lady Macbeth. This is how Shakespeare was a master of psychology and why Sri Aurobindo rated him as one of the five best poets in the world.

For even in the most obscure and misled beings, even in those whose conscious will is to fight against the Divine, in spite of themselves, in spite of everything, their origin is divine. And they work in vain, try in vain to cut themselves off from their origin; they cannot do it. Deliberately, consciously,

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they try all they can; but they know very well they cannot do it. (Ibid: 419)

In the Ramayana, that is what we see with Ravana: he cannot cut himself away from the Divine. He abducts Sita, Lord Rama’s wife, but the reason behind abducting her was not to marry or trouble her; he wanted to attract Sri Rama’s attention to himself so that he may get direct salvation in his hands. He was externally an Asura, but deep within, the soul of Ravana wanted *moksha* at the hands of Sri Rama. And what could be the best way? The shortest way was to steal Sita. Otherwise, Sri Rama would never have gone to Sri Lanka. What a wonderful mystery this Ramayana is! We think

that Rama and Ravana are the Divine and the anti-divine. There is nothing anti-divine; even the most anti-divine loves the Divine. Deep down in his heart, Ravana was a great yogi. There is hardly another example of Ravana's intensity of tapasya. Even Mount Kailash was shaken by his great power of tapasya. He was a yogi at heart. So the Mother says, Deliberately, consciously, they try all they can; but they know very well they cannot do it. Even the most monstrous being there is always a means to touch.

The Divine, the Divine's action in the world, always acts as a limit to the excess of evil, and at the same time gives an unlimited power to the good. And it is this unlimited power of the good which, externally, in the manifestation, serves as a limit to the spreading of evil.

Naturally, to the very limited vision of human beings it seems sometimes that evil has no limits and that it goes to its extreme. But this extreme itself is a limit. There is always a halt, because there is a point where the Divine rises up and says, "You won't go any farther." Whether it be the great destructions of Nature or men's monstrosities, there is *always*

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a moment when the Divine intervenes and prevents things from going farther. (Ibid: 419-420)

Let's all pray that the Divine does this about India and its condition, the way things are happening in our country. We hope that things don't go further and that the Divine intervenes and says "halt" to our ways.

(12th April 2010)

In our last class, we read how the Mother gave us an excellent and easy way to contact the psychic being:

...the capacity for enthusiasm, something which throws you out of your miserable and mean and little ego; and the generous gratitude, the generosity of the gratitude which also flings itself in thanksgiving out of the little ego. These are the two most powerful levers to enter into contact with the Divine in one's psychic being. This serves as a link with the psychic

being—the surest link. (Ibid: 419) Each of us can see for ourselves how strong these levers are in our own being: the capacity for enthusiasm and the generosity of gratitude.

Let us go back to discussing Sri Aurobindo's sentence, "Our one objective must be the Divine himself to whom, knowingly or unknowingly, something always aspires in our secret nature."

We are dealing here with the power of concentration, which is one of the most fundamental elements of Yoga. He concludes the paragraph by saying there must be a triple concentration:

"the flaming concentration of the heart"; a large, many-sided yet single concentration of the thought", and "an immovable concentration of the will."

This triple concentration: is it possible for us, for the beginners? It gets clarified in the following paragraphs where he tells us how to go about the triple concentration.

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But on that which as yet we know not how shall we concentrate? And yet we cannot know the Divine unless we have achieved this concentration of our being upon him.

This is a bit paradoxical. If we want to concentrate on something, we must know that something, the idea must be clear in our thought. But no one can clearly understand the Divine in front of him. It is a kind of circular movement: you concentrate on the Divine whom you don't know, and you know the Divine only by concentration.

A concentration which culminates in a living realisation and the constant sense of the presence of the One in ourselves and in all of which we are aware, is what we mean in Yoga by knowledge and the effort after knowledge.

We should focus on concentration that culminates in a living realisation. Otherwise, to concentrate on a thought or emotion is not sufficient. It must end; it must lead us to a living realisation.

It is not enough to devote ourselves by the reading of Scriptures or by the stress of philosophic reasoning to an intellectual understanding of the Divine; for at the end of our long mental labour we might know all that has been said of the Eternal, possess all that can be thought about the Infinite and yet we might not know him at all.

This is a magnificent sentence for all intellectuals, pundits and scholars. No amount of reading can bring us the realisation of the Divine. He says, “This intellectual preparation can indeed be the first stage in a powerful Yoga, but it is not indispensable...” It could be good mental preparation, but if it stops at that reading level, it means nothing. Reading is a mental preparation at the most. Someone said to Sri Aurobindo that he didn’t know English, so he couldn’t read *The Life Divine*. He told the person it wasn’t necessary to read the works. Let’s not put this equation

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that because someone hasn’t read *The Life Divine* or other works that this person is not a sadhaka. This is a misconception.

...it is not a step which all need or can be called upon to take. Yoga would be impossible, except for a very few, if the intellectual figure of knowledge arrived at by the speculative or meditative Reason were its indispensable condition or a binding preliminary.

Let us not get egoistic and think that because we are reading something superb, we are better than those who aren’t reading. As he says, it is not “indispensable”. To have a living realisation of what we read, is what is important. Of course, we may not be able to realise all that we read. But as the Mother puts it beautifully, “one drop of practice is worth an ocean of theories”. Drop by drop, the reading must sink into our minds, egos and hearts. It will take a long time, but as we know, a drop of water constantly falling on a rock can crack the rock. Similarly, the rock of the subconscious can also be broken, but the drops should be constant.

All that the Light from above asks of us that it may begin its work if there is a call from the soul and a sufficient point of support in the mind.

A prerequisite of the sadhana is a call from the soul, an inner calling. But another critical factor is a “sufficient point of support in the mind”. That is where I feel reading can support the call of the soul. Support means that if one cannot sustain the call of the soul, the mind can still keep the connection with the Divine. Also, the call of the soul gets direction and widening as the understanding increases. The aspiration increases as our understanding increases. That way, knowledge of the mind can help and give a push to the call of the soul.

This support can be reached through an insistent idea of the Divine in the thought, a corresponding will in the dynamic parts, an aspiration, a faith, a need in the heart. Any

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one of these may lead or predominate, if all cannot move in unison or in an equal rhythm.

He explains that knowledge is not indispensable. In the Ashram, we have heard about inmates who did not read but were so close to the Lord and that they merged in the Divine at the time of their passing away. They could converge and feel the Lord persistently. This kind of external knowledge is not indispensable. And, God forbid, if it increases the mental ego, then we are taking a wrong turn with all our reading.

The idea may be and must in the beginning be inadequate; the aspiration may be narrow and imperfect, the faith poorly illumined or even, as not surely founded on the rock of knowledge, fluctuating, uncertain, easily diminished; often even it may be extinguished and need to be lit again with difficulty like a torch in a windy pass. But if once there is a resolute self-consecration from deep within, if there is an awakening to the soul’s call, these inadequate things can be a sufficient instrument for the divine purpose.

Each one of us, with our inadequacies and shortcomings, can be made to feel welcome by Sri Aurobindo in his Yoga. In the beginning, we may have an adequate idea. How many of us know the concept of the Divine? We read *The Mother* and understand a little of the Mother's aspects. By reading *Savitri*, we learn a little more about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The idea of the Divine becomes increasingly sharp, but we can never say we have the highest idea.

Some people who began long ago knew nothing about the Mother. They say "Ma-Bhagwan," Nothing more than that. They don't analyse the triple poise of the Mother or her different aspects. They don't know anything; only that the Mother the Divine. That is sufficient; it is itself a starting point. To know that the Mother is God is all I need to know for my work, and

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my devotion. The aspiration may be narrow and imperfect because although we aspire to serve the Mother, we may have other parts of ourselves which want a different lifestyle and go against the Divine. It may be that one part is aspiring, and the other parts are not yet ready. Sometimes the vital is unwilling to accept; it may be resistant. But Sri Aurobindo asks us not to bother. Even if "the faith [is] poorly illumined", it may be lit again and again.

Our starting point could be anywhere, no matter the circumstances. There is no qualification or degree necessary for aspiration. All this the Divine uses for his own purpose. However, there is an underlining condition, and it is "a resolute self-consecration from deep within." If we can resolve that, I shall dedicate my life to the Mother, it is all that is required. The rest can be taken care of. They want to hear from us, 'Mother, I am here to give my life to thee'.

Someone had asked how many in the Ashram have realised the Divine? The numbers don't matter. There are so many on the path. And what are success and failure? You cannot say I have succeeded in attaining the Divine as if the Divine were on the third floor or the tenth floor. It is an endless march. So where is the success in our Yoga? To turn to Her, to concentrate more

and more on Her is our success. The person was told not to judge the Ashram by the number of people realising the Divine.

Where else in the world do you find a community with at least a partial aspiration if it is not an integral self-consecration? A group of people having all the defects but still looking at the sun. Sri Aurobindo says that is what I require from you.

Therefore the wise have always been unwilling to limit man's avenues towards God; they would not shut against his entry even the narrowest portal, the lowest and darkest postern, the humblest wicket-gate. Any name, any form, any

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symbol, any offering has been held to be sufficient if there is the consecration along with it; for the Divine knows himself in the heart of the seeker and accepts the sacrifice.

This is what spirituality is. You can see how deep Indian spirituality is. Any name, gate, wicket portal can suffice; we don't need big portals to heaven. A small temple on the roadside is sufficient. The Divine knows the seeker from within. Even this tiny opening is enough for the light to penetrate.

But still the greater and wider the moving idea-force behind the consecration, the better for the seeker; his attainment is likely to be fuller and ampler. If we attempt integral Yoga, it will also be as well to start with an idea of the Divine that is itself integral. There should be an aspiration in the heart wide enough for a realisation without any narrow limits. Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the Ineffable in a restricting mental formula.

Sri Aurobindo has explained that three types of concentration are needed: on the idea of the Divine, of aspiration in the heart, and the will. He is dealing here with the idea of the Divine. The idea could be small, narrow, or

limited, it doesn't matter, but this is just a starting point. For Integral Yoga, it is better to develop an integral concept of the Divine.

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by an integral idea of the Divine?

These are crucial points. Often we are asked what is meant by Integral Yoga. The first point is that the concept of the Divine is integral. The Mother answers:

Everyone forms an idea of the Divine for himself according to his personal taste, his possibilities of understanding, his mental preferences, and even his desires. (CWM 8: 1)

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The warrior, a businessman, a teacher, a child: each has different images of God. This is because of his mental preferences and his desires. Those in business would worship Lakshmi because it is Lakshmi whom they think will give them wealth. So they would have a preference for a particular Goddess.

People form the idea of the Divine they want, the Divine they wish to meet. So naturally, they limit their realisation considerably.

But if we can come to understand that the Divine is all that we can conceive of and infinitely more, we begin to progress toward integrality. Integrality is an extremely difficult for the human consciousness, which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself. But still, with a little effort, it is possible for those who know how to play with mental activities to widen oneself sufficiently to approach something integral.

You form an idea of the Divine which suits your nature and conception, don't you? So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do a genuinely integral Yoga, you must try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be—and in addition, something that nobody can think and feel.

So, if you understand this, you have taken the first step on the path of integrality. (Ibid: 1-2)

If the religious fanatics could read only this. What an excellent integration it would be. To read further: Instinctively and without being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their conceptions. For, without thinking quite spontaneously, they tell you, “Oh, this is divine; this is not divine!” What do they know about it? And then some have not yet set foot on the path, who come here and see things or people, and tell you, “This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine.” But if you ask

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them, “what is divine?” they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that’s an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less one can pronounce judgments on things.

And there comes a time when all one can do is observe, but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place they now are in and the one they ought to occupy—for this is the great disorder in the world—but one does not judge. One simply observes.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say,

“This is divine and that is not divine”, for a time comes when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take away anything from it without disturbing everything.

And one or two steps further yet, and one knows with certainty that what shocks us as a contradiction of the Divine is quite simply something not in its proper place. Each thing must be exactly in its place and, besides, it must be supple enough, plastic enough, to admit into a harmonious progressive organisation all the new elements which are constantly added to the

manifested universe. The universe is in a perpetual movement of inner reorganisation. And at the same time it is growing larger, so to say, becoming more and more complex, more and more complete, more and more integral—and this, indefinitely. And as gradually new elements manifest, the whole organisation has to be remade on a new basis, so that there is not a second when everything is not in perpetual movement. But if the movement is in accordance with the divine order, it is harmonious, so perfectly harmonious that it is hardly perceptible, it is difficult to see it.

Now, if one comes down again from this consciousness to

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a more external consciousness, naturally one begins to feel, very precisely, the things which help one to reach the true consciousness and those which bar the way or pull one back or even struggle against the progress. And so the outlook changes and one has to say, “This is divine, or this helps me toward the Divine; and that is against the Divine, it is the enemy of the Divine. (Ibid: 2-3)

But this is a pragmatic point of view, for action, for the movement is worldly life—because one has not yet reached the consciousness which goes beyond all that; because one has not attained that inner perfection, having which one has no longer to struggle, for one has gone beyond the zone of struggle or the time of struggle or the utility of struggle. But before that, before attaining that state in one’s consciousness and action, necessarily there is a struggle, and if there is a struggle, there is a choice, and for the choice, discernment is necessary.

And the surest means to discernment is a conscious and willing surrender, as complete as possible, to the divine Will and Guidance. Then there is no risk of making a mistake and of taking false lights for true ones. (Ibid) This was the Mother’s explanation of the idea of the Divine.

In the beginning some things may seem to be divine and not divine because we have not reached a higher level of consciousness. But there is a level of consciousness where one no longer sees anything undivine. This is the basic

philosophic truth, that what is undivine is not in the right place at the right time. Philosophically, that is the only definition of anything

“wrong”. Otherwise, as the Mother says, everything is in the Divine; everything is the Divine. But what happens is that something goes out of place. To put it back in place, to see total harmony, is to connect the Divine. She has said many times that finding the right time and place for a particular thing is real

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divine power. Otherwise, you cannot say that this person is good or bad because, after all, that is also the creation of the Divine. It is just that it is not in its proper place.

In Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine*, he has embraced all human thought because there is nothing wrong with this human thought, all the saints and sages are not wrong, but if they are put into a time frame that is not relevant, then that becomes wrong. Sri Aurobindo’s conception of integration or “integral”

precisely is this that all things find their proper place in the jigsaw puzzle. That is the right integration.

The dynamic conception or impelling sense with which our Yoga can best set out would be naturally the idea, the sense of a conscious all-embracing but all-exceeding Infinite... He is the one Existence: he is the original and universal Delight that constitutes all things and exceeds them: he is the one infinite Consciousness that composes all consciousnesses and informs all their movements: he is the one illimitable Being who sustains all action and experience: his will guides the evolution of things towards their yet unrealised but inevitable aim and plenitude. To him the heart can consecrate itself, approach him as the supreme Beloved, beat and move in him as in a universal sweetness of Love and a living sea of Delight. For his is the secret Joy that supports the soul in all its experiences and maintains even the errant ego in its ordeals and struggles till all sorrow and suffering shall

cease. His is the Love and the Bliss of the infinite divine Lover who is drawing all things by their own path towards his happy oneness.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo says here: "His is the Love and the Bliss of the infinite divine Lover who is drawing all things by their own path towards his happy oneness."

All things are attracted by the Divine. Are the hostile forces also attracted by the Divine?

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That depends upon how you look at it, you cannot say that.

For there is a potential attraction, but so veiled and so secret that you can't even tell that it exists.

In Matter which has an appearance of inertia—it is only an appearance, but still—the attraction for the Divine is a possibility rather than a fact; that is, it is something which will develop, but which does not yet exist perceptibly.

It may be said that all consciousness, whether it knows it or not—even if it doesn't know it—gravitates towards the Divine. But consciousness must already be there in order to be able to affirm this.

And even among men, who at the moment are the most conscious beings on earth, there is an immense majority who are potentially drawn towards the Divine, but who know nothing about it; and there are even some who deliberately refuse this attraction. Perhaps, in their refusal, behind it, something is preparing but neither willing nor knowingly.

(*Speaking to the child*) And so, what was the last part of your question? ...First you assume something which is not correct and on top of that you ask a question which naturally doesn't make sense, for the assumption is incorrect.

I wanted to say...

Yes, yes I know quite well what you want to say. In fact, finally, everything will be attracted by the Divine. Only, there are direct roads and there are labyrinthine paths where one seems to be going further away for a very long time before drawing close. And there are beings who have chosen the labyrinthine paths and who intend to remain there as long as they can. So, apparently, they are beings who fight against the Divine.

Although those who are of a higher order know quite well that this is an absolutely vain and useless struggle. Without

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issue, they still take pleasure in it. even if this must lead them to their destruction, they have decided to do it.

There are human beings also who indulge in vice—one vice or another, like drinking or drug injections—and who know very well that this is leading them to destruction and death.

But they choose to do it knowingly.

They have no control over themselves.

There is always a moment when everyone has self-control.

And if one had not said “Yes” once, if one had not taken the decision, one would not have done it.

There is not one human being who has not the energy and capacity to resist something imposed upon him—if he is left free to do so. People tell you, “I can’t do otherwise”—it is because in the depths of their heart, they do not want to do otherwise; they have accepted to be the slaves of their vice.

There is a moment when one accepts.

And I would go even further; I say, there is a moment when one accepts to be ill. If one did not accept to be ill, one would not be ill. Only, people are

so unconscious of themselves and their inner movements that they are not even aware of what they do.

But it all depends on the way one looks at things. From a certain point of view there is nothing that is totally useless in the world. Only, things which were tolerable and admissible at a certain time are no longer so at another. And when they become no longer admissible, one begins to say they are bad, because then a will awakes to get rid of them. But in the history of the universe—one can even say in the history of the earth, to limit the problem of our little planet—I think everything that exists had its necessity and importance at a given moment. (CWM 8: 3-5)

This is the ultimate of a spiritual sight. Everything that exists

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has its necessity, so nothing is wrong, and nothing is bad. It had its necessity and importance at a given moment. Because each thing comes and pushes the earth may be one-millionth of a degree forward. Nothing is in vain; the wars, the struggles, the sorrows etc., everything.

And it is as one advances that these things are rejected or replaced by others which belong to the future instead of the past. (Ibid)

An example of this would be the French Revolution. In 1789

no one would have thought it was something positive with all the bloodshed and thousands of people suffering. Yet, when we look back at history, that was a necessary movement that pushed the world from the middle to the modern ages.

It was the transition from the dark ages to modern times when the mind has been illumined. Sri Aurobindo would say that Nature often brings in this kind of tremendous jolt; sometimes it is very violent. But it is a necessary stage because our human nature resists. Even in events like the World War, no one in his right senses would say it was a good thing, and yet it was necessary to break the nations' egos. Otherwise, the nations would have become so strong in consciousness that evolving to the next level would

have become very difficult. Nature wants to bring about a — greater unification of humankind, but this national ego was so strong and stubborn that Nature had no choice but to be violent. It wanted to crush and break the national boundaries and what happened was that the United Nations Organisation was formed. For the first time, people started thinking of this as one world. It is still far from it, but the concept came only after the Second World War. Even Hitler had his place. These examples are harsh, but they are from Sri Aurobindo's writings.

Of the things which have no further purpose, one says, "They

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are bad", because one tries to find within oneself a lever to push them out, to break with the habit. In our own little life, we may feel that it is good, that there is nothing wrong, and we even justify our meanderings, desires and vital instincts.

But later on, we say it is terrible, not in the moral sense, but we begin to grow out of that consciousness. As long as we are in that consciousness, things remain good. Something is good or bad not according to morality, but according to our growth of consciousness. In the parent-child relationship, when the child is told something is bad and not to do it, the child often refuses and justifies his behaviour. It is not that he wants to oppose, but at his level of consciousness and experience, he does not see it as wrong. We have all gone through that stage and evolved in our consciousness to that point when we think it is wrong. The problem is that we may realise it is incorrect mentally but do not change our behaviour. However, the child is not seeing our mental idea and his mental idea is just as strong and universal, so he refutes the parents' idea. If, on the contrary, the child sees in the parents or the teachers a living example, that can change the child or his vision. If you try to argue mind versus mind, one to one, I think it is a futile exercise. This is the definition of bad: it is not moral; it is related to one's own level of consciousness.

“They are bad”, because one tries to find within oneself a lever to push them out to break with the habit. But perhaps at one time they were not bad, and other things were.

There are ways of being, ways of feeling, ways of doing, which you tolerate in yourself for quite a long time, and which don't trouble you, don't seem to you at all useless or bad or to be got rid of. And then all of a sudden one day, you don't know why or what has happened, but the outlook changes, you look at things and say, “But what is this? This is in me! Am I carrying this in myself? But it is intolerable,

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I don't want it any longer.” And suddenly it seems bad to you because it is time to reject these things, for they do not harmonise with the attitude you have taken or the progress you have made in your march forward in the world. These things should be elsewhere, they are no longer in their place, therefore you find them bad. But perhaps the same things which seem bad to you would be excellent for other people who are at a lower level. (Ibid: 5-6)

The more aware we are of ourselves, the more we may feel shocked to see certain things in ourselves that we don't want.

This is a sign of our progress. If one is passive and is taking everything for granted, that all is going on well and that one is fine, that means one is either hiding things or accepting them, and also that one hasn't yet outgrown them. When there is growth, there is this consciousness that, “I don't want this any longer; am I carrying this in myself?” This is a kind of process of self-purification.

There is always someone more dull, more unconscious, more ignorant or worse than oneself. So the state which is intolerable for you, which you can no longer keep, which must disappear, would perhaps be very luminous for those who are on the lower rungs. By what right are you going to say, “This is bad”? All you can say is, “I don't want it any longer. I don't want it, it's not in keeping with my present way of being, I want to go where these things have no place any more; they are no longer in their place, let them go

and find their place elsewhere!” But one cannot judge. It is impossible to say, “This is bad.” At the most one can say, “This is bad for me, it is no longer in its place with me, it must go.” That’s all.

And one drops it on the way.

And this makes the progress much, much easier, to think and feel like that instead of sitting down in despair and

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lamenting about things and what you are like, and the misery you endure and the defects you have and the impossibilities which beset you and all that. You say, “No, no, those things are no longer in their place here, let them go elsewhere, where they will be in their place and welcome. As for me, I am going forward I am going to climb a step, I shall go towards a purer and better and more complete light; and so all these things which like the darkness must go away.” But that’s all.

Each time one sees in oneself something which seems really nasty, well, that proves that one has made progress. So, instead of lamenting and falling into despair, one should be happy; one says, “Ah! That’s good. I am getting on.” (Ibid: 6-7) (19th April 2001)

In our last class, we discussed the integral concept of the Divine as it pertains to Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo enlists almost all the aspects of the Divine. It is important to have an integral image, whatever may be our preference. At least conceptually, if we know and accept this integral concept, it becomes easier not only to follow the path but to have a sense of unity with other thoughts and paths. Otherwise, there is the danger of becoming fanatical.

He says if you attempt an integral Yoga, it would be best to start with an idea of the Divine, which is itself integral.

Now Sri Aurobindo comes to the next point, which is making an effort. We have the integral concept of the Divine; how do we go about it? First, let us accept our desire soul, the craving life force.

Into all our endeavour upward the lower element of desire will at first naturally enter. For what the enlightened will sees as the thing to be done and pursues as the crown to be conquered, what the heart embraces as the one thing delightful, that in us which feels itself limited and opposed and, because it is limited, craves and struggles, will seek with

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the troubled passion of an egoistic desire. This craving life-force or desire-soul in us has to be accepted at first, but only in order that it may be transformed.

Regarding this passage, someone asked the Mother: *But even when we understand that it is a desire and must be rejected, there are difficulties in discerning if it is a desire leading us to the Divine or if it is purely desire.*

You can see the legitimacy of the question because Sri Aurobindo is saying that the desire soul has to be accepted first. That means initially, we are accepting desire as a factor in our effort, whereas traditionally, we have been told to reject desire. It is because of that conflict that this question was asked.

The Mother answered:

One deceives oneself only when one wants to deceive oneself. It is very, very different.

But within, one understands.

Good. Well, then that's enough, if one understands somewhere, that's enough... (CWM 8: 14)

One begins by mixing up desire with one's aspiration...

Yes, that is what Sri Aurobindo has written.

Then, one realises that a desire is mixed up there, but cannot manage to reject this desire.

(To the first disciple) Is that it? No! (laughter) Mother, you said that it may be tolerated, but there is a period of tolerance. But when it goes beyond the period of tolerance and does not want to stop—that's the question.

And so what, what happens?

He wants to ask what one must do, what should be done?

Ah! At last. What should be done? ... Be sincere.

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That's it; always, always, the little worm in the fruit. One tells oneself, "Oh I can't." It's not true, if one wanted, one could.

And there are people who tell me, "I don't have the will-power," That means you are not sincere. For sincerity is an infinitely more powerful force than all the wills in the world.

It can change anything whatever in the twinkling of an eye; it takes hold of it, grips it, pulls it out—and then it's over. But you close your eyes, you find excuses for yourself.

The problem recurs all the time.

It comes back because you don't pull it out completely.

What you do is, you cut the branch, so it grows again.

It takes different forms.

Yes. Well, you have to take it out every time it comes, that's all—until it doesn't come back any more. (Ibid: 18-19) You can see the relentless battle of desire and trying to conquer it on different levels. It may always continue

because, as she says, it goes from level to level. But it is purposeful progress, and there is never a culmination. For each perfection, there is always a junction to another line of progress. One goes from one perfection to another. As she says, the Ashram is not a place for rest. Here too, there are battles, maybe on a higher level, but the work goes on.

Even from the very beginning it has to be taught to renounce all other desires and concentrate itself on the passion for the Divine. This capital point gained, it has to be taught to desire, not for its own separate sake, but for God in the world and for the Divine in ourselves; it has to fix itself upon no personal spiritual gain, though of all possible spiritual gains we are sure, but on the great work to be done in us and others, on the high coming manifestation which is to be the glorious fulfilment of

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the Divine in the world, on the Truth that has to be sought and lived and enthroned for ever.

I hope you catch this subtle distinction between the different kinds of desire. As he says, “it has to be taught to renounce all other desires and concentrate itself on the passion for the Divine.” As the poet (Shelley) says, it is “the desire of the moth for the star”. Sri Aurobindo even uses the phrase “passion for the Divine”. If we can gain this capital point, if we have this central passion for the Divine, then desire can be accepted.. There is a phrase from the Bible, “The zeal of thine house has eaten me up”. If one can have this kind of zeal for the Divine, which he calls passion, then that desire is acceptable.

He explains that desire must be “not for its own separate sake, but for God in the world and for Divine in ourselves; it has to fix itself upon no personal spiritual gain, though of all possible spiritual gains we are sure...” This is one subtle idea the Mother has explained many times. In doing Yoga, we should not even think of the benefits of Yoga. We may think that by doing Yoga, I will attain this and achieve that, that I will become a Yogi, etc.

Yoga should not have anything called a benefit, profit, or gain.

These are not to be sought in Yoga. This is why the Mother asks,

“Why do you want to do Yoga? Is it for power, is it for gain?”

In this question of wanting to gain anything for oneself, the important phrase is “anything for oneself”. Even if it is peace of mind or god realisation, if the “I” and the “My” come in, it deviates us from the path. He adds, “... though of all possible spiritual gains, we are sure.” Yes, the Lord has told us that if you do this, you will have it; it is a guarantee. But my mental concentration and my heart’s longing are not for the gain, it is my unquestioned zeal for the Lord and the great work to be done in us and others. If we can concentrate on the work

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done in us and others, we can progress. That is what we in this Ashram have to do: focus on the work for the Mother.

On a personal note, when I had completed the Higher Course (Graduation), I consulted the Mother to give me work. I asked her to provide me with work that would occupy me twenty-four hours a day. Well, I don’t know, she must have laughed at me, but still, that is full participation in the work. You have no other interest, and though you may have different kinds of activities, inwardly, there is all the time this aspiration that I must spend every hour and every minute of the day for Her. There is great work to be done in us and others for the coming manifestation, which is to be the glorious fulfilment of the Divine in the world—

the reign of the Supermind. That is the fulfilment of the Divine in the world—the Truth that must be sought, lived, and enthroned forever. We may be unable to concentrate on the supermind, the coming of the new race, but if we can, on our own individual small level, think of this mantra—to work for the Mother. That can lead us to all the other kinds of progress we must make. It is nice to forget oneself in work, because to worry about one’s own progress doesn’t help.

But last, most difficult for it, more difficult than to seek with the right object, it has to be taught to seek in the right manner; for it must learn to desire, not in its own egoistic way, but in the way of the Divine. It must insist no longer, as the strong separative will always insists, on its own manner of fulfilment, its own dream of possession, its own idea of the right and the desirable;...

We should not be thinking of the benefits we may get from the Divine, nor our idea of what is right and desirable. Often we have this sense that what I am doing is right. It may be an aspiration of what "I think" is the right way to do the Mother's work. The Mother always teaches us, "do not insist", put your

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best effort forward, but then leave it to the Divine.' It is because we don't know if I am wrong and the other person is right. To insist on my own way also may be wrong. So we have to put our best consciousness and best prayer and say, "Mother, if this is right, let it be done. If it is wrong, then stop me from doing it."

...it must yearn to fulfil a larger and greater Will and consent to wait upon a less interested and ignorant guidance.

Most of the time, we want to push through our will, but there has to be a parallel attitude. At the beginning of the path, as we have not surrendered sufficiently to say, "let thy will be done," it is very difficult. Even to say "let thy will be done"

may bring in a kind of lethargy, then we may not do anything thinking that the Mother will take care. Until we have that level of surrender where we can say with our whole being, "Let thy will be done"; it may be safer to do our work and have that parallel consciousness in which we say, 'Mother, if it is right, if you accept it, let it happen.' There should be a little silence in oneself, a little withdrawal from the action for a moment to say,

'if it is in thy will, let it pass; otherwise, not.' I have seen in life that this works quite positively. Leave ourselves a little space for her to work.

Thus trained, Desire, that great unquiet harasser and troubler of man and cause of every kind of stumbling, will become fit to be transformed into its divine counterpart. For desire and passion too have their divine forms; there is a pure ecstasy of the soul's seeking beyond all craving and grief, there is a Will of Ananda that sits glorified in the possession of the supreme beatitudes.

Sri Aurobindo gives a divine perspective to everything, including desire, which all of them, from Buddha to Adi Shankaracharya, have asked us to reject. Here our weakest point is taken up, which all of us have in common, "desire".

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What Sri Aurobindo has done is to make 'desire' a channel to approach the Divine. He says, desire if you have to have, then aspire only for the Divine. He says you can possess and want anything but in the Divine and for the Divine. If we can gather our little pleasures and desires to possess and push them towards this single aim, it would help us in sadhana. Some desires will fall off; not all can be purified. But at least we can try to put all our desires and possessions into that basket we offer to the Mother. She will select what she wants, and what is left will be transformed.

How beautifully Sri Aurobindo embraces desire because ultimately, he says, there is a pure ecstasy of the soul seeking beyond all craving and greed. To desire the Lord is something magnificent. Desire itself must be heightened into bhakti.

When once the object of concentration has possessed and is possessed by the three master instruments, the thought, the heart and the will,—a consummation fully possible only when the desire-soul in us has submitted to the Divine Law,—

the perfection of mind and life and body can be effectively fulfilled in our transmuted nature.

The object of concentration is the Divine. If the Divine possesses us and is possessed by the mind, life, and body (it must be both ways—the Divine also chooses us), each part in its own way must be possessed, but this doesn't happen until the desire soul is purified.

This will be done, not for the personal satisfaction of the ego, but that the whole may constitute a fit temple for the Divine Presence, a faultless instrument for the divine work. For that work can be truly performed only when the instrument, consecrated and perfected, has grown fit for a selfless action,—and that will be when personal desire and egoism are abolished, but not the liberated individual.

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We individual human beings should become faultless instruments for the Divine work. That can be done when personal egoism and desire are abolished, but not the liberated individual. The argument in *The Life Divine* is that abolishing the individual itself is a possible solution. The old yogas told us to merge our individuality in the Brahman; that was the only way to escape ignorance, pain, and suffering. Sri Aurobindo argues that you can get rid of the negative aspects —personal desire and egoism—without getting rid of the individual itself.

The individual is not only the ego or desire—that is only the outermost part of the individual—he is so much more inside.

If we get rid of the ego and desire, the true individuality can become an instrument of the Divine.

Even when the little ego has been abolished, the true spiritual Person can still remain and God's will and work and delight in him and the spiritual use of his perfection and fulfilment.

“The spiritual Person” is the psychic being. We get rid of the ego, but the individual, the realised human being can continue to work in the world. He doesn't have to withdraw from worldly life.

Our works will then be divine and done divinely; our mind and life and will, devoted to the Divine, will be used to help fulfil in others and in the world that which has been first realised in ourselves—all that we can manifest of the embodied Unity, Love, Freedom, Strength, Power, Splendour, immortal Joy which is the goal of the Spirit's terrestrial adventure.

We can become the Divine's instruments to the extent we have realised the Divine within ourselves. We cannot become instruments of the Divine without contacting the Divine. To be an instrument, we must be able to take the order and commands from our Master. Otherwise, we serve our ego because then we only have direct contact with our ego. Sometimes we may be

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open or close to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and we may get some intuitive guidance, some inner feeling which is beautiful and warm, and we may spontaneously feel like doing something.

Those are the moments of contact when we can receive the command; the rest of the time, we receive orders from our ego.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that the psychic, the inner spirit, can manifest itself in any one of these: unity, love, freedom, strength, power, splendour, immortal joy. If someone is a warrior, his psychic being would give him commands in his area of strength and power. Depending upon our own *swabhava*, the psychic being comes forward. It is not only done in meditation or trance; it can be done in our daily work. In whatever way we can manifest some divine quality, we can become an instrument for that expression of the Divine in the world.

The Yoga must start with an effort or at least a settled turn towards this total concentration.

We get the concession that we can start from wherever we are.

From there, we must make a minimum effort or a settled turn towards this total concentration. This is only the beginning. This is the central decision, the Mother would say, that I am here upon earth to dedicate my life to the Divine. If this could be the settled turn, not a realisation, but a turning of the being to this new light, spiritual life, then consecration and concentration are possible.

A constant and unfailing will of consecration of all ourselves to the Supreme is demanded of us, an offering of our whole being and our many-chambered nature to the Eternal who is the All. The effective fullness of our concentration on the one thing needful to the exclusion of all else will be the measure of our self-consecration to the One who is alone desirable.

If we really want to judge ourselves and see how far we are on the path, the parameter we can use is “The effective fullness of our concentration on the one thing needful to the exclusion of

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all else will be the measure of our self-consecration to the One who is alone desirable.” How many minutes, hours and days, and how much intensity are we putting in our effort towards that one thing desirable? As the Mother said, at least let us be sincere to ourselves. That is the bare minimum; to the world, we can put on a face—and sometimes, to save our face, we can tell half lies—but to ourselves, we should be truthful. The Mother would say that at the end of the day, review how many times you remembered the Divine. This is a yardstick we can use to judge our involvement in Yoga.

But this exclusiveness will in the end exclude nothing except the falsehood of our way of seeing the world and our will’s ignorance. For our concentration on the Eternal will be consummated by the mind when we see constantly the Divine in itself and the Divine in ourselves, but also the Divine in all things and beings and happenings. It will be consummated by the heart when all emotion is summed up in the love of the Divine,—of the Divine in itself and for itself, but love too of the Divine in all its beings and powers and personalities and forms in the Universe.

Almost twice, Sri Aurobindo has repeated the sentence with the same clarification. First, there are realisations of the mind:

“When we see constantly the Divine in itself and the Divine in ourselves”. We can have a superconscient realisation of the Divine, and we can have a realisation of the Divine in the psychic. But this also is not sufficient. We have to see Brahman also in all things and beings and happenings. This is the universal consciousness. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo says that for the realisation of the heart, there is not only love of the Divine in itself, “but love too of the Divine in all its beings and powers and personalities and forms in the Universe.” This universal realisation must accompany our individual realisation.

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It will be consummated by the will when we feel and receive always the divine impulsion and accept that alone as our sole motive force; but this will mean that, having slain to the last rebellious straggler the wandering impulses of the egoistic nature, we have universalised ourselves and can accept with a constant happy acceptance the one divine working in all things. This is the first fundamental siddhi of the integral Yoga.

Almost the first step in Integral Yoga is this kind of universalisation on the levels of the mind, heart and will. We must see the Divine’s working in all things, love the Divine in all forms, and feel and obey the Divine’s impulsion within ourselves and in all actions and happenings. On every level, we must experience only the Divine.

It is nothing less that is meant in the end when we speak of the absolute consecration of the individual to the Divine.

But this total fullness of consecration can only come by a constant progression when the long and difficult process of transforming desire out of existence is completed in an ungrudging measure. Perfect self-consecration implies perfect self-surrender.

Self-consecration implies perfect self-surrender. We have talked about the difference between surrender and self-consecration. Sometimes, in the beginning, surrender could be passive; that is why the Mother preferred the word consecration.

It is not only more active but also more willing and giving.

Surrender could be more of an attitude, but with consecration, in each act, we are aware that we are offering this to the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo says, “this total fullness of consecration can only come by a constant progression when the long and difficult process of transforming desire out of existence is completed in an ungrudging measure.” There must be a conquest of desire, the transformation of desire in an ungrudging manner. This is a laborious process which requires much faith.

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The most important element of surrender is faith.

Consecration also needs faith, but with surrender you have a blind faith. Although it could be a passive attitude, the element of faith is very strong. “Ungrudging measure” means that our whole being gives itself out of faith. And faith when it is realised becomes knowledge. Therefore, surrender has this double gain that we not only surrender ourselves to the Supreme Being, but as the measure of surrender increases, our knowledge also increases. Faith realised is knowledge.

In consecration, we actively give ourselves to the Divine.

Surrender is linked to the attitude of “Let thy will be done”.

When we say that sentence easily, wholly and spontaneously, that is the measure of our surrender. When surrender is complete, there is no more *my* will or *my* desire. We can see that the stage of consecration grows into a fullness of surrender, and when it fulfils itself it becomes knowledge, knowledge of the Divine. There is a sequential order: consecration is active

in the sense that we are offering what we do to the Divine. Surrender is gradually moving towards accepting and doing only “Thy Will”.

And that is the culmination—“Let Thy will be done.”

You can see an example of what we are saying here in the Mother’s *Notes on the Way*. She said, “Let thy will be done.” She was never told that the work she had to do would be completed and done in this life. She was not given any guarantee. But the Mother picked up the work and did it. That is where the question of faith comes in. The moment she heard the command from the Divine, she started working. She had utter faith that the Divine was looking after her and said, “let thy will be done.” She had no questions of whether it would succeed or what stage she would reach. This is the bridge between consecration and surrender.

(26th April 2001)

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Today let us recapitulate what we have read till now in this chapter.

Here, there are two movements with a transitional stage between them, two periods of this Yoga—one of the process of surrender, the other of its crown and consequence. In the first the individual prepares himself for the reception of the Divine into his members. For all this first period he has to work by means of the instruments of the lower Nature, but aided more and more from above. But in the later transitional stage of this movement our personal and necessarily ignorant effort more and more dwindles and a higher Nature acts; the eternal Shakti descends into this limited form of mortality and progressively possesses and transmutes it. In the second period the greater movement wholly replaces the lesser, formerly indispensable first action; but this can be done only when our self-surrender is complete.

There are three stages of Yoga: personal effort, a period of transition, and then when the Divine takes over one’s sadhana.

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes, "For all this period he (the individual) has to work by means of the instruments of the lower Nature."

What is this work, and how is it accomplished?

There is a positive side and a negative side to this work.

The positive side is to increase one's aspiration, develop one's consciousness, unify one's being, to go within to enter more and more into contact with one's psychic being, to take up all the parts, all the movements, all the activities of one's being and put them before this psychic consciousness so that they fall into their proper place in relation to this centre; finally, to organise all one's aspiration towards the Divine and

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one's progress towards the Divine. That is the positive side.

(CWM 8: 22)

The idea of self-consecration is like offering oil to the lamp.

All of our movements, and all of our activities are put before the psychic consciousness. That is the positive side.

At the same time the negative side consists in refusing methodically and with discernment all the influences which come from outside or from the subconscious or inconscient or from the environment, and stand in the way of spiritual progress. One must discern these influences, suggestions, impulses, and systematically refuse them without ever getting discouraged by their persistence and ever yielding to their will. One must, at the same time, observe clearly in one's being all its different elements, obscure, egoistic, unconscious, or even ill-willed, which consciously or otherwise, answer these bad influences, and allow them not only to penetrate into the consciousness, but sometimes to get settled there. That is the negative side.

Both must be practised at the same time. According to the moment, the occasion, and inner readiness, you must insist on one, now on the other, but

never forget either of them. (Ibid) Both the positive and negative sides have been described. One is consecration, and the other is rejection. Constant vigilance, the Mother would say, is a most needful element in Yoga. She would say the first thing is sincerity. One has to be extremely sincere to oneself in discerning outside influences, and impulses, and systematically refuse them. One must observe clearly in one's being all the different elements that are obscure, egoistic, unconscious, or even ill-willed. It is with these parts of our nature that sincerity counts the most; otherwise, if one is insincere, one could cover all one's mistakes by saying, 'well, I am quite good,

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and it is okay if they are there'. It is utter sincerity which can bring out all the negative aspects.

Generally, all progress made on one side is set off by an attack of the adverse forces on the other. So, the more you advance, the more vigilant must you become. And the most essential quality is perseverance, endurance, and a... What shall I call it?—a kind of inner good humour which helps you not to get discouraged, not to become sad, and to face all difficulties with a smile. There is an English word which expresses this very well—cheerfulness. If you can keep this within you, you fight much better, resist much better, in the light, these bad influences which try to hinder you from progressing.

That is the work. It is vast and complex. And one must never forget anything. (Ibid: 22-23)

This is the work, the personal effort required. We have seen that there is a second stage of transition when the effort becomes less and less, but it is still necessary until the complete surrender comes, where the Lord and Shakti take over.

The ego person in us cannot transform itself by its own force or will or knowledge or by any virtue of its own into the nature of the Divine; all it

can do is to fit itself for the transformation and make more and more its surrender to that which it seeks to become.

One of the logical necessities of surrender is that the transformation we seek cannot be done without the help of the Shakti. The Mother said it is easy to become a saint or a sage because it is a path that is well-trodden. People have worked on that for thousands of years, and you know what to do. But the moment we want to transform our nature then begins the problem. When we want to change, you are going against Nature herself, and Nature has given many obstructions and hindrances.

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Even the Mother had to face death because she wanted to transform it. If we don't want to transform our nature and want to be a good person and have a quiet life, then there is no problem at all! You can take the middle path and, at the end of your life, say, "well, Mother, I have had a good and smooth life."

She once said something to this effect: all the spiritual paths that have led us till now are only silver compared to the supramental path, which is gold. There is such a tremendous difference even between the spiritual-psychic path and the supramental path. The supramental path is the path of transformation, and that is what is so difficult and demanding.

Otherwise, life could be pretty smooth with Divine Grace and much aspiration.

In this context, we must understand that transformation cannot come with one's own effort. This is beyond the highest spiritual capacities attained till now in the evolution of humankind. Logically, transformation and surrender go together; you cannot have it otherwise. The rest you could do with one's tapasya, one's knowledge, etc., but this is one place where surrender is irreplaceable.

As long as the ego is at work in us, our personal action is and must always be in its nature a part of the lower grades of existence; it is obscure or half-enlightened, limited in its field, very partially effective in its power. If a

spiritual transformation, not a mere illumining modification of our nature, is to be done at all, we must call in the Divine Shakti to effect that miraculous work in the individual; for she alone has the needed force, decisive, all-wise and illimitable. But the entire substitution of the divine for the human personal action is not at once entirely possible. All interference from below that would falsify the truth of the superior action must

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first be inhibited or rendered impotent, and it must be done by our own free choice.

It is acknowledged that this entire transformation cannot be done at one time.

A continual and always repeated refusal of the impulsions and falsehoods of the lower nature is asked from us and an insistent support to the Truth as it grows in our parts...

What is required of us at this level of personal effort is a repeated refusal of impulsions and falsehoods. And that, too, is to be done out of our own free choice. This is where the problem comes in. We are shown the path, we know what to refuse, and what to reject, but this we must do out of our own choice. The Divine will not force it on us. He has given us all the scriptures, but how to use them is our choice. That is where the intensity of the tapasya comes in. Someone like Nolinida can take only a few years to walk the whole saga of spirituality, whereas the common sadhak may take many lives. What is lacking is intensity. A person who never wastes even a minute but constantly thinks of what is to be rejected, while taking food, while walking, while talking, etc., if the person is constantly thinking of aspiration and rejection, as the Mother told us, then the second stage comes very fast. We all have to pass through the same stages, but how long we stretch that time is up to us.

It is a free choice; we must traverse the same path as all others.

...for the progressive settling into our nature and final perfection of the incoming informing Light, Purity and Power needs for its development and sustenance our free acceptance of it and our stubborn rejection of all that is contrary to it, inferior or incompatible.

In the first movement of self-preparation, the period of personal effort, the method we have to use is this concentration of the whole being on the Divine that it seeks

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and, as its corollary, this constant rejection, throwing out, *katharsis*, of all that is not the true Truth of the Divine. An entire consecration of all that we are, think, feel and do will be the result of this persistence. This consecration in its turn must culminate in an integral self-giving to the Highest; for its crown and sign of completion is the whole nature's all-comprehending absolute surrender. In the second stage of the Yoga, transitional between the human and the divine working, there will supervene an increasing purified and vigilant passivity, a more and more luminous divine response to the Divine Force, but not to any other...

He adds a very important element in Yoga, "a more and more luminous divine response to the Divine Force, but not to any other." This is the danger that there are forces in between, other lesser forces in between the Divine that may attract us and us.

...and there will be as a result the growing inrush of a great and conscious miraculous working from above. In the last period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed sadhana; the place of endeavour and tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature. These are the natural successions of the action of the Yoga.

These are the three stages: personal effort, transition and spontaneous working of the Divine Force.

These movements are indeed not always or absolutely arranged in a strict succession to each other. The second stage begins in part before the first is

completed; the first continues in part until the second is perfected; the last divine working can manifest from time to time as a promise before it is finally settled and normal to the nature. Always too there

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is something higher and greater than the individual which leads him even in his personal labour and endeavour.

These three stages are not one after the other. We cannot say that from twenty to thirty years, there is a personal effort; from age thirty to fifty is the transition, and from age fifty to seventy is the culmination. There is an intermingling of the first, second and third stages. Grace tells us that ultimately our total surrender must be the aim. Her touches of Grace show us that with a simple touch of aspiration and call, she comes as an answer. These touches come and lead us to the third level. But these touches are intermittent until we get to the third stage. So the stages are intermingled and not successive.

Often he may become, and remain for a time, wholly conscious, even in parts of his being permanently conscious, of this greater leading behind the veil, and that may happen long before his whole nature has been purified in all its parts from the lower indirect control. Even, he may be thus conscious from the beginning; his mind and heart, if not his other members, may respond to that seizing and penetrating guidance with a certain initial completeness from the very first steps of the Yoga.

These are different ways of being conscious. One could be wholly conscious in some parts of his being, for example, conscious on the mental level from the beginning, but the emotions and body could be fragile. Another person could be more integrally conscious, but temporally, not for long periods.

There can be different combinations.

But it is the constant and complete and uniform action of the great direct control that more and more distinguishes the transitional stage as it proceeds and draws to its close.

This predominance of a greater diviner leading, not personal

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to ourselves, indicates the nature's increasing ripeness for a total spiritual transformation.

It is a beautiful way of looking at ourselves and seeing how far we are spiritually. It is the measure of "This predominance of a greater diviner leading." To put it more directly, we could use these words—constant, complete, uniform action of great direct control. This is a method we could use to see how far we are under the constant, complete, and uniform control of the Divine?

First, constant memory of the Mother: how many times, for what duration during the day do we remember Her? Second, how complete is my consecration: emotionally I may feel close to the Mother all the time, but my mind and vital may be into a lot of nonsense. In fact, if the mental or vital or physical are even a little out of tune with your inner seeking, the inner call gets jeopardised. There is a minimum requirement for all the beings to call the Divine, otherwise the being is pulled apart and even a little japa of the Mother's name is not possible.

It is the unmistakable sign that the self-consecration has not only been accepted in principle but is fulfilled in act and power.

The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light and Power and Ananda.

Sweet Mother, "The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light and Power and Ananda."

Does the Supreme choose the being who will be his instrument, or does the being choose to become his instrument?

You can take it as you like.

One can't tell who began! But the two usually take place at the same time.

If you want an order of priority, it is evident that the Divine exists before the individual, so it must be the Divine who has

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chosen first! But that is a choice prior to terrestrial life. In the order of the ordinary human consciousness it may be one or the other or both at the same time. In fact it is likely that the Divine is the first to notice that this or that being is ready! But he who is ready generally does not know it to begin with, so he has the impression that it is he who has decided and is choosing. But this is more of an impression than a reality.

And once you are chosen, it is ineluctable, you can't escape even if you try.
(CWM 8: 23)

Mother, to continue the question about the last sentence: "The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light..."

Yes

Can this be applied generally or is it for one in a million?

What do you mean by “generally”? Everyone on earth? Is that what you mean?

All those who aspire and do yoga, or is it only one person?

O! now it begins to take shape! (laughter) It is only one individual the Divine chooses to manifest Him or can He choose several? — He chooses several.

But here too there is a hierarchy. One can understand *nothing* of the spiritual life if one does not understand the true hierarchy.

Nowadays it's not in fashion. It is something which human thought doesn't favour at all. But from the spiritual point of view it is automatic, spontaneous and indisputable. And so, if the hierarchy is true, there is a place for everybody; and for each individual in his own place, his individual truth is absolute. That is to say, each element which is truly in its place has a total and perfect relation with the Divine—in its place. And yet, on the whole, there is a hierarchy which too is

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quite absolute. But to understand spiritual life one must first understand that; and it isn't very easy.

Everyone can be a perfect expression of the Divine in himself, on condition that he knows his place and keeps to it.

(Ibid: 27-28)

That is also the message of the Gita that each one fulfils his own dharma in the divine plan. The Divine is manifesting one part of his truth in each person. When Arjuna chooses Sri Krishna, how far has Sri Krishna chosen Arjuna? There is a hierarchy. Sri Krishna is superior to Arjuna, but at the

same time, each person is chosen for a particular place in the work. In that place in the divine work, there is a hierarchy, but that hierarchy is not higher or lower; all are essential to the Divine work, and all are his manifestations. The universe itself is created based on a hierarchy, such as the Supermind, Overmind etc. The Physical is less than Supermind because it has not yet expressed the Divine in its fullness. Still, in its role in evolution it is just as important as the Supermind, and Matter contains the entire Brahman just as much as Supermind contains it. Brahman is equally in all but is unequally expressed in all. That is the only difference.

And if they do not know the hierarchy, they cannot know this?

But they don't need to know that they form a hierarchy, it is not necessary to know it. It is only if one wants to physically organise a spiritual society — then one has to materialise the hierarchy. But generally, in the world as it is, there are so many gaps in this hierarchy that it seems a confusion.

The perfect hierarchy is a total hierarchy, and it is not concerned with time and space. But when you want to realise this physically it becomes very difficult. It's like weaving a piece of cloth with lots of holes everywhere; and the holes disturb the general harmony. Always people are missing, steps are missing, pieces are missing on the chess-board—all this is missing. So it looks like a confusion. But if everything

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were expressed and each thing in its place, it would be a perfect harmony and a perfect hierarchy.

There is somewhere—not in the material universe, but in the manifested universe—this perfect hierarchy; it exists. But it is not yet manifested upon earth.

Perhaps this will be one of the results of the supramental transformation: the world will be ready for a perfect, spontaneous, essentially true

hierarchical manifestation—and without any kind of coercion—where everyone will become aware of his own perfection.

Mother, what does a spiritual hierarchy mean exactly?

Because when we speak of hierarchy that implies something graded in a superior and inferior order, doesn't it?

Yes, and that's quite wrong. That is to say, materially it is like that. But this is not what I call a hierarchy.

Then what is a hierarchy?

It is the organisation of the functions and the manifestation in action of the particular nature of each person. We have often tried to find comparisons, but they are worthless. For none of the things we know physically can answer to that condition. There is always the sense of superiority and inferiority as you say... Some have compared a hierarchy to the various functions of the body, for example. But that always gives the impression that the head is at the top and the feet at the bottom, so it is a nuisance!

Each element is the whole Divine at the same time, then how can we speak of a hierarchy?

Each element has a direct and perfect relation with the Divine.

But can't they become the whole Divine?

Yes, all become the Divine; but not the totality of the Divine, for the Divine is everything. You can't take a piece

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of the Divine and say, "This is the Divine." And yet, in his spiritual consciousness each one has a perfect relation with the Divine, that is to say, each one is the Divine as perfectly as he can be. But to reconstruct the Divine, all the Divine is necessary. And it is precisely this that constitutes the very essence of hierarchy. But as each one is perfect in himself, there can be no feeling of inferiority or superiority.

I don't think the human mind can understand that. I think it must be lived; once one has lived it, it is straightforward; it appears luminously simple. But understanding it with the mind is not possible; it seems impossible. Above all, because the mind, to understand anything at all, has to divide and contrast everything. Otherwise it does not understand, it gets confused. By its very functioning, it becomes incapable of understanding. (CWM 8: 28-30)

(3rd May 2001)

Chapter – III

Self-Surrender in Works –The Way of the Gita This chapter, “Self-surrender in Works”, is, the crux, of the Gita.

The title itself suggests that it is not a passive self-surrender, but a dynamic one; dynamic in the sense of surrendering oneself in and through work. The chapter starts with “life” itself. There is an innate link between the Integral Yoga and the Yoga of the Gita. Both of them start on the same platform. If Integral Yoga has taken anything from the Gita, first and foremost, it is this aspect of surrender in life primarily through works. Of course, Sri Krishna tells us to do *nishkama karma*, desireless work. But Sri Aurobindo takes off from there and goes further. Thus, this chapter discusses this common point between the Integral Yoga and the Yoga of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo's first sentence in this chapter almost reminds us of the phrase, “All life is Yoga.”

Life, not a remote silent or high-uplifted ecstatic Beyond-Life alone, is the field of our Yoga. The transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life must be its central purpose. The means towards this supreme end is a self-giving of all our nature to the Divine. Everything must be given to the Divine within us, to the universal All and to the transcendent Supreme. An absolute concentration of our will, our heart and our thought on that one and manifold Divine, an unreserved self-consecration of our whole being to the Divine alone—this is the decisive movement, the turning of the ego to That

which is infinitely greater than itself, its self-giving and indispensable surrender.

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We see here two critical concepts. One is that living in a remote and “high-
uplifted ecstatic Beyond” is relatively more straightforward. That has been
the aim and goal, the practice and achievement of the old yogas. It is indeed
a necessary part of yoga to reach the Beyond or the higher consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo insists upon a transformation of our superficial, narrow and
fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and being. There could
be any amount of inner realisation. Still, if we have to live in a collectivity,
as part of a group soul, the inner union is of course the binding force. Still,
at the same time, the outer transformation becomes extremely important in
order to maintain or gain harmony, the sense of oneness or togetherness.

To have an inner realisation is suitable for living an individual existence.
We can be quiet, withdrawn, alone in our room or far away in the woods; it
would be all beautiful and peaceful.

But if this outer change is not accomplished, at least to some extent,
collective living becomes extremely difficult. This is the link between Sri
Aurobindo’s collective Yoga and the need for transformation of the outer
nature. These are almost synonymous terms: ‘transformation of nature’ and
‘collective yoga’.

There cannot be collective Yoga without transformation, and this
transformation cannot be some external, superficial imposition of the
mind’s decision or the heart’s emotion. It must be based on something more
profound. That something deeper could be on the individual inner level, a
deep love for the Divine. That would be love which one gives oneself
unreservedly, unconditionally, wholly and totally to the Mother. I would put
it this way; all our disharmony is a measure of our lack of love for the
Divine. It is a direct reflection. We cannot claim that ‘I love the Divine’ yet
have a life full of quarrels and problems. This love for the Divine gets
translated into what Sri Aurobindo calls the

“dynamic self-giving of all our nature to the Divine.” This is how ‘transformation’ and ‘collective yoga’ are connected.

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However, it is difficult to love the Divine as there is no

‘exclusive’ and ‘total’ love—it is a progressive love. But this love, in day-to-day existence, must get translated into self-giving. The more we give ourselves to her, our nature transforms. We can use this as a measure to understand,

‘why am I not changing? Why is it that things are difficult for me, and they are becoming more and more difficult, even externally, and my own nature is not changing much?’ There is no parameter as straightforward as this. It only means our love for the Divine is not pure and intense.

We may claim verbally and emotionally, ‘I love the Mother’, but it is insufficient. It may be only a lip-service. This love for the Mother has to go so deep that one has to forget oneself.

Our body, mind, and ego all have to be overlooked. Self-abnegation is required, a complete and total self-forgetfulness in her and for her. It doesn’t mean going into a trance. It means a continuous self-giving of all of our nature in day-today life. It is this that transforms us. When we say ‘for the sake of the Mother’ or ‘in the name of the Mother’, we begin to act differently if we love her. Otherwise, it is tough to change. Our ego justifies itself, our mind too justifies its actions so well that it will not give in or give up. The only overwhelming force is love, love for the Mother. As Sri Aurobindo says, “Everything must be given to the Divine within us, to the universal All and to the transcendent Supreme.”

Sri Aurobindo tells us that human life must be transformed into the divine way of life. Let us read the Mother’s clarification on this: *Sweet Mother*,

will “the divine way of life” be established on earth only when the Supermind descends?

I think so. There seems to be no possibility of its happening otherwise; But it is a very relative question. Perhaps our way of life could become a little more divine without becoming altogether divine.

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Mother what do you mean by a divine way of life?

We always call “Divine” all that we are not but wish to be.

All that seems to us definitely superior, not only to all that we have done, but to all that we feel we can do; all that surpasses both our conception and our present possibilities, we call “Divine”.

I say this, not as a joke, but because I am quite convinced that if we go back some thousands of years, when men spoke of the Divine—if ever they did speak of the Divine, as I believe—they spoke perhaps of a state like that of the godheads of the Overmind; and now this mode of being of the Overmind godheads who, obviously, have governed the earth and formed many things on earth for a very long time, seems to us far inferior to what we conceive the Supermind to be. And this Supermind, which is what we now call the Divine and try to bring down on earth, will probably strike us, in the same way, a few thousand or million years hence as the Overmind does today.

And I am sure that in the manifestation, that is, in His self-expression, the Divine is progressive. Outside the manifestation, He is something we cannot conceive.

Still, as soon as He manifests in this kind of perpetual becoming, well, He manifests more and more of Himself, as though He were reserving the most beautiful things in His Being for the end.

As the world progresses, what He expresses in the world becomes what we might call more and more divine.

Let us return to this connection between transforming one's life in the light of one's love for the Mother. The Mother explains that the divine life is directly linked with the supramental consciousness, which is precisely the Mother's own consciousness in this incarnation. She is none else but the

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supramental Mahashakti. No matter how we look at it, it is the same thing. Either we say that the supramental consciousness works in us for transformation, or it is love for the Mother, who in her incarnation is the supramental Mahashakti who will transform our nature. But transform we must; otherwise, we get back into the practice of those individual yogas and away from Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

We find that this love becomes a dynamic element when we start surrendering. Otherwise, we may say, 'I love the Mother, I think of Her, I dream of Her', but it could be something individual and static that will not change my nature. If I want to change my nature, the process is that everything must be given to the Divine within us: "An absolute concentration of our will, our heart and our thought on that one and manifold Divine."

Mark the phrase "manifold Divine." We have to focus not on one aspect of the Divine, not only the impersonal or the personal, *nirguna* or *saguna*; but on the manifold Divine. In simple words, we need to pay attention to the four great personalities of the Mother and her twelve aspects.

There has to be "an unreserved self-consecration of our whole being to the Divine alone". There is no intermediary to whom we surrender ourselves. With one stroke, Sri Aurobindo—has erased all the intermediary beings from the human to the Divine. We must be connected directly to the superconscient. He says, "this is the decisive movement, the turning of the ego to That which is infinitely greater than itself; it is self-giving and indispensable surrender."

The life of the human creature, as it is ordinarily lived, is composed of a half-fixed, half-fluid mass of very imperfectly ruled thoughts, perceptions, sensations, emotions, desires, enjoyments, acts mostly customary and self-repeating, in part only dynamic and self-developing, but all centred around a superficial ego.

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This is the definition of ordinary life. What is the essence of our mundane existence? They are thoughts, sensations, emotions, desires and enjoyment all centred around the ego.

The sum of the movement of these activities eventuates in an internal growth which is partly visible and operative in this life, partly a seed of progress in lives hereafter.

This is the ordinary life with all its desires through which there is some growth. Usually, people grow through all the battering they receive in life, but this growth is only partly visible, and it is very little. But the inner growth is carried over to the next life and for thousands of lives. In each life, there is an internal development, but it is often too small to notice.

This growth of the conscious being, an expansion, an increasing self-expression, a more and more harmonised development of his constituent members is the whole meaning and all the pith of human existence. It is for this meaningful development of consciousness by thought, will, emotion, desire, action and experience, leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery, that Man, the mental being, has entered into the material body.

The Mother explains:

Why has the mental being taken a material body? Is that what you are asking?

Sri Aurobindo says, "leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery."

The divine discovery is the discovery of the Divine in oneself. So man, that is, the mental being—for what we call man is a physical body with a mental

being within, a mental being manifested in a body, a physical body—so the mental being has incarnated and become man in order to find within himself the divine Being, the divine Presence.

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Why? Are you asking why? It's a funny way of going about it!

I don't know if he is going to explain it here, I don't remember now, but one thing is certain, that this marvellous thing, the divine Presence in Matter, which is at the origin of the formation of the psychic being, belongs in its own right to life on earth.

So—we have already said this many times, I believe—our earth which from the astronomical point of view seems to be only a small insignificant planet in the midst of all the stars and all the worlds, our earth has been formed to become the symbol of the universe and the point of concentration for the work of transformation, of divine transmutation.

And because of that, in this Matter which was perhaps the most obscure and most inconscient of all the Matter of the universes, there plunged and incarnated directly the Divine Consciousness, from the supreme Origin right into the obscurest Matter, without going through any intermediate stages, *directly*. Consequently. The two extremes touch, the Supreme and the most inconscient, and the universal circle closes. And so earthly life is the easiest means, one might say, or the most rapid, of becoming conscious of the Divine.

And it is so true that even the great cosmic Individualities, when they want to be converted or to unite with the Origin, take a physical body for that, because it is more convenient for them, for it can be done faster and better than if they had to progress through all the states of being, from any one of the states of being in the universe to the supreme Origin.

It is easier to come down into a human body and find the divine Presence there, it is quicker. Imagine the serpent biting its tail, it makes a circle,

doesn't it? So, if something wants to be united with the Divine, it is easier to enter the tail than to go the whole round of the body! As the head bites the

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tail, well, if you enter the tail you are immediately in contact with the head, otherwise you have to go all the way round to reach the head.

Mind you, I am not quite sure if this is what he means, but any way it is one explanation. (Ibid: 35-36) This is a beautiful explanation of the phrase “leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery.” She has given the example of the serpent. We have the symbol of the serpent biting its tail. So the head is the Superconscient, the Divine, and the tail is the Inconscient. What happens is that the Superconscient is closest to the Inconscient or closest to Matter. So if one wants to reach the Divine directly, instead of going the entire circle of the serpent's body, she says, you can enter the Inconscient or Matter, for Matter is a shortcut to the Divine.

Between the Superconscient and Matter, there are many levels of consciousness: Overmind, Intuition, Illumined mind, Higher mind, Mind, and Vital. The Mother says that the gods come down into Matter because the Matter is as if in the very

“mouth” of the Divine, just like the tail is in the mouth of the serpent. This is why Sri Aurobindo wants to transform Matter because by transforming it, he facilitates the transformation of everything. She explains that once Matter is transformed or absorbs supramental consciousness, this force from Matter will go into the vital, the mental and spiritual mind levels leading up to the Superconscient. This is why the emphasis is on the transformation of the physical.

Until now, all the other Avatars, gurus etc., have asked us to change the thoughts in mind, become moral, religious, quieten the mind, and the vital, but this is midway in the circle of the serpent. We would have to change many things on the way to the Divine.

The Mother has told us many times that once any

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transformation comes in the physical, it is more permanent because any sign of the divine consciousness on matter lasts forever. Whereas its signature on the mind doesn't last.

Sri Aurobindo is showing us the shortest way to the divine manifestation. But for the transformation of the physical being, the touch of the Supermind is an absolute necessity.

It is for this meaningful development of consciousness by thought, will, emotion, desire, action and experience, leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery, that Man, the mental being, has entered into the material body.

The Mother has taken the trouble to explain this phrase “man entering the material body”. There is a bit of philosophy here that we should not miss. When Sri Aurobindo says that “Man, the mental being, has entered into the material body”, he is not referring to an evolution from the chimpanzee to human beings. Supposing that biologically there was the development of the human body, there could still have been a possibility that it would not contain the mental consciousness and instead still contain the animal consciousness. We could have human bodies but still be monkeys if it were not for the descent of the mental being, what he is calling here “the mental principle.”

Unless the human body is impregnated with a particular kind of consciousness, it remains purely an animal. Because the mental principle has manifested in this body, we call it a human being.

Why has this mental being entered this material body? There could be a possibility that the mental being entered only the vital level, the subtle physical! If the mental consciousness had only entered the subtle physical there would have been in mental existence subtle physical beings (which exist already as we see in *Savitri*). There are subtle physical beings with great minds, but why has the mental being come into Matter? It has come

into a mortal body, into a disease-prone body, there are all kinds of difficulties in this body. Still, the mental being

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has entered the physical body. It is because Matter leads the transformation, as seen in the example of serpent.

When I said there are subtle-physical beings with a mind, we can take the example of gods. They have a subtle-physical body, a great mind, we and yet even the gods have to come into Matter, in a physical body to attain to the supramental transformation. So, Matter or body is the shortest path to the Divine.

Initially, it may take a long time, but once the fire is ignited in Matter, it will go rapidly. That is the reason the Mother concentrated so much on the physical transformation. Human beings have tried many moral and ethical changes, but humanity has not changed much. Now the Mother has taken another road, a movement that would guarantee a greater transformation and a permanent one. This is why Sri Aurobindo has said that the mental being has entered the material body for “the development of consciousness by thought, will, emotion, desire, action and experience”.

All the rest is either auxiliary and subordinate or accidental and otiose; that only matters which sustains and helps the evolution of his nature and the growth or rather the progressive unfolding and discovery of his self and spirit.

Except for the development of consciousness and the transformation of the outer being, all other aims are “auxiliary and subordinate and accidental and otiose”, that is, useless and futile.

If we make a conscious attempt to change our consciousness, then our life is worthy. If we want to call ourselves children of the Mother, there has to be a willingness to change.

(12th July 2001)

In our last class we discussed the supreme divine discovery and in this context we read the Mother's explanation of the symbol of the serpent which has its tail in its mouth. She

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suggests that Matter is closest to the Divine consciousness. For the process of transformation, if it were possible to bring down the Supermind directly into Matter, it would be a great shortcut and permanent.

Many questions arose as to how is it possible that Matter receives the Supermind first and not the mind and the vital!

Here the Mother speaks of an experience she had on 22nd November 1967,

But since it is happening in one body, it can happen in all bodies! I am not made of something different from the others. The difference is in consciousness, that is all. It is made exactly of the same thing, with the same things, I eat the same things, and it was made in the same way, absolutely.

And it was as stupid, as obscure, as unconscious, as obstinate as all the bodies of the world.

And this began when the doctors declared that I was very ill, that was the beginning. Because the entire body was emptied of its habits and its forces, and then slowly, slowly, slowly the cells woke up to a new receptivity and opened themselves to the Divine Influence directly.

Otherwise there would be no hope. If this matter that started by being... Even a pebble is already an organisation—

certainly it was worse than a pebble: unconscious, inert, absolute; and then, little by little, little by little that woke up.

It sees, yes, it sees, it has only to open its eyes to see. Well, it is the same thing which happens; for the animal to become a man it did not require

anything other than the infusion of a consciousness,... (CWM 11: 93-94)

We have already discussed this idea given by Sri Aurobindo that the mental being has entered this material body. This is precisely what the Mother is telling us here. That for the animal

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to become a man it did not require anything other than the infusion of mental consciousness:

...a mental consciousness; and now it is the awakening of this consciousness which was altogether at the bottom, the very bottom. The mind is withdrawn, the vital is withdrawn, all is withdrawn. At the time when I was said to be ill, the mind was gone, the vital was gone, the body was left to itself - purposely. Yes, it is that, it is just because the vital and the mental were gone that it gave the impression of a very serious illness. And then, in the body left to itself, little by little the cells began to wake up to the consciousness (*gesture of aspiration rising up*); this consciousness that was infused into the body by the vital (from the mental into the vital, from the vital into the body), when both had disappeared, the consciousness emerged slowly, slowly. That started with a burst of the Love from the highest summit the last supreme altitude, and then little by little, little by little it came down into the body. And then this physical mind, that is to say, something altogether, altogether stupid, which used to turn round and round, repeating constantly the same thing, a hundred times the same thing, little by little it was illumined, became conscious, was organised, and then it entered into the silence; then in the silence the aspiration expressed itself in prayers.

It is the contradiction of all the spiritual assertions of the past: “If you want to live fully conscious of the divine life, give up your body—the body cannot follow”; well, Sri Aurobindo came and said: the body, not only can it follow, it can even be the base for manifesting the Divine.

The work remains to be done.

But now a certitude is there. The result remains still far off, very far; much has to be done before the crust, the

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experience of the most external surface as it is, manifests what is happening within (not “within” in the spiritual depths: within the body). To enable that to manifest what is within...

This will come last, and it is good it is so, for if it came before time, one would neglect the work, one would be so satisfied as to forget to finish his work; everything should be done within, should be well and good, should be thoroughly changed, then the outside will speak it out.

But it is all one single substance, all similar everywhere, and everywhere it was unconscious; and then what is remarkable is that *automatically* things are happening (*gesture showing points scattered everywhere in the world*) altogether unexpected, here and there, in people who do not even know anything. (Ibid: 93-95)

Here there is a hint: in the Mother’s own body there was a purposeful suspension of mind and vital. As we know from Sri Aurobindo’s explanation, the mind and vital impose upon the body, habits, patterns of thinking, and make it suffer. The body is not itself free or independent; it is a slave of the mind and vital. The Mother’s mind was fully developed, fully surrendered, and yet when the mind and vital were suspended, she says that the higher consciousness entered directly into the body and then the cells started aspiring. It is as if the whole burden of the mental and vital consciousness were removed from the physical consciousness. Then the physical could pray independently and receive individually the supreme force of Love.

One of the processes in the physical transformation as indicated by Sri Aurobindo in his letters and sonnets is that of the Force descending from level to level. It is not that the transformation begins with Matter and

spreads to other levels of consciousness. Transformation has to take place simultaneously

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in the mind, vital and physical, and for that process the physical consciousness has to regain its independence.

The Mother had explained her own process of physical transformation in 1967. Until then her new body had not yet come. At this stage her mind and vital were suspended in order to release the physical consciousness and keep it open to the Descent. There could be a Descent through the mental to the vital and into the physical, but if one could suspend these two it is a faster process to transform the body. How much can we common human beings do this? Is it meant for all? Or was it only the Mother who could do that? I do not know. This is a question that has to be left to the future. We cannot guess what course the Supermind will take to transform each one of us.

Someone who had talked to the Mother told me that there need not be only one method to transform the physical. What the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have discovered is one of their own methods, but in the future there could be other methods also. Let us not be rigid in our thinking that this line that has been given is the only one. Spirituality opens up many possibilities, so even the transformation of the body could take place in different ways—perhaps simultaneously on the mental, vital and physical levels, or one level after the other.

Coming back to the text, we have seen the complexity of the mental and the supramental consciousness. We have also discussed how the animal became human by the descent of the mental consciousness. Where did this descent take place?

The vital of the animal did not change, it is the physical that has changed because of the descent of the mental consciousness.

Today our body is what it is because of the descent of the mental consciousness into the animal physical body. It remoulded itself in order to

suit the mental consciousness.

Today we are walking, talking, smiling etc. all this is because the

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mental consciousness descended into the physical. Similarly, only when the supramental consciousness descends into the physical, only then the physical transformation will take place and the new body will be moulded to its needs.

In paragraph three of the text we get the logical conclusion of the first section which is about the Integral Yoga and the common life of humanity.

The aim set before our Yoga is nothing less than to hasten this supreme object of our existence here. Its process leaves behind the ordinary tardy method of slow and confused growth through the evolution of Nature.

For the natural evolution is at its best an uncertain growth under cover, partly by the pressure of the environment, partly by a groping education and an ill-lighted purposeful effort, an only partially illumined and half-automatic use of opportunities with many blunders and lapses and relapses; a great portion of it is made up of apparent accidents and circumstances and vicissitudes,—though veiling a secret divine intervention and guidance.

This again is a summary of the ordinary life. It is not that we do not progress in the ordinary common life, but it is a progress that is not made from one's own self-will but as if pushed by circumstances. It is like a ball on the ocean, subject to the mercy of the tides and waves. Somehow the ball keeps moving, slapped and thrown by the waves of circumstances. As he says, it is a "half-automatic use of opportunities with many blunders and lapses and relapses; a great portion of it is made up of apparent accidents and circumstances and vicissitudes..."

If we think quietly over this sentence we can see why an ordinary life is so full of incidents. If we were to analyse a common person's life we can see

that it is full of events on individual, social and family levels. All the time we feel we are

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being slapped by events and happenings, because we are not willing to move forward through our own will and effort. Nature takes care that some problem or the other is brought to us so that we never stagnate. Nature also wants that we should grow towards the divine consciousness; there is “a secret divine intervention and guidance.” Because we are not conscious, not consciously willing to progress, these thousand things happen to us. But even in Yoga, if we do not move forward consciously, there could be many things happening and we get confused in our understanding.

We can judge the progress we are making by the external events of our life. If we are left a little quiet by outer circumstances we are on the right path, though there could be the other extreme of complete lethargy. But usually if we are peaceful with the events that are happening it means our aspiration is growing. The moment we slacken we often get a slap. That is how Nature moves.

In Yoga we replace this confused crooked crab motion with a rapid, conscious and self-directed evolution which is planned to carry us, as far as can be, in a straight line towards the goal set before us. In a certain sense it may be an error to speak of a goal anywhere in a progression which may well be infinite. Still we can conceive of an immediate goal, an ulterior objective beyond our present achievement towards which the soul in man can aspire. There lies before him the possibility of a new birth; there can be an ascent into a higher and wider plane of being and its descent to transform his members. An enlarged and illumined consciousness is possible that shall make of him a liberated spirit and a perfected force—and, if spread beyond the individual, it might even constitute a divine humanity or else a new, a supramental and therefore a superhuman race. It is this new birth that we make our aim:

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a growth into a divine consciousness is the whole meaning of our Yoga, an integral conversion to divinity not only of the soul but of all the parts of our nature.

In Yoga we try to go on a straight line towards the goal set before us. But immediately he adds “it may be an error to speak of a goal anywhere in a progression which may well be infinite.”

That is true; in Integral Yoga, there is no end. The goal is infinite, that is why Sri Aurobindo says that this Yoga has an immediate goal, but not an ultimate one. The ultimate goal is the Infinite.

He says “we can conceive of an immediate goal, an ulterior objective beyond our present achievement towards which the soul in man can aspire” and that “a growth into a divine consciousness is the whole meaning of our Yoga, an integral conversion to divinity”.

We can ask if there is a growth into a particular divine consciousness that we can define and be able to say of it, ‘now I am in the divine consciousness?’ No! We have to go from one harmony to the next. There is an infinite range of levels of harmony. The sign of a divine life is harmony and unity. It is the harmony of the inner and outer life, and if we find the unity within, it expresses as harmony in our outer life.

A saint may say that he is living in a divine consciousness.

There could be a yogi in the Ashram of a great stature like N

who would say ‘I am living in a divine consciousness’. And tomorrow another person could say the same. They are all right, as there are levels of harmony which depend on the depth of each one’s consciousness. That is why “a growth into a divine consciousness is the whole meaning of our Yoga, an integral conversion to divinity, an integral conversion to divinity not only of the soul but of all the parts of our nature.” *The Synthesis Yoga* explains how to achieve this integral conversion to divinity.

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This next paragraph is one of the precise definitions of what we mean by the Integral Yoga, and by the Superman.

Our purpose in Yoga is to exile the limited outward-looking ego and to enthrone God in its place as the ruling Inhabitant of the nature.

We may recollect *isha vasyamidam* from the Isha Upanishad

which tells us that the Lord is the inhabitant of this cosmos?

The human ego has usurped the seat of the Divine within. And the whole sense of Yoga is to reverse this order and bring back the true owner. It is like a tenant who lives in a house for some years and claims it to be his own. The ego does the same thing.

It says, 'I have been living in mankind since time immemorial'; it challenges the Divine by saying, 'I don't see any record that you are the owner of this body of mankind'. The poor soul is dislodged from its own home. It returns with every birth to reclaim the ownership of the body. But before it wakes up, the ego takes over the body. We give a legitimacy to the ego.

Right from our birth we give it importance and make all the documents in favour of the ego by saying it is 'my mind', 'my feelings', 'my duty', 'my house, etc. When we reach old age we say, 'God, come back'. But he can't hear our call because he was dethroned. This is why we have to remember what the Mother said, that spirituality has to begin when one is young!

To a child we should give the truth that the ego is only a tenant and not the owner of his life. We could tell the child that the real inhabitant is the Divine, the real owner of the body is He and the ego is only temporarily living there. The ego is a helper in the beginning but the moment he refuses to vacate the house it becomes a bar. Sri Aurobindo thus says that in Yoga we must get rid of the ego.

And this means, first, to disinherit desire and no longer accept the enjoyment of desire as the ruling human motive.

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The spiritual life will draw its sustenance not from desire but from a pure and selfless spiritual delight of essential existence. And not only the vital nature in us whose stamp is desire, but the mental being too must undergo a new birth and a transfiguring change.

This is not a simple sentence because normally our life has enjoyment of desire as its ruling human motive. Our actions, mental and vital, have only one aim—enjoyment of desire.

Sri Aurobindo does not tell us to get rid of desire by going away from life. He says, ‘you must have the delight of existence, yet it must not be ruled by desire’. This is the difficulty, to remain in life without attending to desires. The whole paradox of life is here—desire versus the delight of existence. How to take the *rasa* of life and not be in the clutches of desire? This is what we have to understand.

Our divided, egoistic, limited and ignorant thought and intelligence must disappear; in its place there must stream in the catholic and faultless play of a shadowless divine illumination which shall culminate in the end in a natural self-existent Truth-consciousness free from groping half-truth and stumbling error.

On the mental level our divided, egoistic, limited and ignorant thought and intelligence must disappear. Mind’s divisions and limits, its egoism of holding on to its way of thinking must be removed. Sometimes I feel, that mind is an even greater hindrance than the vital desires. Vital desires are not so much of a block as mental obstinacy. The vital on an individual level can be tackled, but mental obstinacy is more harmful and dangerous. We take pride in our thoughts and say, ‘I’ stand upon

‘my’ truth. It is a block. He says this must be replaced with a

“catholic and faultless play of a shadowless divine illumination.”

Even if it takes a thousand lives to do this, it doesn't matter. We

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must first mentally understand it, and then if this understanding can sink into our lives it will be a great gain.

First, the divided obstinate mind must give itself up and take up catholicity. With “catholicity” we normally think of faith and belief. But this catholicity of the mind means it is flexible, free and open, that it accepts and sees the truth in others' views and does not get stuck in its own judgments as the only right way of thinking. Catholicity of mind is the first step which we can practice. It is only after that is established can there come the faultless play of divine illumination.

Our confused and embarrassed ego-centred small-motived will and action must cease and make room for the total working of a swiftly powerful, lucidly automatic, divinely moved and guided unfallen Force.

Our actions are normally “ego-centered and small-motived”

because I just the length of my own shadow. I don't want to see beyond that because I benefit from what this shadow brings me—pleasure, gain, profit, etc. All of our action is covered by this shadow. He says that it must open to “a swiftly powerful, lucidly automatic, divinely moved and guided unfallen Force.”

There must be implanted and activised in all our doings a supreme, impersonal, unfaltering and un stumbling will in spontaneous and untroubled unison with the will of the Divine. The unsatisfying surface play of our feeble egoistic emotions must be ousted and there must be revealed instead a secret deep and vast psychic heart within that waits behind them for its hour; all our feelings, impelled by this inner heart in which dwells the Divine, will be transmuted into calm and intense movements of a twin passion of divine Love and manifold Ananda. This is the definition of a divine humanity or a supramental race. This, not an exaggerated or even a

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sublimated energy of human intellect and action, is the type of the superman whom we are called to evolve by our Yoga.

In this paragraph we see the transformation that is expected on the vital, mental, will and the emotional levels. He doesn't speak specifically of the physical transformation, but he does mention "a divine humanity or a supramental race". We are moving towards the supramental race and it means a complete conversion of all the parts of our being.

In the ordinary human existence an outgoing action is obviously three-fourths or even more of our life. It is only the exceptions, the saint and the seer, the rare thinker, poet and artist who can live more within themselves; these indeed, at least in the most intimate parts of their nature, shape themselves more in inner thought and feeling than in the surface act. But it is not either of these sides separated from the other, but rather a harmony of the inner and the outer life made one in fullness and transfigured into a play of something that is beyond them which will create the form of a perfect living.

Here again we have a description of the ordinary life.

Three-fourths of our lives is an outward going action. All the circumstances, blunders, lapses, and as he puts it, the "crooked crab motion" of mankind make us look outside ourselves. It is only "the saint and the seer, the rare thinker, poet and artist"

who live within themselves. Why has Sri Aurobindo given these and not other professions? The nature of the work done by these people depends more on their inner existence. For example, a musician, an artist, a singer must have this inner contact because the object of their artistic expression is themselves. Whereas for a businessman, the objects he works with are outside of him: the material in the factory, the human beings in industry, money etc.

Businessmen and most other professional constantly deal with

things outside of themselves and do not have that necessity to live within. A businessman has to think about his suppliers and all that is involved with making the business run smoothly. But an artist has to sit in front of the easel, colours and brush and dip into himself. Therefore, the thinker and the artist have to depend on their own inner experience. There is a compulsion to live within, and for that they are blessed. The businessman and those doing physical labour have to make double effort; they have to draw themselves within and also push away the world around them in order to find time to go within.

Although Sri Aurobindo says, the artists, musicians, philosophers may have a greater advantage. They also may become aloof by living so much within and not regularly participating in the world's activities. That is why Sri Aurobindo says, "But it is not either of these sides separated from the other, but rather a harmony of the inner and the outer life made one in fullness and transfigured into a play of something that is beyond them which will create the form of a perfect living." He has seen the artist and thinker living in their own worlds. They may have a greater disbalance because they have fewer bridges with the outer world. At their work they are marvellous, but when they leave their brush and easel their life is often a disaster. There is often a disparity and disbalance in the lives of artists and thinkers. Sri Aurobindo says there has to be a perfect harmony between the inner and outer.

A Yoga of works, a union with the Divine in our will and acts—and not only in knowledge and feeling—is then an indispensable, an inexpressibly important element of an integral Yoga. The conversion of our thought and feeling without a corresponding conversion of the spirit and body of our works would be a maimed achievement.

This emphasises the importance of the yoga of works. The

poet, the thinker and the devotee all have to work because work is the great link between the extremes. If we don't work we go too much within and get disconnected. If we are only emotional we get disconnected with the world. Sri Aurobindo includes both knowledge and bhakti aspects and puts them together with work because this brings balance. That is why the yoga of works and union with the Divine in our will and action is an indispensable element in the Integral Yoga.

Therefore, in the Ashram, in Auroville as well as in other places the Mother emphasised so much on work. Work is the body's prayer, she said. Meditation is needed, but the balancing factor is work. And yet it is a work not for the sake of working, or for the fruit of the work, but a kind of work that will lead us to union with the Divine. That means work that is consecrated and surrendered.

Therefore, the title of this chapter is "Self-surrender in Works".

In spite of the integration of bhakti and knowledge, there is a slight leaning towards work and justifiably so because work is what connects us to the earth. It keeps our material consciousness intact where transformation has to take place. In the Ashram we can see the fantastic rhythm of work in various fields. It is through work that we attain what we need to attain. But a blind work that is a monotonous action does not yield results; it must be a conscious work that takes us towards the Divine.

(19th July 2001)

In our last class we discussed two different ideas, the first was what Sri Aurobindo called a divine humanity or a supramental race, and the other idea was the integration of the inner and outer life. The requirements for admission to the divine humanity is to dethrone ego and enthrone God in its place. After that there are other conditions to be fulfilled. That of course is our aim, but we at present are very far from this ideal. The ones who are a little closer to it are the seers, the saints, the artists,

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the rare thinkers and the poets. These people have a greater possibility of living closer to the divine aspect within because their profession demands their inner subjective states to be the object of their study. But their problem is that they tend to get cut off from the external world. They may be closer to the inner divinity in their feelings and thoughts, but they may be cut off from the outer world of works. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo asks for a harmony of the inner and outer life made one in fullness and transfigured into a play of something beyond them. These are the two different ideas.

Now, Sri Aurobindo discusses the practice of dethroning the ego and enthroning the Godhead:

But if this total conversion is to be done, there must be a consecration of our actions and outer movements as much as of our mind and heart to the Divine. There must be accepted and progressively accomplished a surrender of our capacities of working into the hands of a greater Power behind us and our sense of being the doer and worker must disappear.

Along with a God-orientated devotion, what we call bhakti, and a further consecration of our thoughts, there is needed the consecration of our works and capacities of working. This aspect of surrendering and consecrating our work is much more effective. From the point of view of transformation, it is very effective and necessary, not only because it is a part of our existence, the existence of the body which we are surrendering to the Divine, but because it is intimately connected to our daily habit of work. It is true that we are mostly connected with action and activity. Even our thoughts, our feelings are all related to our action. There are very few thinkers and philosophers who live in the thought world alone. They can consecrate, surrender and offer their thoughts, or one who is deeply involved in bhakti, he can surrender his heart. But most of us are action-orientated, so

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all of our thinking and feelings are related to action. The base of the pyramid of our existence is action. Therefore, if we surrender action, transformation becomes more effective and integral.

It is a simple equation that once action is surrendered, all that is interrelated with action, all the related thoughts and emotions, automatically get surrendered. In one way it becomes easy for us to do sadhana, because Sri Aurobindo is demanding of us what we already do most of the time. We are not being asked to sit in meditation for long hours. In our daily routine we get up and leap into action. Sri Aurobindo is asking us to start with what is prominent in our lives and nature. In other yogas we might be taken away from our nature and told what to do. Here Sri Aurobindo is asking us to do whatever we are doing, but offer it to the Divine. Only he has added a new dimension to our action; it should not be a divided action, our actions should be directed towards a particular project, necessity, duty.

What is that extra project that Sri Aurobindo is asking of us? It is that of surrendering. But is this surrender passive? Is it just to say, ‘O Lord take my action. May this action be a consecration to thee?’ It may start with that. We can repeat whenever we remember: ‘Mother, this action is for you’. There is nothing good or bad, big or small; all actions can be consecrated. That is the first step, but it would still land us in a kind of monotony. We may keep on repeating that this action is for thee, and in the beginning it may give us a thrill to be remembering the Mother and dedicating, but after a few months or a few years this sense of remembering may become dull and lose its thrill because it becomes mechanical. Once a thing becomes mechanical it loses its soul.

We then move on a horizontal plane and there is no ascension of consciousness. When we begin to see that the offering is becoming mechanical there is a second step we can follow:

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“...our sense of being the doer and worker must disappear”.

After a while we start with a new mantra. The first basic mantra is: ‘Mother take this work, this action as an offering to thee’. We have to feel within ourselves when we can move on to the next step. Let us not be over-confident and over-ambitious and say I will move to the second. It cannot be done like that. It is an inner feeling, and when we feel that we are open

enough, then we say, ‘Mother, I am not the doer, I am not the worker, you are the doer, you are the worker.’

We have to realise that it is she, the Mother, the Divine who is doing the work. That is the second step in the elevation of our consciousness. That will come in our life if we are sincere in the first step. We will start realising that we are not really the worker. We have to be careful that this is not an egoistic turn.

The ego can bluff us and say that ‘I am not the worker, I am the instrument’. The ego can play havoc with us if we are not sincere. But if we are sincere and there is a spontaneity in our feeling, we begin to realise that it is she who is doing the work.

This level of realisation lasts for a very long time. We will discuss later—that she is the work, she is the doer, she is the object, she is the subject, she is everything. That is a very high state.

There are levels of ascension even in our work concept and work offering. He says, “...our sense of being the doer and worker must disappear.”

All must be given for a more direct use into the hands of the divine Will which is hidden by these frontal appearances; for by that permitting Will alone is our action possible. A hidden Power is the true Lord and overruling Observer of our acts and only he knows through all the ignorance and perversion and deformation brought in by the ego their entire sense and ultimate purpose.

In the West, “psychology” plays a strong role; psychotherapy

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and psychoanalysis are much sought after. But yoga gives us the best solution. That is why in the West the concept of yoga is gaining popularity; but there is still a tremendous block. The foundation rock of yoga is the Divine. Without the Divine yoga cannot stand. This is the block that

Westerners are feeling. They want to accept yoga but not the soul. They are hesitant and there is a debate in the USA about how to study of the soul scientifically? Can science take up the study of the soul? If science can come closer to the reality of the soul then psychology can come closer to yoga. They are in a real fix, whereas in India we have no such problem, we accept from our birth, the concept of the Divine, the concept of the soul. For us to take up Yoga is like breathing oxygen. But in the West, there is a dichotomy. I asked some of the Sri Aurobindo's devotees why they didn't do some counselling with Integral Yoga. They said it is difficult because in the West they cannot speak of the soul; what Sri Aurobindo is saying could hardly be understood there.

“A hidden Power is the true Lord and overruling Observer of our acts, and only he knows through all the ignorance and perversion and deformation brought in by the ego their entire sense and ultimate purpose.” If this basic concept is accepted by our mind and heart, then surrender becomes a possibility. The idea is that there is a higher Being, a higher Power who knows through all the ignorance and perversion, who knows us despite our ignorance and our ego shielding us. The Mother says it is so easy: ‘when you have a problem, you talk to the Divine, and the Divine creates circumstances to solve the problem’. She goes on to explain that people think that the Divine does not understand our problems because we are so narrow and so ignorant that the Divine could not really understand our little human problems. We tend to think

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this is too small for the Divine and want to do it for ourselves.

This is part of our psychological makeup. When there is a big problem, we go to the Divine, but for little problems, we try to tackle them ourselves. But the Divine Mother does understand us. She will take up everything because she is the Observer, the Lord who knows everything despite our ignorance. However thick may be the perversion, however, gross may be the ego, the Divine understands us.

There must be effected a complete transformation of our limited and distorted egoistic life and works into the large and direct outpouring of a

greater divine Life, Will and Energy that now secretly supports us.

This Divine Power that now secretly supports us must be brought out into the front. Through Yoga the Divine who is there at the back of our consciousness has to be brought to the front.

He is the master. Normally, on the surface consciousness, the ego thinks, ‘I am the doer.’ But the whole process of Yoga is to dethrone this ego and bring forward real Master. The idea is to become conscious of the Divine’s power.

This greater Will and Energy must be made conscious in us and master; no longer must it remain, as now, only a superconscious, upholding and permitting Force. There must be achieved an undistorted transmission through us of the all-wise purpose and process of a now hidden omniscient Power and omnipotent Knowledge which will turn into its pure, unobstructed, happily consenting and participating channel all our transmuted nature. This total consecration and surrender and this resultant entire transformation and free transmission make up the whole fundamental means and the ultimate aim of an integral Karmayoga.

The crux of the paragraph is that the total consecration and surrender of our being to the Divine and the free transmission of

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its Force through us is the fundamental means and the ultimate aim of integral Karmayoga. Whether in bhakti, in thought or work, the whole process is surrender, but the best thing to start with is work because that is the easiest and fundamental to human life.

I read here a small portion of a long conversation by the Mother on five psychological perfections.

In English the word is “surrender”, there is no French word which gives exactly that sense. But Sri Aurobindo has said—I think we have read this—

that surrender is the first and absolute condition for doing the yoga. So if we follow what he has said, this is not just one of the necessary qualities; it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. (CWM 8: 41)

In this conversation the Mother says sincerity is the first necessary step to develop. But the whole attitude in yoga is that of surrender. Surrender is the first, last and the whole.

All our actions of faith, sincerity, aspiration, courage, and devotion are wrapped in this mode of surrender. Surrender is the beginning, the middle and the end. It is not the first or last step; it is the step.

So wonderfully the Mother has explained the position of surrender and the five psychological perfections needed for yoga. If we ever want to explain the Integral Yoga, if anybody wants to know how to contact and realise the psychic being, this is the guidance given by the Mother.

(26th July 2001)

In our last class, we discussed the five psychological perfections. And we have seen the prime importance of surrender, which is almost the fundamental attitude of this Yoga.

Once we take up this attitude, we must remember the other aspects described in the five psychological perfections: sincerity, faith, devotion, courage, and endurance.

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Even for those whose first natural movement is a consecration, a surrender and a resultant entire transformation of the thinking mind and its knowledge, or a total consecration, surrender and transformation of the heart and its emotions, the consecration of works is a needed element in that change. Otherwise, although they may find God in other life, they will not be able to fulfill the Divine in life; life for them will be a meaningless undivine inconsequence. Not for them the true victory that shall be the key to the riddle of our terrestrial existence; their love will not be the absolute

love triumphant over self, their knowledge will not be the total consciousness and the all-embracing knowledge.

Again we see the concentration on the emphasis on work.

Here, Sri Aurobindo indicates that even if our temperament starts with thought or meditation or bhakti, work cannot be excluded. We may begin with any of these attitudes closest to our temperament, but we cannot forget the most fundamental aspect of our life that is work. As he explains, consecration is the starting point of transformation. There have been religions, monasteries, *sanghas*, and individual meditation centres even now, we have so many gurus and religious leaders, yet the emphasis seems to be on bhakti and meditation. But Sri Aurobindo, while not rejecting these two, would lay emphasis on work. Not work just for the sake of the work but as a consecration of work to the Divine. Work that is not consecrated has only a materialistic and egoistic value, but that which is consecrated to the Divine helps in the transformative process. Sri Aurobindo, standing exclusively for the transformation of nature, cannot but choose surrender and consecration of work as the basis of sadhana. Work is almost a platform of sadhana; but work is that dedicated and

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consecrated to the Divine alone and not to any human guru or one's ego. Otherwise, the whole world is working, but it doesn't mean everyone is getting transformed. The energies of work are not adequately channelled; we must consciously channelize the energies of our work towards the Divine. Only then, can we fulfill the Divine in life.

Sri Aurobindo clearly states that meditation and bhakti take us towards extraterrestrial divinity—God beyond earth, towards heaven or mukti, beyond life. It is work that anchors us to the earth. It is dedicated work that helps us to transform our lives.

So we see the importance of work in Integral Yoga. Otherwise, he says, “Not for them the true victory that shall be the key to the riddle of our

terrestrial existence.” If we do not work and are lazy or think that a few hours a day is enough and then take rest, it is the kind of attitude that will bring withdrawal. Some people don't work sufficiently; they sit and meditate or do bhakti and resort to other means than work. That might bring them a false self-satisfaction sense of complacency. They might think I am devoting all these hours to the Mother. Perhaps it would be much better to use that time for work and dedicate that work to the Mother. Through work, devotion and meditation both would increase. Work is not cut off from devotion if it is dedicated to the Divine. Whenever we say “work” as part of yoga, it is meant in this way only. Otherwise, even the love of a great devotee will not be absolute if he does not work for the Divine.

Some great saints and sages merged with the Divine, got lost in the consciousness of Sri Krishna, Christ, or some other form of God. That is not the love that is triumphant over the lower self. It is a love that takes us close to the Divine but does not give us self-conquest. Emotionalism can be good, it has its place, but the base of this emotionalism must be the solid ground of the earth. Without this base of earth even knowledge may

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mislead us. We know what happened to one of the greatest intellects, Sri Shankaracharya. He gained Brahman, but he lost the world. Sri Aurobindo says that it will not be an all-embracing knowledge. Knowledge and meditation are good but they tend to take us away from earth. Whatever takes us away from earth and its transformation do not fit into the scheme of Integral Yoga. The state of samadhi or trance take us away from earth; therefore they too have no place in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. It may be a state of consciousness from which the person returns but not as an ultimate state. Other yogas might teach self-control and bring quietness to mind, but these are perhaps exercises on the way. The proper thing is that work itself is meditation.

If we can work with the right attitude, that become dynamic meditation, not a passive one. This is the advantage of doing as much work as possible for the Divine.

To remain busy is a mental attitude; even without doing many, people will say they are busy, going to the post office, shopping, watching TV, having tea, and going from here to there. Busy often means filling up the hours for our own pleasures. But is that the right work? So, to be busy and work dedicated to the Mother are quite different.

It is possible, indeed, to begin with knowledge or Godward emotion solely or with both together and to leave works for the final movement of the Yoga. But there is then this disadvantage that we may tend to live too exclusively within, subtilised in subjective experience, shut off in our isolated inner parts; there we may get incrustated in our spiritual seclusion and find it difficult later on to pour ourselves triumphantly outwards and apply to life our gains in the higher Nature. When we turn to add this external kingdom also to our inner conquests, we shall find ourselves too much accustomed to an activity purely subjective and ineffective

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on the material plane. There will be an immense difficulty in transforming the outer life and the body.

Interestingly, we can see that Sri Aurobindo's own life has been an excellent example of work. Since his stay in Baroda he was involved with work and responsibilities on the physical level—his teaching and then his work as a principal when he came to Bengal, his work on the *Bande Mataram*, and other activities. He hardly had time to rest. Of course, his work was not only physical; in fact, we could say that through that immense and intense work, he attained the highest consciousness. He says that although we can reach higher consciousness through meditation and bhakti, this can also be attained through work.

Meditation and bhakti are subjective experiences in the sense that we are preoccupied with ourselves—with our own trance, bliss, relaxation and peace. Sri Aurobindo says that if we start with these exclusively, we may find it very difficult to work in the world. We may not be able to accommodate and adjust with other people. We may wish to get back to our

lonely shell. He says there will be tremendous difficulty in transforming the outer life and body if we start exclusively with the paths of knowledge and devotion. For Sri Aurobindo, it was just the opposite; he did sadhana in the world itself. It was through work that he attained a higher consciousness. Of course, he also did a different kind of work; we do not say that he did physical work alone. But it was through work that he had attained the higher consciousness and brought down the highest levels of consciousness upon earth.

What he wrote in the *Bande Mataram*, in the *Arya*, was not with his mind. He had attained that silence of mind after which wrote sixty-five pages of *Arya* per month. He was doing an immense work, not with the mind, but through the higher consciousness he had established in life. There was a combination of great

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dynamism and a vast peace. He was indeed one of the most dynamic persons.

Sri Aurobindo gives an example of the Buddha, how even after attaining *nirvana*, he has been one of the most dynamic spiritual leaders. He went from place to place, giving this new knowledge and enlightenment until the end of his life; even at the age of eighty, he worked and never withdrew. He also was an example of combined dynamism and inner quietude.

Or we shall find that our action does not correspond with the inner light: it still follows the old accustomed mistaken paths, still obeys the old normal imperfect influences; the Truth within us continues to be separated by a painful gulf from the ignorant mechanism of our external nature. This is a frequent experience because in such a process the Light and Power come to be self-contained and unwilling to express themselves in life or to use the physical means prescribed for the Earth and her processes. It is as if we were living in another, a larger and subtler world and had no divine hold, perhaps little hold of any kind, upon the material and terrestrial existence.

But still each must follow his nature, and there are always difficulties that have to be accepted for some time if we are to pursue our natural path of

Yoga. Yoga is after all primarily a change of the inner consciousness and nature, and if the balance of our parts is such that this must be done first with an initial exclusiveness and the rest left for later handling, we must accept the apparent imperfection of the process.

This is important to remember. As he has told us before, each one must follow his nature. He says one can start with whatever is his initial nature, an intellectual, a devotee, or a worker.

Everyone does not have to start by working in the field, garden,

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or any particular kind of work. We can start with what we have.

But at least we must start and launch ourselves on the path.

Secondly, he says that sometimes there may be a necessity for initial exclusiveness. This is very important. All of us on our level of sadhana may feel the need to withdraw. Sometimes it happens that the world is too much for us. There could be such periods, and he says it doesn't matter. If we need to withdraw for two weeks or one month, or if we want to meditate exclusively for some time, concentrate on a problem within or withdraw for a time and listen to bhakti music so that devotion awakens, we may do so. Otherwise, by working like mad, as we say, we may forget the other elements within us. The aspects of bhakti and meditation also need to be developed simultaneously. We cannot neglect or reject them. If we are too overworked, we can step back and take a week off. But this week off is not for lethargy but to develop some other aspects. This temporary exclusiveness is permissible, but we should return after gaining from that experience. He says we must accept the apparent imperfection of the process. That is to say; we may not be able to do all three simultaneously—meditation, bhakti, and work.

We may do much work, while bhakti remains dormant, or some people may go very far with bhakti, and work may lag. He says it may be imperfect, but

at least it keeps us going.

Yet would the ideal working of an integral Yoga be a movement, even from the beginning, integral in its process and whole and many-sided in its progress.

Mark the phrase “integral in its process and whole and many-sided in its progress”.

In any case, our present preoccupation is with a Yoga, integral in its aim and complete movement, but starting from works and proceeding by works although at each step more

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and more moved by a vivifying divine love and more and more illumined by a helping divine knowledge.

This is crucial for those of us in the Ashram or those turning to Sri Aurobindo. He says we are considering a Yoga that is integral,

“but starting from works.” That is why the Mother would give work to people who came to the Ashram. The Mother has balanced our lives here beautifully. She has not given us ten hours of work, but five or six hours per day, out of which one hour does not belong to our field of interest. One hour is general work which is not our cup of tea. Beyond these five plus one hour of work, we also have meditation in the Ashram and physical education. She has balanced other things also and yet the emphasis is on work. But she also did not want us to go beyond this and work for ten hours and get lost in it.

Here there is a very interesting question, “It is possible, indeed, to begin with knowledge or Godward emotion solely or with both together and to leave works for the final movement of the Yoga.” He says it is possible that if I am a mental person, I can start with my intellectual capacities and leave my physical work. (Let’s not misunderstand that work only means physical work.) Work can also be with our minds or with our vital capacities. For example, an artist or a musician also works.

Physical action is not the only work; it is the energy and the force of our consciousness directed towards some result. That is the definition of work. When we direct our energies towards a particular outcome, it could be art, music, medicine, gardening, etc., anywhere on any level, that is work.

Let us read what the Mother tells us about this.

Sri Aurobindo writes here, "it is possible, indeed, to begin with knowledge or Godward emotion solely or with both together and to leave work for the final movement of the Yoga."

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What is this knowledge?

There are three principal paths of yoga: the path of knowledge, the path of love and the path of works. So Sri Aurobindo says that it depends on each case and person.

Some people follow more easily the path of knowledge, others follow more easily the path of love, of devotion, and others follow the path of works. He says that for the integral yoga the three must be combined and with them something else, but that everybody can't do everything at the same time and that there are people who need to be exclusive and choose one of the three paths first in order to be able to combine them all later.

The path of knowledge is the well-known path of Raja Yoga, in which one practices detachment from one's physical being, saying, "I am not the body", then detachment from one's sensations, "I am not my sensations", and from one's feelings, saying, "I am not my feelings", and so on. One detaches oneself from thought and goes more and more within until one finds something which is Eternal and Infinite.

It is a path of meditation, which is truly the path of self-knowledge seen from the point of view of the divine reality.

It is the path of meditation, concentration, of withdrawal from life and action. This was the one most practised by the old Yogas.

Or else the path of devotion and love, like that of Chaitanya or Ramakrishna.

This book [Part One of *The Synthesis of Yoga*] is entirely about the yoga of works, of action, that is to say, the finding of union with the Divine in action and work, and into the consecration of one's work to the Divine. That's all. (CWM

8: 43-44)

Mother, when one is identified with the Divine in the higher

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part of the being while neglecting the lower parts—neglecting life—doesn't the Divine, in the part where one identified with Him, advise one to attend to the lower parts?

The question is, suppose we are a person of bhakti, or of Raja Yoga meditation, and we are somewhere united with the Divine consciousness, doesn't the Divine say, "aren't you neglecting your work? Go back to the work level and do that work also."

Doesn't the Divine send you back? That is the question. And Mother answers:

And if one has decided that this must not happen before even beginning, perhaps one makes it impossible for oneself to receive the advice of the Divine! (Ibid: 44-45) Even the Divine cannot help us if we say No! If we say we will take up only meditation and reach the Divine through meditation, or will take up only bhakti and do devotion, if that is the initial will and decision, then we are not open to the Divine's advice. The Mother continues:

For, truly speaking, each one finds only what he wants to find of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has said this by turning it the other way around; he has said—I am not quoting the exact words, only the idea; what you expect from the Divine is what you find in the Divine... (Ibid) This is something that all religious bigots should be know.

Sri Aurobindo, in his aphorisms, tells us that even if the Divine were to come to me as Christ, I would not accept him because I want to see the Divine as Sri Krishna. If within me there is a great aspiration to see the Divine as Sri Krishna, he will come to me as Krishna. There is no antagonism or quarrel that Christ is greater than Sri Krishna, or Sri Krishna is greater than Christ. In fact, the Divine takes the mould of our devotion. If the person is looking at a beautiful temple of Shiva and thinks that it is the form of the

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Divine, the Divine will come to that person in that form. He takes shape and form of your devotion.

How is it that Hindus don't see Christ or Jehovah? Because right from our childhood, we have been given an image of what the Divine should look like. We have a particular psychological image built up. Even in our dreams, he comes to us as Sri Krishna. We can say He comes to us the way we look at him. The Mother says,

...what you want from the Divine is what you meet in the Divine. He will have for you the aspect you expect or desire.

And His manifestation is always adapted to each one's receptivity and capacity. They may have a real, essential contact, but this contact is limited by their own capacity for receiving and approach... It is only if you are able to go out of all limits that you can meet the total Divine as He totally is. (Ibid)

This isn't easy, because we are so encrusted with our image of the Divine. It is tough for us to go beyond our formation. But those who can go beyond limits can see the Divine totally.

And this capacity for contact is perhaps what constitutes the true hierarchy of beings. For everyone carries within himself the Divine, and therefore everyone has the possibility of uniting with the Divine—that possibility is the same in all. But according to each one's capacity—according to his position in the divine hierarchy—his approach will be more or less partial or total. (Ibid)

Here is a new idea that there is a kind of divine hierarchy of receptivity. We all have the same Atman within us. She says we all have the same possibility of uniting with the Divine. The saint or sinner both have the same possibility to reach the Divine.

But why is it that one is a saint and the other is a sinner? It is

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because of one's capacity and position in the Divine hierarchy.

The way they open themselves is different. The saint opens himself to the inner divinity, whereas the sinner closes himself more and more to the inner divinity. It is a matter of shutting your door to the sunlight or opening your door to the sunlight.

So, depending on how wide we open our door, we become a saint, a Yogi or a sinner.

It could be said—although these words deform things a lot—that the quality of the approach is the same in every being, but the quantity, the totality is very different... It is very difficult to explain in words, but if one may say so, the *point* at which you are identified with the Divine is perfect in itself, that is to say, your identification is perfect in itself, at this point, but the number of points at which you are identified differs immensely. (Ibid)

People have different capabilities—intellectual, emotional, artistic — and each person could have contact with the Divine at those particular points of his consciousness. For example, an artist looks at the Divine in the form of beauty and is open to the Divine at that point, though other parts of his being may not be in contact. She says, “but the number of points at which you are identified differs immensely” from one person to the next. Each of us can contact the Divine at one’s own particular and unique point. Yoga can increase the number of points and, therefore the total area of contact.

In the Integral Yoga, this area of contact gets increased through exercises. If I open my physical consciousness through work, it can also contact the Divine. If we sit for meditation and suddenly feel that great silence, peace, and presence in the heart, we have added one more point of contact. And these points increase. As we practice, the more open to the Divine we become. In the beginning, there is just a needle hole, but that

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small hole gradually becomes a large opening through which the divine light can enter us.

And this is very marked in the difference between the paths followed to approach the Divine. Usually people set limits; they limit themselves by excluding everything that is not exactly the path they have chosen, for this is much easier and they go much faster—relatively. But if, instead of following one road, you go forward in a sort of movement which could be called spherical, where everything is included, which takes in all the possibilities of approach to the Divine, naturally the result is much more complete—and it is this that Sri Aurobindo calls the integral yoga—but the progress is much more difficult and much slower. (Ibid: 45-46) This is the choice one has to make. Usually, almost as a reaction to this miserable world, one says, ‘let me go to the Divine by hook or crook and forget this damn world.’ One can find that many people on the streets and on the TV beckon you to come and follow their path to salvation. One may do all that and then say, “when I was doing Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, I had my progress, but now by taking this other yoga, I feel that I have gone so much closer to

the Divine.” It is not wrong. You may feel a greater closeness to the Divine if you take one of the paths given by these hundreds of gurus across the globe. But here, Sri Aurobindo does not recommend this single path which may take us relatively faster. He is the adventurer who wants to bring everything together. He says, ‘let me go slow, but let me take everything; let me go slow, but let me take all with me’—this is Sri Aurobindo’s integral approach.

Sri Aurobindo has not sought Supermind for himself, but for humanity. That is one of the reasons even why the Mother did not complete her physical transformation process; I feel. She wanted humanity to come to her a little closer in its

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consciousness. Otherwise, there is no meaning in it; if we are mountain trekking and the leader is miles ahead, and if we can’t even see him or her we can’t follow. The leader has to be at least at a whistling distance. If we whistle, he should be at least able to say, ‘yes, come by this path’. We may not be able to see him, but we will be at least able to hear him say, ‘there is a river there; don’t go to the river, go to the forest.’ The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are always within our hearing distance. They may not be visible. But if the leader goes beyond the hearing distance, he is no longer a leader. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said, ‘we will be with you’. After the Mother left her body Nolini-da said once she told me:

Just see. Look at me. I am here come back in my new body,—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done.

Forget all else, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love... (CWNKG 6: 259)

He said the Mother is with us. This “is with us” means she is within hearing distance. If you call her, she hears, and we can listen to her replies. This is a

beautiful living relationship.

Therefore, she says, the progress may be slower, but isn't it a joy that all of us go together?

One who chooses the path of knowledge—and even in the path of knowledge a special method, for everyone has his own method—and follows it, eliminating from his consciousness and life all that's not it, advances much more rapidly, for he is in search of only one aspect and this is much more direct, immediate. And so he rejects, rejects,

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rejects all that is not this, and limits his being just to the path he travels. And the more you want your approach to be integral, naturally the more will it become difficult, complicated, long, laborious.

But he who follows only one path, when he reaches his goal, that is, when he is identified with the Divine, his identification is perfect in itself; that is to say, it is really an identification with the Divine—but it is partial. It is perfect; it is perfect and partial at the same time. (Ibid: 46)

A good example of this is Sri Ramana Maharshi. He reached the Divine, connected with the Brahman, and with that connection he was perfectly identified with the Brahman. Sri Shankaracharya is another example with his marvellous, unique, single path of knowledge. But it is partial. The great realisations of people like Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Shankaracharya are wonderful experiences of identity with the Divine, but it is still a partial identity.

The question was: if I am identified with the Divine in one aspect, does the Divine tell me, “go back”? No. We see that when Shankaracharya reached and identified with the Brahman, he didn't come back. On the contrary, he said the world was an illusion. This partial identification is avoided only with Sri Aurobindo. He, too, reached the Brahman consciousness, but he did not stop short there. He came back to realise Vasudeva in the jail. He

saw the great Kali in that little statue on the bank of river Narmada. He realised the great Atman, the godhead leaping from him when he was going on a horse carriage. And then he started seeing the Brahman in all that was around him—

in the people, in the matter, in atoms, in trees, in every living and non-living form. This experience is integral. He is one of those unique personalities on this earth who has seen Brahman on all

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levels. To see the Brahman fully manifest in the body requires physical transformation. Sri Aurobindo wanted that.

To continue the Mother's explanation of the partial realisation of the Divine of these yogis:

This is very difficult to explain, but it is a fact. He is really identified with the Divine and has found the Divine; he is identified with the Divine—but at one point. And so he who is able to identify himself in his totality with the Divine is necessarily, from the point of view of the universal realisation, on a much higher level of the hierarchy than one who could realise Him only at a single point. (Ibid) It is not that Sri Aurobindo is greater or lesser than Shankaracharya, or that the Vedic Rishis were greater or lesser than Sri Aurobindo. Yet there is an obvious difference between the one who realises the Divine on all levels and the one who realises the Divine on only one level. His realisation is more comprehensive, and therefore he is higher in the hierarchy of levels of consciousness.

And that is the true meaning of the spiritual hierarchy, this is why there is a whole spiritual hierarchical organisation, otherwise it would have no basis, for from the minute you touch the Divine, you touch Him perfectly: the point at which you touch Him is perfect in itself, And, from this point of view, all who are united with the Divine are equally perfect in their union—but not equally complete, if I may say so. (Ibid: 46-47)

This is one thing we must understand clearly because this kind of comparison often needs to be clarified. People say, “what Sri Aurobindo has

said, others have said also”. As the Mother explained, at their point of contact, everyone is equal, from the Gita to the Buddha and Shankaracharya. All the great scriptures, like the Bible, and the Gita, too are connected on one point of

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the Truth. But Sri Aurobindo has connected himself with the Divine at many points which many people don't see, cannot see or don't want to see. There is then a levelling, and they say Sri Aurobindo and so and so are the same; the *The Life Divine* and book X have the same thought. But Sri Aurobindo did not have one point of contact; he had a spherical contact with the Divine; he saw the Divine totally, integrally, in all its aspects. It is there that he shoots beyond any human comparison of past and present; we can't say about the future. He will exceed himself when he comes again. Here the Mother has revealed a new way of looking at Sri Aurobindo.

(2nd August 2001)

The essence of this chapter is directly linked to the philosophy of Karmayoga popularised by Gita. This paragraph is a comment on the Karmayoga, which brings out the difference between Gita and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

The greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the race, the most perfect system of Karmayoga known to man in the past, is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita. In that famous episode of the Mahabharata the great basic lines of Karmayoga are laid down for all time with an incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It is true that the path alone, as the ancients saw it, is worked out fully: the perfect fulfilment, the highest secret, [Footnote: *rahasyam uttamam*] is hinted rather than developed;...

The path of Karmayoga has been explained from different directions. Arjuna's questions are very intriguing. But the ultimate end of Karmayoga is not given. The penultimate end is given, when one becomes the

instrument of the Divine, working for the good of the society. He would say the highest secret is hinted rather than developed.

...it is kept back as an unexpressed part of a supreme

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mystery. There are obvious reasons for this reticence; for the fulfilment is, in any case, a matter for experience and no teaching can express it.

The reticence as to why Sri Krishna does not give us the ultimate end, the highest secret, is because fulfilment is a matter of experience. In addition, he leaves this experience for future times. Humanity of this period was not yet ready to hear the last word of the Supermind. It is not that Sri Krishna did not know the supramental secret. He was reticent because the time was not suitable for this experience to be revealed. Remember, an experience is only revealed when the elite of humanity is somewhere prepared; the number of people does not matter, but there must be the receptiveness of some who can receive.

It cannot be described in a way that can really be understood by a mind that has not the effulgent transmuting experience. And for the soul that has passed the shining portals and stands in the blaze of the inner light, all mental and verbal description is as poor as it is superfluous, inadequate and an impertinence.

Sri Aurobindo is explaining it in a different way here, almost as if taught by Sri Krishna himself. Sri Krishna said, ‘what is the use of the Vedas when there is a flood all around? The person who really dips into his soul and is one with his soul consciousness, for him, the inner light and knowledge are open, and no amount of description of the Supermind or Overmind is of any use because he has directly entered the region of knowledge where he gets a deeper knowledge beyond the Vedas.

All divine consummations have perforce to be figured by us in the inapt and deceptive terms of a language which was made to fit the normal experience of mental man; so expressed, they can be rightly understood only by those

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who already know, and, knowing, are able to give these poor external terms a changed, inner and transfigured sense.

We have also come across a deep truth: “so expressed, they can be rightly understood only by those who already know”.

Even if the truth is described in our inadequate human language to whatever extent, it can be understood by those who have already achieved this knowledge within. It means that you can only understand what you already know. These scriptures and books cannot be understood by the mind alone; our inner being must be ready and open to this knowledge. The scriptures cannot be taught, they reveal themselves, and no amount of studying will help. In whom the inner book has not yet opened, understanding is not possible. It is as if the outer and the inner knowledge only link up. You might study the Gita for ten or fifteen years, but if meditation, bhakti and surrender do not open up the inner being, there is no chance of really understanding it.

This gives us a clue as to how we should read *Savitri* and *The Life Divine* or any of Sri Aurobindo’s books. The inner surrender and offering to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through love, through bhakti have to connect us to the within and only then the perception of *The Life Divine* can come. Not brilliant minds or scholars can understand and appreciate these books. A few can give a synopsis or a lecture and speak about them. The revelations of these books can come only when we consciously surrender to them. This is the secret of understanding Sri Aurobindo. We can only understand by devotion and grace; only then would the inner book of knowledge open to us.

As the Vedic Rishis insisted in the beginning, the words of the supreme wisdom are expressive only to those who are already of the wise.

To one who has gained inner wisdom, the world of supreme

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wisdom has a meaning, a revelation; otherwise, it becomes a kind of superfluous thesis.

The Gita at its cryptic close may seem by its silence to stop short of that solution for which we are seeking; it pauses at the borders of the highest spiritual mind and does not cross them into the splendours of the supramental Light.

Sri Aurobindo has given the next step of supramentalisation.

Remember, supramentalisation or transformation comes only after spiritualisation. That is why we cannot bypass the Gita. In our devotion, we can be surrendered to Sri Aurobindo, but by process, we must go through what the Gita has given. These are two different issues because Sri Aurobindo will also give us what Sri Krishna wants to give. If one's devotion is only for Sri Krishna, then there is not much of a possibility of getting supramentalisation. Mentally you will be blocked, and you may achieve what the Gita has said but nothing beyond. It is better to be open to Sri Aurobindo, who embraces Sri Krishna and the Gita and will give us what the Gita wants us to achieve and then take us beyond.

And yet its secret of dynamic, and not only static, identity with the inner Presence, its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature, is the central secret. This surrender is the indispensable means of the supramental change and, again, it is through the supramental change that the dynamic identity becomes possible.

This is an essential link between Sri Aurobindo and the Gita.

The Gita asks for our “absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature”. This absolute surrender to the Lord is the indispensable necessity for the supramental change. One cannot have the supramental change without

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fulfilling what the Gita is asking us to do, which is to surrender to the Lord absolutely.

Absolute, maybe, but not yet integral. The interesting thing is that without the surrender, the supramental change cannot come, and this surrender cannot be complete without the supramental change. For the requirements of the Gita to be fulfilled, Sri Aurobindo's supramental change has to be acquired.

They are interlinked; the Gita gives the process which brings us to the supramental change, but it cannot be accomplished entirely without the beginning of the supramental change.

Therefore, he says that "it is through the supramental change that the dynamic identity becomes possible". What is this dynamic identity? Why is Sri Aurobindo saying that it is only through the supramental consciousness that a dynamic identity with the Divine, that the Gita wants us to make, would come?

That is why I say that the surrender is absolute but not integral because there is not yet this dynamic identity with the Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Ishwari, and Purushottama and Maya.

In the Gita, there isn't the aspect of Shakti. The Gita takes us to that level of spiritualisation, which can be done without the Shakti aspect, without the Aditi aspect. However, when entering the portals of the Supermind, the Shakti aspect must be there.

Once the Shakti aspect is realised, there is a dynamic identity with the Purushottama. Before that, it may seem to be an active identity, but it is not yet fully dynamic.

The dynamics of the Purushottama, of sachchidananda, is the chit-Shakti. The *sat* by itself is not dynamic. It can be all-inspiring because it is a pure existence, but when it is a question of a dynamic work in the world (Sri Aurobindo uses the word

“dynamic identity”), there is needed the *chit-tapas*. This logic is a bit circular, but it is inevitably so. Lord Krishna says, ‘you must have a dynamic identity with the Purushottama,’ but does not

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explain the process for obtaining this dynamic identity. He only says, *manmanabhava madbhakta madyaji mamnamaskuru*.

Achieve identity with me. I am the Purushottama.’ However, that is not sufficient. We can be a slave, a servant, and instruments of Purushottama, but the dynamic identity requires transformation, which cannot come without the Aditi, without the Shakti. It is as if Sri Krishna almost left his teaching incomplete with a semicolon, for Sri Aurobindo to complete it. This is the relation between the Gita and Sri Aurobindo; together, they make one whole. The Gita comes halfway, and Sri Aurobindo gives the second half. Together, they complete the dynamic identity with the Purushottama, with the *chit-shakti* that can transform.

Perhaps because of this, the Mother tells us that the Gita did much work for the world, but its best work is yet to be done in the future. When the Gita is combined with Sri Aurobindo’s *chit-shakti*, the incomplete Gita will be finished. Otherwise, if Gita is left as it is without Sri Aurobindo’s intervention, it would have gone on for another thousand years, but it would not be more effective. Its effectiveness has increased and will go to increase because of Integral Yoga principles.

Apart from our devotion to him, we must understand the evolutionary importance of Sri Aurobindo and the necessity of his coming. What Sri Krishna left incomplete, unsaid, with a semicolon, Sri Aurobindo has completed with a full stop.

What, then are the lines of Karmayoga laid down by the Gita?

This is the first paragraph where he gives a total picture of Karmayoga, how far it can go and what it cannot do. This is the totality, and now he will take up exclusively what the Gita has to say.

Its key principle, its spiritual method, can be summed up as the union of two largest and highest states or powers of consciousness, equality and oneness. The kernel of its

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method is an unreserved acceptance of the Divine in our life as in our inner self and spirit. An inner renunciation of personal desire leads to equality, accomplishes our total surrender to the Divine, supports a delivery from dividing ego which brings us oneness.

How beautifully, in one sentence, he has summarised the whole of the Gita: “inner renunciation of personal desire”. Mark the use of each word. The inner renunciation is not that inert *vairagya*, that inert giving up due to disgust. Nor does it mean that if I act ascetically, I do not have desires or attachments. Nor does it mean that if there are many things in my outer life, I am necessarily inwardly attached to them.

What is important is the inner condition. If we have outer things we should be inwardly detached from them, and even if we have nothing in our outer life we should not have any cravings. Either way, the inner renunciation of personal desire is what is demanded of us, including all motivation for personal profit or acquisition in our works. We can practice telling ourselves, ‘no, it is not for me; it is for the Mother’; it is an excellent psychological discipline. Unfortunately, when we tell others, ‘it is the Mother’s work that I am doing’, it tends to bring in the ego. But if we can have a silent attitude that it is for the Mother that I am doing it becomes a type of auto-suggestion that gets ingrained in our mind that is very helpful. Silence leads us to a kind of equality, *samata*, one of the first steps in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, about which he wrote in *Record of Yoga*.

However, we must remember that these things are not done overnight; they are lengthy processes. One has to keep at it.

These steps follow each other: working without personal desire leads to equanimity, and equality. The simplest example of this is our reaction to

success and failure, praise and criticism. If we face these in the right way in our work, it is the beginning of

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equality. These are things constantly faced in life, success and failure, one tends to be either elated or depressed by them.

Work is the field for testing our reactions to success and failure.

These are the hardest slaps that a man can get, success and failure. If one can become equal, this leads to the next step, which is surrender.

Surrendering is not possible without the preparation of equality.

Psychologically, try to visualise this: we are telling the Mother that we have surrendered our work, but within we know of some failure or that someone is criticising our work and saying something to make us angry or depressed.

At that moment, we cannot surrender, and even our gesture of consecration gets dampened. There is no openness in the surrender because that criticism has somehow made it smaller. If one can be equal in this criticism, then surrender itself increases.

Moreover, with that surrender, we go towards the Divine.

The next step “supports a delivery from dividing ego which brings us oneness.” As we surrender more and more, simultaneously, the ego begins to diminish, and as the ego shrinks, we go within, and this dipping within brings oneness. So, we see, that the giving up of the ego is done through surrender, and surrender is done through equality, and equality can be done through inner renunciation. Inner renunciation is practised through work done as an offering to the Divine, which is called Karmayoga. It starts with work and ends up in egolessness, union, and oneness. Once one has a sense of oneness, one has crossed eighty per cent of the Integral Yoga’s path.

But this must be a oneness in dynamic force and not only in static peace or inactive beatitude. The Gita promises us freedom for the spirit even in the midst of works and the full energies of Nature, if we accept subjection of

our whole being to that which is higher than the separating and limiting ego. It proposes an integral dynamic activity founded on a

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still passivity; a largest possible action irrevocably based on an immobile calm is its secret,—free expression out of a supreme inward silence.

This is a beautiful balance that is in the Gita. The image I get from the Gita is that of the ocean: calm and unperturbed within with multifarious waves of eternal action on the surface, eternal knowledge from a base of quiet tranquillity. From a supreme inward silence, a free self-expression of one's *svabhava*. It is this combination, as Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishna explain, that is the nature of Brahman—all quiet within and all action outside.

It is the *sat* within and *chit-tapas* outside. He tells us to be like that supreme Brahman; that is the ideal of the Gita. To be as Brahman is to have the same qualities of silence and action simultaneously.

All things here are the one and indivisible eternal transcendent and cosmic Brahman that is in its seeming divided in things and creatures; in seeming only, for in truth it is always one and equal in all things and creatures and the division is only a phenomenon of the surface. As long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief and joy, pain and pleasure, good fortune and ill fortune, success and failure, we follow helplessly the iron or gilt and iron round of the wheel of Maya...

We have come to an important point, which is whether man has free will or not. The Mother discusses the last line of the quote above:

Yes. There are people who have a happy and comfortable life, and people who have a miserable one. That depends...

how shall I put it?—upon individual destiny, that depends perhaps on what they have to do on earth, on the stage they

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have reached, on many things, It's quite obvious that it is not they who choose. For most people would always choose the same thing. If they were asked what they wanted, there would be differences, yes, but not so great. It would be rather monotonous...

Of course, there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule. Generally speaking, the most common ideal to be born in an environment comfortable enough to avoid too many difficulties in life, to marry someone who won't give you too much trouble, to have healthy children who grow up normally—again, to avoid trouble—and then a quiet and happy old age, and not to be too ill, again to avoid trouble.

And then to pass away when one is tired of life because one does not want any trouble.

Indeed, this is the most widespread ideal. Naturally, there are exceptions; one may even find the exact opposite. But existence, as men conceive it, would be rather monotonous.

The differences would come in the details, for in one country, people prefer one thing and in another, another. Then, in the society where one is born, there are certain customs and an ideal of happiness. In another society, there are other customs and another ideal of happiness—and that's all...

That is the usual mentality. And one turns round and round—and sometimes it is an iron circle, sometimes a golden one—but one turns round and round and round, and the children will turn round and round and the grandchildren will turn round and round—and so it will go on. (CWM 8: 57-58)

This is what Sri Aurobindo refers to as going around in the wheel of the mind. This was a simple but graphic description of what we mean by ideals and how we are stuck in this wheel of the mind.

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Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: "At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will or how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence."

Not understood? What do you mean, "not understood"?

It's a fact, there is nothing to understand, it's like that.

I have explained this to you I don't know how many times.

You think it is you who decide... (Ibid: 51) The notion of free will is the greatest bondage. The concept of free will gives us the thickest shield of ego, this false pride that

'I have decided', 'I have done it.'

...these are impulses coming from outside. You think you are conscious of your will: it is a consciousness which is not yours. And everything... you are made up entirely of something which is the forces of Nature expressing a higher Will of which you are unconscious.

Only, one doesn't understand this except when one can come out of one's ego, through it be only for a moment; for the ego—and this is its strength—is convinced that it alone decides. But if one looks attentively, one notices that it is moved by all sorts of things which are not itself. (Ibid) Sri Aurobindo that free will is at the bottom, really illusory

"since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will." This is what we need to understand. We may say, "I have come to this class by my will, I could have done other things." But it is not

free will; it is the modes of Nature that have expressed themselves through our personal will.

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“It is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will and how we shall will it.” It is Nature that determines. You see to what extent things are not in our hands. The Mother says the same thing. If I say that I have chosen to come to this class, it is the universal cosmic will that has taken the shape of my will and I have the sense that

‘I have chosen’. But it is Nature that has chosen through me; it has given me that so-called “choice” to go to the class. It also provides the feeling that ‘I am proud that I have come to the class leaving all other choices’; that pride of having free will.

Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence.

It is unbelievable to realise how much we are not ourselves at all, and it is incredible to see how much we think that we are ourselves. See the whole darkness of our understanding? The more we think that I am myself, that I have my choice, that I am ‘me’, that ‘I’ have decided, the more one has entered into the ravines of the ego and gets stuck up. For the ordinary person, this knowledge is perturbing because, in one blow, the ego is shattered. Western psychology tells us to build up our personality; if we have no personality, we would be shattered.

We are a mould through which the force has come, acted and gone. There is no self-will or “my” will. However, at the same time, one has to be careful. If you kill someone and then say to the judge, ‘No, it is Nature which has killed, not me’, you can imagine where you would end up.

Philosophically, let us be clear and take it positively, not with a hurt ego. It is not to enslave us. Try to understand the motive behind this. Sri Aurobindo explains clearly that Nature’s mould is expressed in us. The sequence is like this: this individual personal will is being used by Nature, and my false ego tells me that I

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have done it. Nature kind of cheats on us, saying, ‘okay, you are doing it’. If Nature says it is doing it, our vital ego would say,

‘no, then I won’t do anything’. We need the ego satisfaction that

‘I am doing it.’ So Nature says, ‘okay, you are doing it’. It won’t reveal the truth. But behind our personal will, it is Nature who is doing her own will. Behind that Nature, Prakriti, there is the Supreme who is guiding. Prakriti cannot do anything without the Purusha’s consent. So *chit* is an extension of *sat*, and we are all individual facets of this cosmic *chit*. The individual faces of this cosmic will are called X, Y, Z. It has to express itself, and that expression is all of us. But if the individual thinks he is the actor, then we can imagine his tremendous ignorance. We are only puppets. The secret is that the Purushottama extends into Prakriti; and Prakriti extends into individual beings.

Ultimately, we are confronted with the question of the Divine and the undivine. All we do here is automatically a part of that Supreme Existence. There is one extension from the Purushottama to the simple man. There are two reactions that one could have to this: either to get depressed and say, ‘I am a slave of Nature, and it is all predetermined’, or we are elated like the Yogi who says, ‘I am acting with the will of the Supreme, and it is such a great joy.’ With this great joy, we surrender even more, saying, ‘Lord, may I become a greater transparent instrument of thy will. Now I realise it is thee who acts through me. May you act through me more and more.’ Not only that, but I can become conscious of the Divine in his action through me.

That consciousness of being a slave of God is the greatest joy.

That is the only truth. Otherwise, the world is going on with His will. The thing we have to become is a conscious slave of God. Therein lies all the joy and all the beauty of the line from *Savitri*: “For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!” (CWSA 34: 702) (29th August 2001)

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The paragraph we are discussing explains the main idea of the previous paragraph where Sri Aurobindo discussed the main lines of Karmayoga as written in the Gita. According to the Gita, two of the highest states of consciousness are equanimity and oneness. Here we see the steps of how to go about it. It is through an inner renunciation of personal desire that one is led to equality and accomplishes our total surrender to the Divine.

This process could become easier if we understood the underlining principle of how renunciation of personal desire leads to equality. This is what Sri Aurobindo explains in the paragraph beginning with “All things here are the one and indivisible eternal transcendent and cosmic Brahman.” In that paragraph, he writes that all things are virtually the cosmic Brahman. In addition, he says,

As long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief and joy, pain and pleasure, good fortune and ill fortune, success and failure, we follow helplessly the round of the wheel of Maya.

The explanation given is similar to what we discussed yesterday in *The Life Divine* class. There we understood that the individual is a being, an extension, an experience of the Supreme Infinite. Behind each individual, there is the Supreme.

There is a continuity of the same supreme consciousness from the individual to the Supreme. It is said that there is the same entirety and essence of the ocean in every one of its waves. We find here a similar explanation when He says: At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us,

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ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will and how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence.

Here is the same point but from a different angle. There is the same consciousness in every individual formation. Despite our ignorance, false steps, and limited capacity, there is a supreme consciousness guiding this individual ray of consciousness. What we think is our free will is actually not free will. It is Nature's will and makes us will what we believe only "we" will. In reality, the individual is not separate; this idea is an illusion and ignorance.

Unlike linking the individual with the transcendent, as in *The Life Divine*, in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the element of Nature comes in. If we can understand this, the inner renunciation of personal desire becomes easier.

How do we go about this inner renunciation of personal desire? Buddha has said this, and Shankaracharya has said this, but what exactly is the metaphysical truth of this and the process? First, we must understand the concept of personal desire. Personal desire means that we think we have the freedom to choose an object or direction and say, "I have chosen it, or I have done it the way I want to do it". That is a personal desire.

To possess, acquire, to keep things, "I think it is mine". Now Sri Aurobindo says that it is an illusion. In the depth of things, there is no personal desire. When we dissect each one of our desires, the whole illusion of it comes out. The Mother tells us that these desires are coming from outside.

But then what is mental and vital will?

That is an expression of something which is not personal.

If you analyse carefully, you see, for instance, that all that you think has been thought by others, that these are things which circulate and pass through you, but you have not

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produced this thought; you are not the originator of this thought. All your reactions come from atavism, from those who gave you birth and from the environment in which you have lived, from all the impressions which have accumulated in you and constituted something which seems to you yourself, yet which is not produced by you, but merely felt and experienced; you become aware of it in passing, but it is not you who created it, not you who gave it birth.

It could be said that these are like sounds—any sounds: words, music, anything—recorded by an instrument, then reproduced by another device which plays them back, like a gramophone, for instance. You wouldn't say that the gramophone has created the sound you hear, would you?

That would never occur to you. But as you are under the illusion of your separate personality, these thoughts which cross your mind and find expression, these feelings which pass through your vital and find expression, you think, have come from you; but nothing comes from you. Where is the

“you” which can create all that?

You must go deep, deep within, and find the eternal essence of your being to know the creative reality in yourself.

And once you have found that, you will realise that it is one single thing, the same in all others, and so where is your separate personality? Nothing's left any longer...

When the Buddha wanted to make his disciples understand these things, he used to tell them; every time you send out a vibration, a desire, for example, the desire for some particular thing, your desire starts circulating from one person to another, from one to another across the universe. It will go right round and come back to you.

And as it is not only one thing but a world of things, and as you are not the only transmitting centre—all individuals

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are transmitting centres—it is such confusion that you lose your bearings there. But these vibrations move about in a single, absolutely identical field; only the complication and interception of the vibrations give you the impression of something independent or separate.

But there's nothing separate or independent; there is only *one* Substance, *one* Force, one Consciousness, and *one* Will, which moves in countless ways of being.

And it is so complicated that one is no longer aware of it, but if one steps back and follows the movement, no matter which line of movement, one can see very clearly that the vibrations propagate themselves, one following another, one following another, one following another, and that in fact there is only one unity—unity of Substance, unity of Consciousness, unity of Will. And that is the only reality.

Outwardly there is a kind of illusion: the illusion of separation and the illusion of difference.

Desires and all those things also?

This is not personal. Not at all personal. And that is *very* easy to find out; of all things this is the easiest to discern, because ninety times out of a hundred it comes to you from someone else or from a certain circumstance or a set of circumstances, or from a vibration coming from another person or several other people. It is very easy to discern, it is the first thing one can discern: it is a vibration which suddenly awakens something similar in you. You know, something makes an impact on you, and this impact brings up a response, as when you play a note. Well, this vibration of desire strikes you in a certain way, and you respond...

It is the same thing for anger. It is very clear that one receives it suddenly, not even from a person, from the atmosphere—it is there—and then all of a sudden it enters

you and usually gets hold of you from below and then rises and pushes you, and so off you go. A minute earlier, you were not angry; you were quite self-possessed and had no intention of losing your temper. And this seizes you so strongly that you can't resist—because you are not sufficiently conscious, you let it enter you, and it makes use of you—you... what you call “yourself”, that is to say, your body; for apparently (I say apparently) it is something separate from your neighbour's body. But that is only an optical illusion because in fact, all the time, there are what may be called particles, even physical particles, like a sort of radiation which comes out of the body and gets mixed with others; and because of this, when one is very sensitive, one can feel things at a distance... (CWM 8: 51-55) How wonderfully the Mother explains that we are, in essence, a marketplace for all kinds of vibrations, whims, desires and even

“physical particles” from other bodies, everything invades us, and we think it is we who are the origin and creators of all this.

She has given the example that we are more or less recorders.

We record the vibrations and reproduce them much like the recorders that store sounds. All the vibrations that are around or above us leave an effect on us. We may not reply immediately, but if we sit quietly and ask ourselves the source of an idea, we can find the moment of its impact on us. It might have been five years or five days back, but we can realise it, ‘oh, yes, that is where it came from.’ I have seen something of this: ‘it is that idea that is now expressing itself this way in me?’

What we see here in the Mother's explanation, we should take it positively, not negatively. This is a truth that can help us to renounce ourselves. Don't take it negatively and say, ‘I am nobody, only a sponge to absorb other vibrations’. Let us take it in the positive sense that it is an illusion that I am somebody,

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that there is something I must possess. If that illusion is broken, this “giving up” becomes much easier. It is as if somebody were to say, ‘no, I disagree; this does not belong to you’. The sense of possession loosens when we realise it is not ours. In this way, we can understand that nothing is ours — the desires, the wills, the vibrations, the impacts. If this realisation can dawn on our mind, heart, and ego, then renouncing becomes much easier, and equanimity becomes possible.

This passage is a psychological analysis of the main idea of the Gita. The Gita says in its seven hundred verses, give up desire, become the instrument, the fruits of your actions belong to the Divine. Now we understand that the fruits of our actions belong to the Divine because the Divine himself is the doer. The one who does, reaps the fruits.

If, on the contrary, we live in the unifying reality of the Brahman, then we go beyond the ego and overstep Nature.

For then we get back to our true self and become the spirit; in the spirit we are above the impulsion of Nature, superior to her modes and forces. Attaining perfect equality in the soul, mind and heart, we realise our true self of oneness, one with all beings, one with That which expresses itself in them and in all that we see and experience. This equality and this oneness are the indispensable twin foundation we must lay down for a divine being, a divine consciousness, a divine action.

Note the sentence: “Attaining to a perfect equality in the soul, mind and heart, we realise our true self of oneness.” See the link there? Earlier we said that when I realise that I do not have anything that is my own, that gives me a sense of equality.

We realise that these same vibrations come to you, me and everyone. These vibrations are cosmic and universal, originating from the Supreme, Sachchidananda. The logical step goes like this: once we give up the sense of our separate individuality,

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we see the cosmic vibrations, which are the vibrations of the transcendental person, Sachchidananda or the Purushottama.

The link is that this individual and that Transcendent are one and the same. There is no difference. According to *The Life Divine*, there is a difference in capacity, but essentially it is the ocean playing itself with the waves. Every wave is an expression of the ocean. This is how we realise the absolute oneness.

This is a psychological analysis. Those who practice Yoga must go through this stage, and this reading would help us initiate the sense of renunciation in our lives. When we come across anything, even the sorrow of losing a person, we should recall that this person never belonged to me! Then perhaps even sorrow may go away. Sorrow comes because we feel we possess that person or object. We can make an auto-suggestion to ourselves that these things are not ours; this may help us in our lives. Equality and oneness are the twin foundations for a divine life. It is from here that Sri Aurobindo takes off. In his *Record of Yoga*, the diary he maintained about his personal sadhana, he first described *samata*, equality. His own personal yoga began where the Gita ends, with a sense of equality and oneness. After *samata*, Sri Aurobindo adds six more elements of the *sapta chatushtaya*, which are his new contributions. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo's own yoga in Pondicherry began where the Gita's yoga ends. That is why he calls equality and oneness the twin foundations of divine action and a divine being and consciousness.

Not one with all, we are not spiritual, not divine. Not equal-souled to all things, happenings and creatures, we cannot see spiritually, know divinely, or feel divinely towards others. The Supreme Power, the one Eternal and Infinite is equal to all things and to all beings; and because it is equal, it can act with an absolute wisdom according to the truth of its works

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and its force and according to the truth of each thing and of every creature.

This is also the only true freedom possible to man, — a freedom which he cannot have unless he outgrows his mental separateness and becomes the conscious soul in Nature. The only free will in the world is the one divine Will of which Nature is the executrix; for she is the master and creator of all other wills.

This is a crucial passage on the eternal question of free will.

We seen earlier also that there is only one free will in the world; that is the divine Will, which expresses itself through Nature, and it is Nature that expresses that free will through human beings.

“It is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will...” This is extraordinary! If we look at the connections, we see that the supreme divine Will is the only free will that translates into Nature. It gives Nature the authority to express it because it is its own force. This Nature, Prakriti, takes up the individual formations such as you and me and all the individualities on this earth. Each one of them expresses what the Divine wants Nature to do.

The important thing is that Nature determines what we shall will. For instance, if I say after class, ‘I will take a walk’. It is ‘I’ who has decided to go for the walk... but it is not so. The Divine’s Will working through Nature makes us will what we shall and how we will.

It has bound us to the last details of “what and how”. It has even determined which route I shall take in my walk. What we shall will, and how we shall will, is Nature expressing herself.

And as was written in *The Life Divine*, this act of the individual is an experience of the Supreme transcendent. It is He who is experiencing ‘your walk on the seashore’. We are walking

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on the seashore and enjoying the beautiful waves, but He, the transcendent, the Supreme Purushottma, is really doing it. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, it

says that it is Nature which is expressing, and in *The Life Divine*, it says that it is the Supreme who is expressing. The reality of the world is then that there is only one substance, one consciousness, one wave, and one course. This is the truth experienced by the yogi and Avatar and spiritual master. Knowing all of this will not help us immediately because of our strong sense of ego; knowledge alone will not be sufficient. It may help to console us in moments of sorrow, but otherwise, in everyday living, we still think our actions are due to our own decisions. But ultimately, in reality, there is only one free will of which Nature is the executrix.

Human free-will can be real in a sense, but, like all things that belong to the modes of Nature, it is only relatively real.

The mind rides on a swirl of natural forces, balances on a poise between several possibilities, inclines to one side or another, settles and has the sense of choosing: but it does not see, it is not even dimly aware of the Force behind that has determined its choice.

“The mind balances on a poise between several possibilities”.

If I say that after the class, I will go for a walk to one of several places, I may think I have all these choices to choose from. You start in one direction, and then someone comes along with a different suggestion, and then you go in an other direction.

What Sri Aurobindo says is that the mind does not see that there is someone else who has already decided this for you. He says, “but it does not see, it is not even dimly aware of the Force behind that has determined its choice.”

It cannot see it, because that Force is something total and to our eyes indeterminate. At most mind can only distinguish with an approach to clarity and precision some out of the

complex variety of particular determinations by which this Force works out her incalculable purposes. Partial itself, the mind rides on a part of the machine, unaware of nine-tenths of its motor agencies in Time and environment, unaware of its past preparation and future drift; but because it rides, it thinks that it is directing the machine.

Just because I am in the driver's seat, I think I am the driver.

The car is being driven by something else; it is a different force which is driving the car. The mind thinks that it can choose to go in one of these different routes, but there is a predetermined choice even there: "because it rides, it thinks that it is directing the machine." This sense of being a separate individual is there but he says it is a false idea.

In a sense, it counts: for that clear inclination of the mind which we call our will, that firm settling of the inclination which presents itself to us as a deliberate choice, is one of Nature's most potent determinants; but it is never independent and sole.

That is the real answer. That sense of free will is a significant determinant factor in the action. The reason that I am doing what I am choosing also has its role. It is like when you make a salad. Many ingredients are necessary, but salt brings it a particular taste. This salt element is like my belief in my freedom of choice. This also counts. If I were told that Nature's forces are driving me and there is no free will then, what may happen is that I withdraw from the action. The wrong attitude may come in and say, 'let Nature force do its will.' But if I think 'I am the actor, I take the *rasa* of the action and enjoy doing it because

"I" am doing it.' Western philosophy tells us that 'you are the master of your fate'. They emphasise the salt element. The more we emphasise this independent individuality, the more ignorant we are of the truth; it is an illusion.

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In India, we emphasised karma and dharma. We have individual free will but also karma. At least here, we reconcile the individual with the cosmic as

much as possible. In the West, there is no cosmic will only the individual. Therefore when there is sorrow and suffering, they have nothing to fall back on. The universal, the cosmic, and the transcendent do not exist for them. In India, when there is an individual problem, we have something to fall back upon. We have been constantly given the Transcendent, the cosmic and the individual. When we come to free will, however much it is untrue, a falsehood, an illusion, it is Nature playing this trick of illusion on humankind so that he gets interested in work. Many people in the Ashram Dining Room take the food home and make it a little tastier by adding their personal taste for they bring their own free will into the Dining Room to spice their food. Similarly, we spice our actions with our free will, but the force and direction are already there.

This is the nature of free will and determination.

This helps us understand the psychology of privatisation.

When it is your factory, and you have to make an effort and decisions to bring it to success, then you will work all day.

Nature uses this trick because the mind is yet in ignorance, so it uses this sense of free will.

Once we realise the psychic being, this false trick is no longer needed. On the contrary, we say, 'Oh Lord, let thy will be done; if there is anything of my will, please eradicate it'. That is an awakened mind that realises the truth of the universe. But until one reaches that state, we must be brought up under the illusion of free will. A common person cannot be given the truth of the Gita because free will is an important notion as long as we are in the parameter of ignorance. Only when we get knowledge and devotion can we surrender.

Behind this petty instrumental action of the human will

there is something vast and powerful and eternal that oversees the trend of the inclination and presses on the turn of the will. There is a total Truth in Nature greater than our individual choice. And in this total Truth, or even beyond and behind it, there is something that determines all results; its presence and secret knowledge keep up steadily in the process of Nature a dynamic, almost automatic perception of the right relations, the varying or persistent necessities, the inevitable steps of the movement. There is a secret divine Will, eternal and infinite, omniscient and omnipotent, that expresses itself in the universality and in each particular of all these apparently temporal and finite inconscient or half-conscient things. This is the Gita' when it speaks of the Lord within the heart of all existences who turns all creatures as if mounted on a machine by the illusion of Nature.

The Life Divine says that behind all these individualities—

particular, finite, temporal, inconscient or half-conscient—there is the eternal infinite, the omniscient and omnipotent, that is guiding, helping and giving the soul what it needs to develop.

It takes away from the soul all that which is not required for its growth. There are stages in life when we need a thing for our growth. After attaining an expanded state of consciousness, it is taken away. If we can give it away consciously, well and good, there is no pain. Otherwise, when it is snatched away from us, we have pain. A complete free will of human beings contradicts the notion that the Supreme is omniscient and omnipotent.

The omnipotent and omniscient acts in us through Nature for our growth and all sorrows, pains, and changes are part of our soul's growth. Sri Aurobindo ends here by quoting Sri Krishna, who turns all creatures as if mounted on a machine. Sri Krishna is there in all of us, guiding us for one single purpose: our soul's

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growth. It is not to give us name and fame, and wealth. All paths lead to one single path: the realisation of the soul.

(19th September 2001)

In the previous class we discussed that it could be depressing to some and joyous for others not to have free will; it depends on our attitude. Sri Aurobindo states that there is nothing called free will; it is an illusion, an illusion that is perhaps necessary for the mind to act until it realises that it is not truly the actor and that it is someone else who acts through us. It is a necessary illusion for those who are in ignorance but once awakened to the truth of the Divine's working in this world; then we realise that there is only one will act in the world, the Will of the Supreme Reality.

The Divine's will is executed through its primary instrument, Nature; Prakriti is the instrument of that Supreme will and executes the Supreme's will in the finite individuals called human beings. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the mind, riding on the crest, thinks it is independent and doing things as it wants. However, everything is selected by Nature, and it also establishes the procedure of execution. What to choose and *how* to select are parts of Nature's will. It may be not easy to understand how this can be. As mentioned in *The Life Divine*, as long as we are ignorant, we cannot accept this truth. The first sign of ignorance is a division separating us from the action, the false idea that 'I am the doer'.

This divine Will is not an alien Power or Presence; it is intimate to us and we ourselves are part of it: for it is our own highest Self that possesses and supports it. Only, it is not our conscious mental will; it rejects often enough what our conscious will accepts and accepts what our conscious will rejects. For while this secret One knows all and every whole and each detail, our surface mind knows only a little part of

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things. Our will is conscious in the mind, and what it knows, it knows by the thought only; the divine Will is superconscious to us because it is in its essence supra-mental, and it knows all because it is all.

The supramental will in us is something beyond our mental comprehension. With its narrow, limited, incapacitated will, our mind can see only the present moment, the partial, the temporal. But the divine Will knows all

because it is all. Very vaguely, we can say, 'God has become this world'. The Vedas say, 'Brahman has become this universe'. In Sri Aurobindo's parlance, we can say that the world's becoming is through the supramental consciousness. Otherwise, if you are unaware of this concept, we can say that God has become the world or Brahman has become the world.

Our highest Self which possesses and supports this universal Power is not our ego-self, not our personal nature; it is something transcendent and universal of which these smaller things are only foam and flowing surface. If we surrender our conscious will and allow it to be made one with the will of the Eternal, then, and then only, shall we attain to a true freedom; living in the divine liberty, we shall no longer cling to this shackled so-called free-will, a puppet freedom ignorant, illusory, relative, bound to the error of its own inadequate vital motives and mental figures.

Try to analyse this and apply this line to our own life: "...this shackled so-called free will". We are proud of our free will, but we must take out the first layer of 'I am doing' from 'my own free will!' He tells us to examine the vital motives behind our free will, our acts, every decision we make, and everything we think of. There are often long strings attached to a personal advantage: somewhere or the other, we have some vital interests.

On the mental level, no idea is independently mine. All that

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I am speaking is coming from the universal mind. Maybe somewhere or other, I have heard a lecture or someone said things which I don't remember now, but it has gone into my subconscious. Because I am reading so much of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, those thoughts have gone into my mind, and it is those thoughts that come forth in my speech. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's thoughts, another philosopher's ideas, or another revolutionary's thoughts, all these come forth, but I still think, 'it is my thought'. That is the illusion, the fallacy of free will.

A distinction has to be firmly seized in our consciousness, the capital distinction between mechanical Nature and the free Lord of Nature,

between the Ishwara or single luminous divine Will and the many executive modes and forces of the universe.

Nature,—not as she is in her divine Truth, the conscious Power of the Eternal, but as she appears to us in the Ignorance,—is executive Force, mechanical in her steps, not consciously intelligent to our experience of her, although all her works are instinct with an absolute intelligence. Not in herself master, she is full of a self-aware Power which has an infinite mastery and, because of this Power driving her, she rules all and exactly fulfils the work intended in her by the Ishwara.

Please note the line: “exactly fulfils the work intended in her by the Ishwara”. Though she is not fully conscious, she fulfills exactly what the divine Ishwara wants her to do. There is a difference between Nature fulfilling and an individual human being fulfilling the Divine’s will. We can consciously fulfill what the Divine wants; thereby, our fulfilment could gain over Nature *vis a vis* in the time taken. Nature fulfils God’s intention through long periods. Because it is not alert, awake and conscious, it takes time. The Integral Yoga is nothing but Nature’s Yoga done consciously. Sri Aurobindo gives us a condensation of

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Nature’s own process in his Yoga. We have everything in Nature, but we are more conscious than Nature. We cannot say it is unconscious, but as He puts it, “not fully self-aware”. Yet Nature fulfills the Ishwara at every stage.

Not enjoying but enjoyed, she bears in herself the burden of all enjoyments. Nature as Prakriti is an inertly active Force,—for she works out a movement imposed upon her; but within her is One that knows,—some Entity sits there that is aware of all her motion and process.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo speaks of “this executive world-Nature”. Is there an executive Nature on the other planes also?

On the other planes, what do you mean?

In the mind and higher up.

The earth-Nature contains not only matter—the physical and its different planes—but also the vital and the mind; all this is part of the earth-Nature.

And after that there is no Nature, that is to say, there is no longer this distinction. That belongs essentially to the material world as it is described here.

But, as Sri Aurobindo says, this is not “all the true truth”. He has given a summary of what is explained in the Gita. That is what the Gita says; it is not exactly like that.

Only, as he says, this may be useful; that is, instead of causing confusion between the different parts of the being, this helps you to distinguish between what is higher and what is lower, what is turned towards the Divine and what is turned towards the matter. It is an psychologically valuable conception, but that’s all there is to it. Things are not like that.

Sri Aurobindo writes: “Nature,—not as she is in her divine Truth the conscious Power of the Eternal, but as she appears to us in the Ignorance,—is executive Force, mechanical in

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her steps, not consciously intelligent to our experiences of her, although all her works are instinct with an absolute intelligence.”

Nature is not consciously intelligent?...

There is an intelligence which acts in her and through her, in her action, but she is not conscious of this intelligence.

You can understand this with animals. Take ants, for example.

They do exactly what they have to do; all their work and organisation is something which really looks perfect. But they are not conscious of the intelligence which organises them.

They are moved mechanically by an intelligence of which they are not aware. And even if you take the most developed animals like the cat and dog for instance, they know exactly what they have to do: a cat bringing up its little ones brings them up just as well as a woman hers—sometimes better than a woman but it is impelled by an intelligence which moves it automatically. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it do things. It is not aware of it, it can't change anything at all in the movement by its own will. Something makes it act mechanically but over that it has no control.

If a human being intervenes and trains a cat, he can make it change its behaviour; but it is the consciousness of the human being which acts upon it, not its own consciousness.

It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it act.

And this kind of self-awareness, this possibility of watching oneself acting, of understanding why one does things, how one does them and, therefore, of having control and changing the action—that belongs to the mind and in his own right to man. This is the essential difference between a man and an animal—that a man is conscious of himself, can become aware of the force which makes him act, and not only become aware of it but control it.

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But all those who feel themselves driven by a force and say, “I was forced to do it”, without the participation of their will, show that they are still deeply rooted in animality, that is to say, in the inconscient. One begins to become a conscious human being only when one knows why one does things and when one is capable of changing one's action by a determined will, when one has a control. Before having any control, one is still more or less an animal with a small embryo of consciousness which is just beginning, a little flame flickering and trying to burn, and likely to be blown out by the slightest passing breeze. (CWM 8: 59-61) The Mother gives wonderful examples of the ants, cats and dogs and explains the difference between man and the animal; how man can become conscious of

himself, of the force working in him and how he can change himself; whereas the animal consciousness cannot change itself nor is it conscious.

Prakriti works containing the knowledge, the mastery, the delight of the Purusha, the Being associated with her or seated within her; but she can participate in them only by subjection and reflection of that which fills her.

Purusha knows and is still and inactive; he contains the action of Prakriti within his consciousness and knowledge and enjoys it. He gives the sanction to Prakriti's works and she works out what is sanctioned by him for his pleasure.

Purusha himself does not execute; he maintains Prakriti in her action and allows her to express in energy and process and formed result what he perceives in his knowledge. This is the distinction made by the Sankhyas; and although it is not all the true truth, not in any way the highest truth either of Purusha or of Prakriti, still it is a valid and indispensable practical knowledge in the lower hemisphere of existence.

This division of the Purusha and Prakriti is a distinction made by the Sankhya Yoga, which is a kind of practical thing, although

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its truth is not comprehensive. Sankhya's distinction between Purusha and Prakriti is a necessary step in yoga. Remember, in yoga; there is also a kind of self-suggestion. One cannot just say, 'I will do yoga'. These philosophies, like the Sankhya, help us in the initial stages of distinguishing between the Purusha and prakriti. Prakriti is the outer action or, in Sri Aurobindo's terminology, the outer being. This outer being consists of the mental, vital and physical, and the Purusha knows everything but does not involve himself. Why is this only the first stage and not the total truth? This is not the whole truth because the inner Purusha, the *chaitya purusha* or the psychic being is not passive; it is not there just watching the Prakriti, for if it were, then the question of transformation would not be possible. Eternally the outer nature would have been there acting, and eternally the inner Purusha would have been watching as the *sakshi*, the witness. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, it cannot be a complete truth; because there is the

chaitya purusha, where the psychic is constantly active. It is constantly trying to affect the outer being through its influence and transform it, at least change it.

Sankhya is one of those old philosophies which helps in Integral Yoga, where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother tell us to distinguish the different parts of our being. To that extent, Sankhya is helpful but does not take the part of the philosophy that says, 'I am only the *Sakshi*, the witness, let Prakriti go on.' On the contrary, once the levels are distinguished, we must focus this psychic light onto the lower planes of Prakriti consciously; that is the difference. If the psychic does not focus its rays on the heart, the mind and the physical, then our outer being cannot change. And without the change of the outer being, Sri Aurobindo has no use for all this philosophy of Sankhya. That is the reason for this phrase, "not all the truth", and the Mother tells us this is only to differentiate the higher and lower, the inner and the outer. Philosophically it gives us

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an essential practical distinction, but this cannot be the whole truth because if this were the entire truth, there could not be the transformation of the outer nature.

The individual soul or the conscious being in a form may identify itself with this experiencing Purusha or with this active Prakriti. If it identifies itself with Prakriti, it is not master, enjoyer and knower, but reflects the modes and workings of Prakriti. It enters by its identification into that subjection and mechanical working which is characteristic of her. And even, by an entire immersion in Prakriti, this soul becomes inconscient or subconscious, asleep in her forms as in the earth and the metal or almost asleep as in plant life. There, in that inconscience, it is subject to the domination of *tamas*, the principle, the power, the qualitative mode of obscurity and inertia: *sattwa* and *rajas* are there, but they are concealed in the thick coating of *tamas*.

This entire paragraph is a description of the psychic being.

He has given us the first step in the evolution of the psychic being when the soul (not yet a psychic being) is completely identified with Prakriti or the outer. The lowest level is where it identifies completely, forgetting itself, in the matter. What should be understood is that there is also the soul element or the spirit in matter. These are confusing words: the soul, the spirit and the psychic. But for a general understanding, “spirit”

is the amorphous divine presence in the matter and everywhere.

As there is the evolution of form from matter to life, this amorphousness (referred to as the presence of the Divine in the matter) begins to get a form or focus. An example may be that now, in this hall, there is a general light, but there is no focus of light. Like that, we can say that there is a spirit in the matter; there is a divine presence, light all over.

Now, in the next stage, there is a focus, some formation but

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not so pointed as to enable one to see the form. But you see that there is a focus of light there, and that focus of light is the soul. This is the soul element that comes in plants and animals, focusing takes an actual formation in man, and then we change the expression to “psychic being”. In one way,, it is the same spirit we are talking about, yet we should distinguish the spirit, the soul element, and the psychic being. Now it becomes a

“being”. He uses the word psychic being, not spirit or soul. The distinction is clear — the psychic being has a form of its own. It is not the same in all of us; as all of us have different forms, we have different psychic beings.

This terse paragraph gives us an excellent synopsis of the soul’s evolution. The first level is when “this soul becomes inconscient or subconscious, asleep in her forms as in the earth”. He still uses the word soul, but it has the same meaning as “spirit” here. It is asleep there in the inconscient, subject to the domination of tamas. At the first level, the soul, the divine presence, is completely identified with matter. It is not active because the inertia, the tamas of matter, dominates it. Matter’s tamas overweighs this

inner spirit. Once we catch this central idea we can go forward and see how it emerges.

Emerging into its own proper nature of consciousness but not yet truly conscious, because there is still too great a domination of *tamas* in the nature, the embodied being becomes more and more subject to *rajas*, the principle, the power, the qualitative mode of action and passion impelled by desire and instinct.

The second evolutionary step is when it comes out of *tamas* and moves into the level of desire, instinct, passion and movement, which is the characteristic of *rajas*.

There is then formed and developed the animal nature, narrow in consciousness, rudimentary in intelligence, *rajaso-*

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tamasic in vital habit and impulse. Emerging yet farther from the great Inconscience towards a spiritual status the embodied being liberates *sattwa*, the mode of light, and acquires a relative freedom and mastery and knowledge and with it a qualified and conditioned sense of inner satisfaction and happiness. Man, the mental being in a physical body, should be but is not, except in a few among this multitude of ensouled bodies, of this nature.

The evolution progresses from the *tamas* of matter, to the *rajas* of the plant and animal, then to *sattwa* in the human being.

Matter is under the domination of *tamas*; in plants and animals, there is the liberation of *rajas*. The animal is an expression of the soul's liberation of *rajas*. We cannot negatively comment on the animal's consciousness, passion, or desire; these are all the soul's own expressions. The soul is almost exuberant that it has been liberated from the *tamas* of Matter; therefore, billions of animals come to life. The earth has become rich due to this liberation, but it is not the entire liberation. There is still the pull of the

tamas; the plant cannot move, and the animal passion cannot liberate itself entirely, but what is expected of it, it does. Then when it comes to humankind, logically, the human is supposed to be at the stage of the liberation of sattwa. Here, Sri Aurobindo adds a small phrase:

“should be but is not”. Therefore the human being suffers; animals and plants don’t suffer; a man suffers because he has not yet fulfilled what is expected of him to liberate sattwa. He says there are only exceptions, a few amongst this multitude in whom the soul is joyous that it is living in a sattwa atmosphere.

Almost the definition of humankind is to be sattwic, but unfortunately we are more rajasic and tamasic. Now we understand why Sri Krishna in the Gita insists on desireless action.

Ordinarily he has too much in him of the obscure earth-inertia and a troubled ignorant animal life-force to be a soul

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of light and bliss or even a mind of harmonious will and knowledge. There is here in man an incomplete and still hampered and baffled ascension towards the true character of the Purusha, free, master, knower and enjoyer. For these are in human and earthly experience relative modes, none giving its single and absolute fruit; all are intermixed with each other and there is not the pure action of any one of them anywhere. Their confused and inconstant interaction determines the experiences of the egoistic human consciousness swinging in Nature’s uncertain balance.

He says, “There is an incomplete and still hampered and baffled ascension in man.” This tells us that humanity has problems because we are still incomplete. The true man at his peak would be superman. This incomplete human that we now are can be called complete only when we have evolved further into a superman, which will be a fulfilled human being. This is the difference between what we are and what we are supposed to be. Now all the gunas are intermixed with each other, and none is giving its single and absolute fruit, and their confused interaction is our human experience. We

are a bit of sattwa, more of rajas, and perhaps most of tamas. Individually we each have different proportions.

The sign of the immersion of the embodied soul in Prakriti is the limitation of consciousness to the ego. The vivid stamp of this limited consciousness can be seen in a constant inequality of the mind and heart and a confused conflict and disharmony in their varied reactions to the touches of experience.

This is a perfect description of the incapacity of man. The incapacity of human beings is in proportion to their level of consciousness. Ignorance is seen in the inequality of mind and heart, the confused conflict and disharmony in their varied reactions to the touches of experience.

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The human reactions sway perpetually between the dualities created by the soul's subjection to Nature and by its often intense but narrow struggle for mastery and enjoyment, a struggle for the most part ineffective.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that our innate inequality betrays our ignorance. To put it positively, our realisation or our growth of consciousness is reflected in our equality. Equality is a stamp of deeper consciousness, and inequality is a stamp of ignorance.

This equality is the quality of equanimity that we have towards each other and what we have in ourselves. He says our human reactions perpetually sway because the tamas and the rajas pull us down and sometimes we have sattwic aspirations to go forward. There is always a struggle between the lower and the higher. If we lived in the psychic being, then the struggle would be lessened, and there would be more of an embracing attitude toward equality. We would see that the world isn't ours, and we would have a kind of universal consciousness.

The soul circles in an unending round of Nature's alluring and distressing opposites, success and failure, good fortune and ill fortune, good and evil,

sin and virtue, joy and grief, pain and pleasure. It is only when, awaking from its immersion in Prakriti, it perceives its oneness with the One and its oneness with all existences that it can become free from these things and found its right relation to this executive world-Nature.

Then it becomes indifferent to her inferior modes, equal-minded to her dualities, capable of mastery and freedom; it is seated above her as the high-throned knower and witness filled with the calm intense unalloyed delight of his own eternal existence. The embodied spirit continues to express its powers in action, but it is no longer involved in ignorance, no longer bound by its works; its actions have no longer a consequence within it, but only a consequence outside in Prakriti. The whole

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movement of Nature becomes to its experience a rising and falling of waves on the surface that make no difference to its own unfathomable peace, its wide delight, its vast universal equality or its boundless God-existence.

We could replace this entire paragraph with what was read from the Mother yesterday; she said the same thing.

Sri Aurobindo writes that it is no longer involved in ignorance, and the Mother says it goes beyond ignorance and continues to exist and live in this world. When we go higher in our consciousness, we develop new faculties which enable us to look beyond the surface and understand the inner meaning of all actions. That is the true way of action. It is not a matter of escaping from the world but of living in reality with a different vision of things. “The whole movement of Nature becomes to its experience a rising and falling of waves on the surface that make no difference to its own unfathomable peace.” This is the meaning of equality. In the Gita, it has been said many times, but it becomes more evident each time. Equality is not just to be detached, with an attitude of “I don’t care, it could be this way or that way, it doesn’t matter”. It is to rise into higher consciousness from where we look at the world to see its meaning. Once we understand the importance behind even the external acts, there is a norm of satisfaction. You are not partial to anyone, pulled to anyone, attracted by anything or distracted by anything. The famous poet Dante wrote something similar; he

said, “In Thy will is our peace”. That peace of understanding comes when one’s own will becomes one with the Supreme Will. All that we studied in the last couple of paragraphs are wonderful explanations of this single, intuitive line: “In Thy will is our peace.”

(3rd October 2001)

Until now, we have been discussing about the ego.

Sri Aurobindo says, “The sign of the immersion of the embodied

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soul in Prakriti is the limitation of consciousness to the ego”.

This seems to be a kind of definition of what exactly the ego is.

As we discussed in our *The Life Divine* classes, to be egoless is to go beyond Prakriti. To be egoless is to have the knowledge, knowledge in the true sense, the knowledge of the Supreme.

This is not mental knowledge; it is a realisation of the Supreme, either within oneself, in the psychic being, or the transcendent.

To come out of ego is perhaps also to come out of ignorance.

The definition of ignorance is nothing but the consciousness of division. To be egoless is to have the consciousness of oneness. That is the task that a yogi has in front of him. This consciousness of oneness can come and does come in the proportion of one’s going within. It is not a vital exercise or mental decision that will make us egoless. The actual path takes us within, towards our psychic being. In proportion to one’s progress in that path, one becomes egoless. To go within towards the psychic is the solution to nearly all problems.

The following three paragraphs are an excellent summary of the Gita.

These are the conditions of our effort and they point to an ideal which can be expressed in these or equivalent formula.

To live in God and not in the ego; to move, vastly founded, not in the little egoistic consciousness, but in the consciousness of the All-Soul and the Transcendent.

To be perfectly equal in all happenings and to all beings, and to see and feel them as one with oneself and one with the Divine; to feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all, oneself in all.

To act in God and not in the ego.

The first step in the Gita or Sri Aurobindo is the same. It is the most challenging step, yet it seems to be the first one: to live in God, which means not to live in ego. One can reverse it: not to

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live in ego but to live in God. However, the truth is that the more we live in our psychic consciousness, the more we do not live in the ego. As the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have told us several times, our Yoga begins with psychic realisation. To live in God is to live in the psychic consciousness; in the language of the Gita, it is to live in the Purushottam.

It is not that we realise the psychic being and only begin to act; if we did that, we could not work. To realise the psychic being may take decades or even many births. We cannot stop action until then, but we can make a sincere effort and have a one-pointed aspiration to realise the psychic being. If one can live in that aspiration, with that background of aspiration, one can act, and this aspiration will guide one's actions. We may not have reached the psychic centre but because we have turned towards the psychic, it begins to radiate its influence on our actions. Therefore, let us not be disappointed or depressed and say, 'Oh, I am not yet in the psychic, so how can I act truly?' For beginners, it is essential to want it; and keeping that aspiration, let us act. It is not that only when we live in God, we can practice equanimity.

Equanimity is not a mental decision made by the mind; it is not a mental attitude at all. We are bound to have preferences as long as it is only a mental attitude. For example, if there is a tragedy in the close circle of one's family, one is disturbed; when there is a tragedy in another part of the city, one is less disturbed; and when it happens ten cities away, one is even less disturbed. We are talking about not that kind of disturbance or non-disturbance.

It is a question of more or less ignorance.

The psychic being's equality makes us 'feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all, oneself in all.' It is perhaps this universal consciousness that we gain through a psychic realisation. The psychic realisation gives us this first experience of vastness. We begin to realise that this same Atman is there

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within all. And by learning that we are all this same Atman, our attitude towards others becomes one of harmony and unity.

That attitude brings in the sense of equanimity.

When Lord Sri Krishna asks us to act without desire, without attachment to the fruits of action, without attachment to works, it is advisable for action. The Gita gives very practical advice. But, on the spiritual-psychological level, what one has to do is live in God. We cannot act without desire or attachment, without achieving some basis or footing in our inner consciousness.

Otherwise, we may take the mental decision that 'I will not be attached to my works; this should not be out of a desire', but let us be confirmed of one thing: all that is mental is temporal.

The mind does not have a sufficient will. However, we have seen that faith and will are interlinked. Faith is something that is connected with a higher

or deeper consciousness. The mind is a very closed, narrow and small consciousness. The will that comes with this mental consciousness is also limited, impotent, and temporal and doesn't take us too far. We have seen in *The Life Divine* that consciousness and will are always proportionate. If the mind is small, the will also is small. As my inner consciousness grows higher, the will also grow higher.

For equanimity or largeness, one must go into a deeper psychic consciousness. That enables the will that goes with the psychic consciousness, which is more potent in its effectivity.

The mental being is ineffective because it is impotent to work against the vital energies or the physical urges. It is only the will of the deeper consciousness or psychic that can be effective in transforming our nature. "To act in God and not in the ego,"

Sri Aurobindo explains.

And here, first, not to choose action by reference to personal needs and standards, but in obedience to the dictates of the living highest Truth above us. Next, as soon

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as we are sufficiently founded in the spiritual consciousness, not to act any longer by our separate will or movement, but more and more to allow action to happen and develop under the impulsion and guidance of a divine Will that surpasses us. And last, the supreme result, to be exalted into an identity in knowledge, force, consciousness, act, joy of existence with the Divine Shakti; to feel a dynamic movement not dominated by mortal desire and vital instinct and impulse and illusive mental free-will, but luminously conceived and evolved in an immortal self-delight and an infinite self-knowledge. For this is the action that comes by a conscious subjection and merging of the natural man into the divine Self and eternal Spirit; it is the Spirit that for ever transcends and guides this world-Nature.

Out of the three steps given in the Gita, the first two are more psychological, dealing with the inner change that must occur.

The third is the outer personality, the being. What happens there is “not to choose action by reference to personal needs and standards, but in obedience to the dictates of the living highest Truth above us.” This is most important. If one asks oneself what is the first step in Yoga and how to go about it? The first step is not to choose an action based on personal needs and standards.

In the early days of the Ashram, one would go to the Mother and ask for work, and she would give the type of work that would be best for the person’s inner growth. Someone might have been an expert in something and thought he should pursue that activity to help others. However, the Mother might have felt that a completely different work would be better for inner growth. It is not by personal choice that the work was taken up but by the will of the Mother. That kind of surrender was a significant step in the Ashram. Even now, in the Ashram, we have to view things in the larger context of the Ashram and

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of sadhana (of course, those who have the possibility can still communicate with the Mother.)

The second step is “as soon as we are sufficiently founded in the spiritual consciousness, not to act any longer by our separate will or movement, but more and more to allow action to happen and develop under the impulsion and guidance of a divine Will”.

This is the language of the Gita is in the stage when we are the doer of action; it is when we say, ‘I am doing the action, but Mother, whatever you want me to do, I will do it.’ The next stage is, “I am the instrument; I don’t do it; you are doing it through me.” However, the precondition is that one is “sufficiently founded in spiritual consciousness”. We cannot be an instrument unless we have a sufficiently developed spiritual consciousness.

I know many people saying, ‘I am doing the Mother’s work; it is she who is guiding me’. Beware of these statements because this could be a vital trick.

The vital is wonderful at playing these kinds of tricks on us. There is a precondition: to be “sufficiently founded in the spiritual consciousness”.

Spiritual consciousness is basically psychic consciousness.

Let us be honest with ourselves; it is better and more honest to say, ‘I am the Mother’s worker; I am the doer because I am still the ego with my ambitions and desires and preferences, but still I can bring in the Mother’s light and offer this work to her. With all my weaknesses and strengths, I am trying to do her work.’ This is a safer way because sincerity is the door to spirituality. The doors are shut if we are not sincere in what we will. At least be sincere and say, ‘I don’t know much; I am doing this little work with my incapacity, and whatever I can do, I offer to the Mother.’ When we are in the psychic consciousness, we no longer tell ourselves that ‘I am an instrument’. Automatically we would feel that somebody is doing things through us, but if we say she is doing it through

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me, it would be a barrier. This kind of self-praising would be detrimental because there comes in the shadow of the sattwic ego. The sattwic ego is extremely dangerous. To say that ‘I am the Mother’s instrument’ is a great pitfall; we never know what the hostile forces are taking us towards.

The last stage is “the supreme result, to be exalted into an identity in knowledge, force, consciousness, act, the joy of existence with the Divine Shakti”. This is the last of the three stages that the Gita describes: the doer, the instrument and then the complete identification. This comes when we realise that we are not the doer nor the instrument that it is She, the Divine Shakti, who is the doer and who is the instrument for what is done. It is when we realise complete oneness, that there is nothing apart from Her. We see that behind all this ignorance, there is a supreme consciousness; behind all this incapacity there is a supreme *tapas*, and behind all this suffering, there is a supreme Ananda. In that identity of knowledge we will see that this world is nothing but She. That is the highest and the last stage.

But by what practical steps of self-discipline can we arrive at this consummation?

The elimination of all egoistic activity and of its foundation, the egoistic consciousness, is clearly the key to the consummation we desire. And since in the path of works action is the knot we have first to loosen, we must endeavour to loosen it where it is centrally tied, in desire and in ego; for otherwise we shall cut only stray strands and not the heart of our bondage. These are the two knots of our subjection to this ignorant and divided Nature, desire and ego-sense. And of these two desire has its native home in the emotions and sensations and instincts and from there affects thought and volition; ego-sense lives indeed in these movements, but it

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casts its deep roots also in the thinking mind and its will and it is there that it becomes fully self-conscious. These are the twin obscure powers of the obsessing world-wide Ignorance that we have to enlighten and eliminate.

The pragmatic steps that should be taken towards this higher spiritual life are first, not to choose action by personal preference or need, and then, “the elimination of all egoistic activity and its foundation, the egoistic consciousness”. In the path of works, action is the knot we have to loosen, and it has to be loosened where it is centrally tied: in desire and ego.

The first guidance is that the knot of action has to be loosened. Sri Aurobindo uses the language of the Gita, where Lord Krishna explains the “knot of action”. This was said in relation to the growing tendency in those times (during the later part of the Upanishads and the beginning of the Gita), where asceticism was creeping in and becoming stronger and stronger.

Asceticism means that they were avoiding and rejecting action.

The Gita said do not avoid action, but cut the knot of action. A knot means it is tied to something, but how is action bound?

How is it formed into a knot? The Mother explains: *Why is action a knot?*

Because one is attached to action. The knot is the knot of the ego. You act because of desire. Sri Aurobindo says this, doesn't he? The ordinarily way of acting is tied to desire in one form or another—a desire, a need—so that is the knot.

If you act only to satisfy desire—a desire which you call a need or a necessity or anything else, but in truth, if you go to the very root of the thing, you see that it is the impulse of a desire which makes the thing, you see that it is the impulse of a desire which makes you act—well, if you act only under the effect of the impulse of desire, you will no longer be able to act when you eliminate the desire. (CWM 8: 70)

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Sri Aurobindo also explains this in the *Essays on the Gita*. When you take away desire, how do you act? What do we act for when there is no motivation for material success? However, the Gita cuts at that very word “motivation”. Do people wonder how to work without motivation. The Mother says that if the desire is the basis of your action, you fall when that basis is withdrawn.

However, she would say:

And this is the first answer people give you. When they are told, “Act without being attached to the result of action, have this consciousness that it is not you who are acting, it is the Divine who is acting”, the reply which ninety-nine and a half per cent give is, “But if I feel like that, I don't move any longer! I don't do anything any more; it is always a need, a desire, a personal impulse which makes me act in one way or another.” So Sri Aurobindo says, if you want to realise this teaching of the Gita, the first thing to do is to loosen this knot, the knot binding action to desire... (Ibid) Now we understand this knot: on one side is action and on the other is desire; they intertwine and make the knot.

...so firmly tied are they that if you take away one you take away the other. He says the knot must be loosened in order to be able to remove desire and yet continue to act.

And this is a fact, this is what must be done. The knot must be loosened. It is a small inner operation which you can very easily perform; and when it has been performed, you realise that you act absolutely without any personal motive, but moved by a Force higher than your egoistic force, and also more powerful. And then you act, but the consequences of action no longer return upon you. (Ibid: 70-71) This also relates to the theory of karma. Karma is formulated by all actions which are done out of desire or out of ego. How do we get rid of this karma of the past and present? The Mother

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would explain that as long as we act out of ego consciousness, we build up karma. And as long as we build up karma, we are bound to the actions built by us. It is a simple mathematical formula; it is nothing to cry over or shy away from. If we do activities based on desire, they produce energies which return upon us, good or bad. To get rid of the karmic effects, one has to act without desire, without any personal motive, and be moved by a higher force than our egoistic force.

Desire leads to karma, and non-desire leads to the elimination of karma. To act without desire is to work without personal motive. That is a wonderful guideline. There is a step beyond it, but the immediate step is not to have a personal motive for our actions. This can easily be practised in Auroville or the Ashram, where we are a community because we can act for the community as a whole. When acting for the community, we are already in the first step out of this closed personal motivation.

The common person outside works for himself or his family, but this is already above that. The second step is to remember that we are moved by force higher than our egoistic force. If we are not working based on desire, then we are moving towards an impersonal action directed by a deeper psychic consciousness.

In the karmic results, the karmic energies are lessened in their power and manifestation. They may still return upon us but they do not have as hard an

effect. To read the Mother further, This is a wonderful phenomenon of consciousness, and quite concrete. In life you do something—whatever you do, good, bad, indifferent, it doesn't matter—whatever it may be, it immediately has a series of consequences. In fact you do it to obtain a certain result, that is why you act, with an eye to the result. For example, if I stretch out my hand like this to take the mike, I am looking for the result, you see, to

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make sounds in the mike. And there is always a consequence, always. But if you loosen the knot and let a Force coming from above — or elsewhere — act through you and make you do things, though there are consequences of your action, they don't come to you any longer, for it was not you who initiated the action, it was the Force from above. (Ibid: 71) This is a very clear explanation of karma and how to get out of it. The logic is that if we initiate the action, we reap the consequence. If someone else initiates the action, that someone else reaps the consequence. It could be good or bad. Therefore the Gita tells us not to be attached to the fruits of our actions.

We cannot be attached to the fruits of action only when we are not the initiator. Who is the initiator of the action? The higher force or the psychic force.

What happens if my psychic or a higher being is working through, me, and I feel I am only an instrument? All the fruit of the action, good, bad or whatever the consequence, is absorbed by the psychic being. I am unaffected; I walk through life unaffected with great bhakti and no circumstantial problems or hindrances. It is a simple law: if I initiate the action, I reap the consequences. If someone else does it, he reaps the consequences. The Mother explains:

And the consequences pass above, or else they are guided, willed, directed, controlled by the Force which make you act.

And you feel absolutely free, nothing comes back to you of the result of what you have done.

There are people who have had this experience — but these things come first in a flash, for a moment, and then withdraw; it is only when one is quite ready for the transformation that this comes and is established — well, some people have had this experience once, perhaps for a few seconds in their lives,

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they have had the experience, and then the movement has been withdrawn, the state of consciousness has withdrawn, but the memory remains. And they imitate that. And suppose by chance they are people who know how to make speeches, like certain gurus who have disciples to whom they teach the path. In that case, they tell them, “When it is the Divine who acts through you, and when you have loosened the knot of desire, you no longer suffer any moral or other consequences of what you do. And you can do anything, whatever: you can kill your neighbour, you can violate a woman, you can do everything the Divine wants in you—and you will never suffer any consequences.”

And indeed, they do it! They take the experience as a cloak to cover all their excesses... This is just to put you on your guard against people who pretend to be what they are not...

But as a matter of fact, the result is straightforward, for immediately they suffer the consequences of their pretences—they say they don't, but they suffer them...

Sweet Mother, do these people have powers?

Yes! There are some who have great powers. But these powers come from the vital and from an association with vital entities. There are all kinds of powers. Only, those powers don't hold out before the true divine Power—they can't resist. But over ordinary human beings they have much power...

Because sincerity is so rare a virtue in the world one ought to bow down before it with respect when one meets it. Sincerity—what we call sincerity,

that is to say, a perfect honesty and transparency: that there may be nowhere in the being anything which pretends, hides or wants to pass itself off for what it is not. (CWM 8: 72-73)

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The Mother gives great importance to sincerity; that is what we discussed when we said, ‘let us not claim that we are the Mother’s instruments because the claiming itself is insincere.

(10th October 2001)

The last section of this chapter covers the two knots of our subjection to this ignorant and divided nature, described as desire and ego-sense.

And of these two desire has its native home in the emotions and sensations and instincts and from there affects thought and volition; ego-sense lives indeed in these movements, but it casts its deep roots also in the thinking mind and its will and it is there that it becomes fully self-conscious. These are the twin obscure powers of the obsessing world-wide Ignorance that we have to enlighten and eliminate.

Desire has its home in emotions, and ego-sense has its home in the mind; those are their primary stations.

In the field of action, desire takes many forms, but the most powerful is the vital self’s craving or seeking after the fruit of our works.

Sri Aurobindo here gives us the thought of the Gita that desire has many forms, and the most obsessive one is seeking after the fruit of our works. This is why Sri Krishna always tells us to do our job and leave the fruit of works to the Divine.

The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions.

Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material,—wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. These satisfactions always

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delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, *niskama karma*.

The seeking after the fruit of works is on two levels; one is on the material level, and the other could be on the emotional-mental level. Anything, even the fulfilment of an idea, could be a desire. Fulfilment of ambition is a desire or getting any award, an honour, or anything that satisfies our ego.

Satisfaction is a word that needs to be understood; it is not just happiness, when the ego says, ‘Ah, I have done something.’

The moment we say, ‘Ah, I have...’, that is it; that is where we are attached to the fruit of our action. It can be material or emotional. He says Gita’s first rule is *niskama karma*: action is done without any desire for the fruit.

A simple rule in appearance, and yet how difficult to carry out with anything like an absolute sincerity and liberating entireness! In the greater part of our action we use the principle very little if at all, and then even mostly as a sort of counterpoise to the normal principle of desire and to mitigate the extreme action of that tyrant impulse. At best, we are satisfied if we arrive at a modified and disciplined egoism that is not too shocking to our moral sense or brutally offensive to others.

We play games with our ego. Practising *niskama karma* is simple, but it is challenging to do it in its purity. What we do is modify it; and say, ‘yes, I have achieved this ambition, and although I may be feeling the pride of it’, I

put it in brackets and say ‘by the Grace of the Mother’. This is how we modify

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the whole thing and make it palatable, so it is not too obvious that the ego is taking the satisfaction. He describes it with such wonderful psychoanalysis: “not too brutally offensive to others”

and a “disciplined egoism”. When one says, ‘I have done it with the Mother’s Grace’, it is a very slippery ground. That is why he says that doing a thing in absolute sincerity is very difficult.

All kinds of trash come into our thinking when we justify ourselves by taking just a small portion of the credit for any accomplished task.

And to our partial self-discipline we give various names and forms; we habituate ourselves by practice to the sense of duty, to a firm fidelity to principle, a stoical fortitude or a religious resignation, a quiet or an ecstatic submission to God’s will.

We give to our partial self-discipline many names like the sense of duty, fidelity to principle, religious resignation, or an ecstatic submission to God’s will. We say, ‘no, it is the Mother’s grace’, or ‘it is my submission to God’s will’, or ‘it is my duty to do this work for eight to twelve hours a day’. That kind of religious duty to a principle can also be egoistic.

But it is not these things that the Gita intends, useful though they are in their place; it aims at something absolute, unmitigated, uncompromising, a turn, an attitude that will change the whole poise of the soul. Not the mind’s control of vital impulse is its rule, but the strong immobility of an immortal spirit.

It is important to understand what the Gita asks of us; it is not the mind’s control of vital impulses by its rules but a strong immobility of an immortal spirit. This line tells us that the Gita is not telling us to control egoism or these desires mentally.

The ego is always slippery, and one cannot keep battling with

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it at every minute. Everyone has to do their work and struggle, and then if they say, 'I have done it,' it can be seen as egoism.

What is happening in life is that a negative battle is always being fought. The Gita has given us a wonderful method for fighting the negative battle with the "immobility of an immortal spirit."

Mother, I don't understand "the strong immobility of an immortal spirit".

What is it you don't understand? That an immortal spirit has a strong immobility? It says what it means. An immortal spirit is necessarily immobile and strong, by the very fact of its being immortal.

This is as clear as daylight. The Gita demands the strong immobility of an immortal spirit—all the rest is secondary.

The Gita wants the spirit to be conscious of its immortality and thus have strong immobility...

But you see, no explanation can give you that; you must have the experience. As long as one has not had the experience, one can't understand what this means... And it is the same for everything: the head, the little brain, cannot understand. The minute one has the experience; one understands—not before. One may have an imaginative idea, but this is not understanding. To understand, one must live it.

When you become conscious of your immortal spirit, you will know its strong immobility—but not before. Otherwise, these are mere words...

And there is a very small superficial application of this which you may understand. Someone comes and insults you or says unpleasant things to you; if you begin to vibrate in unison with their anger or this ill will, you

feel pretty weak and powerless and usually make a fool of yourself. But if you manage to keep within yourself, especially in your

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head, complete immobility, which refuses to receive these vibrations, then at the same time, you feel great strength, and the other person cannot disturb you. If you remain very quiet, even physically, and when violence is directed at you, you can remain very quiet, very silent, very still; that has a power not only over you but also the other person. If you don't have all these vibrations of inner response, if you can remain absolutely immobile within yourself, everywhere, this has an almost immediate effect on the other person.

That gives you an idea of the power of immobility. And it is a widespread fact which can occur every day; it is not a significant event of spiritual life; it is something of the outer, material life.

There is a tremendous power in immobility; mental immobility, sensorial immobility, physical immobility. If you can remain like a wall, absolutely motionless, everything the other person sends you will immediately fall back upon him.

And it has an immediate action. It can stop the arm of the assassin, you understand, it has that strength. Only, one must not just appear to be immobile and yet be boiling inside!

That's not what I mean. I mean an integral immobility. (CWM

8: 66-68)

Now we will connect it to the Gita. It is not this negative battle, but keeping this inner poise. This inner poise of the immobile spirit is nothing but psychic consciousness.

If there is a touch of psychic consciousness, then alone we can be quiet, calm, peaceful, and immobile. Being Immobile is not the opposite of mobility. As the Mother says, we may be immobile physically, sitting

straight and not moving, yet our mind might be disturbed; we must have integral immobility.

Everything in me must be quiet, even if someone attacks or

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insults me. How can I become that integral immobile? Nothing can work except psychic contact. We all know how rare it is to be stationed in the psychic. However, with a repeated experience of the psychic connection—once, twice, thrice—we begin to get the taste of it, which we can recall. When there is a moment of anger in oneself, once we have experienced that taste of motionlessness, like a flame standing still, we can take shelter in that feeling. At least momentarily, we can recall that quietness and calmness. It may be far from being that integral immobility the Mother describes. Still, for us beginners, even recalling a memory of that quietness could be a first barrier to external attacks on the ego.

The test it lays down is an absolute equality of the mind and the heart to all results, to all reactions, to all happenings. If good fortune and ill fortune, if respect and insult, if reputation and obloquy, if victory and defeat, if pleasant event and sorrowful event leave us not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature, then we have the absolute liberation to which the Gita points us, but not otherwise. The tiniest reaction is a proof that the discipline is imperfect and that some part of us accepts ignorance and bondage as its law and clings still to the old nature. Our self-conquest is only partially accomplished; it is still imperfect or unreal in some stretch or part or smallest spot of the ground of our nature. And that little pebble of imperfection may throw down the whole achievement of the Yoga!

There are certain semblances of an equal spirit that must not be mistaken for the profound and vast spiritual equality

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the Gita teaches. There is an equality of disappointed resignation, an equality of pride, an equality of hardness and indifference: all these are egoistic in their nature.

See what a close analysis it is! In Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, there are letters in which sadhaks have written that they felt equality and were not touched by some event; however, Sri Aurobindo would explain that there are different kinds of equality. It can even come out of pride because we consider ourselves to be of a higher society, so we are not bothered about what is happening on a more everyday level of society.

There is an equanimity of hardness and indifference. Some people have suffered a lot and say it is normal, so don't be overly bothered by it. There is also a disappointing resignation in which we see no way out and do nothing. These are different forms of ego; it is not true equanimity.

Inevitably they come in the course of the sadhana, but they must be rejected or transformed into the true quietude.

There is too, on a higher level, the equality of the stoic, the equality of a devout resignation or a sage detachment, the equality of a soul aloof from the world and indifferent to its doings. These too are insufficient; first approaches they can be, but they are at most early soul-phases only or imperfect mental preparations for our entry into the true and absolute self-existent wide evenness of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo embraces the equality of the stoic and the sage.

He says these are steps on the way. He doesn't say, 'these are foolish' or 'don't have the equality of the sage'. He embraces these experiences, gives them their proper position, and refers to them as early soul phases. It is not wrong if we have sage-like indifference; however, it is not enough. We all started by crawling; no one started walking in one go.

He says let it be there; at least you have started crawling; one day, you will start walking.

It is certain that so great a result cannot be arrived at immediately without any previous stages. At first we have to learn to bear the shocks of the world with the central part of our being untouched and silent, even when the surface mind, heart, life are strongly shaken; unmoved there on the bedrock of our life, we must separate the soul watching behind or immune deep within from these outer workings of our nature.

First we have to learn to bear the shocks of the world. Evil and sorrow are here in the world; they are the training grounds for our onward march. This travail, this struggle helps us in our birth into the spiritual life; we must learn to bear all these shocks. The central part of our being must remain untouched.

Externally you feel the difficulty, but inwardly you must stay untouched. This can be described as a parallel existence of a steadfast soul detached from its outer instruments of mind, life and body. I am sure we have all passed through this experience in which we felt unmoved deep within while the surface mind and heart were vigorously shaken. From that inner poise of the soul, or as he says, “unmoved there on the bedrock of our life, we must separate the soul watching behind or immune deep within from these outer workings of our nature.”

Afterwards, extending this calm and steadfastness of the detached soul to its instruments, it will become slowly possible to radiate peace from the luminous centre to the darker peripheries.

I want to emphasise that sometimes the thought in *The Synthesis of Yoga* is simple, but the experiences are difficult; when reading this book, we should constantly refer to our experiences, and then there is a greater joy in reading it. Doing this it brings

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out the experiential clarity of this book. In *The Life Divine*, there is conceptual clarity, but in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, there is experiential clarity.

He says that establishing this experience will help us radiate peace to the outer mind, life and body.

In this process we may take the passing help of many minor phases; a certain stoicism, a certain calm philosophy, a certain religious exaltation may help us towards some nearness to our aim, or we may call in even less strong and exalted but still useful powers of our mental nature. In the end we must either discard or transform them and arrive instead at an entire equality, a perfect self-existent peace within and even, if we can, a total unassailable, self-poised and spontaneous delight in all our members.

In this experience of parallel living, you can take the help of religious exaltation or some philosophies. This is where Sankhya's philosophy can come to our help. We have said it is a help on the way, not the end; for Sri Aurobindo, it cannot be the ultimate. He says that you may take the help of a calm philosophy, which will help us towards the nearness of your aim.

The Sankhya philosophy is the inner Purusha watching the outer Prakriti. When he says the central part of our being is unmoved, it is precisely the Purusha who is untouched and unmoved. If we know this philosophy, we can immediately draw back on it and suggest to ourselves not to get attached, saying, 'let me be in that Purusha consciousness'.

But how, then shall we continue to act at all?

That is also an issue that must be dealt with. How do I act if I have this absolute equality such that my inner being is not touched, and I have no motive, no desire, no wanting the fruit of my works? What can be the motivation behind my work if it is not name, fame, wealth, etc., because we usually act out of desire?

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For ordinarily the human being acts because he has a desire or feels a mental, vital or physical want or need; he is driven by the necessities of the body, by the lust of riches, honours or fame, or by a craving for the personal

satisfactions of the mind or the heart or a craving for power or pleasure. Or he is seized and pushed about by a moral need or, at least, the desire to make his ideas, his ideals, his will, his party, his country, his gods prevail in the world. If none of these desires nor any other must be the spring of our action, it would seem as if all incentive or motive power had been removed and action itself must necessarily cease.

The Gita replies with its third great secret of the divine life.

All action must be done in a more and more Godward and finally a God-possessed consciousness; our works must be a sacrifice to the Divine and in the end a surrender of all our being, mind, will, heart, sense, life and body to the One must make God-love and God-service our only motive.

This transformation of the motive force and very character of works is indeed its master idea; it is the foundation of its unique synthesis of works, love and knowledge. In the end not desire, but the consciously felt will of the Eternal remains as the sole driver of our action and the sole originator of its initiative.

Number one, we must renounce all desire for the fruit of our works. We know that desire is there on every level—

for your country, your personal ideals, your ambitions and even your guru—for anything, there can be the incentive of desire. Even serving your master can be a desire. Desire is almost as universal as the breath we take. So how, if at all, can we get rid of desire? The Gita gives us this final answer: all action must be done in a more and more Godward and

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finally God-possessed consciousness. I think this is the central masterpiece of the Gita. We may not be able to renounce desire; renouncing desire is almost like stopping our own breath. So it says: “turn Godward”.

Sri Aurobindo has described that we are normally seized and pushed by the lust for riches, honours or fame, or a craving for personal satisfactions of the mind or the heart, or by a craving for power or pleasure. Or we are

seized and pushed by moral needs or by the desire to make our ideas, our ideals, our will, our party, our country or our gods prevail in the world. He says this should all be orientated towards God. The Gita has yet to really take away the plank from under our feet. If we removed that plank by taking away all desires, we would fall or no body would act at all; we would become sannyasins. This was done by the illusionists who said, “Remove all action to remove all desire”.

The Gita masterfully tells us to keep on to the plank, keep our desires, ambitions, works, and ideals, all that is giving you your motivation now; the only thing is to turn it Godward. That means to offer it to the Divine. That is so beautiful and simple.

Offer every breath; we breathe, taking in the Mother’s name, and with every breath, we throw out, we say, ‘it is an offering to Thee.’ Where is the difficulty? We have kept our entire life; almost all the desires are still there; the only difference is that instead of directing them towards the ego, we change the direction of the axis (which was towards me) towards the Divine. That is the beginning. It is through this process that we will become God-possessed.

This is not an overnight change. We can start by saying, ‘O

Mother; it is for thee. All that is mine, is for Thee, Thee, Thee’.

Just turn the tables, as it is said, and you keep turning them

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each time. Don’t say ‘I want to be egoless’ each time, because that would be a negative battle. However, each time we can say, ‘it is for Thee, it is for Thee’. Through this kind of conscious mantra, ‘It is for Thee’, one day we will be possessed by the Divine. Once one is God-possessed, there is only the will of the Eternal in us, who remains the sole originator and driver of our actions. This is the wonderful simple secret of the seven hundred verses

of the Gita and an explanation of the renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works. How do we renounce? By offering our works.

The most extraordinary and simple word is “Godward”. The Gita says to abandon all dharmas, but it is not the dharmas of the higher level, it is the dharmas of the lower levels. The first step is to turn all our desires, ambitions, and egos towards the Divine. The second step we will grow into, we don’t have to aspire for it; slowly we will grow into the God-consciousness.

Do not say that in the first stage I will be the doer and in the second stage I will be the instrument. When we are God-possessed we automatically become the instrument of God.

There again, let us not claim anything, because we never know; there could be one part of me that is the instrument of the Divine and the other three-fourths of me are parts of the devil.

Let us not claim anything. The last step is God-possession, then we realise that it is God alone who is the doer, who is the actor, as well as the action. Then the consciousness of the ‘I’ vanishes.

So he concludes: “Equality, renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works, action done as a sacrifice to the supreme Lord of our nature and of all nature,—these are the three first Godward approaches in the Gita’s way of Karmayoga.”

Mother, is this the same as the equality of soul Sri Aurobindo has spoken about?

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Equality of soul is a way. It is a means, it is a way—it can be a goal also. But it is not the consummation.

For example, there are those who say, who profess that everything that happens is the expression of the divine Will (I spoke about this last time, I think), there is an entire way of looking at life, understanding life, which is

like that, which says, “All that is, the world as it is, all that happens, is the expression of the divine Will; therefore wisdom wants us if we want to be in relation with the Divine, to accept without flinching and without the slightest emotion or reaction all that happens, since it is the expression of the divine Will, and it is understood that we should bow down before it.”

This is a conception which tends precisely to help people to acquire this equality of soul. But if you adopt this idea without adopting its opposite and synthesising, naturally, you have only to sit through life and do nothing—or, in any case, never try to make the world progress. (CWM 8: 68) With this clarification from the Mother about equality, we came to the end of this chapter. It has been a chapter that has brought us basic definitions of some of the very important concepts and practices in the Integral Yoga.

(17th October 2001)

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