

THE WHITE LOTUS

At the feet of the Mother



RAVINDRA


About the Book

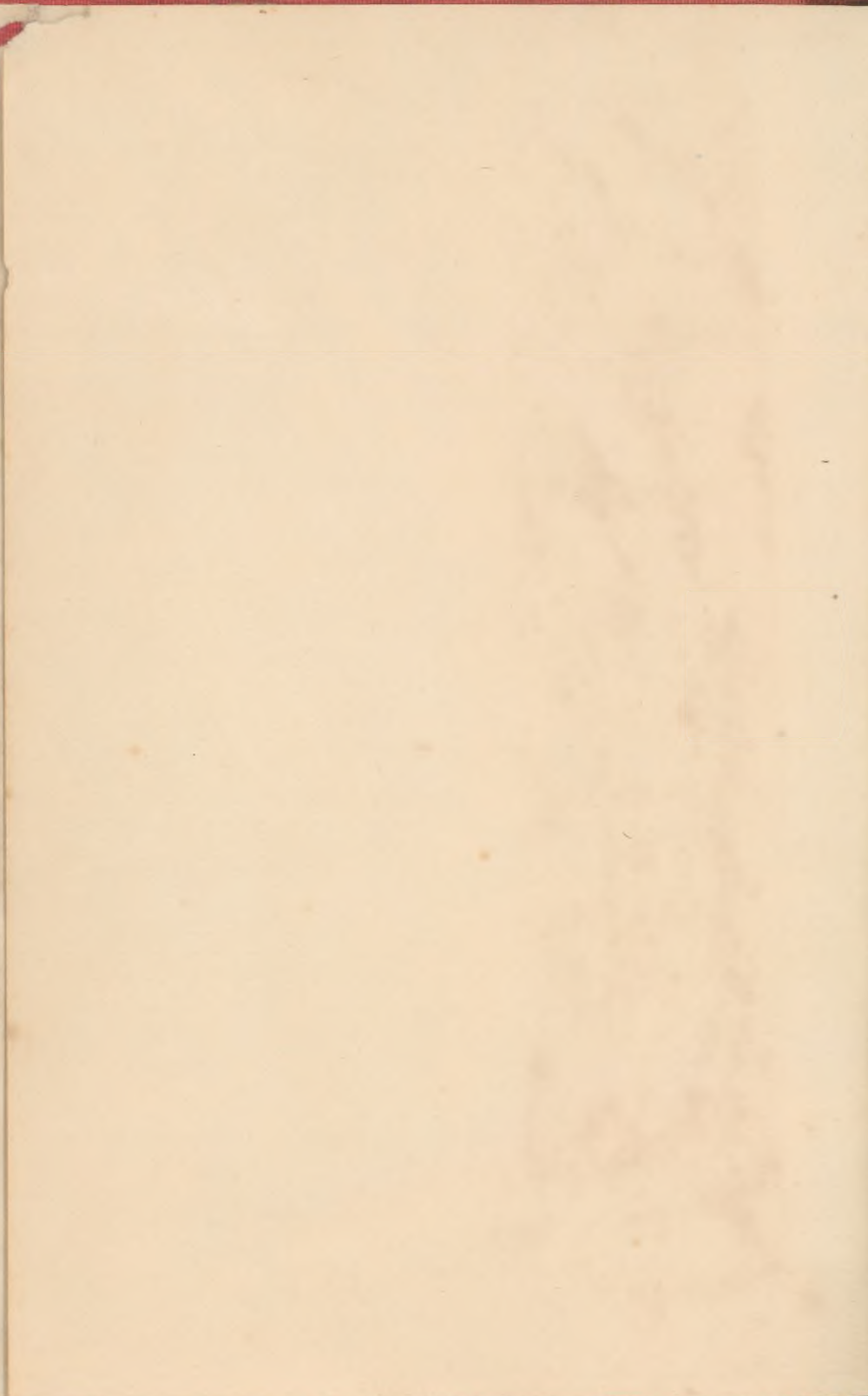
The white lotus is the symbol of Aditi, the Divine Mother, whose Consciousness is pure, immaculate and gloriously powerful. This lotus stands for the Mother's Consciousness.

The White Lotus is the story of the life and teachings of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Yet her life can hardly be described by any book, for it was not lived on the surface. Her life was like the ocean, unfathomable in its depth and mystery, which one can know only by becoming one with it.

The author writes in a simple and straightforward style, using the Mother's own words as often as possible. What emerges is a clear and candid impression of the Mother and of her thought and works. Yet she was, and still is, so many things to so many people that no single account will ever convey a complete and adequate image of her life.

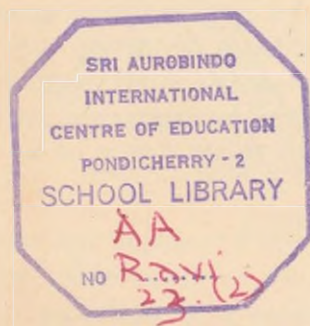
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THE
WHITE LOTUS
AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER

Ravindra



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PREFACE

AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

The fifteenth of August is celebrated throughout the length and breadth of India as the national Independence Day. For the disciples and followers of Sri Aurobindo, it has another, more sacred significance. It was on this day that Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872, and as a very interesting coincidence, it was Sri Krishna's birthday also.

In 1954, as in other years, August 15 was being celebrated at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram with a special serenity. The whole atmosphere was charged with an intense devotional attitude, fervour and delight. This year there was another extraordinary factor which filled the atmosphere with a mysterious expectancy. Everybody was thrilled, everybody was looking forward to the hour of meditation in the playground.

At dusk the playground was a sea of human beings. All its nooks and corners were occupied by men, women and children. You could not throw a pebble without its falling on some head or other. Here and there, in the midst of the crowd were standing powerful loudspeakers; all attention, they were eager not to miss a single sound that they were expected to carry.

Just at the appointed time appeared a slim feminine figure from a room-nearby. One wondered whether it was a human figure or it was moonlight in a condensed human form. As soon as she took the chair, the atmosphere of solid silence and serenity began to resound with her voice;

I want to mark this day by the expression of a long cherished wish; that of becoming an Indian citizen. From the first time I came to India—in 1914—I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free. But I had to wait still longer because of my heavy responsibilities for the Ashram here in Pondicherry. Now the time has come when I can declare myself.

But in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution. So I hope I shall be allowed to adopt a double nationality, that is to say, to remain French while I become an Indian.

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two; on the contrary, they combine very well and complete one another. I know also I can be of service to both equally, for my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching, and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine Unity upon earth through an organized and harmonious diversity.¹

The words stopped as suddenly as they had come. One could feel the living silence pulsating in the atmosphere.

At a time when nationalism was having its sway everywhere, when even a person from an adjoining country was considered an alien, if not a down-right enemy, someone was dreaming of a dual nationality. The crushing circumstances of the World War could not bring England and France together; yet here was someone who was dreaming of a dual nationality between two nations that were poles apart. If accepted this would bring an era of harmony between the East and the West, between the wisdom of ancient India and the practical sense of France. Was humanity ready for such a great step? Even to dream about such a step required extraordinary courage.

Who was she? It was she whom Sri Aurobindo called the Mother, whom all the followers of Sri Aurobindo regard as their Divine Mother. It is she about whom Sri Aurobindo says :

The Mother comes in order to bring down the Supramental and it is the descent which makes her full manifestation here possible.²

Though Sri Aurobindo declared the truth of her descent, she herself never gave great importance to her life. She was humility incarnate. On her 80th birthday, she was requested to narrate some reminiscences on the All India Radio. All that she would agree to say was :

The reminiscences will be short.

I came to India to meet Sri Aurobindo. I remained in India to live with Sri Aurobindo. When he left his body, I continued to live here in order to do his work which is, by serving the Truth and enlightening mankind, to hasten the rule of the Divine's Love upon earth.³

On another occasion when some disciples were very eager to know something about her life, she said that her outward life had no importance at all, that her body did not want to be spoken of, it would prefer to be ignored :

Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body; they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention.

Throughout all this life, knowingly or unknowingly, I have been what the Lord wanted me to be, I have done what the Lord wanted me to do. That alone matters.⁴

This reminds us of a similar reply of Sri Aurobindo where he says :

I see that you have persisted in giving a biography—is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is

bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.

The same applies to Mother, perhaps to a greater degree.

RAVINDRA

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Permit sweet Mother that we may be
Now and for ever more
Thy simple children loving Thee
More and still more.

*

I have a sweet little Mother
Who lives in my heart,
We are so happy together
That we shall never part.

(Written by the Mother)



Mother as a child—1886



Mother in France—1896



Vision



Mahalakshmi



Mother and Sri Aurobindo—Darshan Day, 1950



Descend upon earth, O Supreme Beauty !

CHAPTER 1

A FLAME IS BORN

The Mother was born on 21st February, 1878, in Paris. As far as educational, artistic and cultural activities were concerned, France could claim the highest position in the whole of the civilised world. French culture, French language and French refinement were regarded as the best. What France could not offer to the higher values of Western life did not exist anywhere else.

Mother often used to say that although she was born and brought up in France, she was not a European. Her ancestors had come to France from the ancient land of Egypt. They were connected with the royal family of Egypt. She had Arab and Turkish blood in her veins. Her father, M. Maurice Alfassa, was a banker of the higher middle class. Her Mother, Matilda, was a very cultured, very well-disciplined lady with modern ideas. The Alfassas had two children. The elder one was Matteo, who was later the governor in French-African colonies and served in high positions in the French foreign office. The younger one was a daughter—Mirra—who later came to be known as the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo has said that even in her childhood Mother was not of the ordinary human level. She was much higher. We have a glimpse of her extra-ordinary personality through a letter in which she speaks of the thoughts and problems that pre-occupied her mind when she was only five :

You have never thought about it? You have never looked into yourself to see what effect you exercise upon yourself? Never thought over it?... Never tried to understand how you feel?... Never sought to understand how, for example, decisions take place in you? From where do they come? What makes you decide one thing rather than another? And what is the relation between a decision of yours and your action? And to what extent do you have the freedom of choice between one thing and another? And how far do you feel you are able to, you are free to do this or that or that other or nothing at all?... You have pondered over that?... I was preoccupied with that when I was a child of five!...

This happened to me... I was five or six or seven years old and I had a father who loved the circus, and he came and told me: "Come with me, I am going to the circus on Sunday." I said: "No, I am doing something more interesting than going to the circus!" Or again, young friends invited me to attend a meeting where we were to play together, enjoy together: "No, I enjoy here much more..." And it was quite sincere. It was not a pose: for me, it was like this, it was true. There was nothing in the world more enjoyable than that.¹

Generally parents spoil their children with too much pampering. Mirra's mother was not of this kind. She gave them all her love but kept an eye on discipline and good habits also. Once she had prepared a certain dish. The children did not relish it and declared that they would not eat it. Their mother explained to them that it was good for their health, that food was meant for the nutrition and not for taste. The children did not agree. They insisted on not eating it.

At last their mother gave her decision, "This is the only food that I have, eat it if you like, otherwise go without it." The children protested for some time but could not resist the pangs of hunger and ate the food. At such a

young age they were taught not to give too much importance to taste.

Long before learning the alphabet Mirra had started meditating. At the tender age of 4 when the world of wisdom had not dawned for her, she knew that she had come upon earth with some special mission, that she had come to do something, the parallel of which had never been tried by anybody, which would effect the whole world. While sitting quiet, without knowing in so many words that she was meditating, she would see floods of light descending upon her and entering her being. This is a rare phenomenon even for great yogis.

Little Mirra always remained extremely serious. Unlike other children of her age she did not take interest in mischief-making or any kind of frivolity. One day her mother asked her for the reason and remarked, "It seems you are carrying the burden of the whole earth."

Mirra replied in just one word and said, "Yes." Little did her mother know the significance of this "yes". It had volumes of words hidden in it.

Mirra's father was a strict disciplinarian who did not believe in sparing the rod. Mirra's elder brother, Matteo, often fell victim to the cane. Whenever he would come home late at night he would get a good thrashing. Mirra did not like it.

One evening, when her brother was being punished, the solemn royal figure of Mirra entered the room and announced to her father in a commanding tone, "If he is beaten again, I will leave your house and go away."

And that was the last beating in that house. The father could not defy the orders of the six-year-old princess!

Until the age of seven Mirra had not learnt even the alphabet. One day she was walking with her brother when a big signboard attracted her attention. She asked her

brother what it said. He began to ridicule her for not being able to read even that much. Mirra was hurt. And so she began to study. It was a matter of touch and go. She was admitted to a school. In a very short time she stood first in her class and won many of the first prizes in that class. It appeared as if all were predestined for her.

In her childhood as well as later in life, Mirra felt a deep kinship with Nature. She once said :

When I was about 12, I frequently went to the famous forest of Fontainebleau near Paris for a solitary walk. It was a very old forest, where there were trees that were even 2,000 years old. I would sit quietly under a tree, going deep into meditation. At that time often I felt a close intimacy with these trees that gave me great joy. My consciousness came into communion with these trees, and even the birds and squirrels from them would come down very close to me and fearlessly run across my body in a playful mood. You can also have the same kind of experience if you make the habit of it. Just sit under a tree in solitude, resting your back on its trunk and keep quiet, you will gradually begin to feel the tree's life-vibrations and its consciousness. You will also find that they like to make friends with us human beings; they too have their affection, their sympathy and they are open-hearted enough to give us shelter. Obviously they can feel in their own way. Once there was a talk of cutting down an old tree, and when I went under this tree, I distinctly felt that the tree had become aware of its danger and was soliciting me to anyhow stop this cruelty.²

This kinship with nature gave her an extra-ordinary insight into the inner conditions of the animals. Speaking about her childhood one day, she said :

In Paris there is a garden called "The Garden of Plants": there are animals there also, as well as plants. They had just received a magnificent lion. It was of course in a cage. And it was furious.

There was a door in the cage behind which it could hide. And it would hide itself just when the visitors came to see it! I saw that and one day I went up to the cage and began speaking to it (animals are very sensitive to spoken language, they really listen). I began speaking softly to my lion, I said to it, "Oh! how handsome you are, what a pity that you are hiding yourself like this, how much we would like to see you..." Well, it listened. Then, little by little, it looked at me askance, slowly stretched its neck to see me better; later it brought out its paw and, finally, put the tip of its nose against the bars as if saying, "At last, here's someone who understands me!"²⁸

CHAPTER 2

THE EVENTFUL NIGHTS

Generally we are quite unconscious of our sleep. We go into some deep dark corner and we can recall nothing when we wake up. But the mind does not sleep. It remains active throughout the night although our waking condition does not keep any link with it.

There are different kinds of sleep. Sometimes we get up heavy and dead tired. Sometimes we remember but a few disconnected events of our waking condition during the night. Our hopes and despairs, our great expectations and dismays are written large in our dreams. Sometimes we get an inkling of the future and sometimes we have dreadful nightmares. We are well acquainted with these night activities.

But Mirra was no ordinary person. Between the age of eleven and thirteen she used to have very special spiritual experiences. It was during that period that she could realise the Divine. Not only that, she could see that the Divine Consciousness could be brought down upon the earth, in our active life.

During her sleep she used to meet many spiritual beings and great teachers, who would tell her many secrets of the past, present and future. She met some of them in actual life. It was during that period, when she did not know much about India or the saga of Indian life and literature, that often she would see a person whom she called Krishna. She was told that India would be the field

of her future action. Much later, in 1914, when she met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, she realized that it was none other than he who came to her and whom she called Krishna.

Let us hear from Mother about one of her dreams at the age of 13 :

When I was a child—about the age of 13 and for about a year—every night as I was in bed, it seemed to me that I came out of my body and rose straight up above the town, very high. I saw myself then clad in a magnificent golden robe, longer than myself and as I rose, the robe lengthened, spreading in a circle around me to form, as it were, an immense roof over the town. Then I would see coming out from all sides, men, women, children, old men, sick men, unhappy men; they gathered under the outspread robe imploring help, recounting their miseries, their sufferings, their pains. In reply, the robe, supple and living, stretched out to them individually, and as soon as they touched it, they were consoled and healed and entered back into their body happier and stronger than they had ever been before coming out of it. Nothing appeared to me more beautiful, nothing made me more happy; and all the activities of the day seemed to me dull and colourless, without real life, in comparison with this activity of the night which was for me the true life. Often as I thus rose, I would see on my left an old man, silent and immobile, who looked at me with a benevolent expression and encouraged me by his presence. This old man, dressed in a long robe of sombre violet was the personification—I knew later—of him who is called the Man of Sorrows.¹

Later, speaking to someone she said about the possibility of controlling one's dreams :

There are children who know how to do this, they continue their dreams. Every evening when they go to bed they return to the same place and continue their dream...

Nothing is more interesting. It is a most pleasant way of passing the nights. You begin a story, then, when it is time to wake up, you put a full stop to the last sentence and come back into your body. And then the following night you start off again, reopen the page and resume your story during the whole time you are out; and then you arrange things well—they must be well arranged, it must be very beautiful. And when it is time to come back, you put a full stop once again and tell those things, "Stay very quiet till I return!" And you come back into your body. And you continue this every evening and write a book of wonderful fairy-tales—provided you remember them when you wake up...

When I was small I used to call this "telling stories to oneself." It is not at all a telling with words, in one's head: it is a going away to this place which is fresh and pure, and... building up a wonderful story there. And if you know how to tell yourself a story in this way, and if it is truly beautiful, truly harmonious, truly powerful and well coordinated, this story will be realised in your life—perhaps not exactly in the form in which you created it, but as a more or less changed physical expression of what you made.

That may take years, perhaps, but your story will tend to organise your life.

But there are very few people who know how to tell a beautiful story; and then they always mix horrors in it, which they regret later.

If one could create a magnificent story without any horror in it, nothing but beauty, it would have a **considerable** influence on everyone's life. And **this** is what people don't know."

CHAPTER 3

THE FLAME GROWS

Mirra was a very brilliant student. We find that generally those who are good at language are weak in mathematics. In the later days Mother used to say that if one knew how to concentrate one could master any subject at will. Long before putting this in so many words Mirra illustrated it in her own life. She was quite at home in any and every subject that she took up.

From an early age she had a good command over the French language. Here is the English rendering of an essay written by her in French at the age of fifteen :

THE PATH OF LATER ON

**"The path of Later-on and the road of Tomorrow
lead only to the castle of Nothing-at-all."**

By the wayside, many-coloured flowers delight the eye, red berries gleam on small trees with knotty branches, and in the distance a brilliant sun shines gold upon the ripe corn.

A young traveller is walking briskly along, happily breathing in the pure morning air; he seems joyful, without a care for the future. The way he is following comes to a cross-roads, where innumerable paths branch off in all directions.

Everywhere the young man can see criss-crossing foot-prints. The sun shines ever bright in the sky; the birds are singing in the trees; the day promises to be very beautiful. Without thinking, the

traveller takes the path that is nearest to him, which seems, after all, quite practicable; it occurs to him for a moment that he could have chosen another way; but there will always be time to retrace his steps if the path he has taken leads nowhere. A voice seems to tell him, "Turn back, turn back, turn back, you are not on the right road." But everything around him is charming and delightful. What should he do? He does not know. He goes on without taking any decision; he enjoys the pleasures of the moment. "In a little while," he replies to the voice, "in a little while I shall think; I have plenty of time." The wild grasses around him whisper in his ear, "Later." Later, yes, later. Ah, how pleasant it is to breathe the scented breeze, while the sun warms the air with its fiery rays. Later, later. And the traveller walks on; the path widens. Voices are heard from afar, "Where are you going? Poor fool, don't you see that you are heading for your ruin; you are young: come, come to us, to the beautiful, the good, the true; do not be misled by indolence and weaknesses; do not fall asleep in the present; come to the future."—"Later, later," the traveller answers these unwelcome voices. The flowers smile at him and echo, "Later." The path becomes wider and wider. The sun has reached its zenith; it is a glorious day. The path becomes a road.

The road is white and dusty, bordered with slender birch-trees; the soft purling of a little stream is heard; but in vain he looks in every direction, he sees no end to this interminable road.

The young man, feeling a secret unease, cries, "Where am I? Where am I going? What does it matter? Why think, why act? Let us drift along on this endless road; let us walk on, I shall think to-morrow."

The small trees have disappeared; oak-trees line the road; a gully runs on either side. The traveller feels no weariness; he is borne along as if in a delirium.

The gully becomes deeper; the oaks give way to fir-trees; the sun begins to go down. In a daze, the traveller looks all around him; he sees human figures rolling into the ravine, clutching at the fir-trees, the sheer rocks, roots jutting from the ground; some of them are making great efforts to climb out; but as they come near to the edge, they turn their heads and let themselves fall back.

Hollow voices cry out to the traveller, "Flee this place; go back to the cross-roads; there is still time." The young man hesitates, then replies, "Tomorrow." He covers his face with his hands so as not to see the bodies rolling into the ravine, and runs along the road, drawn on by an irresistible urge to go forward; he no longer wonders whether he will find a way out. With furrowed brow and clothes in disorder, he runs on in desperation. At last, thinking himself far away from the accursed place, he opens his eyes: there are no more fir-trees; all around are barren stones and grey dust. The sun has disappeared beyond the horizon, the night is coming on. The road has lost itself in an endless desert. The desperate traveller, worn out by his long run, wants to stop, but he must walk on. All around him is ruin; he hears stifled cries; his feet stumble on skeletons. In the distance, the thick mist takes on terrifying shapes; black forms loom up; something huge and misshapen suggests itself. The traveller flies rather than walks towards the goal he senses and which seems to flee from him; wild cries direct his steps; he brushes against phantoms.

At last he sees before him a huge edifice, dark, desolate, gloomy, a castle to make one say with a shudder: "A haunted castle." But the young man pays no attention to the bleakness of the place; these great black walls make no impression on him; he hardly trembles as he stands on the dusty ground, at the sight of these formidable towers; he thinks only that the goal is reached, he forgets his weariness and discouragement. As he approaches the castle, he brushes against a wall, and the wall crumbles; instantly everything collapses around him; towers,

battlements, walls have vanished, sinking into dust, which is added to the dust already covering the ground.

Owls, crows and bats fly out in all directions, screeching and circling around the head of the poor traveller who, dazed, downcast, overwhelmed, stands rooted to the spot, unable to move; suddenly, horror of horrors, he sees rising up before him terrible phantoms who bear the names of Desolation, Despair, Weariness with life, and amidst the ruins he even glimpses Suicide, pallid and dismal above a bottomless gulf. All these malignant spirits surround him, clutch him, propel him towards the yawning chasm. The poor youth tries to resist this irresistible force, he wants to draw back, to flee, to tear himself away from all these invisible arms entwining and claspings him; but it is too late; he moves on towards the fatal abyss; he feels drawn, hypnotised by it. He calls out; no voice answers to his cries; he grasps at the phantoms, everything gives way beneath him; with haggard eyes he scans the void, he calls out, he implores; the macabre laughter of Evil rings out at last.

The traveller is on the edge of the gulf; all his efforts were in vain; after a supreme struggle he falls ... from his bed.

A young student had a long essay to prepare for the following morning; a little tired by his day's work, he had said to himself as he arrived home, "I shall work later." Soon afterwards he thought that if he went to bed early, he could get up early, the next morning and quickly finish his task. "Let's go to bed," he said to himself, "I shall work better tomorrow; I shall sleep on it." He did not know how truly he spoke. His sleep was troubled by the terrible nightmare we have described, and his fall awoke him with a start. Thinking over what he had dreamt, he exclaimed, "But it's quite clear: the path is called the path of 'later on', the road is the road of 'tomorrow' and the great building, the castle of 'nothing at all'." Elated at his cleverness, he set to work, vowing to himself that he would never put off until tomorrow what he could do today.¹

Here are the comments of her teacher: "The idea of this composition is original and ingenious, and so is its execution. The narrative is well handled; the images succeed each other in a skilfully contrived gradation of increasing horror. The style is frequently excellent.

"Altogether, this is an outstanding composition, which deserves not only the mark 'very good', but congratulations into the bargain."

An Artist: When she was about 14, Mirra started learning painting and music. It did not take her long to become a good artist and musician. She studied at the world famous institute Ecole des Beaux Arts. In those days Paris was the Mecca of all the western artists. Mirra got an opportunity of coming into contact with some of the most well-known artists of the age. Her paintings were exhibited in some of the best art exhibitions. There was a time when she was spending about six to seven hours daily on painting and another six to seven hours a day on music. She learnt both vocal and instrumental music. When she practised crowds used to collect near her house to listen to her.

Mirra was one of the youngest students of the school but she was recognised as the most serious, most responsible and just girl. They called her the princess. Whenever there was any trouble amongst the students they went to her for a just settlement. Referring to those days the Mother remarked one day about falsehood in art:

If there is not this deliberate falsehood there is what the story of a very well-known painter reveals. I knew him very well. For I was doing painting at that time and practically lived among the painters, all the well-known artists of the epoch. Now this painter was a very fine artist with a genuine inspiration and a remarkable technique; some of his works have become world-famous. He was painting at his very best, but he was extremely poor, to the extent of almost starving. For his paintings were not in

vogue and did not sell. Dealers came, saw and went away; they were not pleased with his work. And yet the paintings were really good. So in those hard days, a dealer came at last to have a look at his works. He examined them all one by one and rejected them wholesale. As he was turning back and going away disappointed his eyes fell suddenly upon a canvas lying in a corner and he exclaimed: "There, there's the thing I wanted. There is the masterpiece. How much you want for it? I shall take it." What was this great painting? It was a canvas on which the painter used to lay his paint scrapings! The dealer asked him to do more of such things and promised to buy the whole lot of them. Here was new painting and a genius! What else the poor artist do but obey his master, the merchant; for he too had to live."

Once there was some trouble between the boys and the girls of the school. The frightened girls shut themselves in a hall and the boys surrounded them from outside. Mirra never had any kind of acquaintance with fear. Mirra did not care to listen to the pleadings of the terror-stricken girls and with an umbrella in hand went out of the hall. Addressing the crowd of unruly boys she said, "Let me pass." And lo! the boys divided themselves in two rows as if they were standing at attention to salute their princess. Mirra walked out as if nothing had happened.

In later years Mirra often received complaints from the girls about boys teasing them. She always said if a girl is truly strong, if she is not coquettish, if she does not enjoy being teased, even in a subtle way, the boys can never do any mischief against her. It is the weakness of character and a sort of unhealthy pleasure in being the centre of attraction, on the part of the girls, that encourages boys to misbehave.

She used to say that in the above-mentioned incident she did not use any occult power. A girl with a strong will power can get similar results.

Mirra herself was very beautiful and attractive, her heart was as soft as butter. Everything in and about her was soft and sweet. Still she could remain quite untouched in a romantic city like Paris. Using her own example she would tell the girls that they should be able to do what she did. In spite of being soft as butter they could be hard as steel if need be.

It is a common fallacy that artists are of loose character and that those who aspire for a higher life should not indulge in arts, music, dancing, etc. We find a contradiction of this fallacy in the artists of Ajanta, in musicians like Haridas, Thyagayya and in dancers like Mira Bai.

According to Mother an artist can express his relation with the Divine through his art. If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, art is not very different from Yoga.

She studied dramatics also. Her artistic talents did not go unrecognised and she was invited to join the well-known Comedie Francaise. Naturally she could not oblige them. The aim of her arts and music was quite different. In 1933 Sri Aurobindo wrote :

Mother, of course, does not play for the sake of a technical musical effect, but to bring down something from the higher planes and that anyone can receive who is open.

In another letter he says that one understands Mother's music "by becoming inwardly silent, opening within and getting the spontaneous feeling of what is in the music."

And this receptivity was true for Mirra almost from the very beginning.

CHAPTER 4

OCCULT KNOWLEDGE

Man has made tremendous progress in the last two centuries. He has split the atom and he has stepped upon the moon. He is bringing home news from the various stars. All this is very good and has its own importance but it has its own limits also. He has not yet been able to know even the fourth dimension and the Yogis say that there are many more. He has not yet gone beyond heat, light, magnetism and electricity, although there are innumerable subtle forces working upon this earth.

There is an atmosphere much more subtle than the one that we know and it is full of an infinite number of forces big and small, some of them friendly and some hostile to mankind. These forces exercise a great influence upon our world. Among the lower species of life are innumerable types of beings under the microscope, some pleasant and others dreadful. All of them represent the subtle forces of the vital world. Amongst these subtle some are divine and others hostile, Daivi and Asuri as we would say in Indian terminology. The knowledge of these forces is called occultism.

According to Sri Aurobindo :

Occultism is the knowledge and the right use of the hidden forces of Nature.

Occult forces are the forces that can only be known by going behind the veil of apparent pheno-

mena—especially the forces of the subtle physical and supraphysical planes.¹

Speaking on occultism the Mother remarked :

Well, the occult world is not one single region where everything is mixed, which only becomes occult because we can't see it. The occult world is a gradation of regions, one could perhaps say, of more and more etherial or subtle regions, anyway, those farther and farther removed in their nature from the physical materiality we ordinarily see. And each one of these domains is a world in itself, having its forms and inhabited by beings with a density, one might say, analogous to that of the domain in which they live. Just as in the physical world we are of the same materiality as the physical world, so in the vital world, in the mental world, in the overmind world and in the supramental world—and in many others, infinite others—there are beings which have a form whose substance is similar to the one of that world. This means that if you are able to enter consciously into that world with the part of your being which corresponds to that domain, you can move there quite objectively, as in the material world.

And there, there are as many, and even more things to see and observe than in our poor little material world, which belongs to only **one** zone of this infinite gradation. You meet all sorts of things in these domains, and you need to make a study as profound, perhaps still more profound than in the physical world, to be able to know what is happening there, to have relations with the beings who live there.

It is obvious that as one goes farther, as it were, from the material world, the forms and consciousness of those beings are of a purity, beauty and perfection much higher than our ordinary physical forms. It is only in the nearest vital world, the one which is, so to say, mixed with our material life—though it lies beyond it and there is a zone where the vital is no longer, mixed with the material world—of that material vital one can say that in some of its aspects it is

even uglier than things here, for it is filled with a bad will which is not counterbalanced by the presence of the psychic being which, in the physical world, amends, corrects, puts right, directs this bad will. But it is rather a limited zone and, as soon as one goes beyond it, one can find and meet things that are not favourable to human life, beings not on the same scale as human existence, but having their own beauty and grandeur, with whom one may establish relations which may become quite pleasant and even useful.

Only, as I have already told you, it is not very prudent to venture into these domains without a previous initiation and, above all, a purification of nature which prevents you from entering there all weighed down and deformed by your desires, your passions, egoisms, fears and weaknesses. Before undertaking these activities one needs a complete preparation of self-purification and widening of the consciousness which is absolutely indispensable.

In these invisible worlds there are also regions which are the result of human mental formations. One can find there all one wants. In fact, one very often finds there exactly what one expects to find. There are hells, there are paradises, there are purgatories. There are all sorts of things in accordance with the different religions and their conceptions. These things have only a very relative existence, but with a relativity similar to that of material things here; that is to say for someone who finds himself there, they are entirely real and their effects quite tangible.

One needs an inner liberation, a wideness of the consciousness and a contact with a deeper and higher truth to be able to escape from the illusion of their reality. But this is something almost similar to what happens here: human beings here are mostly convinced that the only reality is the physical reality—the reality of what one can touch, can see—and for them, all that cannot be seen, cannot be touched, cannot be felt, is after all, problematical; well, what happens there is an identical phenomenon. People who at the moment of death are convinced, for one reason or another, that they are going to paradise or

may be to hell **do find** themselves there after their death; and for them it is truly a paradise or a hell. And it is extremely difficult to make them come out of it and go to a place which is more true, more real.²

Ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Asia Minor, etc., were well known for their occultism. In India it was always a hand-maid of spiritualism and served higher purposes but in many other lands it was mixed up with black magic.

Mirra had an in-born capacity for occultism yet she wanted to study it systematically and in this connection she contacted M. Theon and his wife who were great occultists. They lived in a small town in Algeria called Tlemcen, almost on the border of the Sahara.

Giving her reminiscences about Madame Theon Mother said :

Now, one day when she was particularly tired, she told me, "You will see how I am going to recover my strength." She had plucked from her garden—it was not a garden, it was a vast estate with ancient olive trees, and fig trees such as I have never seen anywhere else, it was a real marvel, on a mountain-side, from the plain to almost half way up—and in this garden there were many lemon trees and orange trees . . . and grapefruit. Grapefruit has flowers which have an even better fragrance than orange blossoms—they are large flowers and she knew how to make an essence from them herself, she had given me a bottle—well, she had plucked a huge grapefruit like this, (**gesture**) very large and ripe, and she lay down on her bed and put the grapefruit on her solar plexus, here, (**gesture**) like this, holding it with both hands. She lay down and rested. She did not sleep, she rested. She told me, "Come back in an hour." An hour later I returned . . . and the grapefruit was as flat as a pancake. That meant that she had such a power to absorb vitality that she had absorbed all the life from the fruit and it had become soft and completely flat. And I saw that myself!³

Here is another incident of the same period :

I could tell you many stories, but I shall finish with one she had told me, which I had not seen myself.

As I was telling you, Tlemcen is very near the Sahara and it has a desert climate except that in the valley a river flows which never dries up and makes the whole country very fertile. But the mountains were absolutely arid. Only in the part occupied by farmers did something grow. Now, Monsieur X's park—a large estate—was, as I said, a marvellous place... everything grew there, everything one could imagine and to a magnificent size. Now, she told me—they had been there a very long time—that about five or six years before, I think, they had felt that these barren mountains might one day cause the river to dry up and that it would be better to plant trees there; and the administrator of Tlemcen ordered trees to be planted on all the neighbouring hills; a wide amphitheatre, you know. He said that pine trees should be planted, for in Algeria the sea-pine grows very well. And they wanted to try it. Well, for some reason or other—forgetfulness or fantasy, heaven knows!—instead of ordering pine trees they ordered fir trees! Fir trees belong to Scandinavian countries, not at all to desert lands. And very conscientiously all these fir trees were planted. Now Madame X saw this and I believe she felt like making an experiment. So it happened that four or five years later these fir trees had not only grown but had become magnificent and when I went to Tlemcen the mountains all around were absolutely green, magnificent with trees. She said to me, "You see, these are not pine trees, they are fir trees", and indeed they were—you know fir trees are Christmas trees, don't you?—they were fir trees. Then she told me how after three years when the fir trees had grown, suddenly one day or rather one December night, as she had just gone to bed and put out her light, she was awakened by a tiny little noise—she was very sensitive to noise; she opened her eyes and saw something like a moonbeam—there was no moon that night—lighting

up a corner of her room. And she noticed that a little gnome was there, like the ones you see in fairy-tales of Norway and Sweden, Scandinavian fairy-tales. He was a tiny little fellow with a big head, a pointed cap, pointed shoes of dark green, a long white beard, and all covered with snow.

So she looked at him—her eyes were open—she looked at him and said, "But...Eh! what are you doing here?"—she was a little worried, for in the warmth of her room the snow was melting and making a little pool on the floor of her room. "But what are you doing here!"

Then he smiled at her, gave her his sweetest smile and said, "But we were called by the fir trees! Fir trees call the snow. They are tree of the snow countries. I am the Lord of the Snow, so I came to announce to you that...we are coming. We have been called, we are coming."

"Snow?...But we are near the Sahara!"

"Ah! then you shouldn't have planted fir trees."

Finally she told him, "Listen, I don't know if what you tell me is true, but you are spoiling my floor. Go away!"

So he went away. The moonlight went with him. She lit a lamp—for there was no electricity—she lit a lamp and saw...a little pool of water in the place where he had stood. So it was not a dream, there really was a little being whose snow had melted in her room. And the next morning when the sun rose, it rose upon mountains covered with snow. It was the first time, it had never been seen before in that country.

Since then, every winter—not for long, just for a little while—all the mountains are covered with snow.⁴

Once Mirra was on board ship along with M. Theon. She said:

When I was coming back from Tlemcen for the

second time, Theon accompanied me to make a tour round Europe. While at sea a violent storm assailed us. The sea became very rough, high waves were continually tossing the ship up and down, and there was apprehension of some catastrophe. The passengers on board got very nervous and some of them began to cry. The captain himself was anxious and said, "The passengers may be in danger." Theon looked at me and said, "Go and stop it." The Captain was astonished; he did not understand what it meant, but I understood. I went to my cabin, lay down there, and leaving my body went freely to the open sea. There I found innumerable formless beings who were madly jumping about and creating havoc over the waters. I approached there and very humbly and sweetly appealed to them to stop mischief saying, "What can you gain by torturing these poor people? Please calm down and save their lives." I went on remonstrating and appealing to them for half an hour, after which they refrained from their activities. The troubled sea became calm. I then went back to my body and came out of the cabin. When I went on deck I found all people gathered there happily engaged in jovial talks.⁶

The Meetings : In 1911 and about 1912 some aspirants for higher life met regularly in Paris "with the object of knowing and mastering themselves". They used to read essays they had written, exchange experiences and meditate. Mirra and Abdul Baha were among them. Luckily some of the essays read by Mirra are still available. They have been published under the title **Words of Long Ago**. In one of her essays "To Know How to Suffer", she says :

If at any time a deep sorrow, a searing doubt or an intense pain overwhelms you and drives you to despair, there is an infallible way to regain calm and peace.

In the depths of our being there shines a light whose brilliance is equalled only by its purity; a light, a living and conscious portion of a universal godhead

who animates and nourishes and illumines Matter, a powerful and unfailing guide for those who are willing to head his law, a helper full of solace and loving forbearance towards all who aspire to see and hear and obey him. No sincere and lasting aspiration towards him can be in vain; no strong and respectful trust can be disappointed, no expectation ever deceived.

My heart has suffered and lamented, almost breaking beneath a sorrow too heavy, almost sinking beneath a pain too strong But I have called to thee, O divine comforter, I have prayed ardently to thee, and the splendour of thy dazzling light has appeared to me and revived me.

As the rays of thy glory penetrated and illumined all my being, I clearly perceived the path to follow, the use that can be made of suffering; I understood that the sorrow that held me in its grip was but a pale reflection of earthly sorrow, of this abysm of suffering and anguish.

Only those who have suffered can understand the suffering of others; understand it, commune with it and relieve it. And I understood, O divine comforter, sublime Holocaust, that in order to sustain us in all our troubles, to soothe all our pangs, thou must have known and felt all the sufferings of earth and men, all without exception.

How is it that among those who claim to be thy worshippers, some regard thee as a cruel torturer, as an inexorable judge witnessing the torments that are tolerated by thee or even created by thy own will?

No, I now perceive that these sufferings come from the very imperfection of Matter which, in its disorder and crudeness, is unfit to manifest thee; and thou art the very first to suffer from it, to bewail it, thou art the first to toil and strive in thy ardent desire to change disorder into order, suffering into happiness, discord into harmony.

Suffering is not something inevitable or even desirable, but when it comes to us, how helpful it can be!

Every time we feel our hearts about to break, a deeper door opens within us, revealing new horizons, ever richer in hidden treasures, whose golden influx brings once more a new and more intense life to the organism on the brink of destruction.

And when, by these successive descents, we reach the veil that reveals thee as it is raised, O Lord, who can describe the intensity of Life that penetrates the whole being, the radiance of the Light that floods it, the sublimity of the Love that transforms it for ever !^o

Her paper dealing with charity and justice shows how deeply and originally she thought on eternal values :

CHARITY

In its most general sense, charity may be defined as the act of giving to each one what he lacks.

That is to say, in the last analysis, to put each thing in its place, which would result in the establishment of the supreme justice upon earth.

Such is the theory, but in practice charity could be considered as the path men ought to follow in their groping advance towards justice.

For in his present state of evolution, man is incapable not only of realising justice in his earthly abode, but also of conceiving it as it is in its absolute essence. Charity is the living acknowledgement of this inability.

Indeed, in our ignorance of true justice, the justice which is one with perfect harmony, perfect equilibrium and perfect order, our wisest course is to take the path of love, the path of charity which shuns all judgment.

This is what justifies the attitude of those who always set charity against justice. Justice is, in their eyes, rigorous, merciless, and charity must come to temper its excessive severity.

Certainly, they cannot speak thus of divine justice, but more rightly of human or rather of social justice, the egoistic justice instituted to defend a more or less extensive grouping of interests and which is as much opposed to true justice as shadow is contrary to light.

When we speak of justice as it is rendered in our so-called civilised countries, we should call it not rigorous and merciless but blind and monstrous in its ignorant pretension.

So we can never make too many amends for its fatal effects, and there charity finds an opportunity to apply itself fruitfully.

But this is only one side of the question and before delving deeper into our subject, I would like to remind you that charity, like all other human activities, is exercised according to four different modes which must be simultaneous if its action is to be integral and truly effective. I mean that no charity is complete if it is not at the same time material, intellectual, spiritual or moral and above all loving, for the very essence of charity is love.

At present charity is considered almost exclusively from the external standpoint and the word is synonymous with the sharing of part of one's possessions with life's rejects. We shall see in a moment how mean this conception is even when confined to the purely material field.

The three other modes of action of charity are admirably summed up in this counsel given by the Buddha to his disciples :

"With your hearts overflowing with compassion, go forth into this world torn by pain, be instructors, and wherever the darkness of ignorance rules, there light a torch."

To instruct those who know less, to give to those who do evil the strength to come out of their error, to console those who suffer, these are all occupations of charity rightly understood.

Thus, charity, regarded from the individual point of view, consists for each one of giving to others all they need, in proportion to one's means.

This brings us to two observations.

The first is that one cannot give what one does not command.

Materially this is so evident that it is unnecessary to insist upon it. But intellectually, spiritually, the same rule holds true.

Indeed, how can one teach others what one does not know? Now can one guide the weak on the path of wisdom if one does not tread the path oneself? How can one radiate love if one does not possess it within oneself?

And the supreme charity, which is integral self-giving to the great work of terrestrial regeneration, implies first of all that one commands that which one wants to offer, that is to say, that one is master of oneself.

Only he who has perfect self-control can consecrate himself in all sincerity to the great work. For he alone knows that no contrary will, no unexpected impulse can ever again come to impede his action, to check his effort by setting him at variance with himself.

In this fact we find the justification of the old proverb which says: "Charity begins at home."

This maxim seems to encourage every kind of egoism and yet it is the expression of a great wisdom for one who understands it well.

It is because charitable people fail to conform to this principle that their efforts so often remain unfruitful, that their goodwill is so often warped in its results, and that, in the end, they are forced to renounce a charity which, because it has not been rightly exercised, is the cause of nothing but confusion, suffering and disillusionment.

There is evidently a wrong way of interpreting this maxim, which says, "First let us accumulate

fortune, intelligence, health, love, energies of all kinds, then we shall distribute them."

For, from the material standpoint, when will the accumulation stop? One who acquires the habit of piling up never finds his pile big enough.

I have even been led to make an observation about this: that in most men generosity seems to exist in inverse proportion to their pecuniary resources.

From observing the way in which workmen, the needy and all the unfortunate act among themselves, I had to conclude that the poor are far more charitable, far more prepared to succour their fellow-sufferers than are those more favoured by fortune. There is not enough time to go into the details of all that I have seen, but I assure you that it is instructive. I can, in any case, assure you that if the rich, in proportion to what they have, gave as much as the poor, soon there would no longer be a single starving person in the world.

Thus gold seems to attract gold, and nothing would be more fatal than wanting to accumulate riches before distributing them. But also, nothing would be more fatal than a rash prodigality which, from lack of discernment, would squander a fortune without benefiting anyone.

Let us never confuse disinterestedness, which is one of the conditions of true charity, with a lack of concern that springs from idle thoughtlessness.

Let us learn therefore to make judicious use of what we can possess or earn while giving the least possible play to our personality, and above all let us not forget that charity should not be confined to material aid.

Nor in the field of forces is it possible to accumulate, for receptivity occurs in proportion to expenditure: the more one expends usefully, the more one makes oneself capable of receiving. Thus the intelligence one can acquire is proportionate to the intelligence one uses. We are formed to manifest a certain

quantity of intellectual forces, but if we develop ourselves mentally, if we put our brains to work, if we meditate regularly and above all if we make others benefit by the fruit, however modest, of our efforts, we make ourselves capable of receiving a greater quantity of ever deeper and purer intellectual forces. And the same holds true for love and spirituality.

We are like channels : if we do not allow what they have received to pour out freely, not only do they become blocked and no longer receive anything, but what they contain will spoil. If, on the contrary, we allow all this flood of vital, intellectual and spiritual forces to flow abundantly, if by impersonalising ourselves we know how to connect our little individuality to the great universal current, what we give will be returned to us a hundredfold.

To know how not to cut ourselves off from the great universal current, to be a link in the chain which must not be broken, this is the true science, the very key of charity.

Unfortunately there exists a very wide-spread error which is a serious obstacle to the practical application of this knowledge.

This error lies in the belief that a thing in the universe may be our own possession. Everything belongs to all, and to say or think, "This is mine," is to create a separation, a division which does not exist in reality.

Everything belongs to all, even the substance of which we are made, a whirl of atoms in perpetual movement which momentarily constitutes our organism without abiding in it and which, tomorrow, will form another.

It is true that some people command great material possessions. But in order to be in accord with the universal law, they should consider themselves as trustees, stewards of these possessions. They ought to know that these riches are entrusted to them so that they may administer them for the best interests of all.

We have come a long way from the narrow conception of charity restricted to the giving of a little of what we have in excess to the unfortunate ones that life brings in our way! And what we say of material riches must be said of spiritual wealth also.

Those who say, "This idea is mine" and who think they are very charitable in allowing others to profit from it are senseless.

The world of ideas belongs to all, intellectual force is a universal force.

It is true that some people are more capable than others of entering into relation with this field of ideas and manifesting it through their conscious cerebrality. But it is nothing other than an additional responsibility for them: because they are the holders of these possessions, they are their stewards and must see that they are used for the good of the greatest number.

The same holds true for all the other universal forces. Only the concept of union, of the perfect identity of everything and everyone can lead to true charity.

But to come back to practice, there is one more serious pitfall in the way of its complete and fruitful manifestation.

For most people, charity consists of giving anything to anyone without even knowing whether this gift corresponds to a need.

Thus charity is made synonymous with sentimental weakness and irrational squandering.

Nothing is more contrary to the very essence of this virtue.

Indeed, to give someone what he does not need is as great a lack of charity as to deny him what he needs.

And this applies to the things of the spirit as well as to those of the body.

By a faulty distribution of material possessions one can hasten the downfall of certain individuals by en-

couraging them to be lazy, instead of favouring their progress by inciting them to effort.

The same holds true for intelligence and love. To give someone a knowledge which is too strong for him, thoughts which he cannot assimilate, is to deprive him for long if not for ever of the possibility of thinking for himself.

Just as to impose on some people an affection, a love for which they feel no need is to make them carry a burden which is often too heavy for their shoulders.

This error has two main causes to which all the others can be linked: ignorance and egoism.

In order to be sure that an act is beneficial one must know its immediate or distant consequences, and an act of charity is no exception to this law.

To want to do well is not enough, one must also know.

How much evil has been done in the world in the name of charity diverted from its true sense and completely warped in its results!

I could give you many examples of acts of charity which have led to the most disastrous results because they were performed without reflection, without discernment, without understanding, without clear-sightedness.

Charity, like all things, must be the result in us of a conscious and a reasoned will, for impulse is synonymous with error and above all with egoism.

Unfortunately it must be acknowledged that charity is very seldom completely disinterested.

I do not mean charity which is performed for the purpose of acquiring merit in the eyes of a personal God or to win eternal bliss.

This utterly base form is the worst of all bargainings and to call it charity would be to tarnish this name.

But I mean charity which is performed because one finds pleasure in it and which is still subject to

all kinds of likes or dislikes, attractions or repulsions.

That kind of charity is very completely free from the desire to meet with gratitude, and such a desire always atrophies the impartial clear-sightedness which is necessary to any action if it is to have its full value.

There is a wisdom in charity as everywhere, and it is to reduce waste to the minimum.

Thus to be truly charitable one must be impersonal.

And once more we see that all the lines of human progress converge on the same necessity: self-mastery, dying to oneself in order to be born into the new and true life.

To the extent that we outgrow the habit of referring everything to ourselves, we can exercise a truly effective charity, a charity one with love.

Besides, there is a height where all virtues meet in communion: love, goodness, compassion, forbearance, charity are all one and the same in their essence.

From this point of view, charity could be considered as the tangible and practical outer action determined by the application of the virtues of love.

For there is a force which can be distributed to all, always, provided that it is given in its most impersonal form: this is love, love which contains within itself light and life, that is, all the possibilities of intelligence, health, blossoming.

Yes, there is a sublime charity, one which rises from a happy heart, from a serene soul.

One who has won inner peace is a herald of deliverance wherever he goes, a bearer of hope and joy. Is not this what poor and suffering humanity needs above all things?

Yes, there are certain men whose thoughts are all love, who radiate love, and the mere presence of those individuals is a charity more active, more real than any other.

Though they utter no word and make no gesture, yet the sick are relieved, the tormented are soothed, the ignorant are enlightened, the wicked are appeased, those who suffer are consoled and all undergo this deep transformation which will open new horizons to them, enable them to take a step forward, which no doubt will be decisive, on the infinite path of progress.

These individuals who, out of love, give themselves to all, who become the servants of all, are the living symbols of the supreme Charity.

I invite all of you here, my brothers, who aspire to be charitable, to join your thought with mine in expressing this wish: that we may strive to follow their example a little more each day so that we may be like them, in the world, messengers of light and love.⁷

Here we are reproducing the story "Virtues". In the later years she had given it the drama form also:

VIRTUES

Once upon a time there was a splendid palace, in the heart of which lay a secret sanctuary, whose threshold no being had ever crossed. Furthermore, even its outermost galleries were almost inaccessible to mortals, for the palace stood on a very high cloud, and very few, in any age, could find the way to it.

It was the palace of Truth.

One day, a festival was held there, not for men but for very different beings, gods and goddesses great and small, who on earth are honoured by the name of Virtues.

The vestibule of this palace was a great hall, where the walls, the floor, the ceiling, luminous in themselves, were resplendent with a myriad glittering fires.

It was the hall of Intelligence. Near to the ground, this light was very soft and had a beautiful

deep sapphire hue, but it became gradually clearer towards the ceiling, from which girandoles of diamonds hung like chandeliers, their myriad facets shooting dazzling rays.

The Virtues came separately, but soon formed congenial groups, full of joy to find themselves for once at least together, for they are usually so widely scattered throughout the world and the worlds, so isolated amid so many alien beings.

Sincerity reigned over the festival. She was dressed in a transparent robe, like clear water, and held in her hand a cube of purest crystal, through which things can be seen as they really are, far different from what they usually seem, for there their image is reflected without distortion.

Near to her, like two faithful guardians, stood Humility, at once respectful and proud, and Courage, lofty-browed, clear-eyed, his lips firm and smiling, with a calm and resolute air.

Close beside Courage, her hand in his, stood a woman, completely veiled, of whom nothing could be seen but her searching eyes, shining through her veils. It was Prudence.

Among them all, coming and going from one to the other and yet seeming always to remain near to each one, Charity, at once vigilant and calm, active and yet discrete, left behind her as she passed through the groups a trail of soft white light. The light that she spreads and softens comes to her, through a radiance so subtle that it is invisible to most eyes, from her closest friend, her inseparable companion, her twin sister, Justice.

And around Charity thronged a shining escort, Kindness, Patience, Gentleness, Solicitude, and many others.

All of them are there, at least they think that all are there.

But then suddenly, at the golden threshold, a newcomer appears.

With great reluctance the guards, set to watch the gates, have agreed to admit her. Never before had they seen her, and there was nothing in her appearance to impress them.

She was indeed very young and slight, and the white dress which she wore was very simple, almost poor. She takes a few steps forward with a shy, embarrassed air. Then, apparently ill at ease to find herself in such a large and brilliant company, she pauses, not knowing towards whom she should go.

After a brief exchange with her companions, Prudence steps forward at their request, and goes towards the stranger. Then, after clearing her throat, as people do when they are embarrassed, to give herself a moment to reflect, she turns to her and says :

"We who are gathered here and all know each other by our names and our merits, are surprised at your coming, for you appear to be a stranger to us, or at least we do not seem to have ever seen you before. Would you be so kind as to tell us who you are?"

Then the newcomer replied with a sigh :

"Alas ! I am not surprised that I appear to be a stranger in the palace, for I am so rarely invited anywhere.

My name is Gratitude."

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS PONDICHERRY

We have seen in an earlier chapter that Mirra used to see somebody whom she would call her Krishna. She wanted to come into contact with him, she was sure that he was present somewhere upon earth. She had been given an occult seal or chakra and it was said that he who could reveal the mystery of the chakra would be her guide.

In those days Pondicherry was a French Colony and it was allowed the privilege of electing a member for the French parliament. Mirra's husband, M. Paul Richard, wanted to stand for election from Pondicherry. Mirra gave him the seal and asked him to see if he could find any yogi who could reveal the secret of this seal. In Pondicherry M. Richard came into contact with Sri Aurobindo who explained the significance of the seal which was none other than a yogachakra lotus which symbolised the mystic opening of the bud of consciousness to the warmth of the Divine Sun.

M. Richard was very much impressed. Speaking to a Japanese audience sometime later after his interview with Sri Aurobindo he said:

The hour is coming of great things, of great events and also of great men; the divine men of Asia. All my life I have sought for them across the world, for all my life I have felt they must exist somewhere in the world, that this world would die if they did not live. For they are its light, its heart, its life. It is

in Asia that I found the greatest among them—the leader, the hero of tomorrow. He is a Hindu, his name is Aurobindo Ghosh.¹

On going back to France M. Richard told Mirra about Sri Aurobindo, 'the leader, the hero of tomorrow', and naturally she was eager to see him. On 1st February, 1914, she said, addressing the Lord:

I turn towards Thee who art everywhere and within all and outside all, intimate essence of all and remote from all, centre of condensation for all energies, creator of conscious individualities: I turn towards Thee and salute Thee, O liberator of the worlds, and, identified with Thy divine love, I contemplate the earth and its creatures, this mass of substance put into forms perpetually destroyed and renewed, this swarming mass of aggregates which are dissolved as soon as constituted, of beings who imagine that they are conscient and permanent individualities and who are as ephemeral as a breath, always alike or almost the same, in their diversity, repeating indefinitely the same desires, the same tendencies, the same appetites, the same ignorant errors.

But from time to time Thy sublime light shines in a being and radiates through him over the world, and then a little wisdom, a little knowledge, a little disinterested faith, heroism and compassion penetrate men's hearts, transform their minds and set free a few elements from that sorrowful and implacable wheel of existence to which their blind ignorance subjects them.

But how much greater a splendour than all those that have gone before, how marvellous a glory and light would be needed to draw these beings out of the horrible aberration in which they are plunged by the life of cities and so-called civilisations! What a formidable and, at the same time, divinely sweet puissance would be needed to turn aside all these wills from the bitter struggle for their selfish, mean and foolish satisfactions, to snatch them from this vortex

which hides death behind its treacherous glitter, and turn them towards Thy conquering harmony!"²

On the next day, 2nd February, 1914, she expresses her deepest aspiration :

O Lord, I would be a love so living that it can fill every solitude and assuage every sorrow.

O Lord, I cry to Thee : make me a burning brazier which consumes all suffering and transforms it into a glad light pouring its rays into the hearts of all !...

Grant my prayer : Transform me into a brazier of pure love and limitless compassion.³

In the beginning of March Mirra was preparing for her long, eventful and most fruitful journey to India. On 3rd March she writes :

As the day of departure draws near, I enter into a sort of calm collectedness; I turn with an affectionate seriousness towards all those thousand little trifles, which surrounded us and which have silently played during so many years the part of faithful friends; I thank them with gratitude for all the charm they have been able to impart from the outside to our life; I wish, if they are destined to pass for a long or a brief period into other hands than ours, that those hands may be gentle to them and may feel all the respect that is due to what Thy divine Love, O Lord, has made to emerge from the dark inconscience of chaos.

Then I turn towards the future and my regard becomes still more grave. What it has in store for us I do not know and am not anxious to know; outer circumstances have no importance at all; I would only wish that it may be the beginning of a new inner period, in which, more detached from material things, we may be more conscious of Thy law and more solely consecrated to its manifestation; that it may be a period of a greater light, a greater love, a more perfect devotion to Thy cause.⁴

On the 4th of March she records her last prayer before leaving Paris. That prayer reveals how conscious she was of the most material things, like a room :

It is the last time, it may well be for long, that I write at this table, in this quiet room steeped in Thy presence. For the next three days I shall probably not be able to write.... It is in an inner concentration that I contemplate this page which, as it turns, vanishes into the dream of the past, and I regard this other page, blank but in potentiality full of the dream of the future.... And yet what a small thing it seems, childish and without importance, when looked at in the light of Thy eternity. The one thing important is to obey Thy law with love and joy.⁵

Mirra left her hearth and home. As we have seen earlier she had consecrated everything to the Divine and asked him to look after everything which was passing from her hands to other hands. Steeped in her inner consciousness she could be one with them.

On the first lap of her destined historic journey she reached Geneva on March 6, 1914. She writes :

Certainly this sentimental and physical attachment which produces a wrench when the bodies separate, is childish from a certain point of view, when we contemplate the impermanence of our forms and the reality of Thy essential oneness; but on the other hand, is not this attachment, this personal affection, an unconscious effort of men to realise externally as far as possible, that fundamental oneness towards which they are ever tending without even being aware of it? And precisely for this reason, is not the suffering produced by the separation of one of the most effective means of transcending this outer consciousness, of replacing this superficial attachment by the integral realisation of Thy eternal oneness?

It was this that I wished for them all; it was this that I ardently willed for them, and it was for this

that I, assured of Thy victory and certain of Thy triumph, confided to Thee their grief so that Thou mightest by illumining heal it.⁶

On the next day (March 7) she was on board the **Kaga Maru**. Her total faith in the Lord is expressed in the meditation of her diary :

Thou wast with us yesterday as the most marvellous protection; Thou hast permitted Thy law to triumph even up to the most outer manifestation. Violence was answered by calm, brutality by the power of gentleness; and where there could have taken place an irreparable misfortune, Thy power was glorified. O Lord! with what fervent gratitude I saluted Thy presence. It was for me a sure sign that we would have the force to act, to think, to live in Thy name and for Thee; not only in intention and will, but effectively in an integral realisation.⁷

And on the 8th of March her prayer reveals her deep love for others on board the ship :

In front of this calm sunrise which turned all within me into silence and peace, at the moment when I grew conscious of Thee and Thou alone wast living in me, O Lord, it seemed to me that I adopted all the inhabitants of this ship and enveloped them in an equal love, and that, so, in each one of them something of Thy consciousness would awake. Not often had I felt so strongly Thy divine power and Thy invincible light, and once again total was my confidence and unmixed my joyful surrender.

O Thou who relievest all suffering and dispersest all ignorance, O Thou the supreme healer, be constantly present on this boat in the hearts of those whom it shelters that once again Thy glory may be manifested!⁸

On the 9th of March she writes :

The whole earth chants Thy praises; in spite of the obscurity, misery, ignorance, through it all, it is still

the glory of Thy love which we perceive and with which we can commune ceaselessly everywhere.

O Lord, my sweet Master, all this I constantly experience on this boat which seems to me a marvellous abode of peace, a temple sailing in Thy honour over the waves of the subconscious passivity which we have to conquer and awaken to the consciousness of Thy divine Presence.

Blessed was the day when I came to know Thee, O Ineffable Eternity !

Blessed among all days be that day when the earth at last awakened shall know Thee and shall live only for Thee !'

Now Mirra was nearing her destination. She writes on 28th March :

Since our departure, more and more we can see in everything Thy divine intervention, everywhere Thy law is expressing itself, and it needs all my inner conviction that for it to be so is perfectly natural, to prevent my passing from marvelling to marvelling.

At no moment do I seem to live outside of Thee and never have the horizons appeared to me more vast and the depths at once more luminous and more unfathomable. Grant, O Divine Teacher, that we may more and more, better and better, know and accomplish our mission upon the earth, that we may fully utilise all the energies that are in us, and that Thy sovereign Presence may become more and more perfectly manifested in the silent depths of our soul, in all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our actions.

It seems to me almost strange that I am addressing Thee, so much it is Thou who livest and thinkest and lovest in me.¹⁰

And 29th March, 1914 was the great day in the spiritual history when Mirra, perhaps now we may begin to know her as Mother, reached Pondicherry via Dhanushkoti by train. Before the great meeting with Sri Aurobindo she writes :

O Thou whom we must know, understand, realise, absolute Consciousness, eternal Law, Thou who guidest and enlightenest us, who determinest and inspirest, grant that these weak souls may be strengthened and those who are fearful may be reassured. To Thee I confide them, in the same way as I confide to Thee the destinies of all of us.¹¹

The Mother came to see Sri Aurobindo at 3.30 in the afternoon. It was an extremely pleasant surprise for her. In him she saw the Sri Krishna of her dreams standing there in flesh and blood to receive her. Perhaps Radha's prayer can be a good mirror of her feelings at that time :

O Thou whom at first sight I knew for the Lord of my being and my God, receive my offering.

Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the sentiments of my heart, all my sensations, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood. I am absolutely and altogether Thine. Thine without reserve, what Thou wilt of me, that I shall be. Whether Thou choosest for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome. Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine bringing with it the supreme Felicity.¹²

After seeing Sri Aurobindo she wrote on 30th March a thankful prayer which is the greatest tribute to Sri Aurobindo :

How in the presence of those who are integrally Thy servitors, of those who have arrived at the perfect consciousness of Thy Presence, I perceive that I am still far, very far, from that which I would realise; and I know that what I conceive to be highest, noblest and purest is still dark and ignorant in comparison with that which I have to conceive. But this perception, far from being depressing, stimulates and strengthens my aspiration, my energy, my will to triumph over all obstacles so as to be at last identified with Thy law and Thy work.

Little by little the horizon becomes precise, the path becomes clear. And we advance to an ever greater certitude.

It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth: His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be, indeed, established upon earth.

O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope is boundless.

My adoration surpasses all words and my reverence is silent.²³

CHAPTER 6

SRI AUROBINDO

Before proceeding further let us learn something about Sri Aurobindo. He was born in a well-to-do, cultured family in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. At the early age of 7, along with his brothers he was sent to England for education. He remained there for a full fourteen years. He learnt various classical and modern languages of Europe and according to his father's wish appeared for the I.C.S. examination. This used to be the highest ambition of educated Indians in those days. He purposely did not go for the riding test and thus remained outside the steel frame of government service. He returned to India in 1893.

Sayajirao Gaekwad was a great connoisseur of men. He saw Sri Aurobindo and picked him up for service in Baroda State where along with other jobs he served as a teacher and administrator of Baroda College. Here he learnt Sanskrit and many of the modern Indian languages. Literary activities went on hand in hand with the study of Indian literature and various aspects of culture. It was during this period that he saw Kali and later also had the experience of Nirvana. It was this time that Bhavani Mandir was planned, a training place for men devoted to selfless service to India. Perhaps it was the first rough outline of what took shape as Sri Aurobindo Ashram later.

Then came the partition of Bengal. Sri Aurobindo left his service and took to active politics. In a very short time

he became a leader of the Swaraj movement with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Pal as his close associates.

He led the country in its freedom struggle and introduced "Bande Mataram" as its national anthem. He was the first to speak of Swaraj from the Congress platform. The whole country woke out of torpor and no sacrifice was regarded as too great.

Sri Aurobindo published **Bande Mataram** which became the most popular periodical of the time. It was said about it that each and every line of **Bande Mataram** was full of sedition against the British Government but it was so cleverly written that no legal action could be taken against it. The then Viceroy's secretary wrote that if all the other revolutionaries were put behind bars and Sri Aurobindo was allowed to remain outside the jail, he would be able to raise an army in no time.

But for Sri Aurobindo India was not merely a land with its mountains and rivers. She was a goddess, she was a mother. In one of his letters he writes to his wife :

Whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the mother, I worship her and adore her as the mother. What would a son do when a demon sitting on the breast of his mother is drinking her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children; or would he, rather, run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; it is not physical strength, I am not going to fight with sword or with the gun, but with the power of knowledge. The power of the warrior is not the only kind of force, there is also the power of the Brahman which is founded on knowledge. This is not a new feeling within me, it is not of a recent origin, I was born with it, it is in my very marrow, God sent me to the earth to accomplish

this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed of it had begun to sprout and at eighteen it had been firmly rooted and became unshakable. You heard the story of Aunti N. and believed that some wicked person had led your simple and good-natured husband to the evil path. In fact, it was your good-natured husband who brought that person and hundreds of others to that path, be it good or evil; and he will still bring thousands to it. I do not say that the work will be successful in my life-time, but it will be most certainly achieved.¹

In 1909 Sri Aurobindo was arrested and remained in the Alipore jail for about one year. There he had the vision of Krishna in everyone and everything. The British Parliament discussed his case for several hours. The prosecution could not prove anything against him and he was let off.

In April 1910 he received a fiat from within and left for Pondicherry to the utter chagrin of the police and C.I.D. He reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910. Thus began a new chapter in his life. After this he did not take any active part in politics. But the British Government could not believe that he had actually given up politics. The British C.I.D. kept watch upon the Ashram up to 1937 when C. Rajagopalachariar, the then chief minister of Madras removed it. In this context perhaps it may not be out of place to quote a statement of the Mother given on April 25, 1954 :

Sri Aurobindo withdrew from politics; and, in his Ashram, a most important rule is that one must abstain from all politics—not because Sri Aurobindo did not concern himself with the happenings of the world, but because politics, as it is practised, is a low and ugly thing, wholly dominated by falsehood, deceit, injustice, misuse of power and violence; because to succeed in politics one has to cultivate in oneself hypocrisy, duplicity and unscrupulous ambition.

The indispensable basis of our Yoga is sincerity, honesty, unselfishness, disinterested consecration to the work to be done, nobility of character and straightforwardness. They who do not practise these elementary virtues are not Sri Aurobindo's disciples and have no place in the Ashram. That is why I refuse to answer imbecile and groundless accusations against the Ashram emanating from perverse and evil-intentioned minds.

Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it.²

Without going into further details about Sri Aurobindo's life, let us have another quotation from the Mother about his work upon the earth. She says :

Sri Aurobindo's work is a unique earth-transformation.

Above the mind there are several levels of conscious being, among which the really divine world is what Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind, the world of Truth. But in between is what he has distinguished as the Overmind, the world of the cosmic gods. Now it is this Overmind that has up to the present governed our world. It is the highest that man has been able to attain in illumined consciousness. It has been taken for the Supreme Divine and all those who have reached it have never for a moment doubted that they have touched the true Spirit. For, its splendours are so great to the ordinary human consciousness that it is absolutely dazzled into believing that here at last is the crowning reality. And yet the fact is that the Overmind is far below the true Divine.

It is not the authentic home of the Truth. It is only the domain of the **formateurs**, all those creative powers and deities to whom man has bowed down since the beginning of history. And the reason why the true Divine has not manifested and transformed the earth-nature is precisely that the Overmind has been mistaken for the Supermind....

The consciousness is like a ladder: at each great epoch there has been one great being capable of adding one more step to the ladder and reaching a place where the ordinary consciousness had never been. It is possible to attain a high level and get completely out of the material consciousness; but then one does not retain the ladder, whereas the great achievement of the great epochs of the universe has been the capacity to add one more step to the ladder without losing contact with the material, the capacity to reach the Highest and at the same time connect the top with the bottom instead of letting a kind of emptiness cut off all connection between the different planes. To go up and down and join the top to the bottom is the whole secret of realisation, and that is the work of the Avatar. Each time he adds one more step to the ladder there is a new creation upon earth. The step which is being added now Sri Aurobindo has named the Supramental; as a result of it the consciousness will be able to enter the supramental world and yet retain its personal form, its individualisation and then come down to establish here a new creation.

Certainly this is not the last, for there are further ranges of being; but now we are at work to bring down the Supramental, to effect a re-organisation of the world, to bring the world back to the true divine order.

It is essentially a creation of order, a putting of everything in its true place; and the chief spirit or force, the Shakti active at present is Mahasaraswati, the Goddess of perfect organisation.

The work of achieving a continuity which permits one to go up and down and bring into the mate-

rial what is above, is done inside the consciousness. He who is meant to do it, the Avatar, even if he were shut up in a prison and saw nobody and never moved out, still would he do the work, because it is a work in the consciousness, the work of connection between the Supermind and the material being. He does not need to be recognised, he need have no outward power in order to be able to establish this conscious connection. Once, however, the connection is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world....

When I first met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, I was in deep concentration, seeing things in the Supermind, things that were to be but which were somehow not manifesting. I told Sri Aurobindo what I had seen and asked him if they would manifest. He simply said, "Yes." And immediately I saw that the Supramental had touched the earth and was beginning to be realised! This was the first time I had witnessed the power to make real what is true.³

As soon as a new concept of the Divine is seen, one at once expects the birth of a new religion. The Mother puts all such ideas at rest by her letter :

Sri Aurobindo has come on earth not to bring a teaching or a creed in competition with previous creeds or teachings, but to show the way to overpass the past and to open concretely the route towards an imminent and inevitable future.⁴

Once while speaking to the children of the Ashram, she explained the true meaning of his advent :

Sri Aurobindo does not belong to the past nor to history.

Sri Aurobindo is the future on the way to its realisation.

So we have to put on an eternal youth to be able to advance with the necessary rapidity and not to be laggards on the way.⁵

CHAPTER 7

COLLABORATION

Before Mother arrived Sri Aurobindo lived a very spartan life along with a few disciples.

There was only one camp cot for Sri Aurobindo, one table and two chairs. There was no servant. Cooking was done by turns. All the other members would finish their bath and go for lunch in the kitchen which was also the dining room. Sri Aurobindo took his bath last and went directly to the dining room. He used to be the last to use the same towel. There were only two lamps in the house—a candle lamp in Sri Aurobindo's room and a small kerosene lamp in the kitchen. When dinner was ready at night the candle lamp was taken to the kitchen.

In one of his letters written in those days Sri Aurobindo says: "The present position is that we have four annas cash with us."¹

After Mother arrived Sri Aurobindo was persuaded to start a philosophical quarterly named **Arya** in order to give to the world his grand synthesis of knowledge and yogic experience. The Mother and Paul Richard helped him in this work. The first issue was brought out on August 15, 1914. The **Arya** office was in the house where Mother was staying. The magazine was printed at the Modern Press.

Sri Aurobindo writes about the aim of the **Arya**:

Its object is to feel out for the thought of the future,

to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.

The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal, he is a spiritual and thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

The problem of thought is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own riches, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.

This is our ideal and our search in the **Arya**.

Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the **soul** of man. They are essential to each other.

Our first preoccupation in the **Arya** has therefore been with the deepest thought that we could command on philosophical foundations of the problem; and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought....

About the significance of the word "Arya" Sri Aurobindo writes :

For in the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward

and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration. The Aryan gods were the supra-physical powers who assisted the mortal in his struggle towards the nature of the godhead. All the highest aspirations of the early human race, its noblest religious temper, its most idealistic velleities of thought are summed up in this single vocable.

In later times, the word Arya expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect of the wise and learned, the social accomplishments. It was the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. Everything that departed from this ideal, everything that tended towards the ignoble, mean, obscure, rude, cruel or false, was termed un-Aryan. There is no word in human speech that has a nobler history.³

While Sri Aurobindo was writing the articles, most of them directly on the type-writer, Mother kept herself busy with maintaining the subscribers' list, keeping accounts, despatch and translations of Sri Aurobindo's writings for the French version of the magazine.

Plunged in all this material work, engaged in various works, including preparation for the publication of *Arya*, her main aspiration was always to remember her Lord. She writes on June 3, 1914:

Now that the whole being is plunged more and more into a material activity and physical realisation which carries with it such a multitude of details I must think over and regulate, I appeal to Thee, O Lord, that my consciousness, thus turned towards outer things, may constantly preserve this communion with Thee, who art the source of all peace, all force and all beatitude.

O my sweet Master, Thyself work out my actions through the individual being in its integrality. Or rather do not let anything, in this individual being forget at any moment that it is only an instrument—an illusion made real so that Thou mayst intervene in it—and that Thou alone livest and doest.

O the benediction of Thy immutable Presence.⁴

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had started the two magazines to dispel the darkness and the black smoke of ignorance. But something more was needed to remove the inertia of a heavy ignorance and the resistance of an uncomprehending ill-will—the two main obstacles in the Divine work. Though the Mother aspired intensely for a constant communion with the Lord she realised that personal salvation was not the final goal. She writes on June 13, 1914:

We must first conquer knowledge, that is to say, learn how to know Thee, to be united with Thee, and all means are good and can be employed to attain this end. But it would be a great mistake to think that all is done when this end is attained. All is done in principle, the victory is won theoretically, and those who have for their motive only the egoistic aspiration for their own salvation can be satisfied and can then live only in and for this communion, without any care for Thy manifestation.

But those whom Thou hast chosen as Thy representatives upon the earth cannot be satisfied with the result so obtained. To know Thee, first and before everything else, yes; but once the knowledge of Thee is acquired, there remains all the work of Thy manifestation; and then intervene the quality, force, complexity and perfection of that manifestation. Very often those who have known Thee, dazzled and transported with ecstasy by their knowledge, are content to see Thee for themselves and to express Thee as best or as worst they can in their outermost being. He who would be perfect in Thy manifestation cannot be satisfied with that; he must manifest

Thee on all the planes, in all the states of the being, and thus draw from the knowledge he has acquired the greatest possible profit for the whole world.

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

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

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

The clouds of the First World War were gathering on the western horizon. She writes on August 4, 1914 :

Lord, eternal Master !

Men, pushed by the conflict of forces, are making a sublime sacrifice, they are offering their lives in a sanguinary holocaust.

Lord, eternal Master, grant that it may not be in vain, that the inexhaustible torrents of Thy divine force may spread over the earth, penetrating into the troubled atmosphere, the struggling energies, all the violent chaos of the battling elements; and that the pure Light of Thy Knowledge and the inexhaustible love of Thy Benediction may fill the hearts of men, penetrate into their souls, illumine their consciousness and make to pour forth out of this obscurity, this sombre, terrible and powerful darkness, the splendour of Thy majestic Presence.

My Being is before Thee in an integral holocaust so that it may make their unconscious holocaust effective.

Accept this offering, reply to our call : **Come !**

Then on August 6, 1914 she says :

What then are the defects and imperfections preventing the offering from being complete enough for Thee

to welcome it or to find the holocaust worthy of Thy acceptance?... There are still limitations in this being, wilt Thou not break them?

O Lord, we know that it is a grave hour for the earth; those who can be Thy intermediaries with her to make arise out of the conflict a greater harmony and out of the obscure ugliness a diviner beauty, must be ready to do it. O Lord, eternal Master, we implore Thee, respond to our endeavours, enlighten them, show us the way, give us the strength to break the inner resistances, to surmount all obstacles.

O my sweet Master, I prostrate myself at Thy feet and all my being cries to Thee in an ardent supplication.... Deliver me from my personal impotence.⁷

Then on 8th August, 1914 she again appeals to the Lord :

Monstrous forces have swept down upon the earth like a hurricane, they are dark and violent, powerful and blind. Give us the force, O Lord, to illumine them. Thy splendour must burst forth in them everywhere and transfigure their action: after their devastating passage they must leave behind them a divine seed.

O my divine Master, do not reject my offering. Make me worthy of being integrally Thine in the plenitude of the giving and of the manifestation.⁸

Even though it was a grim and terrible hour in the history of the earth, the Mother does not despair. She realises the deeper purpose of the war and moreover the Lord has given her the certitude of victory. On 17th August, 1914 she says :

All errors, all prejudices, all misunderstandings must disappear in this whirlwind of destruction which is sweeping away the past.... The light must become perfectly pure, free from all limitations, so that Thou canst manifest fully in it. Lord, Thou hast the power and Thou wilt realise this supreme miracle.

Into this consciousness, Thou hast put the certitude of victory.⁹

The Mother knew the anguish through which the world was passing. She prays to the Lord on August 21, 1914:

O Lord, Lord, the whole earth is convulsed; she groans and suffers, she is in anguish.... It must not be that all this suffering has fallen upon her in vain; grant that all this blood which has been poured may produce a more rapid germination of all the seeds of beauty, light and love which have to flower and cover the earth with their rich harvest. From the depth of this abyss of darkness, the integral terrestrial being cries to Thee that Thou mayst give it air and light; it stifles, wilt Thou not come to its aid?

O Lord, what must we do to Triumph?

Listen to us, for we must conquer at any cost. Break down all resistance: appear!¹⁰

On August 25, 1914 she implores:

O Lord, this earth groans and suffers; chaos has made this world its abode.

The Darkness is so great that Thou alone canst dispel it. Come, manifest Thyself that Thy work may be accomplished.¹¹

On August 31, 1914 The Mother indicates her knowledge of a great Divine working behind the destruction caused by the war:

In this formidable disorder and terrible destruction can be seen a great working, a necessary toil preparing the earth for a new sowing which will rise in marvellous spikes of grain and give to the world the shining harvest of a new race.... The vision is clear and precise, the plan of Thy divine law so plainly traced that peace has come back and installed itself as a sovereign in the hearts of the workers. There are no more doubts and hesitations, no longer any

anguish or impatience. There is only the grand straight line of the work eternally accomplishing itself in spite of all, against all, despite all contrary appearances and illusory detours. These physical personalities, moments unseizable in the infinite Becoming, know that they will have made humanity take one further step, infallibly and without care for the inevitable results, whatever be the apparent momentary consequences: they unite themselves with Thee, O Master eternal, they unite themselves with Thee, O Mother universal, and in this double identity with That which is beyond and That which is all the manifestation, they taste the infinite joy of the perfect Certitude.¹²

On September 4, 1914 the Mother prays on behalf of the whole earth :

Darkness has descended upon earth, dense, violent, victorious. . . . All is sorrow, panic and destruction in the physical world, and the splendour of the light of Thy love seems darkened by a veil of mourning. . . .

O sweet Mother, I melt into Thee with an immense love, in an intense supplication to the Lord of all things, that He may show us our route, that He may trace the path of His work, so that we may walk boldly upon it.

Time presses : O Lord, the powers divine must come to the succour of he anguished earth.¹³

She got an unequivocal reply from the Lord, September 5, 1914 :

"Turn and face the danger !", Thou hast said to me, "Why dost thou wish to turn thy look away or fly far from action, away from the fight, into a profound contemplation of Truth? It is its integral manifestation that has to be realised, it is its victory over all the obstacles of blind ignorance and obscure hostility. Look straight at the danger and it will vanish before the Power."

O Lord, I have understood the weakness of this most external nature which is always ready to surrender to Matter and to escape, as a compensation, into a supreme intellectual and spiritual independence. But Thou expectest from us action, and action does not allow of such an attitude. It is not enough to triumph even in the most material worlds. We must not run away from the difficulty or the obstacle because we have the power to do so by taking shelter in the consciousness where there are no longer any obstacles. . . . We must look the danger straight in the face, with a faith in Thy Omnipotence and Thy Omnipotence will triumph.

Give me integrally the heart of a fighter, O Lord and Thy victory is sure.

"To conquer at any cost" must be the present motto. Not because we are attached to the work and its results, not because we are in need of such an action, not because we are incapable of escaping from all contingencies.

But because such is Thy command to us. But because the time has come for Thy triumph upon earth. But because Thou wilt an integral victory.

And in an infinite love for the world . . . let us fight !¹⁴

The outer war, which was the reflection of an inner turmoil, continued. For the Mother all the outward manifestations were intimately connected with the invisible occult as well as Divine forces. But Mother received an assurance which removed all anxiety and gloom. On September 25, 1914 she writes :

O Divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible? The hour of realisation is near and Thou hast assured us of Thy aid that we may accomplish integrally the supreme Will.

Thou hast accepted us as fit intermediaries between the unthinkable realities and the relativities of

the physical world, and Thy constant presence in our midst is a token of Thy active collaboration.

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute :

A new Light shall break upon the earth,

A new world shall be born,

And the things that were announced shall be fulfilled.¹⁵

Due to the exigencies of the war Mother had to go back to France. She left Pondicherry the day after her birthday, on 22nd February, 1917. It was an extremely painful experience. She writes on March 3, 1915 on board the ship **Kaga Maru** !

Solitude, a harsh, intense solitude, and always this strong impression of having been flung headlong into an inferno of darkness ! Never at any moment of my life, in any circumstances have I felt myself living in surroundings so entirely opposite to all that I am conscious of as true, so contrary to all that is the essence of my life. Sometimes when the impression and the contrast grow very intense, I cannot prevent my total submission from taking a hue of melancholy, and the calm and mute converse with the Master within is transformed for a moment into an invocation almost suppliant, "O Lord, what have I done that Thou throwest me thus into the sombre night?" But at once the aspiration becomes more ardent, "Spare this being all weakening; grant that it may be the docile and clear-eyed instrument of Thy work, whatever that work may be."

For the moment the clear perception is missing : never was the future more veiled. So far as the destiny of the individual is concerned, it looks as if we were advancing towards a high and impenetrable wall. As regards the destinies of the nations and of the earth, they appear more clearly. But of them it is futile to speak; the future will clearly reveal them to the eyes of all, even of the most blind.¹⁶

The Mother was voyaging away from her true home, Pondicherry. On March 4, 1915 she says:

Always the same harsh solitude... but it is not painful, rather the contrary. In it is revealed more clearly the infinite and pure love in which the whole earth is immersed. Through this love all is alive and vibrates, the darkest shadows seem to become translucent and let its streams flow through them, and the most intense pain is transformed into a potent bliss.

Each turn of the helix upon the deep ocean appears to carry me farther from my true destiny, from that which best expresses the divine Will; each hour that passes seems to plunge me back more and more into that past with which I had severed connection, sure of being called to new and vaster realisations; everything appears to draw me back towards a state of things totally contrary to the life of my soul, although it reigns uncontested over the external activities; and in spite of the apparent sadness of the individual situation, the consciousness is so strongly established in a world which on all sides overpasses the personal limits, that the whole being exults in a constant perception of power and love.

Tomorrow is obscure and illegible in the material fact; no light, ever so feeble, reveals to my bewildered sight the indication, the presence of the Divine. But something in the depths of my consciousness turns to the Invisible and Sovereign Witness and says to Him, "Thou plungest me, O Lord, into the most opaque darkness; it must be then because Thou hast so firmly established Thy light in me that Thou knowest it will stand the perilous test. Hast Thou chosen me for descending into the vortex of this hell as Thy torch-bearer? Hast Thou deemed my heart strong enough not to fail, my hand firm enough not to tremble? And yet my individual being feels powerless and weak; when Thou dost not manifest Thy Presence, it is more poorly equipped than the majority of those who do not know or who disregard Thee. In Thee alone is its strength and its capacity. If Thou art pleased to use it, nothing will be too

difficult to accomplish, no task too vast and complex. But if Thou withdrawest, there is left only a poor child capable solely of nestling in Thy arms and sleeping there that sweet dreamless sleep in which nothing exists save Thou alone."²⁷

For a few days, she had some peace of mind. Then she went through a painful ordeal. On March 7, 1914 she writes :

The time of the sweet silence of the mind is past, the time, so peaceful and pure, through which was felt the profound will expressing itself in the all-powerful truth. Now the will is no longer perceived and the mind, having necessarily become active, analyses, classifies, judges, chooses, reacts constantly as a transforming agent on all that is imposed on the individuality which has been widened to be in relation with a world infinitely vast, complex and mixed of shadow and light, like all that belongs to the earth. It is an exile from all spiritual happiness, and of all ordeals, O Lord, this is certainly the most painful that Thou canst impose; above all, the withdrawal of Thy will, which seems to be a sign of total disapprobation. Strong is the growing sense of rejection and it needs all the ardour of a faith that nothing can weary, to guard the external consciousness, thus abandoned to itself, from invasion by an irremediable sorrow.

But it refuses to despair, it refuses to believe that the misfortune is irreparable; it waits with humility in an obscure and hidden effort and struggle for the breath of Thy perfect joy to penetrate it again. And, perhaps, each of its modest and secret victories is a true help brought to the earth.

If it were possible to come definitively out of this external consciousness, to take refuge in the divine consciousness. . . . But that Thou hast forbidden and still and always forbiddest : no light out of the world; the burden of darkness and ugliness must be borne to the end, even if all divine help seems to be with-

drawn. I must remain in the heart of the night and walk on, even without any inner compass, beacon-light or guide.

I will not even implore Thy mercy, for what Thou willest for me, I too will. All my energy strains solely to advance, always to advance, step by step, despite the depth of the darkness and the obstacles of the way; whatever happens, O Lord, it is with a fervent and unchanging love that Thy decision will be welcomed. And even if Thou hast found the instrument unfit to serve Thee, the instrument no longer belongs to itself, it is Thine. . . . Thou canst destroy or magnify it; by itself it does not exist, and it wills nothing, it can do nothing, without Thee.¹⁸

Arriving at Lunel Mother fell seriously ill. She was almost on the verge of death, but her inner work continued without disturbance.

During this period Mother and Sri Aurobindo exchanged some letters. By offering baits and giving out threats the government tried to make Sri Aurobindo leave Pondicherry. He wrote to Mother on 6th May, 1915 :

All is always for the best, but it is sometimes from the external point of view an awkward best. . . .

The whole earth is now under one law and answers to the same vibrations and I am sceptical of finding any place where the clash of the struggle will not pursue us. In any case, an effective retirement does not seem to be my destiny. I must remain in touch with the world until I have either mastered adverse circumstances or succumbed or carried on the struggle between the spiritual and physical so far as I am destined to carry it on. This is how I have always seen things and will see them. As for failure, difficulty and apparent impossibility I am too much habituated to them to be much impressed by their constant self-presentation except for passing moments. . . .

One needs to have a calm heart, a settled will, entire self-abnegation and the eyes constantly fixed on the beyond to live undiscouraged in times like these which are truly a period of universal decomposition. For myself, I follow the Voice and look neither to right nor to left of me. The result is not mine and hardly at all now even the labour.²⁰

And later he writes on 20 May, 1915 :

Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the Yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, "Heaven and Earth equal and one."²⁰

We find this same idea in Mother's diary, on 31st July, 1915:

The heavens have been definitively conquered, and nothing and nobody has the power to take them from me. But the conquest of the earth has yet to be made; it is going on in the very heart of the turmoil, and, even when achieved, will still be relative; in this world its victories are but stages leading progressively towards still more glorious victories; and what Thy Will makes my mind conceive as the goal to be attained, the conquest to be realised, is only one simple element of Thy eternal plan; but in the perfect union I am this plan and this Will and I taste the supreme bliss of the infinite, even while I play with ardour, precision and energy, in the world of division, the special play Thou hast entrusted to me.

Thy power in me is like a fountain, strong and fertilising, which clamours behind the rocks, accumulating its energies to break down the obstacle and gush forth freely to the exterior, pouring over the plain to fertilise it. What will be the hour of its emergence? When the moment will come, it will leap forth, and time and the hour are nothing in Eternity. But what words can tell the immensity of joy caused by this inner accumulation, this deep concentration of all the forces docile to the manifestation of Thy Will of tomorrow, preparing to spread over the world, drowning in their sovereign floods all

that persists in their will to be always an expression of Thy Will of yesterday, in order to take possession of the earth in Thy Name and offer it to Thee as a completer image of Thyself!

Thou hast said that the earth would die, and it will die to its old ignorance.

Thou hast said that the earth would live, and it will live in the renewal of Thy Power.

What words will ever tell the splendour of Thy Law and the magnificence of Thy Glory! What words will express the Perfection of Thy Consciousness and the infinite Bliss of Thy Love!

What words can sing Thy Ineffable Peace and celebrate the Majesty of Thy Silence and the Grandeur of Thy omnipotent Truth!

The whole manifested world cannot speak Thy splendour and recount Thy marvels, and in the eternity of time, it is this which it has been trying to do more and more, better and better, eternally.²¹

Writing on 28th July 1915, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the struggle going on all over the world:

Everything internal is ripe or ripening, but there is a sort of locked struggle in which neither side can make a very appreciable advance (somewhat like the trench warfare in Europe), the spiritual force, insisting against the resistance disputing every inch and making more or less effective counter-attacks.... And if there were not the strength and Ananda within, it would be harassing and disgusting work; but the eye of knowledge looks beyond and sees that it is only a retracted episode.²²

And on 16 September, 1915, he says:

Nothing seems able to disturb the immobility of things and all that is active outside our own selves is a sort of welter of dark and sombre confusion from which nothing formed or luminous can emerge.

It is a singular condition of the world, the very definition of chaos with the superficial form of the old world resting apparently intact on the surface. But a chaos of long disintegration or of some early new birth? It is the thing yet without any approach to a decision.²³

In her letter of November 26, 1915, Mother tells Sri Aurobindo about an experience :

The entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity.

Then was the physical body seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made little by little even in the most material sensation all personal limits fall away. The being progressively, methodically, grew in greatness, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity. It was, as it were, a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in etherial space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Personality, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to Her in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss. Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, in its totality immobile, in its internal complexity moving infinitely. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being standing on a many-headed serpent whose body coiled infinitely around the universe. The Being in an eternal gesture of triumph mastered and created as one and the same time the serpent and the universe that issued from it; erect on the serpent he dominated it with all his victorious

might, and the same gesture that crushed the hydra, enveloping the universe, gave it eternal birth. Then the consciousness became this Being and perceived that its form was changing once more; it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms, something which, immutable, sees,—the Eye, the Witness. And what It sees, is. Then this last vestige of form disappeared and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration, by successive gradations, but directly, without passing again through the universal and terrestrial forms. And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture, without any intermediary, of the supreme and eternal Witness.²⁴

To which Sri Aurobindo replied on 31st December, 1915 :

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense, though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves Yogic. It is the union of the "Earth" of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which the world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.²⁵

In his last letter Sri Aurobindo writes to Mother on 26th June, 1916 :

The difficulties you find in the spiritual progress are common to us all. In this yoga the progress is always attended with these relapses into the ordinary mentality until the whole being is so remoulded that it can no longer be effected either by any downward tendency in our own nature or by the impressions

from the discordant world outside or even by the mental state of those associated with us most closely in the yoga. The ordinary yoga is usually concentrated on a single aim and therefore less exposed to such recoils; ours is so complex and many-sided and embraces such large aims that we cannot expect any smooth progress until we near the completion of an effort,—especially as all the hostile forces in the spiritual world are in a constant state of opposition and besiege our gains; for the complete victory of a single one of us would mean a general downfall among them. In fact by our own unaided effort we could not hope to succeed. It is only in proportion as we come into a more and more universal communion with the Highest that we can hope to overcome with any finality. For myself I have had to come back so often from things that seemed to have been securely gained that it is only relatively that I can say of any part of my yoga, "It is done". Still I have always found that when I recover from one of these recoils, it is always with a new spiritual gain which might have been neglected or missed if I had remained securely in my former state of partial satisfaction. Especially, as I have long had the map of my advance sketched out before me, I am able to measure my progress at each step and the particular losses are compensated for by the clear consciousness of the general advance that has been made. The final goal is far but the progress made in the face of so constant and massive an opposition is the guarantee of its being gained in the end. But the time is in other hands than ours. Therefore I have put impatience and dissatisfaction far away from me.

An absolute equality of the mind and heart and a clear purity and calm strength in all the members of the being have long been the primary condition on which the power working in me has insisted with an inexhaustible patience and an undeviating constancy of will which rejects all the efforts of other powers to hasten forward to the neglect of these first requisites. Wherever they are impaired it returns upon them and works over and again over the weak

points like a workman patiently mending the defects of his work. These seem to me to be the foundation and condition of all the rest. As they become firmer and more complete the system is more able to hold consistently and vividly the settled perception of the One in all things and beings, in all qualities, forces, happenings, in all this world-consciousness and the play of its workings. That founds the Unity and upon it the deep satisfaction and growing rapture of the Unity. It is this to which our nature is most recalcitrant. It persists in the division, in the qualities, in the sorrow and unsatisfied passion and labour, it finds it difficult to accustom itself to the divine largeness, joy and equipoise—especially the vital and material parts of our nature; it is they that pull down the mind which has accepted and even when it has long lived in the joy and peace and oneness. That, I suppose, is why the religions and philosophies have had so strong a leaning to the condemnation of Life and Matter and aimed at an escape instead of a victory. But the victory has to be won; the rebellious elements have to be redeemed and transformed, not rejected or excised.

When the Unity has been well founded, the static half of our work is done but the active half remains. It is then that in the One we must see the Master and His Power,—Krishna and Kali as I name them using the terms of our Indian religions; the Power occupying the whole of myself and my nature which becomes Kali and ceases to be anything else, the Master using, directing, enjoying the Power to his ends, not mine, with that which I call myself only as a centre of his universal existence and responding to its working as a soul to the Soul, taking upon itself his image until there is nothing left but Krishna and Kali. This is the stage I have reached in spite of all set-backs and recoils, imperfectly indeed in the secureness and intensity of the state, but well enough in the general type. When that has been done, then we may hope to found securely the play in us of his divine Knowledge governing the action of divine Power. The rest is the full opening up of

the different planes of his world-play and the subjection of Matter and the body and the material world to the law of the higher heavens of the Truth. To these things towards which in my earlier ignorance I used to press forward impatiently before satisfying the first conditions—the effort, however, was necessary and made the necessary preparation of the material instruments—I can now only look forward as a subsequent eventuality in a yet distant vista of things.

To possess securely the Light and the Force of the Supramental being, this is the main object to which the power is now returning. But the remnant of the old habits of intellectual thought and mental will come so obstinate in their determination to remain that the progress is hampered, uncertain and always falls back from the little achievement already effected. They are no longer within me, they are blind, stupid, mechanical, incorrigible even when they perceive their incompetence, but they crowd round the mind and pour in their suggestions whenever it tries to remain open only to the supramental Light and the Command, so that the Knowledge and the Will reach the mind in a confused, distorted and often misleading form. It is, however, only a question of time: the siege will diminish in force and be finally dispelled.²⁰

In the beginning of June Mother went to Japan and lived there for about four years. It was in Japan that she came into contact with Mr. Pearson, Andrews and Rabindranath Tagore, who invited her to return to India and live at his home and school, Shanti Niketan.

The Mother has told us about some of her experiences in Japan. One is about the spirit of Fire:

I saw the spirit of fire, particularly in Japan because fire is an extraordinary thing in that country. When a fire starts, some eighty houses burn: a whole quarter. It is something fantastic. The houses are of wood and they burn like match-boxes; you see a fire

kindling and then all of a sudden puff! . . . You have never seen a match-box catching fire? a flash! like that, a flash! one, two, three, ten, twenty houses burnt down before my eyes! . . . So there are spirits of fire. One day, I was in my bed. I was concentrating, looking at people. Suddenly I saw something like a cloud of flames drawing close to the house. I looked and I saw it was a conscious being.

—Eh! what are you here for?

—I have a right to burn the house, start a fire.

—That's possible, I told it, but not here.

And it could not resist.

It is a question of who proves the stronger. I said: "No, here you can't burn, that's all!" Five minutes later I heard cries: "Ah! Ah!" Two or three houses farther away, a house had caught fire. It had gone there as I had forbidden it to come to my house. It had a claim to one house. There we are! ²⁷

In this connection it may be interesting to narrate her experience of the spirit of Death:

Yes, I call it the spirit of Death. I know it very well. And that is an extraordinary organisation. You do not know to what an extent it is organised.

I believe there are many of these spirits of death, I believe there are hundreds. I have met at least two of them. One I met in France and the other in Japan, and they were very different; which leads one to believe that probably in accordance with the mental culture, the education, the country and beliefs there should be different spirits. But there are spirits of all the manifestations of Nature: there are spirits of fire, spirits of air, of water, of rain, of wind; and there are spirits of death.

Each spirit of death, whatever it may be, has a claim to a certain number of deaths per day. Indeed it is a fantastic organisation; it is a kind of alliance between the vital forces and the forces of Nature.

For example, if the spirit of death has decided: "That is the number of people to which I am entitled", let us say four or five or six, or one or two persons, it depends on the day; it has decided that certain persons would die, it goes straight and settles down beside the person about to die. But if you happen to be conscious (not the person), if you see the spirit going to a person and you do not want him to die, then you can, if you possess a certain occult power, tell it: "No, I forbid you to take him." It is a thing that has happened, not once but several times, in Japan and here. It was not the same spirit. That is what makes me say that there must be many.

—I don't want him to die.

—But I have a right to one death!

—Go and find someone who is ready to die.

So I have seen several cases: sometimes it is just a neighbour who dies suddenly in place of the other, sometimes it is an acquaintance and sometimes it is an enemy. Naturally, there is a relation, good or bad, of neighbourhood (or anything else) which externally looks like chance. But it is the spirit who had taken its dead. The spirit has a claim to one death, it will have one death. You can tell it: "I forbid you take this one", and have the power of sending it away, and the spirit can do nothing but go away; but it does not give up its due and goes elsewhere. There is another death.²⁸

An equally interesting experience is about the occult battle she fought while on the verge of death, due to an attack of influenza. She says:

I was in Japan. It was at the beginning of January 1919. Anyway, it was the time when a terrible flu raged there in the whole of Japan, which killed hundreds of thousands of people. It was one of those epidemics the like of which is rarely seen. In Tokyo, every day there were hundreds and hundreds of new cases. The disease appeared to take this turn: it lasted three days and on the third day the patient

died. And people died in such large numbers that they could not even be cremated, you understand, it was impossible, there were too many of them. Or otherwise, if one did not die on the third day, at the end of seven days one was altogether cured: a little exhausted but all the same completely cured. There was a panic in the town, for epidemics are very rare in Japan. They are a very clean people, very careful and with a fine morale. Illnesses are very rare. But still this came, it came as a catastrophe. There was a terrible fear. For example, people were seen walking about in the streets with a mask on the nose, a mask to purify the air they were breathing, so that it might not be full of the microbes of the illness. It was a common fear. . . . Now, it so happened I was living with someone who never ceased troubling me: "But what is this disease? What is there behind this disease?" What I was doing, you know, was simply to cover myself with my force, my protection so as not to catch it and I did not think of it any more and continued doing my work. Nothing happened and I was not thinking of it. But constantly I heard: "What is this? Oh, I would like to know what is there behind this illness. But could you not tell me what this illness is, why it is there? . . ." etc. One day I was called to the other end of the town by a young woman whom I knew and who wished to introduce me to some friends and show me certain things: I do not remember now what exactly was the matter, but anyway I had to cross the whole town in a tram-car. And I was in the tram and seeing these people with masks on their noses, and then there was in the atmosphere this constant fear, and so there came a suggestion to me; I began to ask myself: "Truly, what is this illness? What is there behind this illness? What are the forces that are in this illness? . . ." I came to the house, I passed an hour there and I returned. And I returned with a terrible fever. I had caught it. It came to you thus, without preparation, instantaneously. Illnesses, generally illnesses from germs and microbes take a few days in the system: they come, there is a little battle inside; you win or you lose, if you lose you catch the

illness, it is not complicated. But there, you just receive a letter, open the envelope, hop! puff! The next minute you have the fever. Well, that evening I had a terrible fever. The doctor was called (it was not I who called him), the doctor was called and he told me: "I must absolutely give you this medicine." It was one of the best medicines for the fever, he had just a little (all their stocks were exhausted, everyone was taking it); he said: "I have still a few packets, I shall give you some"—"I beg of you, do not give it to me, I won't take it. Keep it for someone who has faith in it and will take it." He was quite disgusted: "It was no use my coming here." So I said: "Perhaps it was no use!" And I remained in my bed, with my fever, a violent fever. All the while I was asking myself: "What is this illness? Why is it there? What is there behind it?..." At the end of the second day, as I was lying alone, I saw clearly a being, with a part of the head cut off, in a military uniform (or the remains of a military uniform) approaching me and suddenly flinging himself upon my chest with that half a head to suck my force. I took a good look, then realised that I was about to die. He was drawing all my life out (for I must tell you that people were dying of pneumonia in three days). I was completely nailed to the bed, without movement, in a deep trance. I could no longer stir and he was pulling. I thought: now it is the end. Then I called on my occult power, I gave a big fight and I succeeded in turning him back so that he could not stay there any longer. And I woke up.

But I had seen. And I had learnt, I had understood that the illness originated from beings who had been thrown out of their bodies. I had seen this during the First Great War, towards its end, when people used to live in trenches and were killed by bombardment. They were in perfect health, altogether healthy and in a second they were thrown out of their bodies, not conscious that they were dead. They did not know they hadn't a body any more and they tried to find in others the life they could not find in

themselves. That is, they were turned into so many countless vampires. And they vampirised upon men. And then over and above that, there was a decomposition of the vital forces of people who fell ill and died. One lived in a kind of sticky and thick cloud made up of all that. And so those who took in this cloud fell ill and usually got cured, but those who were attacked by a being of that kind invariably died, they could not resist. I know how much knowledge and force were necessary for me to resist. It was irresistible. That is, if they were attacked by a being who was a centre of this whirl of bad forces, they died. And there must have been many of these, a very great number. I saw all that and I understood.

When someone came to see me, I asked to be left alone, I lay quietly in my bed and I passed two or three days absolutely quiet, in concentration, with my consciousness. Subsequently, a friend of ours (a Japanese, a very good friend) came and told me: "Ah! you were ill? So what I thought was true. . . . Just imagine for the last two or three days, there hasn't been a single new case of illness in the town and most to the people who were ill have been cured and the number of deaths has become almost negligible, and now it is all over. The illness is wholly under control." Then I narrated what had happened to me and he went and narrated it to everybody. They even published articles about it in the papers.²⁰

CHAPTER 8

BACK TO PONDICHERRY

The Mother came to India the second time on April 24th, 1920. Later, on this day, in the year 1937, she described her return to Pondicherry as "the tangible sign of sure victory over the adverse forces." In the beginning she was staying in the Hotel Magrie, now renamed the Hotel d'Europe. From there she moved to Subbu Hotel and then to house No. 1, Rue St. Martin, which is now known as Guest House. The name justifies itself since a very special guest lived in it.

On November 24, 1920, there was a great tempest followed by heavy rainfall. Water began to leak from the terraced roof of the house and the rain did not abate. In the early part of the evening, the roof of a godown in Rue d'Orleans, opposite to the Vinayak temple, collapsed owing to heavy percolation of water into the roof. Sri Aurobindo came to know about the leaking of water in the house where the Mother was staying with Datta. In order to avoid any unpleasant accident he considered it safer for them to remove to No. 41, Rue Francois Martin, at least as a precautionary measure. The removal began at eight in the evening and went on till midnight. The remaining articles were removed next morning. Ever since, the Mother has remained in the same house with Sri Aurobindo.

Six years after, the day which became known as the Siddhi-day fell on the same date,—24th of November (1926). The date seems to be as significant an event as his birthday, 15th of August....

It was at the end of this year that in reply to a request the Mother wrote in letter form a few lines in a Magazine from Chandernagore. The title was "How I became conscious of my mission".

The Mother's Letter

"When and how did I become conscious of a mission, which I was to fulfil on earth? And when and how I met Sri Aurobindo?"

These two questions you have asked me and I promised a short reply.

For the knowledge of the mission, it is difficult to say when it came to me. It is as though I was born with it, and following the growth of the mind and brain, the precision and completeness of this consciousness grew also.

Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of meeting with Him, or revealing Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me, during my body's sleep, by several teachers some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane. Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and physical relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and pregnant, and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time, I was led to call him Krishna and henceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.

In the year 1910, my husband came alone to Pondicherry where under very interesting and peculiar circumstances, he made the acquaintance of Sri Aurobindo. Since then we both strongly wished to return to India, the country which I had always cherished as my true mother-country and in 1914 this joy was granted to us.

As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo, I recognised him as the well-known being whom I used to call Krishna... and this is enough to explain why I am fully convinced that my place and my work are near him in India.²

Mother's arrival made a very visible change in the household. Everything became neat and clean and orderly. Evidently it was her Mahasaraswati and Mahalaksmi aspects at work.

For example, proper arrangements were made for Sri Aurobindo's bath and food. Beauty and simplicity were united in his daily life. She used to look after every little detail.

Nolini had seen how things were before Mother came and what shape they took after her arrival. He says in his **Reminiscences** :

We do not always notice how very disorderly we are : our belongings and household effects are in a mess, our actions are haphazard, and in our inner life we are as disorderly as in our outer life.... If the brain is a market-place, the heart is no better than a madhouse.... One of the things the Mother has been trying to teach us both by her word and example is this, namely, that to keep our outer life and its materials in proper order and neat and tidy is a very necessary element in our life on earth.... The Mother taught us to use our things with care.... She uses things not merely with care but with love and affection.³

Those who lived with Sri Aurobindo regarded him more as a friend and comrade. They felt that he was great but their behaviour towards him was mainly one of friendship and respect. The Mother has said that she cannot exist without him and he cannot manifest without her. On 1st January, 1922, Mother took full responsibility of looking after Sri Aurobindo's house. It was Mother who first

showed people how to behave, how to talk and how to prepare oneself for receiving his grace.

In 1925 Sri Aurobindo said on his birthday :

I am not doing an isolated yoga. . . . It is true that my yoga is not for humanity; but it is not for myself either; of course, my attaining to the Siddhi is the preliminary condition to others being able to attain it.⁴

CHAPTER 9

THE DAY ARRIVES

To quote Purani who was present at that time :

Days, months and years passed; but Sri Aurobindo did not seem at all in a hurry to begin his work. He was all along preparing the possibility of the descent of the Higher Power. The resistance of the powers of Ignorance against any such attempt is naturally immense. In one evening talk he said that he was engaged in the tremendous task of opening up the physical cells to the Divine Light and the resistance of the Inconscient was formidable. When one knows that all this Herculean labour was undertaken not for himself but for humanity, for making a new departure for man in the course of his evolution then one feels that the words he used for Savitri "The world unknowing, for the world she stood"—are so apposite in his own case. It was therefore natural that when by the grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the disciples also felt the nearness of the descent, their hearts should be full of expectant and concentrated enthusiasm.

At last the great day arrived. From the beginning of November the pressure of the Higher Power began to be unbearable. The day for which the Mother had been waiting for so many long years came on the 24th November. The sun had almost set, and everyone was occupied with his own activity—some had gone out to the seaside for a walk when the Mother sent round word to all the disciples to assemble as soon as possible in the verandah where the usual meditation was held. It did

not take long for the message to go round to all. By six o'clock most of the disciples had gathered. It was becoming dark. In the verandah on the wall near Sri Aurobindo's door, just behind his chair, a black silk curtain with gold lace work representing three Chinese dragons was hung. The three dragons were so represented that the tail of one reached up to the mouth of the other and the three of them covered the curtain from end to end. We came to know afterwards that there is a prophecy in China that the Truth will manifest itself on earth when the three dragons (the dragons of the earth, of the mind region and of the sky) meet. To-day on the 24th of November the Truth was descending and the hanging of the curtain was significant.

There was a deep silence in the atmosphere after the disciples had gathered there. Many saw an oceanic flood of Light rushing down from above. Everyone present felt a kind of pressure above his head. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with some electrical energy. In that silence, in that atmosphere full of concentrated expectation and aspiration, in the electrically charged atmosphere, the usual, yet on this day quite unusual, tick was heard behind the door of the entrance. Expectation rose in a flood. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be seen through the half-opened door. The Mother with the gesture of the eyes requested Sri Aurobindo to step out first. Sri Aurobindo with a similar gesture suggested to her to do the same. With a slow dignified step the Mother came out first followed by Sri Aurobindo with his majestic gait. The small table that used to be in front of Sri Aurobindo's chair was removed this day. The Mother sat on a small stool to his right.

Silence absolute, living silence—not merely living but overflowing with divinity. The meditation lasted about forty-five minutes. After that one, by one the disciples bowed to the Mother.

She and Sri Aurobindo gave blessings to them. Whenever a disciple bowed to the Mother Sri Aurobindo's right hand came forward behind the Mother's

as if blessing him through the Mother. After the blessings, in the same silence there was a short meditation.

In the interval of silent meditation and blessings many had distinct experiences. When all was over they felt as if they had awakened from a divine dream. Then they felt the grandeur, the poetry and the absolute beauty of the occasion. It was not as if a handful of disciples were receiving blessings from their Supreme Master and the Mother in one little corner of the earth. The significance of the occasion was far greater than that. It was certain that a Higher Consciousness had descended on earth. In that deep silence had burgeoned forth, like the sprout of a Banyan tree, the beginning of a mighty spiritual work. This momentous occasion carried its significance to all in the divine dynamism of the silence, in its unearthly dignity and grandeur and in the utter beauty of its every little act. The deep impress of divinity which everyone got was for him a priceless treasure.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother went inside. Immediately Datta was inspired. In that silence she spoke: "The Lord has descended into the physical to-day."

That the November 24th should be given an importance equal to that of the birth-days of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is quite proper because on that day the descent of the Higher Power symbolic of the victory of their mission took place. The Delight consciousness in the Overmind which Sri Krishna incarnated—as Avatar—descended on this day into the physical rendering possible the descent of the Supermind in Matter.

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Of this descent Sri Aurobindo wrote on several occasions afterwards. In October 1935 he wrote the following:

"The 24th November, 1926 was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supra-

mental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind God-head preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the overmind leading it towards his Ananda."¹

CHAPTER 10

ASHRAM (1)

When Sri Aurobindo came to his "cave of tapasya in Pondicherry", he had no idea of starting an ashram. Some young men came to stay with him and they were living more as friends and companions than as disciples. It was on the ground of politics that he had come to know them and not on spiritual ground.

Perhaps the idea of the Ashram originated from the Mother. She says:

At the beginning of my present earthly existence I was put into touch with many people who said they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but were tied down, subjected, slaves of that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed down upon them so much, took away so much of their time and energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard that very often.

I was very young at that time, and always I used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world—Oh! quite a small one, but still—a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied by problems of food and lodging and clothing and the imperious necessities of life, to see if all the energies freed by this certainty of an assured material living, would spontaneously be turned towards the divine life and inner realisation. Well, towards the middle of my life at least what is generally considered the middle

of human life—the means was given to me and I could realise this, that is, create these conditions of living.¹

Before 1926 as Mother has said, there was “a collection of individuals...without a collective organisation.... One could say it had a general value, but it was something very floating, without a collective reality.”²

And how did the actual decision to form an Ashram come about? She says:

This is the first question that arose when I met Sri Aurobindo.

Should we do an intensive sadhana withdrawing from the world, that is to say, having no contact with others any more, and arrive at the goal, then, thereafter deal with others? Or should one allow all those others to come who have the same aspiration, let the group form itself in a natural and spontaneous way and march all together towards the goal? The two possibilities were there.

The decision was not a mental choice, not at all. Quite naturally, spontaneously the group formed and asserted itself as an imperative necessity. There was no choice to be made.³

Sri Aurobindo has written:

This Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit.⁴

With this ideal in view Mother began the Herculean task. As she says:

All our endeavour is to make this consciousness and this will govern our lives and action and organise all our activities.... Since 1926 when Sri Aurobindo

retired and gave me full charge of it... all has grown up and developed like the growth of a forest, and each service was created not by any artificial planning but by a living and dynamic need. This is the secret of constant growth and endless progress.⁵

To a certain disciple Sri Aurobindo has written that in India organisations are not planned beforehand. They start from a very small beginning and grow as needs and circumstances permit, whereas in the West every minute detail is foreseen and chalked out beforehand.

And how does such a big institution run? Sri Aurobindo says:

It has been an arduous and trying work for the Mother and myself to keep up this Ashram, with its ever-increasing numbers, to make both ends meet and at times to prevent deficit budgets and their results; specially in this war time, when the expenses have climbed to a dizzy fantastic height, only one accustomed to these things or who had similar responsibilities can understand what we have gone through. Carrying on anything of this magnitude without any settled income could not have been done if there had not been the working of a divine Force.⁶

And although Mother and Sri Aurobindo have left their bodies, yet they are maintaining the Ashram with a bigger number and expenses much higher than they have ever been. It is nothing short of a day-to-day miracle.

The Ashram was and is Mother and Sri Aurobindo's laboratory where the greatest and most difficult experiments are being carried out. Ancient Indians have said that human nature is like a dog's tail. It can never become straight. The modern psychologist tells you that the subconscious is like a sea. All your efforts to change human nature are in vain. The sea will swallow up everything. And yet Mother and Sri Aurobindo have decided to bring

down the highest consciousness and change the nature and the Ashram is a laboratory for that purpose.

Sri Aurobindo says :

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Ashram which is a "laboratory", as X puts it, for a spiritual and supramental yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic and cultured men come for yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical, and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of the **human being**. Those in the Ashram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.⁷

Generally those who are accustomed to a superficial view of things, expect that in the Ashram everybody should be a sample of perfection—but it is not so and it can not be so. Mother said long ago : "Each one here represents an impossibility to be solved."⁸ Each new addition to the Ashram brought new problems. Mother did not invite new problems but she did not back out when they came. According to her all the problems of the world are concentrated in India and all the problems of India are concentrated in the Ashram. We have to find a spiritual solution for all of them.

Sri Aurobindo says in the **Synthesis of Yoga** :

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."

The following letter by Sri Aurobindo clearly defines the difference between the physical life of an ordinary human being and that of a sadhak in the Ashram :

There are only two possible foundations for the material life here. One is that one is a member of an Ashram founded on the principle of self-giving and surrender. One belongs to the Divine and all one has belongs to the Divine; in giving one gives not what is one's own but what already belongs to the Divine. There is no question of payment or return, no bargain, no room for demand and desire."⁹

The Ashram had few rules as such. Sri Aurobindo writes to a new sadhak about them :

A sadhak in the Ashram is expected to observe the following conditions :

All physical sexual relation or connection between sadhak and sadhika are absolutely forbidden and inadmissible in the Ashram.

All vital relations of a sexual character are contrary to the sadhana and must also be given up by those who wish to stay in the Ashram and progress in the Yoga.

Even a husband and wife must stop all conjugal relations and regard each other as fellow-sadhaks only and not as husband and wife. It is not as man and woman that the sadhaks are here; they have not come here to continue or to form vital or physical sexual relations between themselves under any pretext but to practise Yoga.

Any sadhak forming vital relation with others under the pretext of a psychic or spiritual relation is deceiving himself and violating the Truth and breaking the rule of the Yoga.

No sadhak should worship another sadhak or look on him as the embodied Divine; such movements are contrary to the sadhana and to the discipline of the Ashram and create false movements in the atmosphere.¹¹

Speaking about the differences between other sadhanas and Sri Aurobindo's sadhana the Mother says :

The usual Sadhanas have for their aim union with the Supreme Consciousness (Sat-chit-ananda). And they who reach there, are satisfied with their own liberation and leave the world to its unhappy plight. On the contrary, Sri Aurobindo's Sadhana starts where the others end. Once the union with the Supreme is realised, one must bring down that realisation to the external world and change the conditions of life upon the earth until a total transformation is accomplished. In accordance with this aim, the Sadhaks of the Integral Yoga do not retire from the world to lead a life of contemplation and meditation. Each one must devote at least one-third of his time to a useful work. All activities are represented in the Ashram and each one chooses the work most congenial to his nature, but must do it in a spirit of service and unselfishness, keeping always in view the aim of integral transformation.

To make this purpose possible the Ashram is organised in such a way that all its inmates find their reasonable needs satisfied and have not to worry about their subsistence.

The rules are very few so that each one can enjoy the freedom needed for his development; but a few things are strictly forbidden; they are—(1) politics, (2) smoking, (3) alcoholic drink and (4) sex enjoyment.

Great care is taken for the maintenance of good health and the welfare and normal growth of the body of all, small and big, young and old. The education given seeks an all-round mental development and is based upon the teaching and ideal of Sri Aurobindo.

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There is in the Ashram no exterior discipline and no visible test. But the inner test is severe and constant, one must be very sincere in the aspiration to surmount all egoism and to conquer all vanity in order to be able to stay here. A complete surrender is not outwardly exacted but it is indispensable for those who wish to stick on, and many things come to test the sincerity of this surrender. However, the Grace and the help are always there for those who aspire for them and their power is limitless when received with faith and confidence.¹²

Explaining to the sadhak she says :

What we are attempting here is to prove to the world, through a concrete example, that by some inner psychological realisation and some outer organisation a world can be created where most of the causes of human misery will cease to exist.¹³

She goes on to explain the principle of complete self-giving :

We are here to work out the Divine Will, more truly, to be worked upon by the Divine Will so that we may be its instruments for the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and the establishment of His reign upon earth.¹⁴

Speaking to a group she said :

We have all met in previous lives. Otherwise we would not have come together in this life. We are one family and have worked through ages for the victory of the Divine and its manifestation upon earth.¹⁶

She continues to speak of the family :

My aim is to create a big family in which it will be possible for everyone to fully develop his capacities and express them.¹⁶

At the same time she wants us to know that :

The Ashram is meant for those who want to consecrate their lives to the Divine.¹⁷

Speaking to an enthusiast reformer perhaps, she explains why the usual experiments cannot succeed in the Ashram :

None of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view, we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies

and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unfailing trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for that purpose.¹⁸

Speaking about the total transformation for which the Ashram was created Sri Aurobindo writes :

We have undertaken a work which includes life and action and the physical world. In what I am trying to do, the spiritual realisation is the first necessity, but it cannot be complete without an outer realisation also in life, in men, in this world. Spiritual consciousness within but also spiritual life without. The Ashram as it is now is not that ideal, for that all its members have to live in a spiritual consciousness and not in the ordinary egoistic mind and mainly rajasic vital nature. But, all the same, the Ashram is a first form which our effort has taken, a field in which the preparatory work has to be done. The Mother has to maintain it and for that all this order and organisation has to be there and it cannot be done without rules and discipline. Discipline is even necessary for the overcoming of the ego and the mental preferences and the rajasic vital nature, as a help to it at any rate. If these were overcome outward rules etc. would be less necessary; spontaneous agreement, unity, harmony and spontaneous right action might take its place. But while the present

state of things exists, by the abandonment or leaving out of discipline except such as people choose or not choose to impose themselves, the result would be failure and disaster.... On that principle the work also would have gone to pot, there would have been nothing but strife, assertion by each worker of his own idea and self-will and constant clashes.¹⁹

In the Ashram work is given a very great importance. Seclusion, fasting, silence or rather not keeping outwardly silent and inaction are not given any quarter. Wherever you go you will find some activity or other. There are no rules and regulations, no list of do's and don'ts, no rewards and no punishments—yet you find the Ashram full of activity.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo says :

The work in the Ashram was not meant as a service to humanity or to a section of it called the sadhaks of the Ashram.... The work was meant as a service to the Divine and as a field for the inner opening to the Divine, surrender to the Divine alone, rejection of ego and all the ordinary vital movements and the training in a psychic elevation, selflessness, obedience, renunciation of all mental, vital or other self-assertion of the limited personality.²⁰

Mother has made it even more clear :

That was my very first basis in forming the Ashram, that the work done must be an offering to the Divine.

Instead of letting oneself go in the current of one's nature, of one's mood, one must keep constantly in mind this kind of feeling that you are a representative of the Supreme Knowledge, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Law and you must apply it in the most honest way, in the most sincere way you are capable of; then you make great progress yourself and can make others also progress.²¹

There are people who find it a little difficult to under-

stand how the Ashram can be a laboratory. They think that laboratory is meant only for science. For them here is a good word from Mother :

Do not divide what is one. Both science and spirituality have the same goal—the Supreme Divinity. The only difference between them is that the latter knows it and the other not.²²

To put it in official parlance the Ashram is an institute of research in Yoga. According to Mother :

Project : The ashram has a yogic project of research, namely, the Divinisation of human nature.

Operation : The mode of operation of this project is a change of consciousness brought about by the Descent of a New Force and the advent of a new race.

Methods : The methods have been very fully described in the various writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Assessment : The criterion for assessment of the progress of the participants in the research work is as follows :

The more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences and keeps a perfect mastery of himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.²³

As for entrance in the Ashram, Mother's reply to an aspirant can be quoted :

It is not from disgust for life and people that one must come to yoga.

It is not to run away from difficulties that one must come here.

It is not even to find the sweetness of love and protection, for the Divine's love and protection can be enjoyed everywhere if one takes the right attitude.

When one wants to give oneself totally in service to the Divine, to consecrate oneself totally to the

Divine's work, simply for the joy of giving oneself and of serving, without asking for anything in exchange, except the possibility of consecration and service, then one is ready to come here and will find the doors wide open.

I give you the blessings given to all my children wherever they are in the world and tell you : "Prepare yourself, my help will always be with you."¹⁹²⁴

CHAPTER 11

ASHRAM (2)

In the preceding chapter we got a glimpse of the idea behind the Ashram. Now let us have a bird's eyeview of this first fruit of Mother and Sri Aurobindo's labour. Truly speaking, the Ashram is not an institution. It is the abode of the guru where the disciples are allowed to stay. It is a gurukul. It was in the main building of the Ashram that Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to live. Their samadhi is situated in its central courtyard.

Each disciple has his own problem and his own aim in life and the guru helps on the path. You cannot find any kind of uniformity in the Ashram because each one is given full freedom.

At present there are about two thousand persons in the Ashram. They are all children of the Mother who have come here for some higher aim. These include people above 90 and children below 5.

Naturally, in such a big community all kinds of needs arise and the Ashram has various departments (called services) to cater to these needs. For example there is a reception service to deal with the stream of daily visitors, there are guest houses and transport arrangements to help them. In her instructions to this service Mother says :

The Mother wants that the people responsible for receiving the visitors should always be very polite and gentle in their behaviour towards them. High and low, young and old, whether they are well-

dressed or ill-clad, all should always be received properly with benevolence and good behaviour. It is not necessary that the better dressed people may be more fit for being received well in this Ashram. It should not be that we give more care to the people with a motor car than to an ordinary man looking like a beggar. We must never forget that they are as much human as we are and we have no right to think that we are at the top of the scale.

And our politeness should not be merely an outer form, stiff politeness, so to say. It must be something coming from within. Whatever may be the difficulties and whatever may be the circumstances—Mother fully knows even to the minute detail the circumstances when we lose our temper and get irritated in our work and knowing that fully well she says—whatever may be the circumstances, rudeness or curt behaviour is never permissible.

There are difficulties in our way, but Mother says that as a rule our difficulties and our troubles are always such that we do have the capacity of overcoming them. If we could remain at our best we shall always be able to tackle the situation without losing control. Remember, each time we lose control of ourselves, each time we get angry or we have to use the outer means of keeping discipline it means that at that moment we have fallen low and we could not rise up to the situation. In everything, in every way, it boils down to one rule—always endeavour to make progress, try to be your true self. Even if you have not been able to do it today you must be able to do it tomorrow. But the full effort must be there. Never forget in your action that you are representing the Ashram. People will judge the Ashram from your behaviour. Even if you have to say, no, even if you have to reject somebody's request you can do it with all politeness and courtesy. Try to help each one. Even if others are rude to you it is not a reason for you to do likewise. If you behave in the same way as the outsiders do, then what is the fun of your being here?"

There is a big dining room which can and does cater to the needs of thousands of people during darshan days. Cleanliness is given the highest importance. Mother wanted the dining room and the kitchen to be kept as clean as an operation theatre of a good hospital.

Once there was a country-wide shortage of food and a weekly fast was suggested, Mother gave a notice :

It would be hundred times more effective to **never** waste food than to cut down one meal as a show and to eat more before and after.

A strong, ardent, sincere campaign against the waste of food is essential and full-heartedly I approve of it.

Let the inmates of the Ashram show their goodwill and collaboration in never eating **more** than they can digest and never ask for more than they can eat.²

Along with the dining room there is a bakery, granary, dairy and poultry. There are farms that produce fruits, vegetables and paddy for the Ashram.

And there are dispensaries to help the sick people. Allopathy, Ayurveda, homoeopathy, biochemic medicine, massage, naturopathy, all are given a chance to help the sick, but it is not to be forgotten that one's own will has a great part to play. Mother says :

Wake up in yourself a will to conquer. Not a mere will in the mind but a will in the very cells of your body. Without that you can't do anything e.g. you may take a hundred medicines but they won't cure you unless you have a will to overcome the physical illness.

I may destroy the adverse force that has possessed you. I may repeat the action a thousand times. But each time that a vacuum is created it will be filled up by one of the many forces that try to rush in. That is why I say wake up the will to conquer.³

Here we may add one more quotation :

Even when doctors say, "Impossible", it is still possible. Science has gone very high, but about one thing it says, "It can be done" and about another, "It can't". So there is a contradiction within Science. Actually you cannot say "No" about anything. Every time the impossible can become the possible. If people, when doctors say, "Impossible", turn to the Divine about it, the Divine can achieve the impossibility.

The Supreme has every power : there are no limits for Him. And when people will realise that they do not know anything, they will realise that to the Supreme's Will all things are possible. In the Supreme, there is a whole universe, waiting and ready to make impossibilities actual. Even what is most inconceivable to us now can happen. For, everything is already there, hidden. So, when human beings come to feel they are quite ignorant, at that very moment the impossible will start happening. At present, people think they know everything. O they are so very clever !

When the demand grew for the writings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press was started which prints books and magazines in English, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, etc. And for making the books available to the general public there is Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency, called SABDA in short.

In the beginning children below 12 were not allowed to enter the main premises. But during the Second World War, it became necessary to admit children and along with them came the necessity of a school, physical education, arts, music, dancing, theatricals, etc. and all these are flourishing very well.

The Ashram is not situated in a single house or compound. It is spread over a very big area, and its houses,

farms, gardens are scattered here and there all over the town. There is a maintenance service to look after the upkeep of the houses and to build new ones, a furniture service to make all the furniture needed and there are a few workshops. One might wonder why the Mother took so much trouble over creating departments,—we can see her point of view as regards work in this sentence :

Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine.⁶

In the Ashram there is no question of rich or poor, high class or low class; caste, religion, nationality are not given any importance. When Gandhiji was doing his utmost for Harijan uplift work, he remarked that he could not understand how Mother had been successful in removing caste and creed from the Ashram without any apparent effort. Perhaps it is due to the importance given to Unity that this seemingly impossible task was done :

We must give importance to the things that unite and ignore, as much as possible, those that separate.⁸

Whenever Ashramites had any problem, whether personal or collective, pertaining to Sadhana—and here the word is used in its widest sense which embraces all possible activities of a sadhak—they would refer to Mother and without fail they got an oral, written or inner reply. Here is her answer to a sadhak about work :

When in your work you find something giving trouble outside, look within and you will find in yourself the corresponding difficulty.⁷

There was nothing that was not a part of sadhana. She once wrote to a teacher :

Your difficulty comes from the fact that you have still the old belief that, in life, there are some high things

and some low things. It is not exact. It is not the things or activities that are high and low, it is the **consciousness** of the doer which is true or false.

If you unite your consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness and manifest It, all you think, feel or **do** becomes luminous and true. It is not the subject of the teaching which is to be changed, it is the consciousness with which you teach that must be changed.⁸

And even today when it is not possible to approach her physically, her help is always readily available to those who call for it.

Work is given a very great importance in the Ashram. We can see what spirit she expected from the workers. She says :

Work done in the true spirit is meditation.⁹

In the work maximum liberty is given to the worker. Her advice to a sadhak who worked with a group shows clearly the balance between personal freedom and collective responsibility:

When we have to work collectively, it is always better to insist, in our thoughts, feelings and actions, on the points of agreement rather than on the points of divergence.¹⁰

Liberty, with her, never meant licence. Here is her advice to a sadhak who does not seem to know his own mind:

To begin a work and to leave it half done and to start another work elsewhere is not a very wholesome habit.¹¹

Formerly Mother used to look after each and every minute detail of every work. She says:

Formerly I used to keep control over everything. Nothing would be done without my first knowing and

approving of it. Afterwards I adopted a different mode of acting. I withdrew from all the details and kept myself at a distance, watching things from above, as it were, and sending the right inspiration to each worker in his own field.

The change was necessary for the worker's spiritual development. He has to become aware of my influence inwardly. But he can receive it only if all the workers collaborate. Without collaboration the right inspiration will not be effective. The action from above has a wide sweep: it covers all the departments and is one harmonious whole. If walls are set up in the field of work, dividing and breaking it up, the work can never be according to the spiritual Will.

So bear this in mind: no collaboration, no right working.¹²

It was through work that she taught the sadhaks the meaning of surrender. She says:

If people could stop speaking of the work as **their** work, it would put an end to a lot of trouble. Here, all work is the Divine's.¹³

Not only surrender but co-operation was expected from each and everyone:

Work all together harmoniously, helping one another as much as you can.¹⁴

Maximum liberty did not mean interference with others:

As a general rule it is always better not to intervene in things that do not fall within one's own work.¹⁵

Her demand for perfection was most exacting. Nothing was to be ignored:

Even what is apparently the most insignificant thing must be done with perfect perfection, with a sense of cleanliness, beauty, harmony and order.¹⁶

She tried to teach the sadhaks self-discipline through work:

For the work, steadiness and regularity are as necessary as skill.¹⁷

Good resolutions were welcome but:

A drop of practice is better than an ocean of theories, advices and good resolutions.¹⁸

Though she was all love as the Mother, she could also be strict with the lazy and the dodger:

Not to take care of material things which one uses is a sign of inconscience and ignorance.

You have no right to use any material object whatsoever if you do not take care of it.

You must take care of it not because you are attached to it, but because it manifests something of the Divine Consciousness.¹⁹

For her material things as well as the inner condition of a sadhak had the same importance:

Greed for anything concerning physical consciousness, so called necessities and comfort of whatever nature—this is one of the most serious obstacles to sadhana.

Each little satisfaction you get through greed is one step backward from the goal.²⁰

She was particular about perfection and she was equally particular about being sincere. Here is a gentle rebuke:

If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth?

A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation.²¹

On principle the Mother did not believe in the use of

servants. But since servants have always been employed in the Ashram, Mother once explained how they should be treated :

Don't be indulgent,
don't be severe.
They should know that you see everything,
but you shouldn't scold them.²⁹

Certain departments have to employ servants. If she is a mother to the sadhaks, she is a mother to the servants also:

Servants behave according to the way they are treated.



No workman must be given any work exceeding his strength; it is unfair and inhuman to do so.³⁰

Harmony was her first demand for group work. She reprimands a sadhak:

Be severe to yourself before being strict with others.³¹

Once this question was raised before the Mother: "If work is worship, it is the body's best prayer to the divine. Then what is the place of holidays?" Her reply was :

Shall we say **holy** days? There are two kinds of them: traditionally, the Lord for six days (or aeons) worked to create his world and the seventh he stopped for rest, concentration and contemplation. This can be called the day of God.

The second one is the men, the creatures, during six days work for their personal interests and egoistic motives, and the seventh, they stop working to take rest and have time to look inwardly or upwardly, in contemplation of the source and origin of their existence and consciousness, in order to take a dip in it and renew their energies.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the modern manner of understanding the word or the thing, that is to say all the possible ways of wasting time in a futile attempt at amusing oneself.^{as}

And this is not all. Even the plants and animals received all possible kindness from Mother. No tree could be uprooted without her special permission. Gardening was given full encouragement. Many varieties of flowers, fruits and vegetables, quite unknown in this area, were introduced in the Ashram gardens, and now they are prospering. The Mother has told us about trees which complained to her against the ill-treatment accorded to them and she saw to it that they were redressed.

In the centre of Auroville (about which you will be reading later on) there is a Banyan tree. One day Mother told an Aurovillian that the Banyan had come to her and told her that it did not want her to build a town in its vicinity as the workers there harassed it. The Aurovillian went back to the sight and made inquiries. He found out that some of the labourers had carelessly left an axe near the trunk and the trunk had been bruised. Unfortunately some branches too were chopped off. After this incident everybody was asked to be extremely careful with the tree.

Some months later, it seems that the tree went to the Mother once again and complained, "You seem to have forgotten me, nobody pays me any attention." So from then on, meetings are held under the Banyan tree.

Once there was a pair of bullocks in the Ashram. The keeper was always complaining against them. Mother saw the bullocks and wrote to the helper :

I have watched the thing from the roof, and saw with the inner sight also. There is absolutely no doubt about what is happening and once more I shall try to make you understand it.

The bullocks are not mischievous. On the con-

trary, they are very good and peaceful creatures, but very sensitive—unusually sensitive perhaps. (Of this I am not sure, as I have not followed other bullocks closely.) The truth is that they dislike and distrust the present driver, and **not without reason**. When they were working under the previous one they were happy and cheerful and worked well. Since this one is driving them, they are sad and dejected and work reluctantly. I see no solution but to change the man and to find a better one.

The proposal to frighten them in order to master them is unacceptable. Some kind of submission can thus be attained perhaps, but of the worst kind. The beasts lose more and more confidence and joy and peace and finally their strength and even their health goes.

What is the use of being a Sadhak, if, as we act, we act like the ignorant ordinary man? I can tell you this to finish with the subject, that from the roof I concentrated the power on the bullocks ordering them to yield and obey and I found them **quite receptive**. To use a **quiet, steady, unwavering conscious will**, that is the way, the only true way **really** effective and worthy of an aspirant for the Divine Life.

I hope that this time I have made myself clear.²⁰

CHAPTER 12

THE MOTHER AND INDIA

The Second World War was raging. In India the Congress ministers had resigned in order to force Britain to quit India. They started a new political move which was called the 'Quit India Movement'. Mother spoke at that time to a young Indian patriot about the situation in the country. She said that there was absolutely no question about the freedom of India. The fiat had gone out and India's freedom could be taken as an accomplished fact. Freedom was bound to come even if Indians did nothing about it. She had seen it in 1920 and said: "India is free." It was decreed in the higher regions. Now it was only a question of time to get it translated here on earth.

But she was worried about the behaviour of Indians after freedom. Would they be able to keep such a precious gift? Would they be able to handle freedom with care so that there may be no bloodshed and all kinds of chaos? Would they rise to the occasion and stand as one man? Would they not fall a prey to fissiparous tendencies and spoil the fruit earned with so much labour? Alas, nobody is giving attention to the issue.

The young man felt very much hurt. He thought that, being a European, Mother could not have full sympathy and understanding for India and Indians. He did not say anything but Mother could read all this on his face. Suddenly in the middle of the conversation she asked him: "What is your age?" He told her he was born in 1917. Mother

smiled and said that she had come to India three years before he was born, so she had as much if not more love and concern for the country.

Little could anybody realise how true her words were. Who else could have foreseen the great catastrophe that befell India—a partition of her body, the amount of bloodshed and the chaos that followed?

When the Second World War broke out, Mother and Sri Aurobindo unequivocally declared that it was a war in which all the spiritual values were at stake, that if Hitler won, the whole civilization would be thrown a thousand years back. At that time Mother remarked that Nazi Germany was completely asuric whereas Japan had only taken the infection from the Nazis. The aesthetic sense of the Japanese was a point in their favour.

In India the general trend was against the Allies. A good many people expected Hitler's victory to bring Independence to India. Those who were for the Allies were dubbed as anti-nationalist. But just at that time Mother and Sri Aurobindo made a contribution to the viceroy's war fund and declared in a joint letter to the Governor of Madras:

We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world-domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and of the whole future of humanity. To this cause our support and sympathy will be unswerving whatever may happen; we look forward to the victory of Britain and, as the eventual result, an era of peace and union among the nations and a better and more secure world-order.¹

There were people in the Ashram itself who were floating in the anti-British currents. For their benefit as well as for those who valued Mother and Sri Aurobindo's advice, Mother declared on 6 May 1941:

It has become necessary to state emphatically and clearly that all who by their thoughts and wishes are supporting and calling for the victory of the Nazis are by that very fact collaborating with the Asura against the Divine and helping to bring about the victory of the Asura.²

And again in 1941, speaking to a disciple who seemed to be anxious about the safety of his family, she says :

The world situation is critical today. India's fate too is hanging in the balance. There was a time when India was absolutely secure, there was no danger whatever of her being a victim to Asuric aggression. But things have changed. People and forces in India have acted in such a way as to invite Asuric influences upon her: these have worked insidiously and undermined the security that was there.

If India is in danger, Pondicherry cannot be expected to remain outside the danger zone. It will share the fate of the rest of the country. The protection I can give is not unconditional. It is idle to hope that in spite of anything and everything, the protection will be there over all. My protection is there if conditions are fulfilled. It goes without saying that any sympathy or support for the Nazis (or for any ally of theirs) automatically cuts across the circle of protection. Apart from this obvious and external factor, there are more fundamental psychological conditions which demand fulfilment. The Divine can give protection only to those who are whole-heartedly faithful to the Divine, who live truly in the spirit of sadhana and keep their consciousness and preoccupation fixed upon the Divine and service of the Divine. Desire, for example, insistence on one's likes and conveniences, all movements of hypocrisy and insincerity and falsehood, are great obstacles standing in the way of the Divine's protection. If you seek to impose your will upon the Divine, it is as if you were calling for a bomb to fall upon you. I do not say that things are bound to happen in this way; but they are very likely to happen, if people do not

become conscious and strictly vigilant and act in the true spirit of a spiritual seeker. If the psychological atmosphere remains the same as that of the outside world, there can be no sure wall of security against the dark Forces that are working out in it the ordeal of danger, suffering and destruction entering here.³

The monetary contribution of Mother and Sri Aurobindo was just a token, a symbol of the inner spiritual help that they were giving. We get an inkling of that in a statement of Sri Aurobindo; referring to himself in the third person, he writes:

Inwardly, he put his spiritual force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk.... This he did, because he saw behind Hitler and Nazism were dark Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, and a set-back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind: it would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but of Asia, and in it of India, an enslavement far more terrible than any this country had ever endured, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for her liberation.⁴

In the early months of 1942 the fate of India was hanging in the balance. Japan had overtaken Singapore and Malayasia and it was a direct threat to India. There were Indians who dreamt of welcoming Japan as liberator. In those days Mother used to say that Britain has been a colonial power for a very long time and her stomach is sufficiently full. She will eat you bit by bit but if another power, Germany or Japan, comes with an empty stomach it will devour you. She declared:

It is treachery against Sri Aurobindo to wish for Hitler's victory. Sri Aurobindo's cause is closely connected with that of the Allies, and he is working night and day for it.... If Hitler or Stalin wins spirituality is doomed.⁵

Then came the famous Cripps Proposals; offering partial independence to India and the prospect of full independence at a later time. Sri Aurobindo openly welcomed them. He saw in them,

an opportunity given to India to determine for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity, and take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be accepted, and right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that friendly relations between Britain and India replacing the past struggles, will be a step towards a greater world union in which, as a free nation, her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light I offer public adhesion, in case it can be of any help in your work.⁶

Needless to say, whatever Mother or Sri Aurobindo said or did was their joint word or work. They were and they are inseparable. Going out of his way Sri Aurobindo sent a personal messenger to New Delhi to tell the Congress leaders that for the good of the country they should accept the proposals for whatever they were worth.

Unfortunately for India, Sri Aurobindo's advice was not accepted and in the wake of the refusal came partition of the country and the various calamities that followed. Mother had said:

It was with great difficulty that Sri Aurobindo had brought this opportunity for India but India's leaders have kicked it....⁷

Many of the Congress leaders later accepted this in their private talk. K.M. Munshi even declared it openly on 16th August 1951:

He [Sri Aurobindo] saw into the heart of things.... His perception of the political situation in India was always unerring. When the World War came in

1939...it was he of the unerring eye who said that the triumph of England and France was the triumph of the Divine forces over the demonic forces.... He spoke again when Sir Stafford Cripps came with his first proposal. He said, "India should accept it." We rejected the advice....But today we realise that if the first proposal had been accepted, there would have been no partition, no refugees and no Kashmir problem.⁸

And we may add that the question of Bangla Desh and the aftermath that followed would not have arisen at all.

It is not that Mother and Sri Aurobindo believed the Allies to be angels. They fully knew their shortcomings, Sri Aurobindo says:

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord's side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I know that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities opened to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove the peril of black servitude and revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important tragic issue before us.⁹

The most dangerous war came to an end with a victory for the Allies. On that day Mother gave a message:

The Victory has come, Thy victory, O'Lord, for which we render to Thee infinite thanks-giving.

But now our ardent prayer rises towards Thee. It is with Thy force and by Thy force that the victors

have conquered. Grant that they do not forget it in their success and that they keep the promises which they have made to Thee in the hours of danger and anguish. They have taken Thy name to make war, may they not forget Thy grace when they have to make the peace.¹⁰

But things in India were not at all satisfactory. The situation in Bengal was particularly bad. The Noakhali and Calcutta killings had a disastrous effect on the already strained Hindu-Muslim relations all over the country. Sri Aurobindo wrote to a correspondent :

As regards Bengal, things are certainly very bad; the conditions of the Hindus there are terrible and they may even get worse in spite of the Interim *mariage de convenance* at Delhi. But we must not let our reaction to it become excessive or suggest despair. There must be at least 20 million Hindus in Bengal and they are not going to be exterminated,—even Hitler with his scientific methods of massacre could not exterminate the Jews who are still showing themselves very much alive and, as for Hindu culture, it is not such a weak and fluffy thing as to be easily stamped out; it has lasted through something like 5 millenniums at least and is going to carry on much longer and has accumulated quite enough power to survive. What is happening did not come to me as a surprise. I foresaw it when I was in Bengal and warned people that it is probable and almost inevitable and that they should be prepared for it. At that time no one attached any value to what I said although some afterwards remembered and admitted, when the trouble first began, that I have been right; only C. R. Das had grave apprehensions and he even told me when he came to Pondicherry that he would not like the British to go out until this dangerous problem had been settled. But I have not been discouraged by what is happening, because I know and have experienced hundred times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God's victory. I have never

had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world—I am not speaking of personal things—which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster. There was a time when Hitler was victorious everywhere and it seemed certain that a black yoke of the Asura would be imposed on the whole world; but where is Hitler now and where is his rule? Berlin and Nuremburg have marked the end of that dreadful chapter in human history. Other blacknesses threaten to overshadow or even engulf mankind, but they too will end as that nightmare has ended.¹¹

In the meanwhile Indian independence was slowly coming nearer. On June 1947 the then viceroy of India made his declaration about the partition of India. Mother heard it on the radio and gave a message with full approval of Sri Aurobindo:

A proposal has been made for the solution of our difficulties in organising Indian independence and it is being accepted with whatever bitterness of regret and searchings of heart by Indian leaders.

But do you know why this proposal has been made to us? It is to prove to us the absurdity of our quarrels.

And do you know why we have to accept these proposals? It is to prove to ourselves the absurdity of our quarrels.

Clearly, this is not a solution; it is a test, an ordeal which, if we live it out in all sincerity, will prove to us that it is not by cutting a country into small bits that we shall bring about its unity and its greatness; it is not by opposing interests against each other that we can win for it prosperity; it is not by setting one dogma against another that we can serve the spirit of Truth. In spite of all, India has a single soul and while we have to wait till we can speak of an India one and indivisible our cry must be:

Let the soul of India live for ever.¹²

In this connection let us remember what Mother had said about India during a talk :

India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being, as much living as say, Siva. All the countries have their own spirit and if politically you make any changes, they would be unreal. For example, although Austria has become a part of Germany, (at that time Hitler had swallowed Austria) still they are quite separate and the spirit of Austria is in agony. India is a goddess, as Siva is a god. If she likes, she can manifest in a human form.¹³

In another talk she said:

A nation is a living personality, it has a soul, even like a human individual. The soul of a nation is also a psychic being, that is to say, a conscious being, a formation out of the Divine consciousness and in direct contact with it, a power and aspect of Mahashakti. A nation is not merely the sum total of the individuals that compose it, but a collective personality of which the individuals are as it were cells, like the cells of a living and conscious organism.¹⁴

When freedom came to India Sri Aurobindo welcomed it with a message :

August 15, 1947 is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But we can also make it by our life and acts as a free nation an important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity.

August 15 is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-

movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Also, the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to

her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated: its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook.

A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.¹⁶

And Mother invoked India with these words :

O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who hast never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from thy voice, served other masters and denied thee, now when they have arisen and the light is on thy face in this dawn of thy liberation, in this great hour we salute thee. Guide us so that the horizon of free-

dom opening before us may be also a horizon of true greatness and of thy true life in the community of the nations. Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the ways of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples.¹⁶

To remind one and all that India is one and "the partition must and will go", a map of undivided India was engraved on a wall of the Ashram Playground. Mother used to stand in front of it at the time of mediation and the march past.

Not to speak of other lands, even in India there are people who cannot believe that in the modern world spirituality can have a chance anywhere. But India has been the cradle of humanity at its highest. She has a special responsibility for the future. Mother says :

India is the country in which the psychic law **can and must** reign and the time has come for that **here**. Besides, this is the only salvation possible for the country whose consciousness has unfortunately been falsified by the influence and domination of a foreign country, but which in spite of everything, is in possession of a unique spiritual heritage.¹⁷

When the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the Ashram in 1969, Mother gave her the following message :

Let India work for the future and take the lead.
Thus she will recover her true place in the world.

*

Since long it was the habit to govern through division and opposition. The time has come to govern through union, mutual understanding and collaboration.

*

To choose a collaborator, the value of the man is more important than the party to which he belongs.

*

The greatness of a country does not depend on the victory of a party but on the union of all the parties.¹⁸

India has a special role in the evolution of the world. Mother says :

In the whole creation the earth has a place of distinction, because unlike any other planet it is evolutionary with a psychic entity at its centre. In it, India, in particular, is a divinely chosen country.¹⁹

Speaking on liberty she does not stop with the political sense of the word, but takes it to its ultimate significance :

True liberty is an ascending movement, not yielding to the lower instincts. True liberty is a Divine manifestation.

We want the true liberty for India so that she may be the right example for the world as the demonstration of what humanity must become.²⁰

In spite of all the differences, quarrels and division India is one. Mother says :

It is only India's soul who can unify the country.

Externally the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in language, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results.

But her soul is one, intense in her aspiration towards the spiritual truth, the essential unity of the creation and the divine origin of life, and by uniting with this aspiration the whole country can recover a unity that has never ceased to exist for the superior mentality.²¹

Mother envisaged the future of India not politically

but spiritually. Her occult vision must have given her a true picture of India's future :

The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating the spiritual knowledge in the world. The Government of India ought to recognise the significance of India in this sphere and plan their action accordingly.²³

All India Radio wanted a message to be broadcast from Pondicherry station on its opening day. Mother's message was :

O India, land of light and spiritual knowledge !
Wake up to your true mission in the world, show the way to union and harmony.²³

A patriotic Indian asked her about the attitude he should develop towards his country, and Mother said :

Overgrow your small egoistic personality, and become a worthy child of our Mother India, fulfil your duties with honesty and rectitude, and always keep cheerful and confident, with a steady trust in the Divine's Grace.²⁴

Giving her views on Education and Integral Education in particular, she writes :

India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it. An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.²⁵

In 1964 the **Illustrated Weekly** sent a questionnaire to Mother. Here are the questions with Mother's replies :

(1) If you were asked to sum up, just in one sentence, your vision of India, what would be your answer?

India's true destiny is to be the Guru of the World.

(2) Similarly, if you were asked to comment on the reality as you see it, how would you do so in one sentence?

The present reality is a big falsehood—hiding an eternal truth.

(3) What, according to you, are the three main barriers that stand between the vision and the reality?

(a) Ignorance; (b) fear; (c) falsehood.

(4) Are you satisfied with the over-all progress India has made since Independence?

No.

(5) What is our most outstanding achievement in recent times? Why do you consider it so important?

Waking up of the yearning for Truth. Because without Truth there is no reality.

(6) Likewise, can you name our saddest failure? On what grounds do you regard it so tragic?

Insincerity. Because insincerity leads to ruin.²⁰

Thus we see that India's chief mission is to bring down the Truth even in our most exterior life and so-called insignificant parts of life. In spite of all the dark clouds Mother says that we are standing in front of a "glorious future". Let us be worthy of that.

CHAPTER 13

EDUCATION IN THE ASHRAM

In the beginning children below 12 were not allowed in the Ashram. The atmosphere was rather serious. One could see smiling faces, but laughter was not common. Due to the Second World War and the Calcutta killings, many families migrated to the Ashram and they brought small children with them.

With the arrival of the children a new era started in the Ashram. Mother had to arrange for their studies, their physical training, sports, music, dancing, dramatics, painting, etc. Nothing was too small to escape her attention.

It was reported to Mother that a child was telling his friends with a gusto that his family was very rich and they always travelled first class. Mother said :

When a child wants to impress you by telling you stories of the wealth of his family, you must not keep quiet. You must explain to him that worldly wealth does not count here, only the wealth that has been offered to the Divine has some value; that you do not become big by living in big houses, travelling in first-class and spending money lavishly. You can increase in stature only by being truthful, sincere, obedient and grateful.¹

Along with the children came the problems of keeping them in discipline. Beating and scolding were strictly forbidden.

Do not beat your children. It clouds **your** consciousness and spoils **their** character.²

To the strict disciplinarian Mother's reply was :

You want your children to do as you bid. What do you know of Truth? You want to impose your will, because you are stronger. That way a giant can catch hold of you and you will have to do whatever he says.

It is the most difficult thing to bring up children. I have not seen many parents who can do the proper thing.

What right have you to impose your will on the children, you who have brought them into the world without giving any serious thought to their problems or making the necessary preparations?³

In the 1930's there were two or three children who used to learn English, French, Mathematics from some of the elderly inmates. But in the late 1940's when the number of children increased, a regular school was started with French as the medium of instruction. In this connection Mother said :

To unite East and West, to give the best of one to the other and make a true synthesis a University will be established for all kinds of studies. Our school will form a nucleus of that University.

In our school I have put French as the medium of instruction. One of the reasons is that French is the cultural language of the world. The children can learn the Indian languages at a later stage. If more stress is laid upon the Indian languages at present, then the natural tendency of the Indian mind will be to fall back upon the ancient literature, culture and religion. You know very well that we realise the value of ancient Indian things, but we are here to create something new, to bring down something that will be quite fresh for the earth. In this endeavour, if your mind is tied down to the

ancient things, then it will refuse to go forward. The study of the past has its place, but it must not hamper the work for the future.⁴

In 1952 the Mother declared the opening of the "Sri Aurobindo University Centre". Due to some legal difficulties the name was later changed to "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education". Writing to someone about it in 1953 she says :

I am perfectly sure, I am quite confident, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that this university which is being established here, will be the greatest seat of knowledge upon earth.

It may take fifty years, it may take a hundred years, and you may doubt about my being there, I may be there or I may not be there, but these children of mine will be there to carry my work.

And those who collaborate in this Divine work to-day will have the joy and pride of having participated in such an exceptional achievement.⁵

Mother wanted the centre to be a bridge between East and West. She said about France :

It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of her present bad condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth, although I am not French.⁶

She used to meet teachers and students, listen to their problems and give the necessary advice. To a student who felt hurt by the words of his companions, her reply was :

I suggest the same remedy as the one I was using in my childhood when disagreeing with my young play-mates. I was at that time, as you are, very sensitive and I felt hurt when abused by them, especially by those to whom I had always shown only sympathy

and kindness. I used to tell myself, "Why be sorry and feel miserable? If they are right in what they say, I have only to be glad for the lesson and correct myself; if they are wrong, why should I worry about it, it is for them to be sorry for their mistake. In both cases the best and the most dignified thing I can do is to remain strong, quiet and unmoved."

The lesson which I was giving to myself and trying to follow when I was eight years old, still holds good in all similar cases.⁷

Another student must have felt out of sorts and miserable, the advice she gives here should help all who are in that state :

You see, my child, the pity is that you are too pre-occupied with yourself. At your age, I was exclusively occupied with my study; to educate myself, to learn, to understand, to know, that is what interested me, even thrilled me. My mother loved my brother and I very much, but never allowed us to be in a bad mood, discontented or lazy. If we went to her to complain about something or other and say that we were not pleased, she made fun of us or scolded us and would say: "What is all this foolishness, don't be ridiculous, go and work at once and do not concern yourselves with whether you are in a good mood or a bad ! That has no interest !"

My mother was perfectly right and I have always been grateful to her for having taught me discipline and the necessity of forgetting oneself in the concentration upon what one is doing.⁸

Mother once offered this valuable tip from her own experience about how to learn new things :

From my earliest childhood I have not stopped observing things. When I was very young I was chided for never speaking. It was because I spent my time observing. I passed my time observing, I registered everything, I learnt all I could, I did not stop learning....I have seen a great number of

people, I began attending to people when very young, I have seen many countries; . . . in every country I lived the life of that country in order to understand it well, and there is nothing which interested me in my outer being as much as learning.⁹

She told a teacher to stick to teaching his own subject :

You must be very careful to see that there is no overlapping in the lessons that you teach. Your subjects are related to each other. If two teachers begin to speak on the same point, naturally there will be some difference in their points of view. The same thing seen from different angles looks different. This will bring confusion in the young minds of the students and they will start comparison amongst the teachers which is not very desirable. So each one should try to take up his own subject without wandering about in other subjects.¹⁰

Mother gave this prayer for the students of the Ashram school :

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we may be ready to receive them.¹¹

So, Mother wants her students to be hero-warriors. And what is her definition of heroism? She says :

To stand for the truth in all circumstances, to declare it if necessary in the teeth of the worst opposition and to be ready to do all you can for its sake, is the definition of heroism.¹²

A teacher had asked Mother, "What is the real purpose, the aim of our education centre? Is it to teach Sri Aurobindo's works and these only? And all or some of these? Or is it to prepare the students to read Sri Aurobindo's works and Mother's?" The Mother replied :

It is not a question of preparing to read these works or other works. It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so, out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to those who are here to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing; it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to live and become a true being and that the aim of the education here is to prepare the children and make them fit for that life.

For all the rest, the human way of thinking and living, the world is vast and there is place out there for everybody.

It is not a number that we want—it is a selection: it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.¹³

According to the Mother, truth, harmony and liberty should be the guiding principles of the new ideal of education. She often used to say that we are here to do something new and not to repeat what has been done elsewhere, even in a little better way. She says:

In education—that includes technical education also—we shall not blindly follow the western method. The mind of our children will of course be trained, but we shall also develop in them the faculty of intuition and knowledge by identity.¹⁴

She told a teacher:

There is one thing that I must emphasise. Don't try to follow what is done in the universities outside. Don't try to pump into the students mere data and information. Don't give them so much work that they may not get time for anything else. You are not in a great hurry to catch a train. Let the students understand what they learn. Let them assimilate it. Finishing the course should not be your goal. You should make the programme in such a way that the students may get time to attend the subjects they

want to learn. They should have sufficient time for their physical exercises. I don't want them to be very good students, yet pale, thin, anaemic. Perhaps you will say that in this way they will not have sufficient time for their studies, but that can be made up by expanding the course over a longer period. Instead of finishing a course in four years, you can take six years. Rather it would be better for them; they will be able to assimilate more of the atmosphere here and their progress will not be just in one direction at the cost of everything else. It will be an all-round progress in all directions.¹⁵

Mother gave all possible facilities for studies; the humanities, science, technology, fine arts, etc., were introduced. Yet each student was given full freedom to choose and select the subjects he would like to study.

Once the newspapers reported about a discussion between Jawaharlal Nehru and Srinivas Shastri. Shastri was reported to be of the opinion that if the students saw some bad thing in other students they should report to their elders, but Nehru found it in bad taste something that spoils the character of the student. Mother was asked about it. Naturally it must have been connected with complaints to her from others. She answered :

It all depends upon your attitude. If you report a matter with a spirit of vengeance against someone or to show your superiority or with any other personal motive, then it is absolutely wrong and you should not do that. But the true way is that you should be like a mirror and reflect faithfully whatever you see. Don't give your personal colouring and be quite dispassionate. If there is something wrong in the mirror itself, then I can correct it. But you must try to make sure that your mirror does not distort the picture.¹⁶

An ordinary human being is a bundle of fears. Mother used to tell children not to fear anything and anybody. She said :

Fear is hidden consent. When you are afraid of something, it means that you admit its possibility and thus strengthen its hands. It can be said that it is a subsequent consent. Fear can be overcome in many ways. The ways of courage, faith, knowledge are some of them.¹⁷

Mother did not like to impose her will. She gave full freedom to all. They were free even to choose the path of the abyss. The students were expected to choose their future :

According to what I know and see, in a general way, **after 14 years**, children should be left independent and they should be advised only to the extent that they ask for it.

They should know that they are responsible for the conduct of their own existence.¹⁸

But along with that she told them what actual freedom was :

After all, what is freedom? To go about doing whatever you like? But do you know what is "you"? Do you know what is your own will? Do you know what comes from you and what comes from elsewhere? Well, if you had a strong will I could have allowed you to work. But it is not like that; it is only impulses that move you and they are also not your own. They come from outside and make you do all sorts of stupid things. You fall into the hands of the Rakshasas. First they make you do stupid things and then they laugh. If you have a strong will, if your will, your impulses and all else were centred around the psychic, then and then alone can you have some taste of liberty and freedom; otherwise you are a slave.¹⁹

In the Ashram boys and girls are allowed to mix freely. They are together in the school, in the playground, in the dining room. They mix everywhere without any restriction. This is not to the liking of some of our orthodox people.

In 1960, one of the greatest Vedic scholars of this age, Pandit Satwalekar had come to visit the Ashram. At that time he was, according to him, 93 years young. Generally at an advanced age one gets fossilised, the mind is not ready to grasp new ideas. Panditji said the first thing that appealed to him about the Ashram was the equality of men and women. He said according to the Vedas the soul is neither a man nor a woman. In the Vedic age they made no distinction between man and woman. Soul used to meet soul. Mother wants to bring into existence that kind of society. There may be flaws here and there. But Panditji was more interested in the high aim for which she is striving.

And yet this does not mean that Mother encouraged a licentious life. Sex is one of the few things strictly prohibited in the Ashram, not for any dogmatic reasons but because it lowers the consciousness. The vital relations reduce your energy to one-third of what it should be. But one is not expected to concentrate on curbing it for that would only strengthen it. Sri Aurobindo says:

It is best not to pay too much attention to this movement, but to let it drop off quietly by lack of support and assent from the mind and the higher vital.²⁰

Generally our educational institutions treat all the students in the same way, they have to pass under the same roller, so to say. But Mother says:

I am not for treating all the children in the same way, it makes a kind of uniform level, advantageous for those that are backward, but detrimental to those who can rise above the common height.

Those who want to work and learn must be encouraged but the energy of those who dislike studies must be turned to another outlet. Things are to be arranged and organised. The details of execution will be fixed later on.²¹

In the beginning they used to have the standard kind

of examinations in the Ashram school, but it was found difficult to avoid the evils that accompany them, so these examinations were dispensed with. But Mother says :

Naturally the teacher has to test the student to know if he or she has learnt something and has made a progress. But this test must be individual and adapted to each student, not the same mechanical test for all of them. It must be a spontaneous and unexpected test leaving no room for pretence and insincerity. Naturally also this is much more difficult for the teachers but so much more living and interesting also.²²

A training college for teachers asked Mother about the personality traits of a successful teacher. She made a list of qualities :

- (1) Complete self-control not only to the extent of not showing any anger, but remaining absolutely quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances.
- (2) In the matter of self-confidence, must also have a sense of the relativity of his importance.

Above all, must have the knowledge that the teacher himself must always progress if he wants his students to progress, must not remain satisfied either with that he is or with what he knows.

- (3) Must not have any sense of essential superiority over his students nor preference or attachment whatsoever for one or another.
- (4) Must know that all are equal spiritually and instead of mere tolerance must have a global comprehension or understanding.
- (5) "The business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material." (Sri Aurobindo, **The Human Cycle**).²³

The education commission of the Government of India had asked some questions about a natural system of education. Mother's answers are short but to the point :

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

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

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

Make matter ready to manifest the Spirit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Insist on the paramount importance of the contact with the Spirit and the growth and manifestation of the Truth of the being.²⁴

And what should students do? Mother says :

Students should be told that they should work for transformation. The virtues or the qualities which they want in society should first be realised in themselves. The mistakes which others are committing should first be corrected in yourself. You should not wait for them to be corrected in others, because if everyone waits for others to change, who will be changed? The best way of changing others is to change oneself. This is the only way—to be an example. This is the way: it is not by preaching, but by changing yourself. There will then be no need to preach to others.

Of course, the argument will be: even if one changes oneself, what effect will it have on others? But one must change oneself and see for oneself what happens. The ills that are outside are in oneself and, if one changes oneself, things will change outside. This is universal. One is given a body for this purpose. Each one is given a problem or problems in oneself, so that they can be solved by an inner change. This is the work given to everyone. When this is done, you will know change is brought about in others.

And you must know that each one has his own way of changing. What is one's way is not the way

of another. This is absolute. The difficulties arise because this is not understood.²⁵

Mother did not want her teachings to be taken as dogmas to be committed to memory. Somebody asked how one should read Mother and Sri Aurobindo's works. Mother's reply was :

The true method is to read a little at a time, with concentration, then keep the mind as silent as possible, without trying actively to understand, but turned upward in the silence and aspiring to the light. The understanding will come little by little.

And later, in a year or two, you will re-read the same thing and then you will know that the first contact was vague and incomplete and that the true understanding comes later on when you have tried to put into practice.²⁶

Mother was asked whether the teaching of certain subjects was in tune with the ways she wanted to adopt in her school. She replied :

Your difficulty comes from the fact that you have still the old belief that, in life, there are some high things and some low things. It is not exact. It is not the things or activities that are high or low, it is the **consciousness** of the doer that is true or false.

If you unite your consciousness with the Supreme consciousness and manifest it, all you think, feel or **do** becomes luminous and true. It is not the subject of teaching which is to be changed, it is the consciousness with which you teach that must be changed.²⁷

That she was preparing the children to embody and welcome a new force and give it a solid base is clear from her words :

The conditions under which men live upon earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change conditions without changing the conscious-

ness is a vain chimera. All who have had the perception of what could be and should be done to improve the situation, in the different domains of human life, economical, political, social, financial, educational or sanitary, are precisely the individuals who have developed their consciousness more or less to an exceptional degree and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas remained on the whole theoretical; or, if an attempt was ever made to realise them practically, it always failed lamentably in the long or short run: for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another, religions, spiritual or social, have been created, their beginnings were at times full of promise: but, as humanity was not transformed at heart, the old errors arising from human nature itself have reappeared gradually and after a time it was found that one was left almost at the same spot from where one had started with so much hope and enthusiasm. In this effort, however, to improve human conditions there have always been two tendencies, which although apparently contrary to each other should rather be complementary and together work out the progress. One seeks a collective reorganisation, something that would lead towards an effective unity of mankind: the other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that it is the individual who should be given conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both the lines. Collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, it is necessary that something of an antecedent progress be achieved in the collective life. A way has therefore to be found whereby the twofold progress can go on simultaneously.

It is in answer to this pressing need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of his International Centre of Education, so that the elite of humanity may be made ready who would be able to work for

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

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

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

To make this possible, children from their very early age, must be accustomed not merely to the idea but to its practice. Therefore the International Centre of Education will be international not because students from all countries will be admitted here, nor because the education will be given in their own mother-tongue, but particularly because the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically too

through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of world-exhibition has to be organised in which all the countries will be represented in a concrete and living manner; the ideal is that every nation with a very definite culture would have a pavilion representing that culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of the country: it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as manufactured, products also that best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus find a practical and concrete interest in cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work by taking over the charge of the pavilion that represents it. A lodging house also could be attached, large or small according to the need, where students of the same nationality would be accommodated; they will thus enjoy the very culture of their own motherland, and at the same time receive at the centre the education which will introduce them as well to other cultures existing upon earth. Thus the international education will not be simply theoretical, on the school bench, but practical in all details of existence.

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

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

Education: and their solution will be given in the light of the Supramental Knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.²⁸

Mother did not like the idea of giving degrees or diplomas in the education centre. She says:

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

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

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

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

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

To learn in order to know, to study in order to have the knowledge of the secrets of Nature and of

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

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

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

Physical education is given a very high priority in the Ashram. Usually competitions bring out an unhealthy atmosphere of rivalry and children are mostly preoccupied with winning. To such a child she gives her own example :

I remember having learnt to play tennis when I was eight, it was a passion; but I never wished to play with my little comrades because I learnt nothing (usually I used to defeat them), I always went to the best players. At times they looked surprised, but in the end they played with me—I never won but I learnt much."

The Mother says :

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

will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony.³¹

Mother says :

The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and resistant in its health and organic functions.³²

One can see how much interest she took in each and every activity of the children. To a question by a physical education captain on how to mould the children she says :

So it would be good if the group leaders, the captains, before they begin the games, called all who are under them to repeat and explain to them what is said about games and sports in "The Supramental Manifestation", "The Code of the Perfect Sportsman" and "What an ideal child should be." These are things that should be repeated often to the children. And then they should be put on guard against bad company, bad comrades; lastly and especially, give them a good example. Be yourself what you wish them to be. Give them the example of unselfishness, patience, self-mastery, self-forgetfulness, a constant happy mood in all circumstances; overcome little personal inconveniences, for example do not be unpleasant, do not be impatient when you are tired or indisposed; have a constant kindness, understanding of others' difficulties and that equality of temper so that children have no fear of you; for what makes children dissimulating, lying and vicious is the fear for punishment. On the contrary, if they feel confident they will hide nothing and you can tell them precisely to be loyal and honest.

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

far in the necessary discipline for the fulfilment of the Yoga.

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

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

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

Few persons understand that, and generally they who are against this external discipline, this concentration on a material achievement like the sports, are exactly the people who lack totally control over their physical being. But to realise the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, control of the body is one of the first indispensable steps. They who despise physical activities are people who will not be able to take a single step on the true way of integral Yoga, unless they get rid of their despise first. The control of the body in all its forms is an indispensable basis. A body that rules you is an enemy, it is an unacceptable disorder. It is the enlightened will of the spirit that should rule the body, not the body

that should impose its law upon the Spirit. When one knows that a thing is bad, one should be capable of not doing it. And when one wants a thing to be realised, one must be capable of realising it. You must not at every step be stopped by an incapacity or a bad will or want of co-operation from the body. For that you have to follow a physical discipline and become the master of your own house.

It is fine to escape into meditation and look down from one's pretended greatness upon material things; but one who is not master of one's house is a slave.⁸³

Once somebody asked Mother: "Why is it that the largest number of people take interest in games, while only a minority is interested in serious exercise?" She answered:

Because in the immense majority of cases what creates the interest is vital satisfaction. If you are to find interest in exercises of training, which has not the excitement of games, your being must be governed by reason. In the case of ordinary humanity Reason is the summit of the consciousness, that part of the being which would govern the rest, because it is the ordered and reasonable part, that is to say, it does things with a sense of the orderly and of the good and the useful and according to a given plan recognised and followed by each one.

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

One of the very first uses of physical training is precisely this that you cannot do it truly well unless the body is habituated to obey Reason rather than

the vital impulses. Let us take, for example, exercises for the development of bodily perfection—dumbbells, etc.—that have nothing particularly exciting in them that demand the discipline of a strict life, regular and rational habits giving no room for passion or desire or impulse; well then, to be able to do them perfectly, you must have a life ruled by Reason.

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

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

I remember a man who came here very long ago to stand in the elections as a deputy. As people wanted to know my opinion of him, he was introduced to me; he put to me some questions about the Ashram, the life that was led here and then asked me what was according to me the discipline indispensable for life. I must tell you that he was a man who was smoking the whole day, drinking much

more than was necessary and he complained that he felt extremely tired and was at times incapable of controlling himself. So I replied to him: "The very first thing you have to do is to stop smoking and drinking." The man looked at me in utter bewilderment and cried out: "But then, if you do not smoke, if you do not drink, life is not worth living."

The thing is more common than one believes. it appears to us absurd, to us, because we have something else which is evidently more interesting than smoking and drinking, but for ordinary humanity, the satisfaction of desires is the only motive for existence. People who indulge in excesses and in vice do so to assert as it were their independence and their reason for existence; while in reality it is a deviation, a deformation, a negation of the life-instinct, an unhealthy and perverse intervention of the mind and vital impulse in physical life."²⁴

CHAPTER 14

THUS SPAKE MOTHER (SADHANA)

Who is worthy or unworthy in front of the Divine Grace?

All are children of the one and the same Mother.
Her love is equally spread over all of them.

And to each one She gives according to his nature and receptivity.¹

Explaining to a sadhak the true aspect of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo writes :

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine.²

Sri Aurobindo constantly refers to the Mother's force which acts not only on individuals but also on world events. A sadhak once asked : "What is the Mother's Force?" Sri Aurobindo said :

It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.³

And how does Mother's force work? The Mother herself said :

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.

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, your human mind takes it as a principle and tries to apply it rigidly in all cases. 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 there is a big obstruction in the way. Now, there can be two ways: either I should allow the point to change the 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. 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 in 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 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, they 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 you 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 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.⁴

In his book **The Mother** Sri Aurobindo speaks of the four aspects of the Mother : Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. Which one remains with us and helps us more? The Mother replies :

It is only the Mahasaraswati aspect that can remain with you. It is she who looks after each detail. Sri Aurobindo has said that she does not forgive unless you try to change yourself. It is impossible to keep Mahakali with you. She comes like lightning and goes like thunder.

Generally people do not worship Mahakali, Mahalakshmi or Mahasaraswati. They are satisfied with Kali, Lakshmi and Saraswati. For them the worship of Lakshmi is like marrying a rich woman.⁵

Asceticism is in the blood of every Indian, amongst some it is very evident, among others it remains dormant but

jumps up from time to time. Asceticism asks us to shun beauty. Mother says :

It is one of the greatest weapons of the Asura at work when you are taught to shun beauty. It has been the ruin of India. The Divine manifests in the psychic as love, in the mind as knowledge, in the vital as power and in the physical as beauty. If you discard beauty it means that you are depriving the Divine of this manifestation in the material and you hand over that part to the Asura.⁹

People generally expect Mother to perform miracles. About this she says :

It is an idiotic idea to get things done in a magical way. People think that once they inform me about the bad handling and mismanagement, their duty is finished. It is not so. Physical things have to be done in a physical way. I can give you consciousness which will help you, but it cannot take away the need of the physical action. You can't expect me to go everywhere and do everything myself. You can't simply come and tell me that this is going wrong and things are going from bad to worse. I have heard enough of it and now no more.

There is an old axiom and it is completely true, that you can have absolutely no right to criticise others or complain against them unless you can set things right and get them going in a better way.

It is not at all difficult to keep a running concern going. In the same way, in politics when a new government steps in, it brings new policies and new methods, but the day-to-day work is not stopped for a moment.¹

Generally, as soon as we think that we have succeeded in something, something goes seriously wrong. Why? Mother says :

As soon as you think that you have succeeded in a certain thing, the adverse forces make it a point to

attack and spoil it. Moreover, when you think of success, you relax your aspiration and the slightest relaxation is sufficient to spoil the game. The best thing is not to think of it but to go on doing your duty. But sometimes when you go on thinking of your shortcomings and failures and you get depressed, then you have to put the success before your nose and say, "Look at this."

A sadhak seriously pursuing his sadhana asked: "How can one get rid of falsehood?"

Well, if everybody does his duty and rejects falsehood, it will be easier for the world to get rid of the grip of the Asura. But if you go on twisting everything, if you remain crooked, then the task becomes much difficult. Falsehood is not only telling a lie. That is the most ordinary thing. Any acceptance of the Asura's influence in any part, in any shape or form is falsehood. If you cling to it and enjoy it, then how can you get rid of it? You say that you know that you have to suffer under the influence of falsehood, that there are things that you hate and want to get rid of, you go on saying "No, no, no" and still they cling to you. But really, if you know falsehood, then you cannot keep it for a moment. It becomes impossible to live with it and you will be obliged to leave it at once. But that is not the case, some part in you likes it and enjoys it. You say that very often you hear something telling you not to do a certain thing, but at the same time there is something in you that invites it. If you listen to the former voice and obey it, it will become more powerful and save you.

There is another way also. That is the way of surrender of falsehood. You give all that to the Divine and ask Him to purify it. It does not mean that you should become idle and do nothing and expect the Divine to do everything for you. At every moment you have to pray and surrender.

Mother says :

For being a permanent Sadhak, you must give all your possessions, all your thoughts, all your aspirations and all your actions. You must give all your time for work. Only then you can ask to be made permanent. Less than that won't do. You must be sincere.¹⁰

A sadhak asked : "Is it necessary to sacrifice everything for the Divine?" Mother replied :

When you speak of sacrificing everything for the Divine, it means that you are very greatly attached to those things, you have a great value for them and still you are ready to leave them for the sake of the Divine.

Actually you should not be attached to anything or anybody except the Divine and apart from Him nothing should have any value for you. And in that case you cannot speak of your sacrificing for the Divine.¹¹

An observant sadhak remarked : "In spite of our best efforts the dark periods go on coming." The Mother said :

You must remember one thing : the dark periods are inevitable. When your psychic is active, you feel a delight without any apparent reason. It continues for some time and again the same mental or vital reactions come in and you go back to the darkness. This will continue. The brighter days will become longer and the dark periods will come after longer intervals and for shorter duration till they finally disappear. Till then you must know that the sun is there behind the clouds and you need not worry. You must have the confidence of a child—a confidence that there is someone who takes care of you and you can entirely depend on him.¹²

It has been the experience of most sadhaks that even the most physical works can be done in a better way with

Mother's help. But there are moments when they forget to call for her help. Referring to such a moment she said :

I was standing there and watching when they were trying to pull out the big pole that had been fixed in the ground. It was a difficult job no doubt, but they were making it much more difficult. Their effort was not one-pointed and they were shouting in excitement like ordinary coolies. Their noise and excitement had created such a confusion in the atmosphere that they could not receive my help. If they had worked without shouting and wasting their energy, with a concentrated will, the work would have been much easier and quicker.¹³

A visitor who wished to be initiated asked : "How can one get initiated in Mother and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?"

In ancient times the disciple had to undergo severe tests to prove his ability for initiation. Here we do not follow that method. Apparently there is no test and no trial. But if you see the truth, you will find that here it is much more difficult. There the disciple knew that he was undergoing a period of trial and after he passed through some outward tests, he was taken in. But here you have to face life and you are watched at every moment. It is not only your outer actions that count. Each and every thought and inner movement is seen, every reaction is noticed. It is not what you do in the solitude of the forest, but what you do in the thick of the battle of life that is important.

Are you ready to submit yourself for such tests? Are you ready to change yourself completely? You will have to throw off your ideas, ideals, values, interests and opinions. Everything will have to be learnt anew. If you are ready for all this, then take the plunge; otherwise don't try to step in.¹⁴

Mother says :

This is not a place for those who fail in life and who are good-for-nothing. Life is hard and even those who are very successful in the outside world find it

difficult here. We want to have the best of everything and then improve it, so the question of taking failures does not arise.¹⁸

Speaking about the difference between the Divine's work and Nature's work, the Mother said :

In our way of working we must not be the slaves of Nature; all these habits of trying and changing, doing and undoing and re-doing again and again, wasting energy, labour, material and money, are Nature's way of action, not the Divine's. The Divine Consciousness sees first the truth of a work, the best way of doing it according to given circumstances; and when She acts it is final; She never comes back to what is done, She goes forward, using failure as well as success for a new progress, one more step towards the goal.

In order to progress, Nature destroys, while the Divine Consciousness stimulates growth and finally transforms.¹⁹

There was a time when Mother used to visit the houses of Ashramites. Once she went to the house of a gentleman who had been a very well-to-do person. He had a big family. During the conversation he told Mother that his wife was almost an animal. Mother became very serious and said :

You say that you could not bring up your children properly because although you are well-educated and cultured, you have no time to spare for them and your wife has time but she is uneducated, uncultured, good-for-nothing. Will you tell me who is responsible for her conditions? For more than twenty-five years she has lived with you. What did you do in these twenty-five years to educate her or give her your "culture"—absolutely nothing. Even the idea did not occur to you. You never thought that even if you had given her one hour daily for her education, it would have made a big difference in twenty-

five years. For you she existed only as a machine to look after your comforts and produce your children. You could not take her in your confidence, you could not do anything for her improvement, but there you stand with all your vanity, blaming her for being uneducated and uncultured.

I hold you responsible for all her shortcomings.¹⁷

Someone asked : "When some of our near and dear ones fall ill, they want us to go to see them. What shall we do?"

It is a question of relativity of values. You have to decide whether you give more value to yoga or to the social values of relations, etc. If you give more value to yoga, then surrender your sick relative to the Supreme and let the Supreme take care of him. Once you give me the charge of your relative, I put a consciousness upon him and it acts. It brings out the truth of his psychic. If the psychic needs to live longer for its experiences, the person survives. If the psychic need is not there and life is lingering on, the person can die in a few hours. Whatever I do will be in accordance with the needs of the psychic. By surrendering to the Supreme you can call a higher destiny to prevail, whereas by being physically near you cannot help in any way.¹⁸

While speaking to Mother about the Ashram a sadhak said : "Some of us are not happy in the Ashram." She told him :

People who feel miserable here and find that they have not the comfort they require ought not to stay. We are not in a position to do more than we do, and after all our aim is not to give to people a comfortable life, but to prepare them for a Divine Life which is quite a different affair.¹⁹

Somebody complained about too much work. Mother replied :

Here, for each work given, the full strength and Grace are always given at the same time to do the work as it has to be done. If you do not feel the strength and the Grace it proves that there is some mistake in your attitude. The faith is lacking or you have fallen back on old tracks and old creeds and thus you lose all receptivity.²⁰

Speaking to someone who was perhaps not satisfied with his inner condition, Mother said :

If you are not satisfied with what you are, take advantage of the Divine's help and **change**. If you have no courage to change, submit to your destiny and be quiet.

But to go on complaining about the condition in which you are and do nothing to change it is sheer waste of time and energy.

The cure from all difficulties can come only when the egoistic concentration upon one's desires and conveniences ceases.²¹

Normally, educated people find it difficult to trust their own spiritual experiences but they never have a doubt about the "scientific truths" which change from time to time. Mother comments :

Much depends on the environment. All around you find people believing in science, so you also believe in it. Moreover, it has the stamp of government education. If you go to the masses who have religious faith, you will find that they believe it quite naturally. It is the collective suggestion that works. If people want to reject blind faith it is all right, provided that they seek for knowledge. But when a man says that he does not believe blindly, he rejects the religious dogmas and then accepts the scientific dogmas in just the same way. Instead of believing in the authority of religious people, he prefers to follow the authority of title-holding scientists. My mother, for example, was a very strong atheist, but she would

swallow whatever any scientist said. So both are of the same kind.

Moreover, the physical mind has the nature of doubting. Even if you put something on its very nose, it won't believe it. It is happening all the time but you don't notice it, as you see in this case : you lock a door and go a few steps. Your physical mind asks you whether really you have locked it or not. You go back and see that it is locked ; again you get the same doubts. It may happen fifteen or twenty times in this most material case where you can go and check whenever you like. It is not so with the spiritual experience. You may not get the same experience again; even if you get it, it may come in a different shape. Hence a greater chance for this physical mind.²²

Mother was very particular about keeping things in order. Once some things made of glass were broken due to mishandling. Speaking in that connection Mother said :

To keep things in their proper order is a highly interesting and amusing work. You do not love your things, you simply take them as things. If you love your things, they will speak to you. They know where they are to be placed. There are vibrations in them that you cannot catch because of your mind. They want to be kept in a certain way, at another time they want to go in another way. In your consciousness you can translate their language. They will call you if they are not in the right place. They will warn you beforehand if there is going to be an accident. Everything has its own place in the universe. They have all been thrown away and scattered. If you could put everything in order, then that would be the Divine arrangement, there would be no trouble after that. Even the smallest thing has a relation with the universal order. You must have the whole universe in your consciousness.²³

In the Ashram a departmental head had some difficulties in his work. Mother told him :

The greatest mischief is that people with whom I have to work have no faith. If you don't understand what I mean I would put it this way: the people with whom I have to work are fully merged in ignorance and they cannot come out from it. What is needed is that you should have a confidence that there exists a consciousness that knows better and which can work in a better way.

Those who have more capacity for work have more difficulty: they think that theirs is the only way to do things. The true activity should come from within and it should come out with all its strength and act on the outside circumstances. But all of you try to gather up things outside, to collect all the particles of dust and expect them to work. You can go on doing it for a thousand years but it will not succeed.

You go on bothering that this man is not working properly, that man is not working properly, and that this organisation is going wrong. But all this is useless. You find fault with others and give your own proposals. But those proposals are from your mind. Human beings are very proud of their minds, but it is an ignorant and incapable instrument. If only you could see it once in its naked form, you would forget all your pride and be humble. All your feverishness and your proposals only spoil my work. Not only do they spoil the work for which they are meant, but they try to spoil the whole work. What is the use of my being upon the earth if you cannot have that trust in me which is the first thing that is needed for work? You should know that there is a power that is working, there is a consciousness that is trying to arrange things in the proper harmony. Your agitation can only disturb that work and delay its progress.

I don't mean to say that you should do nothing and say, "Mother will do everything, I need not make any effort." That is an attitude that your vital takes when it goes on strike. When things are not done according to its wishes it says, "Now let Mother do what she wants, I shall do nothing." You take inter-

est in the work and be active only when it is "my work, my responsibility"—"My", "My" with a capital M. This is a very wrong attitude. You must combine activity and faith. You must not come in the way of my work but give full collaboration at every moment. It is a difficult task and I don't know if there is one man who does it. But that has to be done and it is sufficient work for a hundred years.³⁴

So often we get angry and we think that it is a righteous anger. Mother says :

When you get angry you get an unusual strength and energy which you use for howling and making scenes. If you try to contain that energy and use it for overcoming an obstacle or for making some progress, the results will be wonderful. In the ordinary way you will gain strength and make some progress.³⁵

On another occasion also, Mother commented :

No, there is absolutely no reason for getting angry. Anger is a sign of weakness and whatever may be the reasons they cannot justify anger.

You get angry when you take the role of a judge and begin to decide what should and should not happen. But you yourself do not know the truth, so how can you lay down rules for the conduct of others? You think that everything should happen according to your ideas. If something goes in a different direction you get angry. You think that you are the centre of the world and the whole universe must follow your wishes. But why? What is the special thing in you that your will should be carried out? You are just one point in the universe, one out of millions of millions.

Even for your own defence you should not get angry. You can defend better if you are calm and cool. I am not asking you to suppress anger. I am asking you to change your nature and to get rid of anger. As a first step towards it you must not allow your anger to manifest and then ask for the Help to remove it altogether.

Left to himself the human being has no strength, no intelligence, no power or knowledge. He has only his stupidity, weakness and ignorance that he can call his own. But if he takes refuge in the Divine, if he gives himself to the Divine Delight, he gets all, he gets everything, he becomes strong, intelligent and powerful. Put yourself completely in His hands and let Him defend you.³⁰

Speaking on translations she said :

Even in the best translations of Sri Aurobindo's books and in the English translations of my writings—I am not speaking of translations done by Sri Aurobindo—you miss at least fifty per cent of the original,

It is impossible to taranslate **Prieres et meditations**. Even Sri Aurobindo said that it was very difficult for him and so he left it after translating a few prayers.

When I give permission for publishing a certain translation, it does not mean that I approve of the translation and put my seal of authority on it. Sometimes it only means that in this way I am preventing a worse translation from taking place.³¹

Many Ashramites used to tell Mother : "Why don't you take some better specimens of humanity so that your work may advance more quickly?" Her usual reply was that she did not want great people, she preferred children. Once a very highly placed saint came to see Mother and at once fell at her feet. This was quite unexpected. When asked about him Mother said :

He is an advanced being. And when he saw me he at once fell at my feet. He said he could recognise me. But he cannot fit in the Ashram in spite of all his good intentions.

Those who have achieved something find it very difficult to stay here. When they achieve something they think that they have reached the highest limits.

If they come here they will have to give up their greatness and become like a child. After every great achievement you have to submit it and try to go higher. At that time you feel that everything is lost and there are not many who are ready to do that.²⁸

Many people who have read a lot complain that it has not helped them in any way. For them there is a consolation:

You say that you have read all our books, but still you remain ignorant and it has not brought any change in your life and so it is useless to read. But after reading you know what is the right thing and what is not. Only your inner connection has not yet become so strong that it may act upon your life. One day it will become strong enough to act upon you more effectively. But if you had not read at all you would not have known what should be done and what should not be done and you would have said, "I didn't know", and the condition would have been worse.²⁹

CHAPTER 15

DISEASE AND ILLNESS

Speaking about diseases to someone Mother said:

All along I have been saying that diseases are due to the mind. It is your mind that makes you ill. You take something with the idea that it will make you sick and you will fall sick. You take something with the idea that it will cure you and it will cure you. Each and every disease comes like that. For example, T.B. comes when a person is in despair and depression, when he thinks that nobody loves him, nobody cares for him, etc. If you give him the proper environment and love, he will get cured. Even dental decay, arthritis, cancer, etc., come because of the mind.¹

What then is the cause of disease? And how should we get rid of them?

Diseases are caused by an unbalancing. By fasting or giving various treatments that go on changing from time to time, you create a sort of atmosphere in which the patient feels some safety. By giving preventive inoculations you give a strong confidence and mass suggestion that protect you from disease.

But our way is different. We do not admit a disease. You feel a little uneasy. Instead of running to the doctor, you tell your body that it must not accept the illness and it must behave as normal. It must take its food as usual, it must work as usual and go on without making any fuss. You will find that the body is very obedient and it will not fall ill.

Of course much depends upon the state of your consciousness and the force that you can command.

But if you accept a disease and go off your food and give up your normal routine, then the disease gets a hold upon you and you have to take the longer path of medication and convalescence, etc. That is why I don't like that people should stop eating and working at the slightest disturbance of the body.

The other day the governor's wife was telling me that when she had been in British India her daughter had got typhoid. She was under the treatment of a German doctor, who gave her only appetising medicines and full food to her liking. With this unorthodox treatment the fever took a very short course and the girl was completely cured without any intervening period of convalescence.²

Speaking to a sadhak Mother explained the psychological reasons of his illness :

Your illness was not a mere accident. You did not give sufficient attention to the inner change, a psychological change with a broadening of your consciousness. You were satisfied with yourself. You were shut up in your small shell and did not try to make any progress. You said sadhana did not interest you and you thought that the little work that you were doing was quite sufficient for you and nothing more was needed. It was this attitude that took you out of my protection. I gave you a warning, but you challenged Nature by saying that nothing could touch you. All these things combined and brought your mental difficulties, weakness and illness. You must change. You must try to fulfil the conditions of Mahasaraswati, make your work more and more perfect, make progress and try for a psychological transformation. Less than this will not help you. This is the minimum and if you try sincerely, my help will always be there. These days my work is going on at such speed that unless you make a serious effort, you will be left far behind and not be able to remain

with me. But, if you do as I say, everything will be all right.³

The Mother told someone else :

Your illness gave you an opportunity to open your eyes towards the need for an inner change. You must take advantage of this and progress.⁴

The Mother knew the true reasons for serious illnesses like cancer and tumours. Here is the remedy :

The cells of the body get the habit of increasing without cause. This is cancer. If you change the consciousness in the cells and get rid of their habit, cancer can be cured.⁵



Tumours always indicate some difficulty in the nature; certain cells decide to be independent of the discipline of the body. They do not remain in harmony with the other parts and begin to grow out of all proportion. Generally this is the result of a very strong greed in the nature. It may be greed for material things or for power or any other subtle object.

By performing an operation you may remove the tumour, but if the inner nature remains unchanged, it will come up in some other part and all the trouble that the patient has to undergo for the operation and its after-effects will be in vain.⁶

Replying to a sadhak's letter on illness she said :

Both the things are correct. You must put a strong will for getting rid of your illness and you must remain quiet and unperturbed by the results. The two are not contradictory. One should accompany the other. When you are completely cured, it will be an indication of some inner progress.

Sri Aurobindo's compassion is always there to

help you, but some effort is needed from your side also.⁷

Mother told another sadhak :

Things that do not want to change in your nature join together and come out in the form of illness. The only thing to be done is to have a strong aspiration and a total change. Then everything will be all right.⁸

The vibrations in the atmosphere around us influence our health :

Everything is contagious. Every good thing and every bad thing has its vibrations. If you catch those vibrations, you get that thing. The true Yogi knows these vibrations and can handle them; that is, how he can give you peace, etc. Even so-called accidents are contagious. You catch others' sorrow and feel sorrowful in the same way.⁹

Mother never encouraged worrying over any illness. She said :

When I was twenty, a doctor told me that in cases of troubles of the stomach or intestines, the best thing is to continue eating as usual and not to bother about the trouble. He said, "If you have acidity it will come from whatever food you take and the more you bother about it, the more it will increase. You go on changing your food and in the end you will find that you cannot drink even a drop of water without getting into trouble. But if you remain normal and don't worry, you will become all right."

And I have found this advice to be quite true.¹⁰

Again she said :

If you want to get cured there are two conditions. First you must be without fear, absolutely fearless, you understand, and secondly you must have a complete faith in the Divine protection. These two things are essential.¹¹

Mother had simple remedies to suggest for disturbances of the body. For instance :

The majority of people do not know how to breathe properly. Very often the air in the uppermost part of your lungs is not thrown out when you breathe ; you breathe only from the middle portion of the lungs and the dirty old air in the upper parts does not get changed. A good many troubles are due to this fact.

I have not read the classical method of Pranayam. But one of the methods that I have tried is inhale fresh air to the full capacity of your lungs and count 1, 2, 3, 4. Then stop the breath while you count 1, 2, 3, 4, and throw out as much air as possible, again with 1, 2, 3, 4. In this process you may breathe in with one nostril and breathe out with the other so that both nostrils get an opportunity of working vigorously.

If you can push the air towards a diseased part of your body and concentrate there then you will see that the disease will go away. In this way you can cure all kinds of troubles of the whole body.

When I say push the air towards the diseased part, I do not mean this physical air which does not go beyond the lungs—I mean the energy that comes with the air. When you breathe you must take in energy, consciousness, and force. It is these three that act upon the body and remove the trouble. They give you the new life and vigour that you feel after Pranayam. When you try to concentrate then on a part of the body, you get the feeling as if air was pressing there.

But you must be careful to draw only the right type of consciousness, energy and force with your breath, otherwise you may have the wrong results."

She discouraged external remedies for minor troubles :

With a persistent will and some attention you can get rid of the trouble with your eyesight. But if you take to glasses you think that all that could be done has been done and you do not make any effort to improve your eyes.

Codliver oil is no good. In spite of all the tall claims, it does not help you. Only carrots can be useful for improving your eyesight. When you pull them out of the ground wash them immediately and wrap them with a dark cloth so that they may not be exposed to light. Bring them home and eat them raw. They will surely help your eyesight.¹³

What then is needed to cure ourselves? Mother once said :

For getting rid of all illnesses two things are needed : one is a strong faith and the other is a receptivity. Faith in the mind and receptivity in the body. From your childhood it has been stuffed in your heads that you need medicines for curing your illness. Even when you decide not to see a doctor you say, "Even if I get worse I shall not go to the doctor." Behind this there is the idea that you believe that the doctor is necessary to cure you, but still you will not go to him. This much is enough to invite the disease. The mind has no faith and this body is so stupid that it thinks it cannot get any help directly from the Force, that it needs a vehicle for the working of the Force. Even when you try to bring in faith you push the idea about disease and medicine, you push it down in the subconscious and it remains hidden there till it gets an opportunity to raise its head. For instance, a slight depression, even for a minute or a half a minute, can bring an attack of cold and once it is there your belief works to the effect that once it is there it has to last for three days. But if you try, you can get rid of it in the same way in a minute.

I have seen Sri Aurobindo curing serious diseases in no time; but as I have said—faith and receptivity must be there.

The battle goes on at every minute.¹⁴

Sometimes it is our well-wishers who increase the trouble. Mother spoke thus to a parent :

If parents could leave their children alone, they would not fall ill so often, perhaps not even once

out of ten times. Yes, you have not said anything to the child, but how worried you were about its health. It appeared as if a catastrophe had happened or the child had suddenly developed cancer. It is your worry that spoils the whole atmosphere and increases the trouble.¹⁵

Illness has many psychological factors. Referring to one such factor, over-dependence on others, she said :

His great difficulty is that there are many women to look after him. For a man this is the worst thing. When there is a woman who loves him, he begins to expect her to give him all that he needs and all that he does not need. The trouble is that it is only the Divine who can give you what you need; but in the presence of a woman you become lazy and expect the woman—a creature like yourself who is equally imperfect and full of weaknesses and defects—to do all that is needed. Man begins to ask woman to raise him up when he is depressed, to give him peace when he is troubled and give him strength when he is weak. Evidently that is not possible. It takes you away from the Divine and leads you to more trouble and miseries.

It is the same thing for a woman: she expects all support from a man and loses touch with the main support. And the man cannot give her what he himself has not got. This gives rise to more difficulties and diseases and opens the door for all possible troubles.¹⁶

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If you are ill, your illness is looked after with so much anxiety and fear, you are given so much care that you forget to take help from the One who can help you and you fall into a vicious circle and take a morbid interest in your illness.¹⁷

And with illness comes often the question of death and life after death :

The question of "life after death" seems to be so

stupid and meaningless. It presumes that there are the distinct compartments of life divided by death. In fact it is not so. There is only one life and it continues. After death it is the same life without any change, only it is minus the body. Otherwise in all respects it is the same. If you were only the body and nothing else, then it could be said that life ceases as soon as the body drops off. But even cats and dogs are not merely a body. They also have their vital. I have known dogs that consciously used to go out of their bodies. There was a dog of Theon; when I used to be in meditation, he would rise out of his body and come up to me and poke his vital cold nose into my body to inform me that it was time to come out of meditation. I used to come down and find his body under the staircase, lying in a deep sleep.

When you die you do not go outside earth-conditions. The psychic may go for a repose in the psychic world, but the life of the vital continues exactly in the same way for a very long time, only you lose the fortress that affords protection—I mean the body. When you are in your body, if the vital goes to some dangerous place it can always rush back to the body for protection, but once you are without a body you are at the mercy of each and every passing force, unless of course you have the Divine protection. That is why I say death will not solve any of your problems. If anything at all, it will only increase them by taking away your protection of the body.¹⁸

The river of life goes on flowing. Life and death are the two banks, and the whole thing constitutes evolution. Once, some of the students wanted to depict evolution in an exhibition. As usual they turned towards Mother for guidance. She said :

The evolutionary creation has reached up to man—the highest that can be reached by the mind. There is also the creation of the Asura—insects, worms and

the like belong to this category. If you see them under the microscope, they are the exact replica of some beings of the vital world. Third is the creation of the gods and the angels—they are the birds. The swan represents the soul. In this category the highest being is the involved man, where the consciousness does not evolve from below but comes down and takes a form. The form is not made by sex. It is something coming from above to help in the changing of the lower creation. Above both of these stands the Supreme.¹⁹

As for life she has much to say. Life, in her eyes, is not to be lived for our selfish ends. She said :

Life has a purpose.

This purpose is to find and to serve the Divine.

The Divine is not far. He is in ourselves, deep inside and above the feelings and the thoughts. With the Divine is peace and certitude and even the solution of all difficulties. Hand over your problems to the Divine and He will pull you out of all difficulties.²⁰

From the moment you are satisfied and aspire no longer, you begin to die. Life is movement, life is effort; it is marching forward, climbing towards future revelations and realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest.²¹

For those who want to play safe Mother says :

From birth to death life is a dangerous thing.

The brave pass through it without caring for the risks.

The prudent take their precautions.

The cowards fear everything.

But ultimately there comes to each one only that which the Supreme Will decides.²²

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The whole life is a sadhana. It is a mistake to cut it into bits and say this is sadhana and that is not. Even your eating and sleeping should be a part of sadhana.²³

CHAPTER 16

AUROVILLE

As we have seen, even in the early years of this century, Mother wanted to provide facilities to those who wanted to work for a higher life. Sri Aurobindo Ashram was their first laboratory in this physical world. According to Mother :

Sri Aurobindo came to tell the world of the beauty of the future that must be realised. He came to give not a hope but a certitude of the splendour towards which the world moves. The world is not an unfortunate accident, it is a marvel which moves towards its expression. The world needs the certitude of the beauty of the future and Sri Aurobindo has given that assurance.¹

It is Mother's job to give it a material form. The Ashram was the first step and Auroville the next. She gave a statement explaining the reason for the Ashram as well as for Auroville :

The task of giving a concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's vision has been entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society, expressing and embodying the new consciousness, is the work undertaken by her. In the nature of things, it is a collective ideal calling for a collective effort to realise it in terms of an integral human perfection.

The Ashram, founded and built up by the Mother, has been the first step towards the fulfil-

ment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, "the more exterior", seeking to widen the base of this endeavour to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth in the collective life of humanity.²

Mother wrote :

There should be somewhere upon earth a place no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all form, painting, sculpture, music, literature will be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they give being limited solely by each one's capacities and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be

there as the means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which, on its side, would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where the relations among human beings, usually based almost exclusively upon competition and strife, would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood.³

Mother was asked: "What is the difference between the Ashram and Auroville? She said :

The Ashram will keep its role as pioneer, inspirer and guide. Auroville will be an experiment in collective realisation.⁴

On 28th February 1968, youth, representing various countries of the world, gathered together on the soil of Auroville to mark its inauguration. Earth from 124 countries was poured in a marble lotus-shaped urn. The charter of Auroville was read out in 16 of the main languages :

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.

Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.

But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.

3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.⁵

About the purpose of Auroville Mother says :

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

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Humanity is not the last rung of terrestrial creation.

Evolution continues and man will be surpassed.

It is for each one to know whether he wants to participate in the advent of this new species.

For those who are satisfied with the world as it is, Auroville has evidently no reason for existence.

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Auroville wants to be a new creation expressing a new consciousness in a new way and according to new methods.^o

Who can be a true Aurovillian? Here is Mother's reply :

(1) The first necessity is the inner discovery by which one learns who one really is behind the social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances.

At our inmost centre there is a free being, wide and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the acting centre of our being and our life in Auroville.

(2) One lives in Auroville in order to be free of moral and social conventions; but this liberty must not be a new slavery to the ego, its desires and its ambitions.

The fulfilment of desires bars the route to the inner discovery which can only be attained in peace and the transparency of a perfect disinterestedness.

(3) The Aurovillian must lose the proprietary sense of possession.

For our passage in the material world, that which is indispensable to our life and to our action is put at our disposal according to the place we should occupy there. The more conscious our contact is with our inner being, the more exact are the means given.

(4) Work, even manual work, is an indispensable thing for the inner discovery.

If one does not work, if one does not inject his consciousness into matter, the latter will never develop. To let one's consciousness organise a bit of matter by way of one's body is very good. To establish order around oneself, helps to bring order within oneself.

One should organise life not according to outer, artificial rules, but according to an organised, inner consciousness, because if one allows life to drift without imposing the control of a higher consciousness, life becomes inexpressive and irresolute. It is to waste one's time in the sense that matter persists without a conscious utilisation.

(5) The whole earth must prepare itself for the advent of the new species, and Auroville wants to consciously work towards hastening that advent.

(6) Little by little it will be revealed to us what this new species should be, and meanwhile the best measure to take is to consecrate oneself entirely to the Divine.⁷

It is but natural that such an extraordinary project should raise many questions. Mother in her gracious manner was always ready to help. Here are some questions by an Aurovillian and her replies :

What political organisation do you wish for Auroville?

An amusing definition comes to me: a divine anarchy. But the world will not understand it. Men must become conscious of their psychic being and organise themselves spontaneously, without rules and fixed laws—that is the ideal.

For this one must be in contact with one's psychic being, one must be guided by it and the authority and the influence of the ego must disappear.

Is Auroville the only solution to the misery of man and to the troubles of the society ?

Not the only one. It is a centre of transformation; a small nucleus of people who transform themselves and give an example to the world. This is what Auroville aspires to be. As long as egoism and badwill exist in the world the general transformation is impossible.⁸

Someone else asked : "How dependent is the building of Auroville upon man's acceptance of spirituality?" Mother replied :

The opposition between spirituality and material life, the division between the two has no sense for me as, in truth, life and the spirit are one and it is in and by the physical work that the highest spirit must be manifested.⁹

Why did Mother start Auroville? Who is welcome to live there? Mother says :

The reason of Auroville's existence is to hasten the advent of the Supramental Reality upon earth.

The help of all those who find that the world is not as it should be is welcome there.

Each one should know whether he wants to be a part of the old dying world or to work for a new and better world which is preparing to be born.¹⁰

Though Mother speaks of freedom she lays great emphasis on discipline :

No big creation is possible without discipline.

Individual discipline.

Group discipline.

Discipline towards the Divine.¹¹

Auroville is in a full period of construction and disciplined workers are necessary. Those who do not want to submit to a discipline should not be here for the moment. Goodwill, sincerity and discipline are indispensable qualities for those who want to be Aurovillians.¹²

Mother was all love and kindness but at times she could be severe when her human children made it necessary :

Is it to satisfy your personal needs that you have come to Auroville? It is really not necessary, the ordinary world is there for that.

One comes to Auroville to realise a divine life which wants to manifest upon earth.

Everyone should make an effort in this direction and not remain hypnotised by the so-called needs which are nothing but personal caprices.

Look up and forward, try to surmount the animal human nature. Take the resolution and you will find that you are helped on the path.¹³

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To be an Aurovillian one must at least belong to the enlightened humanity and aspire to the higher consciousness, that which will govern the race of tomorrow. Always higher and always better, beyond the egoistic limitations.¹⁴

As there are many Europeans in Auroville, the question of drugs becomes rather annoying. The Mother gave a sharp answer when asked about it.

Drugs are prohibited in Auroville. If there are some who take them, they take them on the sly.

The ideal Aurovillian aspiring to become conscious of the Divine Consciousness takes neither tobacco nor alcohol nor drugs.¹⁵

Someone asked : "You have said that you do not want to make rules for Auroville. But lately you have written that drugs are prohibited there. Has there been any modification in your vision of Auroville?" Mother replied :

Perhaps the Aurovillians have not attained the level of consciousness expected of them.¹⁶

When a new community centre was started, the Mother gave it the name "Peace". In her message she explained to them the code of conduct she expected of them :

"Peace". The foremost thing must be "Peace". Whatever you do must be by peaceful means.

The second thing necessary is Harmony, not only general harmony but also between the individuals living there. You must begin to look for the harmony in each individual and not dwell on the disharmony. The disharmony exists everywhere but you must reject that and allow only the harmony to enter.

There must be a sense of Order. Each individual must have a sense of self-discipline, and actually practise it.

PEACE, HARMONY, ORDER, SELF-DISCIPLINE.¹⁷

In the centre of the township a unique temple is being built which is dedicated to the Mother. It is called Matrimandir. Encouraging the people, she wrote :

The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner the soul is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for Aurovillians.¹⁸

About the significance of this temple the Mother says :

Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection.

The union with the Divine manifesting Himself in a progressive human unity.¹⁹

The township brought in many practical problems, including money. The Mother was asked a question regarding this subject: "Will there be an exchange of money in Auroville?" She said :

No, it is only with the outside world that Auroville will have money relations.²⁰

Elsewhere she has written about money :

In this material world, for men, money is more **sacred** than the Divine's Will.²¹

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Money is not meant to make money, money is meant to make the earth ready for the advent of the new creation.²²

One would normally expect religion to play an important part in this kind of township, but Mother's ideas are revolutionary :

We want the Truth.

For most men, it is what they want that they label truth.

The Aurovillians must want Truth whatever it may be.

Auroville is for those who want to live a life essentially divine but who renounce all religions whether they be ancient, modern, new or future.

It is only in experience that there can be knowledge of the Truth.

No one ought to speak of the Divine unless he has had experience of the Divine.

Get experience of the Divine, then alone will you have the right to speak of it.

The objective study of religions will be a part of the historical study of the development of human consciousness.

Religions make up part of the history of mankind and it is in this guise that they will be studied at Auroville—not as beliefs to which one ought or ought not to fasten, but as part of a process in the development of human consciousness which should lead man towards his superior realisation.

PROGRAMME

Research through the experience of the Supreme Truth

A Life Divine

but

NO RELIGIONS

Our research will not be a search effected by mystic means. It is in life itself that we wish to find the Divine. And it is through this discovery that life can really be transformed.²³

CHAPTER 17

MOTHER AND WOMEN

In the old schools of Yoga, Kamini and Kanchan (woman and gold, sex and wealth) are regarded as the doors of hell, and anybody who wants to take to the higher life is expected to shun them. Not so in Sri Aurobindo's yoga where Mother is the presiding deity.

As far as the Ashram is concerned, Mother did not want to make any difference between men and women—both were children of the same Divine Mother, her own little forms. But no sexual life is allowed and no vital relations encouraged. Both are expected to meet each other as Mother's children, trying to serve her. She said :

For God's sake can't you forget that you are a girl or a boy and try to become a human being?¹

For both, men and women, there is a general rule. These are her words :

You say that you wish to lead the spiritual life, but for that you should understand that the first point is to overcome all the lower movements, all the attractions, all the attachments, for all these are **absolutely contrary** to the spiritual life.

The spiritual life **demand**s that one is exclusively turned towards the Divine and the Divine **alone**. All that one does should be done **for the Divine**, all occupations, all aspirations, all, without exception, should be directed towards the Divine with a complete surrender of the whole being.

I know that this cannot be done in a day, but the **decision** that it may be so should be taken in an **unshakable** manner. It is only on this condition that I can accept you for the spiritual life.²

A young man in his thirties was very eager to get married. But each time that he asked for Mother and Sri Aurobindo's permission he got an emphatic "no". Exasperated, he asked Mother: "How is it? You got married, Sri Aurobindo got married, and yet you deprive me of this chance." With all sweetness Mother replied that we got this experience just to be able to answer to people like you; now we can say we have the experience, and on the basis of that we advise you not to get married.

When the playground activities started in the Ashram, Mother encouraged girls to take part in them. It was in the 1940's that the Ashram girls began to take part in marching, athletics, gymnastics, etc., side by side with the boys. But people protested on various grounds. Mother was asked: "Why do you have the same programme of physical education for boys and girls?" She replied:

There are some who consider it a scandal; some consider it a glaring error from the physical, material point of view. "Why aren't girls treated in a special way and quite differently from boys?"—then the great argument—"as it is done everywhere."

Ah! thank you. Then why do we have an Ashram? Why do we have a Centre of Education? If everywhere the same things are done, we don't need to repeat them, we won't do them any better than others.

And when they put this argument in my way, they couldn't tell me anything that appears more utterly stupid to me. It is done everywhere? That is just the reason for not doing it; for if we do what others do, it is not worth the trouble doing anything at all. We want precisely to introduce into the world something which is not there; but if we keep all the

habits of the world, all the preferences of the world, all the constructions of the world, I don't see how we can get out of the rut and do something new.

My children, I have told you, repeated it in every tone, in every way: if you really want to profit by your stay here, try to look at things and understand them with a new vision and a new understanding based on something higher, something deeper, vaster, something more true, something which is not yet but will be one day. And it is because we want to build this future that we have taken this special stand.

I tell you that we have had quite material proofs of the correctness and truth of our position, but... they are not lasting. Why? Because it is extremely easy to fall back into the ordinary consciousness, and there is nothing more difficult than to always stand on the top of the ladder and try to look at the world from up there.

We **don't want** to obey the orders of Nature, even if these orders have millions of years of habits behind them. And one thing is certain, the argument of Nature when she is opposed to things changing, is: "It has always been thus." I claim this is not true. Whether she likes it or not, things change, and a day will come when it will be said: "Ah! yes, there was a time when it was like that, but now it is different."

Well, grant only for some time, in a way which is still that of faith and trust, that we are in fact bringing about this change, that we have come to a point where things are going to take a turn and a new orientation. You are simply asked to have just a little faith and trust and allow yourselves to be guided. Otherwise, well, you will lose the advantage of being here, that's all. And you will go back with the same weaknesses and same habits one sees in life as it is outside. There you are.

You thought I was a little severe, a little hard, and that after all it was not easy to satisfy me! That is why you tie pretty little pink ribbons in your hair

or on pigtails hanging at the back. I say, perhaps, a little uncharitably: "You look ridiculous!" For you think you are very fine to look at, but truly this makes you ridiculous. If you want to go out into the world and preen yourselves as girls do in the world and give yourselves airs in order to please because that is your sole defence and sole weapon, to attract attention and to please, and be quite pretty, quite seductive, you are quite free to do so, it's no longer my concern. But indeed to do all that here is ridiculous. It is ridiculous and you also bring yourselves down immediately to a level which is not very pretty.

Naturally, you may blame me for telling you all this in front of "the other sex". But I include him in the ridicule, for if he did not think as he does, if he did not feel as he does and did not act as he does, you would have long ago been disgusted with these childish little affectations. There we are.

Now I have told you all I wanted to say. I think this is enough for today, isn't it? You have really had it!"

Some people who were responsible for teaching physical culture to the Ashram school children were faced with many questions concerning girls. They wrote to the Mother: "Please throw your light on the following questions so that we are better equipped in our knowledge to execute our responsibilities more efficiently." Mother replied to them:

Before answering your questions I wish to tell you something which you know no doubt, but which you must never forget if you wish to learn how to lead a wise life.

It is true that we are, in our inner being, a spirit, a living soul that holds within it the Divine and aspires to become it, to manifest it perfectly; it is equally true, for the moment at least, that in our most material external being, in our body, we are

still an animal, a mammalian, of a higher order no doubt, but made like animals and subject to the laws of animal Nature.

You have been taught surely that one peculiarity of the mammal is that the female conceives the child, carries it and builds it up within herself until the moment when the young one, fully formed, comes out of the body of its mother and lives independently.

In view of this function Nature has provided the woman with an additional quantity of blood which has to be used for the child in making. But as the use of this additional blood is not a constant need, when there is no child in making, the surplus blood has to be thrown out to avoid excess and congestion. This is the cause of the monthly periods. It is a simple natural phenomenon, result of the way in which woman has been made and there is no need to attach to it more importance than to the other functions of the body. It is not a disease and cannot be the cause of any weakness or real discomfort. Therefore a normal woman, one who is not ridiculously sensitive, should merely take the necessary precautions of cleanliness, never think of it any more and lead her daily life as usual without any change in her programme. This is the best way to be in good health.

Besides, even while recognising that in our body we still belong dreadfully to animality, we must not therefore conclude that this animal part, as it is the most concrete and the most real for us, is one to which we are obliged to be subjected and which we must allow to rule over us. Unfortunately this is what happens most often in life and men are certainly much more slaves than masters of their physical being. Yet it is the contrary that should be, for the truth of individual life is quite another thing.

We have in us an intelligent will more or less enlightened which is the first instrument of our psychic being. It is this intelligent will that we must use in order to learn to live not like an animal man, but as a human being, candidate for Divinity.

And the first step towards this realisation is to become master of this body instead of remaining an impotent slave.

One most effective help towards this goal is physical culture.

For about a century there has been a renewal of a knowledge greatly favoured in ancient times, partially forgotten since then. Now it is reawakening, and with the progress of modern science, it is acquiring quite a new amplitude and importance. This knowledge deals with the physical body and the extraordinary mastery that can be obtained over it with the help of enlightened and systematised physical education.

This renewal has been the result of the action of a new power and light that have spread upon the earth in order to prepare it for the great transformations that must take place in the near future.

We must not hesitate to give a primary importance to this physical education whose very purpose is to make our body capable of receiving and expressing the new force which seeks to manifest upon earth.

This said I now answer the questions you put to me.

I

What attitude should a girl take towards her monthly periods?

The attitude you take towards something quite natural and unavoidable. Give it as little importance as possible and go on with your usual life, without changing anything because of it.

II

Should a girl participate in her normal programme of Physical Education during her periods?

Certainly if she is accustomed to physical exercise, she must not stop because of that. If one keeps the

habit of leading one's normal life always, very soon one does not even notice the presence of the menses.

III

Why are some girls completely run down during their periods and suffer from pain in the lower back and abdomen while others may have slight or no inconvenience at all?

It is a question of temperament and mostly of education. If from her childhood a girl has been accustomed to pay much attention to the slightest uneasiness and to make a big fuss about the smallest inconvenience, then she loses all capacity of endurance and anything becomes the occasion for being pulled down. Especially if the parents themselves get too easily anxious about the reactions of their children. It is wiser to teach a child to be a bit sturdy and enduring than to show much care for these small inconveniences and accidents that cannot always be avoided in life. An attitude of quiet forbearance is the best one can adopt for oneself and teach to the children.

It is a well known fact that if you expect some pain you are bound to have it and, once it is come, if you concentrate upon it, then it increases more and more until it becomes what is usually termed as "unbearable", although with some will and courage there is hardly any pain that one cannot bear.

IV

How can a girl overcome her suffering and pain during periods?

There are some exercises that make the abdomen strong and improve the circulation. These exercises must be done regularly and continued even after the pains have disappeared. For the grown-up girls, this kind of pain comes almost entirely from sexual desires. If we get rid of the desires we get rid of the pains. There are two ways of getting rid of desires; the first one, the usual one, is through satisfaction (or rather what is called so, because there

is no such thing as satisfaction in the domain of desire). That means leading the ordinary human-animal life, marriage, children and all the rest of it.

There is, of course, another way, a better way, —control, mastery, transformation; this is more dignified and also more effective.

V

Do you think there should be different types of exercises for boys and girls? Will a girl bring harm on her genital organs by practising the so-called manly sports?

In all cases, as well for boys as for girls, the exercises must be graded according to the strength and the capacity of each one. If a weak student tries at once to do hard and heavy exercises, he may suffer for his foolishness. But with a wise and progressive training, girls as well as boys can participate in all kinds of sports, and thus increase their strength and health.

To become strong and healthy can never bring harm to a body, even if it is a woman's body!

VI

Will a girl's appearance change and become muscular like a muscular man and make her look ugly by practising vigorous exercises?

Weakness and fragility may look attractive in the view of a perverted mind, but it is not the truth of Nature nor the truth of the Spirit.

If you have ever looked at the photos of the women gymnasts you will know what perfectly beautiful bodies they have; and nobody can deny that they are muscular!

VII

Will the practice of vigorous types of exercises bring difficulties in the child-birth if the girls want to marry and have children afterwards?

I never came across such a case. On the contrary, women who are trained to strong exercises and have

muscular body go through the ordeal of child-formation and child-birth much more easily and painlessly.

I heard the authentic story of one of those African women who are accustomed to walk for miles carrying heavy loads. She was pregnant and the time of delivery came during one of the day's march. She sat on the side of the track, under a tree, gave birth to the child, waited for half an hour, then she rose and adding the new born babe to the former luggage, went on her way quietly, as if nothing had happened. This is a splendid example of what a woman can do when she is in full possession of her health and strength.

Doctors will say that such a thing cannot occur in a civilised world with all the so-called progress that humanity has achieved; but we cannot deny that, from the physical point of view, this is a more happy condition than all the sensitiveness, the sufferings and the complications created by the modern civilisations.

Moreover, usually doctors are more interested in the abnormal cases, and they judge mostly from that point of view. But for us, it is different; it is from the normal that we can rise to the supernormal, not from the abnormal which is always a sign of perversion and inferiority.

VIII

What should be the ideal of Physical Education for a girl from the point of view of her sex?

I do not see why there should be any special ideal of physical education for girls other than for boys.

Physical education has for aim to develop all the possibilities of a human body, possibilities of harmony, strength, plasticity, cleverness, agility, endurance, and to increase the control over the functioning of the limbs and the organs, to make of the body a perfect instrument at the disposal of a conscious will. This programme is excellent for all human beings equally, and there is no point in wanting to adopt another one for girls.

IX

What roles should man and woman play in our new way of life? What shall be the relation between them?

Why make at all a distinction between them? They are all equally human beings, trying to become fit instruments for the Divine Work, above sex, caste, creed and nationality, all children of the same Infinite Mother and aspirants to the one External Godhead.

X

What should be the ideal of a woman's physical beauty?

A perfect harmony in the proportion, suppleness and strength, grace and force, plasticity and endurance, and above all, an excellent health, unvarying and unchanging, which is the result of a pure soul, a happy trust in life and an unshakable faith in the Divine Grace.

One word to finish :

I have told you these things, because you needed to hear them, but do not make of them absolute dogmas, for that would take away their truth.⁴

In one of the very first dramas staged in the Ashram, a girl was asked to play the part of the Prime Minister of a State. It was something unimaginable at that time and even the girls found it a little difficult.

According to the Mother men and women are both slaves of each other and both require freedom. But she didn't believe that enforcing laws would help in any way :

No law can liberate women unless they liberate themselves. What makes them slaves is :

- (1) Attraction towards the male and his strength.
- (2) Desire for home life and its security.
- (3) Attachment to motherhood.

If they get free from these three slaveries they will truly be the equal of man.

Men also have three slaveries :

- (1) Spirit of possession, attachment to power and domination.
- (2) Desire for sexual relation with woman.
- (3) Attachment to the small comforts of married life.

If they get rid of these three slaveries, they can truly become the equal of women.⁵

To Mother freedom meant something quite different from self-assertion. In 1933 she wrote a letter to a person who wanted to get married. In that letter she mentions the ideal relationship in marriage :

To unite your physical existences and your material interests, to associate yourselves so as to face together the difficulties and successes, the defeats and victories of life—this is the very basis of marriage—but you know already that it does not suffice.

To be united in feelings, to have the same tastes and same aesthetic pleasures, to vibrate together in a common response to the same things, one by the other and one for the other—it is good, it is necessary—but it is not enough.

To be one in profound sentiments, your affection, your feelings of tenderness for each other not varying in spite of all the shocks of existence; withstanding weariness, nervous irritations and disappointments, to be always and in every case happy, most happy to be together, to find, under all circumstances, one in the presence of the other, rest, peace and joy—it is good, it is very good, it is indispensable but it is not enough.

To unite your mentalities, your thoughts harmonising and becoming complementary to each other, your intellectual preoccupations and discoveries shared between you; in a word, to make your spheres of mental activity identical through a broadening and

an enrichment acquired by the two at the same time—it is good, it is absolutely necessary—but it is not enough.

Beyond it all, at the bottom, at the centre, at the summit of the being, there is a supreme Truth of the being, an Eternal Light independent of all circumstances of birth, of country, of environment, of education; the origin, cause and master of our spiritual development—it is That that gives a definite orientation to our existence; it is That that decides our destiny; it is in the consciousness of this that you should unite. To be one in aspiration and ascension, to advance with the same step on the spiritual path—such is the secret of a durable union.*

And for women who lived ordinary life she had a different kind of ideal. We can share her wisdom which she gave to the women of Japan when they had requested her to speak on the subject :

“TO THE WOMEN OF JAPAN”

To speak of children to the women of Japan is, I think, to speak to them of their dearest, their most sacred subject. Indeed, in no other country in the world have the children taken such an important, such a primordial place. They are, here, the centre of care and attention. On them are concentrated—and rightly—the hopes for the future. They are the living promise of growing prosperity for the country. Therefore, the most important work assigned to women in Japan is child-making. Maternity is considered as the principal role of woman. But this is true only so long as we understand what is meant by the word maternity. For to bring children into the world as rabbits do their young—instinctively, ignorantly, machine-like, that certainly cannot be called maternity ! True maternity begins with the conscious creation of a being, with the willed shaping of a soul coming to develop and utilise a new body. The true domain of women is the spiritual. We forget it but too often.

To bear a child and construct his body almost subconsciously is not enough. The work really commences when, by the power of thought and will, we conceive and create a character capable of manifesting an ideal.

And do not say that we have no power for realising such a thing. Innumerable instances of this very effective power could be brought out as proofs.

First of all, the effect of physical environment was recognised and studied long ago. It is by surrounding women with forms of art and beauty that, little by little, the ancient Greeks created the exceptionally harmonious race that they were.

Individual instances of the same fact are numerous. It is not rare to see a woman who, while pregnant, had looked at constantly and admired a beautiful picture or statue, giving birth to a child after the perfect likeness of this picture or statue. I met several of these instances myself. Among them, I remember very clearly two little girls; they were twins and perfectly beautiful. But the most astonishing was how little like their parents they were.... They reminded me of a very famous picture painted by the English artist Reynolds. One day I made this remark to the mother, who immediately exclaimed: "Indeed, is it not so? You will be interested to know that while I was expecting these children, I had, hanging above my bed, a very good reproduction of Reynold's picture. Before going to sleep and as soon as I woke, my last and first glance was for that picture; and in my heart I hoped: may my children be like the faces in this picture. You see that I succeeded quite well!" In truth, she could be proud of her success, and her example is of great utility for other women.

But if we can obtain such results on the physical plane where the materials are the least plastic, how much more so on the psychological plane where the influence of thought and will is so powerful. Why accept the obscure bonds of heredity and atavism—which are nothing else than subconscious preferences

for our own trend of character—when we can, by concentration and will, call into being a type constructed according to the highest ideal we are able to conceive? With this effort, maternity becomes truly precious and sacred; indeed with this, we enter the glorious work of the Spirit, and womanhood rises above animality and its ordinary instincts, towards real humanity and its powers.

In this effort, in this attempt, then, lies our true duty. And if this duty was always of the greatest importance, it certainly has taken a capital one in the present turn of the earth's evolution.

For we are living in an exceptional time at an exceptional turning point in the world's history. Never before, perhaps, did mankind pass through such a dark period of hatred, bloodshed and confusion. And, at the same time, never had such a strong, such an ardent hope awakened in the hearts of the people. Indeed, if we listen to our heart's voice, we immediately perceive that we are, more or less consciously, waiting for a new reign of justice, of beauty, of harmonious good-will and fraternity. And this seems in complete contradiction with the actual state of the world. But we all know that never is the night so dark as before the dawn. May not this darkness, then, be the sign of an approaching dawn? And as never was night so complete, so terrifying, maybe never will dawn have been so bright, so pure, so illuminating as the coming one. . . . After the bad dreams of the night the world will awaken to a new consciousness.

The civilisation which is ending now in such a dramatic way was based on the power of mind, mind dealing with matter and life. What it has been to the world, we have not to discuss here. But a new reign is coming, that of the Spirit; after the human, the divine.

Yet, if we have been fortunate enough to live on earth at such a stupendous, a unique time as this one, is it sufficient to sit and watch the unfolding events? All those who feel that their heart extends further than the limits of their own person and family, that

their thought embraces more than small personal interests and local conventions, all those, in short, who realise that they belong not to themselves, or to their family, or even to their country, but to God who manifests himself in all countries, through mankind, these, indeed, know that they must rise and set to work for the sake of humanity, for the advent of the Dawn.

And in this momentous, endless, many-sided work, what can be the part of womanhood? It is true that, as soon as great events and works are in question, the custom is to relegate women to a corner with a smile of patronising contempt which means: this is not your business, poor, feeble, futile creatures. . . . And women, submissive, childlike, lazy perhaps, have accepted, at least in many countries, this deplorable state of things. I dare to say that they are wrong. In the life of the future, there shall be no more room for such division, such disequilibrium between the masculine and the feminine. The true relation of the two sexes is an equal footing of mutual help and close collaboration. And from now, we must reassume our veritable position, take again our due place and assert our real importance—that of spiritual former and educator. Indeed, some men, perhaps a little vainglorious of their so-called advantages, may despise the apparent weakness of women (although even this exterior weakness is not quite certain) but: “Do what he may, the superman will have to be born of woman all the same”, someone said very rightly.⁷

Such were Mother's ideas. It is difficult to label her; one couldn't call her modern, one couldn't call her conservative or old-fashioned. She was herself, unique.

CHAPTER 18

TOWARDS THE LORD'S DAY

As we have seen, 24 November 1926 was the Siddhi Day when Sri Krishna's Consciousness (the Overmind Consciousness) descended. From then onward Mother and Sri Aurobindo tried to bring down the next stage of evolution: the Supermind. Explaining Sri Aurobindo's work the Mother said:

Sri Aurobindo's work is a unique earth-transformation. Above the mind there are several levels of conscious being, among which the really divine world is what Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind, the world of the Truth.... It is the direct descent of the Supramental Consciousness and Power that alone can utterly re-create life in terms of the Spirit....

There is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand. It is no mere experiment but an inevitable manifestation of the Supramental.¹

Explaining the process of evolution, the Mother said: The consciousness is like a ladder: at each great epoch there has been one great being capable of adding one more step to the ladder and reaching a place where the ordinary consciousness had never been. It is possible to attain a high level and get completely out of the material consciousness; but then one does not retain the ladder, whereas the great achievement of the great epochs of the universe has been the capacity to add one more step to the ladder without losing contact with the material, the capacity

to reach the Highest and at the same time connect the top with the bottom instead of letting a kind of emptiness cut off all connection between the different planes. To go up and down and join the top to the bottom is the whole secret of realisation, and that is the work of the Avatar. Each time he adds one more step to the ladder there is a new creation upon earth.²

Thus the work continued and Mother once said :

Even in 1938 I used to see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo. What he could not do at that time was to fix it here.³

This gives us a glimpse of the Herculean task they had undertaken. In 1950 Sri Aurobindo left his body. Mother said in this connection :

By the mere fact of leaving his body Sri Aurobindo has done the work that would have taken an age in the normal way.⁴

*

People do not know what a tremendous sacrifice Sri Aurobindo has made for the world. About a year ago, while I was discussing things, I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone, "No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation, I might go, you will have to fulfil our Yoga of supramental descent and transformation."⁵

And what is transformation? According to Mother :

The transformation of the material body has not been done nor even attempted perhaps in the past. It can be done only if life is sufficiently prolonged; you do not leave the body unless you will it so and thus have the necessary time at your disposal to bring about the change. Sri Aurobindo once said—and he said it without the least hesitation—that it will take about three hundred year to do it, I can add, from the time when the last stage of union with the Divine is achieved.

Three hundred years is the minimum, I should say. You must realise what it means to transform the body. The body with all its organs and functionings works automatically without the intervention of your consciousness, and is built upon an animal plan. If your heart stops for the hundredth part of a second, your body goes off. You cannot do without a single one of your organs and you must keep watch over their proper functioning. Transformation means the replacement of this purely material arrangement by a systematic concentration of forces. You must bring about an arrangement of forces, according to a certain kind of vibrations, replacing each organ by a centre of self-conscious energy which governs through the concentration of higher force. There will no longer be a stomach, no more a heart even. These things will give place to a system of vibrations which represent what they really are. The material organs are symbols of energy centres; they are not the essential reality, they only give a former figure to it under certain circumstances. The transformed body will function through its real energy centres, not through their representatives as developed in an animal body. For that you must first of all be conscious of these centres and their functionings; instead of an unconscious automatic movement there has to be a movement of conscious control. Thus one will have at his disposal not physical animal organs but the symbolic vibrations, the symbolic energies. This does not mean that there will not be any definite recognisable form. The form will be built up with qualities rather than with solid (dust) particles. It will be, so to say, a practical or pragmatic form: it will be supple and mobile, unlike the fixed grossly material shape. As the expression of your face changes with your feeling, impulsion, even so the body will change according to the need of the inner movement: have you never had this kind of experience in your dreams? You rise in the air and you give as it were a push with your elbow in one direction and your body extends that way; you give a kick with your feet and you land somewhere else: you can be transparent at will and go easily through a solid wall! The trans-

formed body will behave somewhat in the same way, it will be light, luminous, elastic. Lightness, luminosity, elasticity will be the very fundamental qualities of the body.

To prepare such a body 300 years is nothing; even a thousand years will not be too much. Naturally, I am speaking of the same body. If you change your body in between, it will no longer be the same body. At 50 the body already begins to wear out. But, on the contrary, if you have a body that goes on perfecting itself, if each passing year represents a step in progress, then you can continue indefinitely: for after all, you are immortal.

There is another difficulty one has to face in the work of transformation. A particular body cannot change unless there is some sort of a corresponding change in the surrounding bodies and in the surrounding generally also; for one lives and moves through mutual interchange in the midst of others. A collective change takes more time than individual change. So it is no longer an individual consciousness, but the collective consciousness that has to do the work.⁶

On 29th February 1956, which was later named as the Day of the Lord, there was the usual meditation in the playground. After the meditation there took place what the Mother called the descent of the Supramental Manifestation upon earth. In Mother's words:

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that **"the time has come,"** and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces,

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.⁷

Years back Mother had written a prophetic prayer :
The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute :
A new light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were announced shall be fulfilled.⁸

After the experience of 29th February Mother changed the words of the Prayer :

Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute :
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.⁹

Two years later Mother had an experience which she described vividly :

... I identified myself with Nature, totally, I entered into her play. And this movement of identification called forth a response, a new kind of intimacy between Nature and myself, a long movement of drawing ever nearer until it found its culmination in an experience that came on the 8th November.

All on a sudden Nature understood. She understood that this new consciousness that has taken birth does not intend to reject her, but wishes to embrace her totally. She understood that the new spirituality did not shirk life, did not recoil before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but, on the contrary, wanted to integrate all her aspects. She understood that the supramental consciousness was there not to diminish but to complete her.

Then, out of the supreme Reality came this order : "Awake, O Nature, to the joy of collaboration." And all Nature threw herself suddenly into

an immense bouncing of joy, saying, "I accept, I collaborate." And at the same time there came a calm, an absolute tranquillity so that this receptacle of the body might receive and hold, without breaking, without losing anything, the mighty flood of this delight of Nature who has thrown herself as it were into a movement of gratefulness. She accepted, she saw with all the eternity before her that this supramental consciousness was going to fulfil her more perfectly, give a still greater force to her movement, a greater amplitude and further possibilities to her play.

And suddenly I heard as if coming from all the corners of the earth those great notes that one hears sometimes in the subtle physical, somewhat like those of the Concerto in Re of Beethoven, that come at the hour of great advancement, as if a hundred orchestras burst out all together, without a single false note, to announce the joy of this new communion between Nature and Spirit, of this meeting of old friends who find each other after having been separated for a long time.

Then came these words: "O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration." ...

Yet you must not make a mistake on the meaning of this experience and imagine that henceforth everything will happen without any difficulty and always in a way favourable to our personal desires.... It is something deeper. Nature has admitted into the play of her forces the new force that has manifested, she has included it within her movements. And, as always, things of Nature, movements of Nature are on a scale that surpasses infinitely the human, that is not visible to the ordinary human consciousness. It is an inner, psychological possibility that has been born on earth rather than a spectacular change in earthly events.

I say this because you might be tempted to

believe that fairy tales are going to be realised on earth. The moment is not yet...¹⁰

Almost everyday some new thing was happening; unseen by the physical eye great changes were taking place. Even if they are put in the ordinary language of the human beings, we shall find them difficult to understand.

Even before Sri Aurobindo's centenary Mother began to withdraw from the various kinds of physical works that she used to do, as if she was preparing the Ashramites for the coming event: her physical departure from the earth. She called some people on April 2, 1972 and told them:

For centuries and centuries humanity has waited for this time. It is come. But it is difficult.

I don't simply tell you we are here upon earth to rest and enjoy ourselves, now it is not the time for that. We are here... to prepare the way for a new creation.

The body has some difficulty, so I can't be active, alas. It is not because I am old—I am not old, I am not old, I am younger than most of you. If I am here inactive, it is because the body has given itself definitely to prepare the transformation. But the consciousness is clear and we are here to work—rest and enjoyment will come afterwards. Let us do our work here.

So I have called you to tell you that. Take what you can, do what you can, my help will be with you. All sincere effort will be helped to the maximum.

It is the hour to be heroic. Heroism is not what it is said to be: it is to become wholly unified—and the Divine help will be always with those who have resolved to be heroic in full sincerity.

You are here at this moment, that is to say, upon earth because you chose it at one time—you do not remember it any more but I know it—that is

why you are here. Well, you must rise to the height of the task, you must strive, you must conquer all weaknesses and limitations : above all, you must say to your ego : your hour has gone. We want a new race that has no ego, that has in the place of the ego the Divine Consciousness. It is that which we want; the Divine Consciousness that will allow the race to develop itself and the Supramental being to take birth.

If you believe that I am here because I am bound—it is not true. I am not bound, I am here because my body has been given for the first attempt at transformation. Sri Aurobindo told me so. Well, I am doing it. I do not wish anyone to do it for me because . . . because it is not very pleasant, but I do it willingly because of the results; everybody will be able to benefit from it. I ask only one thing : Do not listen to the ego.

If there is in your hearts a sincere Yes, you will satisfy me completely. I do not need words, I need the sincere adhesion of your hearts. That's all.²¹

The Ashram attracted visitors in great numbers each year. On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's centenary about 7,000 persons had Mother's darshan. After that she began to reduce her physical contact with people. On November 17, 1973, it was declared that she had left her body. The Mother's body was kept for three days in the Meditation Hall of the Ashram. Thousands of people came to pay their last respects. Then on November 20th her body was placed in the Samadhi in which Sri Aurobindo's body was placed, in the Ashram courtyard.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were one and the same. Mother had told us that Sri Aurobindo had not left, he is here, very much present and living. We can say the same thing about Mother. She has not left us. She is very much with us guiding and helping all sincere efforts and she will remain here till her task is accomplished. And we finish this with a prayer that she wrote for one of her children :

Permit sweet Mother that we be
Now and for ever more
Thy simple children
Loving Thee, more and still more.¹⁹

And the next was for the same child :

I have a sweet little Mother
Who lives in my heart,
We are so happy together
That we shall never part.²⁰

And this is true even to-day for all those, young and old, known and unknown who love the Mother.

CHAPTER 19

THE TWO CENTENARIES

Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872, so 1972 was the year of his birth centenary. In the New Year Message of 1971 Mother said :

Blessed are those who take a leap towards the future.¹

And what does she mean by future ?

The push towards the future is to be ready to give up all gains, moral and material, in order to acquire what the future can give us.

Very few are like that; there are many who would like to have what the Future is bringing, but they are not ready to give up what they have in order to acquire the new wealth.²

And yet she warns the disciples that in reality we should only rely on the Divine Grace for the fruit of our aspirations :

In the final analysis everything really depends on the Divine Grace and we should look at the future with confidence and serenity progressing at the same time as quickly as we can.³

The following answer of the Mother to a disciple gives a glimpse of the difficulties and conditions of this particular yoga :

When you come to the yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital

scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be in all what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family, lie there; it is the DIVINE.⁴

Mother gives us a warning that if we would not collaborate then :

The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come.

But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate for this change or it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances.⁵

Many people have said much about youthfulness. But Mother's idea includes them all and goes beyond :

To be young, it is to live in the future.

To be young, it is to be always ready to abandon that one is to become what one ought to be.

To be young, it is to never admit the irreparable.⁶

So 1972 began with an invitation for a leap in the future. Though she speaks strongly against the past yet she is not for scratching it out indiscriminately. In a message to some hippies who would have nothing to do with the past or present, Mother says :

To break with old traditions and not to obey old rules is good—provided you discover within yourself a higher and truer consciousness which manifests harmony, peace, beauty and a superior order vast and progressive.⁷

Someone asked Mother : "How can I make Sri Aurobindo's influence living and dynamic in my daily activities?" She answered :

Be perfectly sincere and He will answer your call.*

But for the collectivity she had a different message to give. *On 1st April, 1971 she gave the following message to the Physical Education Department :

We are at one of these "Hours of God", when the old bases get shaken, and there is a great confusion; but it is a wonderful opportunity for those who want to leap forward, the possibility of progress is exceptional.

Will you not be one of those who take advantage of it?

Let your body be prepared through physical education for this great change!"

To understand what Sri Aurobindo meant by the Hour of God we give his quotation :

There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being; there are others when it retires and men are left to act in the strength or the weakness of their own egoism. The first are periods when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny; the second are spaces of time when much labour goes to the making of a little result. It is true that the latter may prepare the former, may be the little smoke of sacrifice going up to heaven which calls down the rain of God's bounty.

Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.

In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. For let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected.¹⁰

It seemed that the country was faced with such an hour in June, 1971, and when during the crisis Mother was asked for help, she gave a mantra :

Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth
Let us obey Thee alone
And live according to Truth."

Perhaps the Mother felt that the country was ready to listen to Sri Aurobindo's message.

An answer which she gave to a disciple, in July 1971, shows very clearly that her business was the concern for the whole world, not only for the Ashram or for a single country :

The whole world is steeped in falsehood, so all actions that arise will be false, and this situation may continue for a long time and will bring much suffering to the people and the country.

The only thing to do is to pray from the heart for Divine Intervention as that is the only thing that can save us. And all people who can become con-

scious of this must decide very firmly to stand **only** on the Truth and to act **only** in the Truth. **There should be no compromise.** This is very essential. It is the only way.

Even if things seem to go wrong and badly for us, as indeed they will because of the present prevailing falsehood, we should not be deterred from our own determination to stand on the Truth. **This is the only way.**¹²

She rings a note of hope for us, for if falsehood is all powerful at present, it means that it is soon to die. Her words give us courage :

Before dying, falsehood rises in full swing.

Still people understand only the lesson of catastrophe. Will it have to come before they open their eyes to the Truth?

I ask an effort from all so that it has not to be.

It is only the Truth that can save us, truth in words, truth in action, truth in will, truth in feelings. It is a choice between serving the Truth or being destroyed.¹³

To someone who asked for guidance regarding falsehood, she said :

There is only one solution for falsehood : it is to cure in ourselves all that contradicts in our consciousness the presence of the Divine.¹⁴

In September 1971 a very conscientious sadhak asked : "On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Centenary, a lot of people will be coming to the Ashram. What could we do to show them the reality of the Ashram?" She replied :

Live it. Live this reality. All the rest : talking, etc. —all that serves no purpose.

He also asked : "How shall we prepare ourselves for this?" She said :

By communion with the psychic being, the Divine incarnate, deep within.

An intense aspiration,
A perfect consecration,
A constant dedication.¹⁵

Writing to another sadhak on the centenary she says :

The best homage that we can render to Sri Aurobindo on his centenary is to have a thirst for progress, and to open all our being to the Divine Influence of which he is the Messenger upon the earth.¹⁶

She writes to a disciple that Sri Aurobindo has not left him :

Sri Aurobindo is constantly among us and reveals himself to those who are ready to see and hear him.¹⁷

A sadhak who was exasperated by the conditions around him asked : "In 1919 Sri Aurobindo wrote that the chaos and the calamities were perhaps the pangs of the birth of a new creation. How long are these pangs going to continue? In the Ashram, in India and eventually in the world?" Mother told him :

It will continue until the world is ready and willing to receive the new creation; the consciousness of this new creation is already at work upon earth since the beginning of this year. If instead of resisting the people were collaborating, it would be quicker.

But stupidity and ignorance are very obstinate!¹⁸

But collaboration requires faith and someone told Mother it is disappointing that not one out of a hundred has faith in the Divine. The Mother replied :

Why disappointing? If there is one in a hundred who has a true faith it is already a miracle!¹⁹

Mother also said :

At the very moment when everything seems to go

from bad to worse, it is then that **we must make a supreme act of faith** and know that the Grace will never fail us.

[Explanation of the emphasis:]

I mean act according to our inner conviction regardless of all consequences and keep our faith unshaken in spite of the apparent so called proofs to the contrary.²⁰

Such is the personality of the Divine Mother. One could write volumes and not be able to give the whole picture of her vastness. Soon we shall be celebrating her centenary. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have told us again and again that they are one and the same. On that basis we can say that all that she had said about Sri Aurobindo's centenary stands true for her centenary also. This is what she said :

Sri Aurobindo belongs to the future; he is the messenger of the future. He still shows us the way to follow in order to hasten the realisation of a glorious future fashioned by the Divine Will.

All those who want to collaborate for the progress of humanity and for India's luminous destiny must unite in a clairvoyant aspiration and in an illumined work.²¹

She gave a message when Sri Aurobindo took his Mahasamadhi. That message has been inscribed on the Samadhi, in the Ashram courtyard; now that it contains the two Divine Beings, Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the words have an increased sacred significance :

To THEE who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to THEE our infinite gratitude. Before THEE who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before THEE who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before THEE we bow down and implore that we may never forget ever for a moment, all we owe to THEE.²²

Let us pray that we may be able to put it into practice.

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