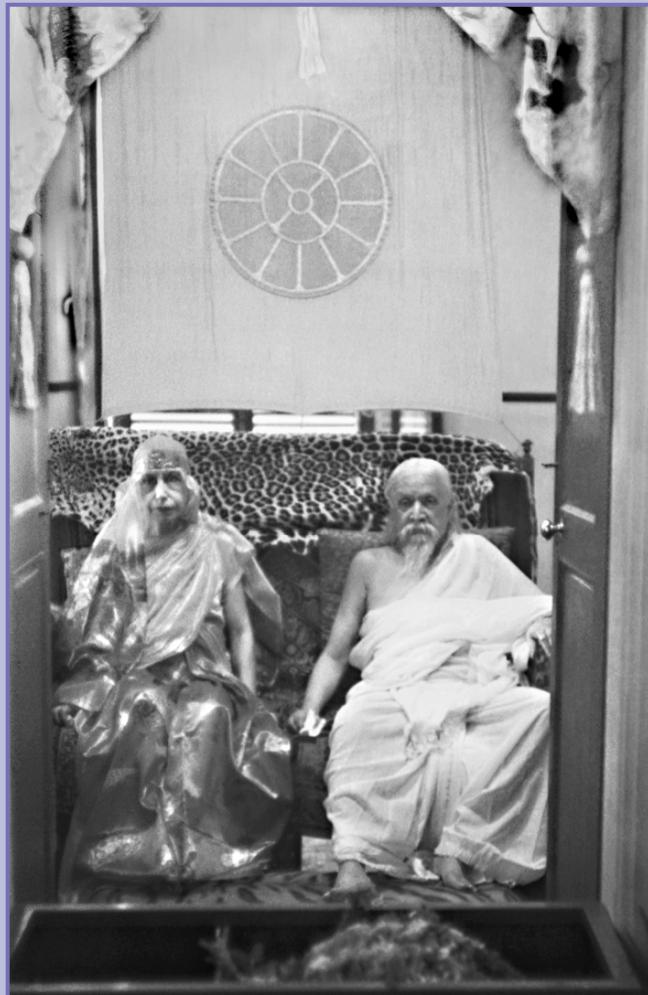


The Mother with Letters on the Mother



Sri Aurobindo

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The Mother

with Letters on the Mother

Publisher's Note

This volume consists of two different but related works of Sri Aurobindo: *The Mother* and *Letters on the Mother*. It also includes his translations of passages from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*. These three constituents make up the three parts of the volume.

The Mother consists of six chapters, all of them written in 1927. The first chapter was originally written as a message, the second to fifth chapters as letters. The sixth and longest chapter was written for inclusion in a booklet that eventually comprised the message, the letters, and Chapter 6. This booklet was first published under the title *The Mother* in 1928. The present text has been checked against Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts.

The letters on the Mother included in Part Two have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples and others between 1927 and 1950. Most of his letters from this period are published in *Letters on Yoga*, volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Others appear in volume 35, *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, and volume 27, *Letters on Poetry and Art*. The letters chosen for inclusion in the present volume deal with the Mother in her individual, universal and transcendent aspects. They have been arranged in five sections. Many letters are preceded by the questions or comments that elicited Sri Aurobindo's reply. The texts of the letters have been checked, whenever possible, against Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts.

The translated extracts from the Mother's *Prières et Méditations* (*Prayers and Meditations*) included in Part Three comprise all the passages that Sri Aurobindo is known to have translated entirely on his own. His translation of "Radha's Prayer" is also included in this part.

CONTENTS

PART ONE	
THE MOTHER	1
PART TWO	
LETTERS ON THE MOTHER	27
Section One	
The Mother: Individual, Universal, Transcendent	
The Mother and the Purpose of Her Embodiment	
Who Is the Mother?	31
The Mother and the Supramental Descent	32
Sri Aurobindo's Recognition of the Mother	34
The Mother: Some Events in Her Life	
The Mother's Year of Birth	35
Early Visions and Experiences	35
Studying Occultism with Max Théon	37
Early Occult Experiences	37
Meeting Jnan Chakrabarti	38
Arrival in Pondicherry	39
Some Occult and Spiritual Experiences	40
The Mother's Illness in 1931 and Her Temporary Retirement	41
Three Aspects of the Mother	
Individual, Universal, Transcendent	50
The Universal Mother and the Individual Mother	50
The Mother's Universal Action and Her Embodied Physical Action	51
Concentration on the Embodied Mother	52
The Transcendental Mother and the Embodied Mother	52
The Transcendent Mother and the Higher Hemisphere	52
The Eternal Mother	54

CONTENTS

The Mother, the Divine and the Lower Nature

The Consciousness and Force of the Divine	55
The Mother in the Tantra	55
The Mother in the Gita	56
The One and the Supreme Mother	56
The Cosmic Divine and the Mother	58
The Self, the Divine and the Mother	58
The Mother and Self-Realisation	60
The Mother, the Jivatman and the Soul	60
The Mother's Interest in the World	61
The Mother and the Lower Prakriti	61

Forms, Powers, Personalities and Appearances of the Mother

Nirguna and Saguna (Formless and with Form)	64
Many Powers and Forms	65
Adyashakti	66
Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati	66
Maheshwari	66
Mahakali	67
Krishna-Mahakali	67
Mahakali and Kali	68
Kali	68
Durga	69
Mahalakshmi	70
Mahasaraswati	71
The Radha-Power	72
The Mother's Vibhutis	73
Different Appearances of the Mother	74
False Appearances of the Mother	75

Section Two

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Integral Yoga

Two in One

One Consciousness	79
One Force	79
One Path	80

CONTENTS

No Less nor Greater	82
One in Two Bodies	82
Appendix: Two Texts	84
Incarnation and Evolution	
The Mystery of Incarnation	85
The Reason for Their Embodiment	86
Connections in Past Lives	87
Carrying on the Evolution	88
The Guru, the Divine and the Truth	91
The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Overmind	92
The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Supramental Descent	92
The Triple Transformation and Control over Death	93
Difficulties of the Pathfinders	
The Burden of Humanity	94
Difficulties and the Sunlit Path	96
Vital Sensitiveness	96
Self-imposed Barenness	97
Joyous Sacrifice	97
No Grand Trunk Road	97
Helpers on the Way	
Sadhana through the Mother and Sri Aurobindo	98
The Only Way to Advance	98
Taking Refuge in Their Protection	99
Their Attitude towards the Sadhaks	101
Faithfulness to the Light and the Call	104
Openness to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo	104
Their Presence	105
Calling the Mother and Sri Aurobindo	105
Receiving Their Influence	106
Following a Hostile Influence	107
Misinterpreting Their Words	111
Criticisms, Humility and Faith	112
Taking on the Sadhaks' Difficulties	114

CONTENTS

Dealing with the Sadhaks	115
Awareness of the Sadhaks' Movements	119
Their Knowledge of Human Nature	120
Their Patience	120
Their Help	121
Speaking One's Thoughts Freely	125
Sri Aurobindo's Coming out of Retirement	125
 The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Dreams, Visions and Experiences	
Visions, Dreams and Experiences of Their Unity	126
Other Dreams and Experiences	127
 Section Three	
 The Mother and the Practice of the Integral Yoga	
 Aspiration and Surrender to the Mother	
Yoga, Sadhana, Dhyana	135
Aspiration	135
Aspiration and the Psychic	136
The Psychic Fire and Offering	137
Aspiration, Rejection, Surrender	137
Surrender to the Mother	140
 Opening, Sincerity and the Mother's Grace	
The Meaning of Opening	150
Opening to the Mother and the Integral Yoga	151
Loyalty and Fidelity	160
The Psychic and Opening	161
Sincerity	164
The Mother's Grace	165
Opening and Presence	167
 The Mother's Presence	
She Is Always Present	169
Feeling the Mother's Presence	172
Spiritual Possibility due to the Mother's Presence	175
The Mother's Presence and the Adverse Forces	176

CONTENTS

The Mother's Presence and Human Imperfection	176
The Mother's Emanations	178
The Mother's Knowledge and Her Emanations	178
The Mother's Awareness of Thoughts and Actions	181
Feeling the Mother's Presence and Seeing Visions	182
Feeling the Mother's Presence through a Photograph	183
Remembering the Mother and Feeling Her Presence	184
The Psychic and the Mother's Presence	186
Feeling the Mother's Presence in Sleep	188
Feeling the Mother's Presence at Work	189
Union with the Mother	189
The Mother's Force	
What Is the Mother's Force?	192
Progress in Sadhana and the Mother's Force	193
Reliance on the Mother's Force	198
Becoming Conscious of the Mother's Force	201
Descent of the Mother's Force	203
Pressure of the Descending Force	208
Faith and the Working of the Mother's Force	212
Surrender to the Mother and the Working of Her Force	213
Assimilation of the Mother's Force	214
Calling the Mother's Force	215
Receptivity and Openness to the Mother's Force	218
Pulling the Mother's Force	220
The Mother's Force and the Forces of the Lower Nature	223
The Mother's Force and the Three Gunas	226
Conditions for the Working of the Mother's Force	227
Discrimination and the Working of the Mother's Force	228
Mental Knowledge and the Working of the Mother's Force	230
The Mother's Force and the Body	231
The Mother's Therapeutic Force	234

CONTENTS

Receiving the Mother's Force at a Distance	238
Sadhana through Work for the Mother	
Finding the Mother's Force in Work and Action	241
Work for the Mother in the Integral Yoga	246
Work for the Mother as Karmayoga	254
Following the Mother's Will	254
The Mother's Consciousness and the Divine Law	256
Opening to the Mother in Work	256
Remembering the Mother in Work	258
Offering Actions to the Mother	260
Work for the Mother and the Worker's Ego	260
The Mother's Lights	
Lights and the Mother	262
The Mother's White Light	263
The Mother's Diamond Light	266
The Golden Light of Mahakali	267
Seeing Light around the Mother	268
The Mother in Visions, Dreams and Experiences	
Seeing the Mother in Visions and Dreams	271
Developing the Ability to See the Mother	283
Experiences of the Mother and Her Powers	284
Hearing the Mother's Voice	291
Visions, Voices and Progress in Sadhana	292
The Mother's Help in Difficulties	
Difficulties and the Mother's Help	294
Difficulties and the Mother's Force	296
Difficulties and the Mother's Grace	299
Turning to the Mother for Help	300
Personal Effort and the Mother's Help	301
Opening to the Mother in Difficulty	303
The Mother's Protection	304
Calling the Mother in Difficulty	309
Praying to the Mother	314
The Mother's Help and the Hostile Forces	317

CONTENTS

Natural Disasters, Adverse Forces and the Mother's Help	322
Helping Others and the Mother's Help	323
The Mother's Help in Worldly Matters	325
Section Four	
The Mother in the Life of the Ashram	
The Mother and the Sadhana in the Ashram	
The Mother Does the Sadhana	329
The Mother's Victory	331
Being Taken Up by the Mother	331
Broad Lines of the Sadhana	332
The Mother and Other Paths of Yoga	333
Turning Entirely to the Mother	334
Acceptance of the Mother	335
Confidence in the Mother	337
Recognising the Mother's Divinity	337
Discontent with the Mother	341
The Mother as Guru and Guide	
The Mother's Way of Dealing with Sadhaks	345
The Mahakali Method	353
Understanding the Mother's Actions	354
Misunderstanding the Mother's Words	356
Asking Questions to the Mother	363
Writing to the Mother	364
Leaving the Mother and the Ashram	366
The Mother and the Discipline in the Ashram	
The Mother in Sole Charge of the Ashram	374
Demands on the Mother's Time	376
The Mother and Material Things	377
The Mother and the Vital Difficulties of the Sadhaks	382
The Mother's Attitude towards Quarrels between the Sadhaks	395
The Mother and the Satisfaction of Desires	399
The Mother and the Control of Sexual Desire	400

CONTENTS

Uneasiness in Mixing with Others	402
The Mother's Advice on Some Practical Matters	402
Imitation of "Great Sadhaks"	405
Work for the Mother in the Ashram	
All Ashram Work Is the Mother's Work	408
Doing Work for the Mother	413
Work for the Mother and <i>Kartavyāṁ Karma</i>	416
Work, Sadhana and the Mother	417
Vital Energy and the Mother's Work	420
The Mother and the Organisation of Work	421
The Mother's Use of Department Heads	428
The Mother and Clashes between Workers	433
The Mother and Mistakes in Work	446
Relation between the Mother and Her Children	
True Relation with the Mother	448
Inner Contact with the Mother	456
The Right Way of Loving the Mother	460
Receiving What the Mother Gives	463
Telling the Whole Truth	463
Psychic Relation with the Mother	464
The Vital Element of Love	471
Devotion or Bhakti for the Mother	476
Consecration to the Mother	478
The Mother's Love	479
Inner Union and Outer Relation with the Mother	482
Relation with the Mother and with Others	485
False Suggestions of the Mother's Displeasure	487
Nearness to the Mother and Progress in Sadhana	491
Closeness to the Mother and Speaking French	502
Special Relation with the Mother	502
Meeting the Mother	
Right Attitude during Interviews with the Mother	510
Impossibility of Giving Interviews to Everyone	514
Interviews with Outsiders	524

CONTENTS

Significance of Birthday Interviews	524
Right Use of Birthday Interviews	525
Group Meditation with the Mother	526
The Morning Pranam	530
Experiences during Pranam	531
Right Way to Make Pranam	532
The Mother's Expression at Pranam	535
The Mother's Smile at Pranam	536
Smiles and Seriousness	541
Wrong Ideas about the Mother's Showing Displeasure	543
Wrong Ideas about the Mother's Smile and Touch	547
The Mother's Hand at Pranam	550
Feeling the Mother's Touch at Pranam	554
Flowers at Pranam	555
Avoiding Pranam	559
Pranam and Non-Pranam Days	560
Fixed Places at Pranam	561
The Change from Pranam to Meditation	561
Outsiders at Pranam	566
Making Pranam at a Distance	566
Making Pranam to Others	567
Pranam in the Reception Hall	568
The Soup Ceremony	568
The Value of Darshan	569
Public Darshan Days	569
The First Blessing	570
 Aspects of the Mother's Life in the Ashram	
The Mother's Music	571
The Mother's Attitude towards Music and Other Arts	573
Golconde	576
The French Book <i>L'Ether Vivant</i>	583
Meeting the Dead	583
Speaking to People about Past Lives	584
Sending Ethereal Beings to the Sadhaks	584

CONTENTS

An Occult or Yogic Faculty	584
The Mother Takes upon Herself Difficulties and Illnesses	585
The Mother and Medicines	591
The Mother and Eye Treatment	594
Giving Money to the Mother	594
The Mother's Accounts	595
The Mother's Attire	596
The Mother's Photograph	597
The Mother's Naming of Cats	597
The Mother's Symbol	597
The Mother's Flag	598
 Section Five	
On Three Works of the Mother	
On Prières et Méditations de la Mère	
General Comments on the Mother's <i>Prières</i>	601
Comments on Specific <i>Prières</i>	602
Hearing the Mother Read Her <i>Prières</i>	609
Reading the Mother's <i>Prières</i>	609
On Conversations with the Mother	
Comments on Specific <i>Conversations</i>	610
A Translation of <i>Conversations</i>	622
Reading the Mother's <i>Conversations</i> and <i>Prières</i>	622
On Entretiens avec la Mère	
Comments on Specific <i>Entretiens</i>	623
 PART THREE	
TRANSLATIONS OF PRAYERS OF THE MOTHER	
 Prayers and Meditations	
November 28, 1913	631
February 15, 1914	631
August 27, 1914	632
August 31, 1914	632

CONTENTS

September 1, 1914	633
September 25, 1914	634
September 28, 1914	634
September 30, 1914	634
October 5, 1914	635
October 7, 1914	635
October 14, 1914	636
October 25, 1914	637
November 8, 1914	637
February 15, 1915	638
March 3, 1915	638
March 7, 1915	639
March 8, 1915	640
December 26, 1916	640
December 27, 1916	641
December 29, 1916	641
March 31, 1917	642
April 28, 1917	643
July 12, 1918	643
December 28, 1928	644
Radha's Prayer	
Radha's Prayer	647
NOTE ON THE TEXTS	651



The Mother and Sri Aurobindo
giving darshan on 24 April 1950

Part One

The Mother

The One whom we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movements is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. But something of her ways can be seen and felt through her embodiments and the more seizable because more defined and limited temperament and ^{action} of the goddess forms in whom she consents to be manifest to her creatures.

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Passage from the opening paragraph
of chapter 6 of *The Mother*

I

There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.

But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth; it will not act in conditions laid upon it by the Falsehood and the Ignorance. For if it were to yield to the demands of the Falsehood, it would defeat its own purpose.

These are the conditions of the Light and Truth, the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend; and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties . . . There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.

The surrender must be total and seize all the parts of the being. It is not enough that the psychic should respond and the higher mental accept or even the inner vital submit and the inner physical consciousness feel the influence. There must be in no part of the being, even the most external, anything that makes a reserve, anything that hides behind doubts, confusions and subterfuges, anything that revolts or refuses.

If part of the being surrenders, but another part reserves itself, follows its own way or makes its own conditions, then each time that that happens, you are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you.

If behind your devotion and surrender you make a cover for your desires, egoistic demands and vital insistences, if you put

these things in place of the true aspiration or mix them with it and try to impose them on the Divine Shakti, then it is idle to invoke the divine Grace to transform you.

If you open yourself on one side or in one part to the Truth and on another side are constantly opening the gates to hostile forces, it is vain to expect that the divine Grace will abide with you. You must keep the temple clean if you wish to instal there the living Presence.

If each time the Power intervenes and brings in the Truth, you turn your back on it and call in again the falsehood that has been expelled, it is not the divine Grace that you must blame for failing you, but the falsity of your own will and the imperfection of your own surrender.

If you call for the Truth and yet something in you chooses what is false, ignorant and undivine or even simply is unwilling to reject it altogether, then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you. Detect first what is false or obscure in you and persistently reject it, then alone can you rightly call for the divine Power to transform you.

Do not imagine that truth and falsehood, light and darkness, surrender and selfishness can be allowed to dwell together in the house consecrated to the Divine. The transformation must be integral, and integral therefore the rejection of all that withstands it.

Reject the false notion that the divine Power will do and is bound to do everything for you at your demand and even though you do not satisfy the conditions laid down by the Supreme. Make your surrender true and complete, then only will all else be done for you.

Reject too the false and indolent expectation that the divine Power will do even the surrender for you. The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving, if you are willing to suffer the spiritual consequence. Your surrender must be self-made and free; it must be the surrender of a living being, not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool.

An inert passivity is constantly confused with the real surrender, but out of an inert passivity nothing true and powerful can come. It is the inert passivity of physical Nature that leaves it at the mercy of every obscure or undivine influence. A glad and strong and helpful submission is demanded to the working of the Divine Force, the obedience of the illumined disciple of the Truth, of the inner Warrior who fights against obscurity and falsehood, of the faithful servant of the Divine.

This is the true attitude and only those who can take and keep it, preserve a faith unshaken by disappointments and difficulties and shall pass through the ordeal to the supreme victory and the great transmutation.

II

In all that is done in the universe, the Divine through his Shakti is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya and works through the ego of the Jiva in the lower nature.

In Yoga also it is the Divine who is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana; it is his Shakti with her light, power, knowledge, consciousness, Ananda, acting upon the adhara and, when it is opened to her, pouring into it with these divine forces that makes the Sadhana possible. But so long as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the Sadhaka remains necessary.

The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender,—

an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing — the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature; rejection of the movements of the lower nature — rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind, — rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being, — rejection of the physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine;

surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.

*
* *

In proportion as the surrender and self-consecration progress the Sadhaka becomes conscious of the Divine Shakti doing the Sadhana, pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature. The more this conscious process replaces his own effort, the more rapid and true becomes his progress. But it cannot completely replace the necessity of personal effort until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom.

Note that a tamasic surrender refusing to fulfil the conditions and calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection.

III

To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together — the Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your faith be pure, candid and perfect. An egoistic faith in the mental and vital being tainted by ambition, pride, vanity, mental arrogance, vital self-will, personal demand, desire for the petty satisfactions of the lower nature is a low and smoke-obscured flame that cannot burn upwards to heaven. Regard your life as given you only for the divine work and to help in the divine manifestation. Desire nothing but the purity, force, light, wideness, calm, Ananda of the divine consciousness and its insistence to transform and perfect your mind, life and body. Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth, its realisation on earth and in you and in all who are called and chosen and the conditions needed for its creation and its victory over all opposing forces.

Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. When you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power.

The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For

the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.

IV

Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose. This is indeed one of the three forces—power, wealth, sex—that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them. The seekers or keepers of wealth are more often possessed rather than its possessors; few escape entirely a certain distorting influence stamped on it by its long seizure and perversion by the Asura. For this reason most spiritual disciplines insist on a complete self-control, detachment and renunciation of all bondage to wealth and of all personal and egoistic desire for its possession. Some even put a ban on money and riches and proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But this is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the Sadhaka.

You must neither turn with an ascetic shrinking from the money power, the means it gives and the objects it brings, nor cherish a rajasic attachment to them or a spirit of enslaving self-indulgence in their gratifications. Regard wealth simply as a power to be won back for the Mother and placed at her service.

All wealth belongs to the Divine and those who hold it are trustees, not possessors. It is with them today, tomorrow it may be elsewhere. All depends on the way they discharge their trust while it is with them, in what spirit, with what consciousness in their use of it, to what purpose.

In your personal use of money look on all you have or get or bring as the Mother's. Make no demand but accept what you receive from her and use it for the purposes for which it is given to you. Be entirely selfless, entirely scrupulous, exact, careful in detail, a good trustee; always consider that it is her possessions and not your own that you are handling. On the other hand, what you receive for her, lay religiously before her; turn nothing to your own or anybody else's purpose.

Do not look up to men because of their riches or allow yourself to be impressed by the show, the power or the influence. When you ask for the Mother, you must feel that it is she who is demanding through you a very little of what belongs to her and the man from whom you ask will be judged by his response.

If you are free from the money-taint but without any ascetic withdrawal, you will have a greater power to command the money-force for the divine work. Equality of mind, absence of demand and the full dedication of all you possess and receive and all your power of acquisition to the Divine Shakti and her work are the signs of this freedom. Any perturbation of mind with regard to money and its use, any claim, any grudging is a sure index of some imperfection or bondage.

The ideal Sadhaka in this kind is one who if required to live poorly can so live and no sense of want will affect him or interfere with the full inner play of the divine consciousness, and if he is required to live richly, can so live and never for a moment fall into desire or attachment to his wealth or to the things that he uses or servitude to self-indulgence or a weak bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates. The divine Will is all for him and the divine Ananda.

In the supramental creation the money-force has to be restored to the Divine Power and used for a true and beautiful and harmonious equipment and ordering of a new divinised vital and physical existence in whatever way the Divine Mother herself decides in her creative vision. But first it must be conquered back for her and those will be strongest for the conquest who are in this part of their nature strong and large and free from ego and surrendered without any claim or withholding or hesitation, pure and powerful channels for the Supreme Puissance.

V

If you want to be a true doer of divine works, your first aim must be to be totally free from all desire and self-regarding ego. All your life must be an offering and a sacrifice to the Supreme; your only object in action shall be to serve, to receive, to fulfil, to become a manifesting instrument of the Divine Shakti in her works. You must grow in the divine consciousness till there is no difference between your will and hers, no motive except her impulsion in you, no action that is not her conscious action in you and through you.

Until you are capable of this complete dynamic identification, you have to regard yourself as a soul and body created for her service, one who does all for her sake. Even if the idea of the separate worker is strong in you and you feel that it is you who do the act, yet it must be done for her. All stress of egoistic choice, all hankering after personal profit, all stipulation of self-regarding desire must be extirpated from the nature. There must be no demand for fruit and no seeking for reward; the only fruit for you is the pleasure of the Divine Mother and the fulfilment of her work, your only reward a constant progression in divine consciousness and calm and strength and bliss. The joy of service and the joy of inner growth through works is the sufficient recompense of the selfless worker.

But a time will come when you will feel more and more that you are the instrument and not the worker. For first by the force of your devotion your contact with the Divine Mother will become so intimate that at all times you will have only to concentrate and to put everything into her hands to have her present guidance, her direct command or impulse, the sure indication of the thing to be done and the way to do it and the result. And afterwards you will realise that the divine Shakti not only inspires and guides, but initiates and carries out your works; all your movements are originated by her, all your powers are

hers, mind, life and body are conscious and joyful instruments of her action, means for her play, moulds for her manifestation in the physical universe. There can be no more happy condition than this union and dependence; for this step carries you back beyond the border-line from the life of stress and suffering in the ignorance into the truth of your spiritual being, into its deep peace and its intense Ananda.

While this transformation is being done it is more than ever necessary to keep yourself free from all taint of the perversions of the ego. Let no demand or insistence creep in to stain the purity of the self-giving and the sacrifice. There must be no attachment to the work or the result, no laying down of conditions, no claim to possess the Power that should possess you, no pride of the instrument, no vanity or arrogance. Nothing in the mind or in the vital or physical parts should be suffered to distort to its own use or seize for its own personal and separate satisfaction the greatness of the forces that are acting through you. Let your faith, your sincerity, your purity of aspiration be absolute and pervasive of all the planes and layers of the being; then every disturbing element and distorting influence will progressively fall away from your nature.

The last stage of this perfection will come when you are completely identified with the Divine Mother and feel yourself to be no longer another and separate being, instrument, servant or worker but truly a child and eternal portion of her consciousness and force. Always she will be in you and you in her; it will be your constant, simple and natural experience that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing and moving come from her and are hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, ananda of her Ananda. When this condition is entire and her supramental energies can freely move you, then you will be perfect in divine works; knowledge, will, action will become sure, simple, luminous, spontaneous, flawless, an outflow from the Supreme, a divine movement of the Eternal.

VI

The four Powers of the Mother are four of her outstanding Personalities, portions and embodiments of her divinity through whom she acts on her creatures, orders and harmonises her creations in the worlds and directs the working out of her thousand forces. For the Mother is one but she comes before us with differing aspects; many are her powers and personalities, many her emanations and Vibhutis that do her work in the universe. The One whom we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. But something of her ways can be seen and felt through her embodiments and the more seizable because more defined and limited temperament and action of the goddess forms in whom she consents to be manifest to her creatures.

There are three ways of being of the Mother of which you can become aware when you enter into touch of oneness with the Conscious Force that upholds us and the universe. Transcendent, the original supreme Shakti, she stands above the worlds and links the creation to the ever unmanifest mystery of the Supreme. Universal, the cosmic Mahashakti, she creates all these beings and contains and enters, supports and conducts all these million processes and forces. Individual, she embodies the power of these two vaster ways of her existence, makes them living and near to us and mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature.

The one original transcendent Shakti, the Mother stands above all the worlds and bears in her eternal consciousness the Supreme Divine. Alone, she harbours the absolute Power and the ineffable Presence; containing or calling the Truths that have to

be manifested, she brings them down from the Mystery in which they were hidden into the light of her infinite consciousness and gives them a form of force in her omnipotent power and her boundless life and a body in the universe. The Supreme is manifest in her for ever as the everlasting Sachchidananda, manifested through her in the worlds as the one and dual consciousness of Ishwara-Shakti and the dual principle of Purusha-Prakriti, embodied by her in the Worlds and the Planes and the Gods and their Energies and figured because of her as all that is in the known worlds and in unknown others. All is her play with the Supreme; all is her manifestation of the mysteries of the Eternal, the miracles of the Infinite. All is she, for all are parcel and portion of the divine Conscious-Force. Nothing can be here or elsewhere but what she decides and the Supreme sanctions; nothing can take shape except what she moved by the Supreme perceives and forms after casting it into seed in her creating Ananda.

The Mahashakti, the universal Mother, works out whatever is transmitted by her transcendent consciousness from the Supreme and enters into the worlds that she has made; her presence fills and supports them with the divine spirit and the divine all-sustaining force and delight without which they could not exist. That which we call Nature or Prakriti is only her most outward executive aspect; she marshals and arranges the harmony of her forces and processes, impels the operations of Nature and moves among them secret or manifest in all that can be seen or experienced or put into motion of life. Each of the worlds is nothing but one play of the Mahashakti of that system of worlds or universe, who is there as the cosmic Soul and Personality of the transcendent Mother. Each is something that she has seen in her vision, gathered into her heart of beauty and power and created in her Ananda.

But there are many planes of her creation, many steps of the Divine Shakti. At the summit of this manifestation of which we are a part there are worlds of infinite existence, consciousness, force and bliss over which the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal Power. All beings there live and move in an ineffable completeness and unalterable oneness, because she carries them

safe in her arms for ever. Nearer to us are the worlds of a perfect supramental creation in which the Mother is the supramental Mahashakti, a Power of divine omniscient Will and omnipotent Knowledge always apparent in its unfailing works and spontaneously perfect in every process. There all movements are the steps of the Truth; there all beings are souls and powers and bodies of the divine Light; there all experiences are seas and floods and waves of an intense and absolute Ananda. But here where we dwell are the worlds of the Ignorance, worlds of mind and life and body separated in consciousness from their source, of which this earth is a significant centre and its evolution a crucial process. This too with all its obscurity and struggle and imperfection is upheld by the Universal Mother; this too is impelled and guided to its secret aim by the Mahashakti.

The Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance stands in an intermediate plane between the supramental Light, the Truth life, the Truth creation which has to be brought down here and this mounting and descending hierarchy of planes of consciousness that like a double ladder lapse into the nescience of Matter and climb back again through the flowering of life and soul and mind into the infinity of the Spirit. Determining all that shall be in this universe and in the terrestrial evolution by what she sees and feels and pours from her, she stands there above the Gods and all her Powers and Personalities are put out in front of her for the action and she sends down emanations of them into these lower worlds to intervene, to govern, to battle and conquer, to lead and turn their cycles, to direct the total and the individual lines of their forces. These Emanations are the many divine forms and personalities in which men have worshipped her under different names throughout the ages. But also she prepares and shapes through these Powers and their emanations the minds and bodies of her Vibhutis, even as she prepares and shapes minds and bodies for the Vibhutis of the Ishwara, that she may manifest in the physical world and in the disguise of the human consciousness some ray of her power and quality and presence. All the scenes of the earth-play have been like a drama arranged and planned and staged by her with the

cosmic Gods for her assistants and herself as a veiled actor.

The Mother not only governs all from above but she descends into this lesser triple universe. Impersonally, all things here, even the movements of the Ignorance, are herself in veiled power and her creations in diminished substance, her Nature-body and Nature-force, and they exist because, moved by the mysterious fiat of the Supreme to work out something that was there in the possibilities of the Infinite, she has consented to the great sacrifice and has put on like a mask the soul and forms of the Ignorance. But personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda. In her deep and great love for her children she has consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother.

Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play. One is her personality of calm wideness and comprehending wisdom and tranquil benignity and inexhaustible compassion and sovereign and surpassing majesty and all-ruling greatness. Another embodies her power of splendid strength and irresistible passion, her warrior mood, her overwhelming will, her impetuous swiftness and world-shaking force. A third is vivid and sweet and wonderful with her deep secret of beauty and harmony and fine rhythm, her intricate and subtle opulence, her compelling attraction and captivating grace. The fourth is equipped with her

close and profound capacity of intimate knowledge and careful flawless work and quiet and exact perfection in all things. Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection are their several attributes and it is these powers that they bring with them into the world, manifest in a human disguise in their Vibhutis and shall be found in the divine degree of their ascension in those who can open their earthly nature to the direct and living influence of the Mother. To the four we give the four great names, Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati.

Imperial MAHESHWARI is seated in the wideness above the thinking mind and will and sublimates and greatnesses them into wisdom and largeness or floods with a splendour beyond them. For she is the mighty and wise One who opens us to the supramental infinities and the cosmic vastness, to the grandeur of the supreme Light, to a treasure-house of miraculous knowledge, to the measureless movement of the Mother's eternal forces. Tranquil is she and wonderful, great and calm for ever. Nothing can move her because all wisdom is in her; nothing is hidden from her that she chooses to know; she comprehends all things and all beings and their nature and what moves them and the law of the world and its times and how all was and is and must be. A strength is in her that meets everything and masters and none can prevail in the end against her vast intangible wisdom and high tranquil power. Equal, patient and unalterable in her will she deals with men according to their nature and with things and happenings according to their force and the truth that is in them. Partiality she has none, but she follows the decrees of the Supreme and some she raises up and some she casts down or puts away from her into the darkness. To the wise she gives a greater and more luminous wisdom; those that have vision she admits to her counsels; on the hostile she imposes the consequence of their hostility; the ignorant and foolish she leads according to their blindness. In each man she answers and handles the different elements of his nature according to their need and their urge and the return they call for, puts on them the required pressure or leaves them to their cherished liberty to prosper in the ways of the Ignorance or to perish. For she is above all, bound by nothing,

attached to nothing in the universe. Yet has she more than any other the heart of the universal Mother. For her compassion is endless and inexhaustible; all are to her eyes her children and portions of the One, even the Asura and Rakshasa and Pisacha and those that are revolted and hostile. Even her rejections are only a postponement, even her punishments are a grace. But her compassion does not blind her wisdom or turn her action from the course decreed; for the Truth of things is her one concern, knowledge her centre of power and to build our soul and our nature into the divine Truth her mission and her labour.

MAHAKALI is of another nature. Not wideness but height, not wisdom but force and strength are her peculiar power. There is in her an overwhelming intensity, a mighty passion of force to achieve, a divine violence rushing to shatter every limit and obstacle. All her divinity leaps out in a splendour of tempestuous action; she is there for swiftness, for the immediately effective process, the rapid and direct stroke, the frontal assault that carries everything before it. Terrible is her face to the Asura, dangerous and ruthless her mood against the haters of the Divine; for she is the Warrior of the Worlds who never shrinks from the battle. Intolerant of imperfection, she deals roughly with all in man that is unwilling and she is severe to all that is obstinately ignorant and obscure; her wrath is immediate and dire against treachery and falsehood and malignity, ill-will is smitten at once by her scourge. Indifference, negligence and sloth in the divine work she cannot bear and she smites awake at once with sharp pain, if need be, the untimely slumberer and the loiterer. The impulses that are swift and straight and frank, the movements that are unreserved and absolute, the aspiration that mounts in flame are the motion of Mahakali. Her spirit is timeless, her vision and will are high and far-reaching like the flight of an eagle, her feet are rapid on the upward way and her hands are outstretched to strike and to succour. For she too is the Mother and her love is as intense as her wrath and she has a deep and passionate kindness. When she is allowed to intervene in her strength, then in one moment are broken like things without consistence the obstacles that immobilise or the enemies that assail the seeker.

If her anger is dreadful to the hostile and the vehemence of her pressure painful to the weak and timid, she is loved and worshipped by the great, the strong and the noble; for they feel that her blows beat what is rebellious in their material into strength and perfect truth, hammer straight what is wry and perverse and expel what is impure or defective. But for her what is done in a day might have taken centuries; without her Ananda might be wide and grave or soft and sweet and beautiful but would lose the flaming joy of its most absolute intensities. To knowledge she gives a conquering might, brings to beauty and harmony a high and mounting movement and imparts to the slow and difficult labour after perfection an impetus that multiplies the power and shortens the long way. Nothing can satisfy her that falls short of the supreme ecstasies, the highest heights, the noblest aims, the largest vistas. Therefore with her is the victorious force of the Divine and it is by grace of her fire and passion and speed if the great achievement can be done now rather than hereafter.

Wisdom and Force are not the only manifestations of the supreme Mother; there is a subtler mystery of her nature and without it Wisdom and Force would be incomplete things and without it perfection would not be perfect. Above them is the miracle of eternal beauty, an unseizable secret of divine harmonies, the compelling magic of an irresistible universal charm and attraction that draws and holds things and forces and beings together and obliges them to meet and unite that a hidden Ananda may play from behind the veil and make of them its rhythms and its figures. This is the power of MAHALAKSHMI and there is no aspect of the Divine Shakti more attractive to the heart of embodied beings. Maheshwari can appear too calm and great and distant for the littleness of earthly nature to approach or contain her, Mahakali too swift and formidable for its weakness to bear; but all turn with joy and longing to Mahalakshmi. For she throws the spell of the intoxicating sweetness of the Divine: to be close to her is a profound happiness and to feel her within the heart is to make existence a rapture and a marvel; grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the

loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss. Magnetic is the touch of her hands and their occult and delicate influence refines mind and life and body and where she presses her feet course miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda.

And yet it is not easy to meet the demand of this enchanting Power or to keep her presence. Harmony and beauty of the mind and soul, harmony and beauty of the thoughts and feelings, harmony and beauty in every outward act and movement, harmony and beauty of the life and surroundings, this is the demand of Mahalakshmi. Where there is affinity to the rhythms of the secret world-bliss and response to the call of the All-Beautiful and concord and unity and the glad flow of many lives turned towards the Divine, in that atmosphere she consents to abide. But all that is ugly and mean and base, all that is poor and sordid and squalid, all that is brutal and coarse repels her advent. Where love and beauty are not or are reluctant to be born, she does not come; where they are mixed and disfigured with baser things, she turns soon to depart or cares little to pour her riches. If she finds herself in men's hearts surrounded with selfishness and hatred and jealousy and malignance and envy and strife, if treachery and greed and ingratitude are mixed in the sacred chalice, if grossness of passion and unrefined desire degrade devotion, in such hearts the gracious and beautiful Goddess will not linger. A divine disgust seizes upon her and she withdraws, for she is not one who insists or strives; or, veiling her face, she waits for this bitter and poisonous devil's stuff to be rejected and disappear before she will found anew her happy influence. Ascetic barenness and harshness are not pleasing to her nor the suppression of the heart's deeper emotions and the rigid repression of the soul's and the life's parts of beauty. For it is through love and beauty that she lays on men the yoke of the Divine. Life is turned in her supreme creations into a rich work of celestial art and all existence into a poem of sacred delight; the world's riches are brought together and concerted for a supreme order and even the simplest and commonest things are made wonderful by her intuition of unity and the breath of her spirit.

Admitted to the heart she lifts wisdom to pinnacles of wonder and reveals to it the mystic secrets of the ecstasy that surpasses all knowledge, meets devotion with the passionate attraction of the Divine, teaches to strength and force the rhythm that keeps the might of their acts harmonious and in measure and casts on perfection the charm that makes it endure for ever.

MAHASARASWATI is the Mother's Power of Work and her spirit of perfection and order. The youngest of the Four, she is the most skilful in executive faculty and the nearest to physical Nature. Maheshwari lays down the large lines of the world-forces, Mahakali drives their energy and impetus, Mahalakshmi discovers their rhythms and measures, but Mahasaraswati presides over their detail of organisation and execution, relation of parts and effective combination of forces and unfailing exactitude of result and fulfilment. The science and craft and technique of things are Mahasaraswati's province. Always she holds in her nature and can give to those whom she has chosen the intimate and precise knowledge, the subtlety and patience, the accuracy of intuitive mind and conscious hand and discerning eye of the perfect worker. This Power is the strong, the tireless, the careful and efficient builder, organiser, administrator, technician, artisan and classifier of the worlds. When she takes up the transformation and new-building of the nature, her action is laborious and minute and often seems to our impatience slow and interminable, but it is persistent, integral and flawless. For the will in her works is scrupulous, unsleeping, indefatigable; leaning over us she notes and touches every little detail, finds out every minute defect, gap, twist or incompleteness, considers and weighs accurately all that has been done and all that remains still to be done hereafter. Nothing is too small or apparently trivial for her attention; nothing however impalpable or disguised or latent can escape her. Moulding and remoulding she labours each part till it has attained its true form, is put in its exact place in the whole and fulfils its precise purpose. In her constant and diligent arrangement and rearrangement of things her eye is on all needs at once and the way to meet them and her intuition knows what is to be chosen and what rejected and successfully

determines the right instrument, the right time, the right conditions and the right process. Carelessness and negligence and indolence she abhors; all scamped and hasty and shuffling work, all clumsiness and *à peu près* and misfire, all false adaptation and misuse of instruments and faculties and leaving of things undone or half done is offensive and foreign to her temper. When her work is finished, nothing has been forgotten, no part has been misplaced or omitted or left in a faulty condition; all is solid, accurate, complete, admirable. Nothing short of a perfect perfection satisfies her and she is ready to face an eternity of toil if that is needed for the fullness of her creation. Therefore of all the Mother's powers she is the most long-suffering with man and his thousand imperfections. Kind, smiling, close and helpful, not easily turned away or discouraged, insistent even after repeated failure, her hand sustains our every step on condition that we are single in our will and straightforward and sincere; for a double mind she will not tolerate and her revealing irony is merciless to drama and histrionics and self-deceit and pretence. A mother to our wants, a friend in our difficulties, a persistent and tranquil counsellor and mentor, chasing away with her radiant smile the clouds of gloom and fretfulness and depression, reminding always of the ever-present help, pointing to the eternal sunshine, she is firm, quiet and persevering in the deep and continuous urge that drives us towards the integrality of the higher nature. All the work of the other Powers leans on her for its completeness; for she assures the material foundation, elaborates the stuff of detail and erects and rivets the armour of the structure.

There are other great Personalities of the Divine Mother, but they were more difficult to bring down and have not stood out in front with so much prominence in the evolution of the earth-spirit. There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation,—most of all one who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from

its secracies the work of all the other Powers of the universe. But human nature bounded, egoistic and obscure is inapt to receive these great Presences or to support their mighty action. Only when the Four have founded their harmony and freedom of movement in the transformed mind and life and body, can those other rarer Powers manifest in the earth movement and the supramental action become possible. For when her Personalities are all gathered in her and manifested and their separate working has been turned into a harmonious unity and they rise in her to their supramental godheads, then is the Mother revealed as the supramental Mahashakti and brings pouring down her luminous transcendences from their ineffable ether. Then can human nature change into dynamic divine nature because all the elemental lines of the supramental Truth-consciousness and Truth-force are strung together and the harp of life is fitted for the rhythms of the Eternal.

If you desire this transformation, put yourself in the hands of the Mother and her Powers without cavil or resistance and let her do unhindered her work within you. Three things you must have, consciousness, plasticity, unreserved surrender. For you must be conscious in your mind and soul and heart and life and the very cells of your body, aware of the Mother and her Powers and their working; for although she can and does work in you even in your obscurity and your unconscious parts and moments, it is not the same thing as when you are in an awakened and living communion with her. All your nature must be plastic to her touch,—not questioning as the self-sufficient ignorant mind questions and doubts and disputes and is the enemy of its enlightenment and change; not insisting on its own movements as the vital in man insists and persistently opposes its refractory desires and ill-will to every divine influence; not obstructing and entrenched in incapacity, inertia and tamas as man's physical consciousness obstructs and clinging to its pleasure in smallness and darkness cries out against each touch that disturbs its soulless routine or its dull sloth or its torpid slumber. The unreserved surrender of your inner and outer being will bring this plasticity into all the parts of your nature; consciousness will

awaken everywhere in you by constant openness to the Wisdom and Light, the Force, the Harmony and Beauty, the Perfection that come flowing down from above. Even the body will awake and unite at last its consciousness subliminal no longer to the supramental superconscious Force, feel all her powers permeating from above and below and around it and thrill to a supreme Love and Ananda.

But be on your guard and do not try to understand and judge the Divine Mother by your little earthly mind that loves to subject even the things that are beyond it to its own norms and standards, its narrow reasonings and erring impressions, its bottomless aggressive ignorance and its petty self-confident knowledge. The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine Shakti. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension; the measures of her movement are not its measures. Bewildered by the swift alternation of her many different personalities, her making of rhythms and her breaking of rhythms, her accelerations of speed and her retardations, her varied ways of dealing with the problem of one and of another, her taking up and dropping now of this line and now of that one and her gathering of them together, it will not recognise the way of the Supreme Power when it is circling and sweeping upwards through the maze of the Ignorance to a supernal Light. Open rather your soul to her and be content to feel her with the psychic nature and see her with the psychic vision that alone make a straight response to the Truth. Then the Mother herself will enlighten by their psychic elements your mind and heart and life and physical consciousness and reveal to them too her ways and her nature.

Avoid also the error of the ignorant mind's demand on the Divine Power to act always according to our crude surface notions of omniscience and omnipotence. For our mind clamours to be impressed at every turn by miraculous power and easy success and dazzling splendour; otherwise it cannot believe that here is the Divine. The Mother is dealing with the Ignorance in the fields of the Ignorance; she has descended there and is not

all above. Partly she veils and partly she unveils her knowledge and her power, often holds them back from her instruments and personalities and follows that she may transform them the way of the seeking mind, the way of the aspiring psychic, the way of the battling vital, the way of the imprisoned and suffering physical nature. There are conditions that have been laid down by a Supreme Will, there are many tangled knots that have to be loosened and cannot be cut abruptly asunder. The Asura and Rakshasa hold this evolving earthly nature and have to be met and conquered on their own terms in their own long-conquered fief and province; the human in us has to be led and prepared to transcend its limits and is too weak and obscure to be lifted up suddenly to a form far beyond it. The Divine Consciousness and Force are there and do at each moment the thing that is needed in the conditions of the labour, take always the step that is decreed and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come. But only when the supermind has descended in you can she deal directly as the supramental Shakti with supramental natures. If you follow your mind, it will not recognise the Mother even when she is manifest before you. Follow your soul and not your mind, your soul that answers to the Truth, not your mind that leaps at appearances; trust the Divine Power and she will free the godlike elements in you and shape all into an expression of Divine Nature.

The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda.

Part Two
Letters on the Mother

The Mother is always with you. Put your faith in her, remain quiet within and do with that quietude what has to be done. You will become more and more aware of her constant Presence, will feel her action behind yours and the burden of your work will no longer be heavy on you. Sri Aurobindo

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Sri Aurobindo

Final paragraph of a letter written by Sri Aurobindo
to a disciple living outside the Ashram

Section One
The Mother:
Individual, Universal, Transcendent

The Mother and the Purpose of Her Embodiment

Who Is the Mother?

Do you not refer to the Mother (our Mother) in your book *The Mother*?

Yes.

Is she not the “Individual” Divine Mother who has embodied “the power of these two vaster ways of her existence”¹—Transcendent and Universal?

Yes.

Has she not *descended* here (amongst us) into the Darkness and Falsehood and Error and Death in her deep and great love for us?

Yes.

There are many who hold the view that she was human but now embodies the Divine Mother and her *Prayers*, they say, explain this view. But to my mental conception, to my psychic feeling, she is the Divine Mother who has consented to put on herself the cloak of obscurity and suffering and ignorance so that she can effectively lead us—human beings—to Knowledge and Bliss and Ananda and to Him.

The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing divine

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 14. Other letters on the book *The Mother* are published in Letters on Himself and on the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 102–17.—Ed.

consciousness, not human turning into divine. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood, so the view held by "many" is erroneous.

I also conceive that the Mother's *Prayers* are meant to show us — the aspiring psychic — how to pray to the Divine.

Yes.

17 August 1938

The Mother and the Supramental Descent

Am I right in thinking that the Mother as an individual embodies all the Divine Powers and brings down the Grace more and more to the physical plane . . .

Yes.

and that her embodiment is a chance for the entire physical to change and be transformed?

It is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a farther transformation by the supramental, but the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised — there will be first a new race representing the supermind, as man represents the mind.

The more we open individually to the Mother's Light and Force, the more her power is established in the universal — is it not so?

It is the transforming power that is established — the universal Power is always there.

13 August 1933

*

The Mother has come down to work on the earth, not in another world. The thousand petalled lotus and the plane or world that corresponds to it is only a means of communication between the

Truth and the earth-existence. But it is true that the consciousness of each has to rise to that level if the work on earth is to be successfully done.

1 October 1933

*

I know that all here is unreal. The Mother alone is real.

It is the higher reality that the Mother brings into the world — without it all else is ignorant and false.

3 August 1934

*

The Mother does not work on the sadhak directly from her own plane above, though she can do so if she wants to — she can even suprmentalise the world in a day; but in that case the suprmental Nature created here would be the same as it is above, and not the earth in Ignorance evolving into the suprmental earth, which will not be quite the same in appearance as what the Supermind is.

That is a very important truth.

17 June 1935

*

Some people seem to be quite misled in understanding the Mother's status with regard to the higher planes. When they are in these planes or receive something from them, they begin to think that they have reached a great height, and that the higher planes have nothing to do with the Mother. They value them more than they value the Mother! Especially about the Supermind they have such queer notions — that it is something greater than the Mother.

If they have a greater experience or consciousness than the Mother, they should not stay here but go and save the world with it.

18 September 1935

*

Is there any difference between the Mother's manifestation and the descent of the suprmental?

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

23 September 1935

*

Is the attitude that I am the Brahman not necessary in the Integral Yoga?

It is not enough to transform the whole nature. Otherwise there would be no need of the embodiment. It could be done by simply thinking of oneself as the Brahman. There would be no need of the Mother's presence or the Mother's force.

27 December 1935

Sri Aurobindo's Recognition of the Mother

I believe that on the 24th November 1926 Sri Aurobindo realised that the Mother is the Divine Consciousness and Force.

No. I knew that long before.

2 November 1935

The Mother: Some Events in Her Life

The Mother's Year of Birth

I asked Mother last night to kindly let me know the correct year of her birth. I am waiting to hear from her.

I don't see why.

22 February 1934

*

The reason why I want to know the year of the Mother's birth is, for the moment, only a certain curiosity, though there may be something deeper behind.

Curiosity is hardly a proper motive — people ask these things because they want to gossip about the Mother as about all things and in the same spirit. It is this constant action from the lower human motives of the ordinary consciousness which keeps people from living within and prevents the transformation of the physical nature.

22 February 1934

*

Today something deeper than curiosity has awakened in me. I long to know the year of the Mother's birth in order to keep it as a loving memory in my heart. Everything about her is dear and sweet to me.

You can have the loving memory without knowing the year. At that rate you could insist on the Mother telling you all the details of her private life so that you may have a loving memory of them.

23 February 1934

Early Visions and Experiences

When Ramakrishna was doing sadhana, Mother was on earth physically for the first eight years of her childhood, from 1878

to 1886. Did he know that Mother had come down? He must have had some vision at least of her coming, but we do not read anywhere definitely about it. And when Ramakrishna must have been intensely calling Mother, she must have felt something at that age.

In Mother's childhood's visions she saw myself whom she knew as "Krishna" — she did not see Ramakrishna.

It was not necessary that he should have a vision of her coming down as he was not thinking of the future nor consciously preparing for it. I don't think he had the idea of any incarnation of the Mother.

11 July 1935

*

The Mother is not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo.¹ She has had the same realisation and experience as myself.

The Mother's sadhana started when she was very young. When she was twelve or thirteen, every evening many teachers came to her and taught her various spiritual disciplines. Among them was a dark Asiatic figure. When we first met, she immediately recognised me as the dark Asiatic figure whom she used to see a long time ago. That she should come here and work with me for a common goal was, as it were, a divine dispensation.

The Mother was an adept in the Buddhist yoga and the yoga of the Gita even before she came to India. Her yoga was moving towards a grand synthesis. After this, it was natural that she should come here. She has helped and is helping to give a concrete form to my yoga. This would not have been possible without her co-operation.

One of the two great steps in this yoga is to take refuge in the Mother.²

17 August 1941

¹ This letter was dictated by Sri Aurobindo, who referred to himself in the third person.—Ed.

² When Sri Aurobindo was asked, on a later occasion, what the second great step is, he replied, "Aspiration of the sadhak for the divine life." —Ed.

Studying Occultism with Max Théon

I should like to know something about Théon: what role has he played in this new manifestation of yours?

Théon was merely the Mother's guru in occultism—he had some idea of the aim to be achieved, but got much of it wrong. Moreover what was true came from his wife and was not originally his.

*

In your letter this morning you say, "There are some who get a complete control in sleep." This sentence evoked a doubt in me: "If ordinary people—Coué's patients, for example—could make their suggestions effective and cure themselves wonderfully, why is the will of people here so weak even when the Divine is here?" My answer was that those people had only a simple objective and not the aim of a complex change of consciousness; there was no pressure from above and no consequent resistance from below.

When I spoke of some, I was thinking not of people in the Asram but of occultists who make such things their main method. The Mother herself was taught to do it by a great occultist under whom she first practised these things. As to Coué, your answer was the right one. Coué's work was on the mental and vital level and to that there is only a very minor opposition from the vital world because it does not seriously endanger their rule.

31 October 1933

Early Occult Experiences

X asked me whether Mother can materialise herself at a distance. Y seems to have said something like that.

Y probably referred to an experience in which the Mother being in Algeria appeared to a circle of friends sitting in Paris and took up a pencil and wrote a few words on a paper. Having satisfied herself that it was possible she did not develop it any farther. That was at a time when she was practising occultism

with Théon in Algeria. Materialisation is possible but it does not happen easily—it demands a very rare and difficult concentration of forces or else an occult process with vital beings behind it such as materialises objects, like the stones that were daily thrown in the Guest House when we were there. In neither case is it a miracle. But to do as you suggest, make it a common or everyday phenomenon, would be hardly practicable and spiritually not useful, as it is not a spiritual force which gives the power but an occult mental-vital force. It would turn the Yoga into a display of occultism, rather than a process of spiritual change.

20 October 1935

*

You have said that the Mother's materialising herself in Paris while she was living in Algeria was not a miracle. What could be called a miracle, then?

A miracle means something without a process or law which gets done by a sort of magical power or feat—at least that is the impression given by the use of the word. This kind of manifestation is not that, it is a thing well-known at least in theory and sometimes successfully accomplished.

21 October 1935

Meeting Jnan Chakrabarti

I never met Chakrabarti personally and know nothing about Krishnaprem's Guru. Chakrabarti's father came here to see me, but even that I had forgotten till the Mother reminded me of it. I know Chakrabarti only through the Mother, but that is better than any personal acquaintance. The Mother met him in Paris when he was there once with his sons on his way to England; it was before the deluge, in pre-war days. She meditated with him and they were able inwardly to meet each other with a brief but living spiritual interchange. He told her that he had an extraordinary meditation which was entirely due to her, and she was aware of his state of consciousness and discovered in

him a remarkable spiritual realisation and a considerable insight on the inner plane. It was the realisation of the Gita or part of it which he had built up in himself, peace, equanimity, the sense of the Divine within, and the atmosphere of peace was so strongly formed and living and real in him that he could convey it to others. On the other hand, he was externally a very worldly man, accepting the not very exalted outward personal life and surroundings he had as the milieu given him and not in the least wishing to change it. It was his theory that this was the teaching of the Gita — to feel Krishna within, to have the inner spiritual life and realisation, — the rest was the Lila and could be left as it was unless or until the Divine himself in the automatic movement of his play chose to change it. This explains the double character of the impression he conveyed to others, which so much surprised you. Those who had themselves some development or aspired to it could, I suppose, feel the sadhak in him; others might see only the worldly man, able, strong, rich, social, successful, accepting, even perhaps drawing to himself enjoyment of riches and power. Others felt both sides, but could understand neither, like your friend in Geneva. Your account of him interested myself and the Mother greatly; it was so evidently the same man, even if the external facts were not there to identify the husband of Krishnaprem's Guru with the spiritual-worldly Chakrabarti of Paris. Not a complete spiritual hero, no doubt, but a remarkable sadhak all the same.

1 April 1932

Arrival in Pondicherry

In *Prayers and Meditations*, the Mother mentions her seeing you first on the 29th March 1914; in other words she met you when she first came to Pondicherry. How is it then that the 24th April 1920 is considered to be the day on which Mother saw you first?

The 24th April is the day on which Mother came from Japan to Pondicherry finally — not the day of her first seeing me. On the 29th March she came first from France, that visit lasting till February of the next year.

19 March 1936

Some Occult and Spiritual Experiences

I have been wondering whether the Mother has been able to establish a direct connection with Mars or any other far-off planet which is probably habitable and inhabited.

A long time ago Mother was going everywhere in the subtle body but she found it of a very secondary interest. Our attention must be fixed on the earth because our work is here. Besides, the earth is a concentration of all the other worlds and one can touch them by touching something corresponding in the earth-atmosphere.

13 January 1934

*

Why do we feel that the Mother is experiencing this or that?
Has she still to go on experiencing?

Experiencing what? She has her own experiences in bringing down the things that have to be brought down—but what the sadhaks experience she had long ago. The Divine does the sadhana first for the world and then in others. 3 January 1935

*

I am afraid I don't know much about Narad. Mother once saw him standing between the Overmind and Supermind where they join as if that was his highest station. But he has his action on the lower plane also—only I don't quite know what it is. In the Puranic tales pure love and Bhakti on the one hand and, on the other hand, a pleasure in making human beings quarrel seem to be his salient characteristics.

5 May 1935

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Yesterday evening I went to bed at 9.30. When I lay down, suddenly my heart stopped for a second and I felt a shock, as if I had fallen down from up above. Is this some kind of Yogic experience or is it due to some weakness of the heart? (I went to Dr. X, but he found nothing wrong with the heart.)

A feeling like that of the shock and the stopping of the breath for a second and as if of falling down comes to many when the consciousness for a moment or a longer time exteriorises itself (goes up out of the body); the shock comes from the going up of the consciousness or from the return into the body. The Mother used to have that hundreds of times. It is not anything physical (the Doctor, as you say, found nothing). When this movement of the consciousness is more normal, the feeling will probably disappear.

1 October 1935

*

If some things are easier to do in samadhi, then is not samadhi a very good state even for this Yoga? But some months ago when I spoke of samadhi, you said something like, "It is not samadhi that is needed but a new consciousness."

Certainly, samadhi is not barred from this Yoga. The fact that the Mother was always entering into it is proof enough of that. What I said then was not a general statement that samadhi is never needed and never helpful, but referred to your then need. Particular statements must not be converted by the mind into exclusive and absolute laws.

10 June 1936

The Mother's Illness in 1931 and Her Temporary Retirement

In the first place why on earth do you put any belief in the "reports circulated in the Asram" and, in the second, why on earth do you allow them to depress you? I thought you knew the value or rather the entire absence of value of this kind of gossip and rumour? What about the "scepticism" which makes you unwilling to believe everything people tell you — why not make a useful use of it in refusing to believe these things? That would be better than to make a useless use of it in doubting the experiences of your own inner being which are a thousand times more reliable than this imaginative chit-chat built upon nothing. If the Mother makes you a communication when you are in your inner consciousness, why not put your faith in that

and not in all this external noise and blather? And who, by the way, told you that the Mother is seeing those for whom she has love and confidence and that for others, like yourself, she has no love and confidence? The Mother has been “seeing” nobody and even now and for some time to come all visits and talk must be refused until she is stronger. Certain people come here for their usual work, or to do necessary things, or to bring food or letters etc. (dealt with by me, not by the Mother!), but the Mother has not been wasting her strength in receiving them or in chatting with anybody, I can assure you. I do not think I need say more about all that you have built on what “*they* say”; you ought to see that the foundation is unsubstantial mist and that therefore the structure you have built on it has no right to exist. As for my not answering questions, I have naturally been too busy all these days, but I thought everyone would easily understand that; I did not expect that a theory would be built on it that I was “disappointed”, had turned tail and was running away from my work. At any rate, since *they* say so, please reassure them and tell them that such is not the case. For yourself, cheer up and throw sadness to the dogs. How can you be sad when you have such beautiful dreams and messages from the Mother?

2 November 1931

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As for all the rest you write, you should realise that the Mother has had a very severe attack and that she must absolutely husband her forces in view of the strain the 24th November will mean for her. It is quite out of the question for her to begin seeing everybody and receiving them meanwhile — a single morning of that kind of thing would exhaust her altogether. You must remember that for her a physical contact of this kind with others is not a mere social or domestic meeting with a few superficial movements which make no great difference one way or the other. It means for her an interchange, a pouring out of her forces and a receiving of things good, bad and mixed from them which often involves a great labour of adjustment and elimination and, in many cases though not in all, a severe strain on the body. If it

had been only a question of two or three people, it would have been a different matter; but there is the whole Ashram here ready to enforce each one his claim the moment she opens her doors. You surely do not want to put all that upon her before she has recovered her health and strength! In the interests of the work itself — the Mother has never cared in the least for her body or her health for its own sake and that indifference has been one reason, though only an outward one, for the damage done — I must insist on her going slowly in the resumption of the work and doing only so much at first as her health can bear. It seems to me that all who care for her ought to feel in the way I do.

12 November 1931

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I had hoped to write shortly, but I have not been able to do so. Therefore, for the moment, since I have promised you this letter in the morning, I can only repeat, on the other matter, that I have not said that you in any degree or the sadhaks generally were the cause of the Mother's illness. To another who wrote something of the kind from the same personal standpoint, I replied that the Mother's illness was due to a strife with universal forces which far overpassed the scope of any individual or group of individuals. What I wrote about the strain thrown on the Mother by the physical contacts was in connection with her resumption of work — and it concerns the conditions under which the work can best be done, so that these forces may not in future have the advantage. Conditions have been particularly arduous in the past owing to the perhaps inevitable development of things, for which I do not hold anyone responsible; but now that the sadhana has come down to the most material plane on which blows can still be given by the adverse forces, it is necessary to make a change which can best be done by a change in the inner attitude of the sadhaks; for that alone now can make — until the decisive descent of the supramental Light and Force — the external conditions easier. But of this I cannot write at the tail end of a letter.

16 November 1931

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I really don't know, my dear X, why you read into what I have written such extravagant things which I certainly never intended to be there. I was trying to explain in one letter why, practically, the Mother could not see anyone until she was strong enough; why should you deduce from it a *principle* intended to govern her action for all the future? I did not at all mean that you were henceforth to be confounded in the mass and never see the Mother in private! I have not, I think, anywhere insisted on a "silent expressionless love" and I cannot even remember having used the phrase. On the contrary, I thought I had made it clear, first, that divine love and psychic love both needed a complete *expression* and that vital and physical love were their necessary complements and were both a part of that complete expression. At any rate, if that was not clear in my letter, I want to make it clear now,— as also that physical darshan etc. are quite legitimate means of expression of the psychic love itself and, *a fortiori*, of the complete love which embraces all the parts of the nature. Therefore, you were never asked to stop seeing the Mother and to give up all personal private contact with her; on the contrary when from some misunderstanding you made the proposal, both the Mother and myself strongly objected and said it would be a wrong movement. How then can you imagine that I wanted you to do anything of the kind? As for killing the vital, that would be in absolute contradiction to the whole principle of the sadhana and we would never dream of asking anybody to do such a thing. We have always said that the vital was absolutely indispensable to any realisation and without it nothing,— neither the Divine nor anything else— could be established in life. All that I ventured to suggest was that the vital movements which lead to trouble and suffering and disturbance should be eliminated or transformed as soon as possible, and even this I would not have stressed in your case if you had not had these violent fits of misery and despondency and what seemed to me unnecessary suffering. You can surely understand that I do not like to see you suffer and, knowing from long experience that it is the cravings and imaginations of the lower vital consciousness that cause men needlessly to torture themselves, wanted you to get free from the

cause. It was not the joy of seeing and talking with the Mother that I wanted you to suppress but this contrary element in you that makes you think she does not love you, does not want to see you or to smile on you, prefers others to yourself, etc., etc. However, I will not insist; I will wait for these disturbances to pass away from you in the due course of the Yoga, as the inner being develops and takes charge of the lower vital nature. . . .

Finally, I will call your attention to what I have said very plainly that *you have in no degree* contributed to bring about the Mother's illness; why then persist in thinking that you have done so or may do it? As for my dark hints about the necessity of a radical change in the sadhana — I spoke, in fact, of a needed change in the *inner* attitude of the *sadhaks*, — it was not a reference to you, but to much that had been going wrong within the atmosphere. You yourself speak of certain persons shaping funnily before the eyes of all, especially during the Mother's illness; there is nothing unreasonable in our wanting to make the inner mistakes to cease which cause such funny shapings to be possible. There is nothing in that that touches you or need alarm you.

I have not yet said anything about the Mother's illness³ because to do so would have needed a long consideration of what those who are at the centre of a work like this have to be, what they have to take upon themselves of human or terrestrial nature and its limitations and how much they have to bear of the difficulties of the transformation. All that is not only difficult in itself for the mind to understand but difficult for me to write in such a way as to bring it home to those who have not our consciousness or our experience. I suppose it has to be written, but I have not yet found the necessary form or the necessary leisure.

19 November 1931

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There will always be doubts, upsettings and confusion of the physical mind and vital, so long as the vital approaches the

³ About your dream I think I have already intimated that you could accept it as true.

Mother from the wrong standpoint,— e.g. if it insists on judging her by her response to its demands and ideas of what she ought to give it. Not to impose one's mind or vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's Will and follow it, is the true attitude of sadhana. Not to say "This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?", but to give oneself, to surrender and to receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the right way. Then what one receives will be the right thing for one. All this you know very well; why do you constantly allow your outer vital to forget it and drag you back towards the old wrong attitude?

As for the Mother drawing back from the old course, routine etc. of her action with regard to the sadhaks, it was a sheer necessity of the work and the sadhana. Everything had got into a wrong groove, was full of mixed movements and a mistaken attitude—and consequently things were going on in the same rajo-tamasic round without any chance of issue, like a squirrel in a cage. The Mother's illness was an emphatic warning that this could not be allowed to go on any longer. A new basis of action and relations has to be built up in which no further sanction will ever seem to be given to the past mistaken movements of the sadhaks which were standing in the way of the descent of the Truth into the physical (material) nature. The basis cannot be built in a day, but the Mother had to stand back, otherwise to build it at all would be impossible.

7 December 1931

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If it is the same part of the vital that was on the right side and has now turned against the Mother, the explanation is very obvious. It gave its adhesion formerly because it thought that by its adhesion it could make her satisfy its desires; finding its desires not indulged, it turns against her. That is the usual vital movement in ordinary man and in ordinary life, and it has no true place in Yoga. It was just the introduction of this attitude into Yoga by the sadhaks and its persistence which has at last made it necessary for the Mother to draw back as she has done. What you have to do is to get these lower parts to understand

that they exist not for themselves but for the Divine and to give their adhesion, without claim or *arrière-pensée* or subterfuge. It is the whole issue at the present moment in the sadhana; for it is only if this is done that the physical consciousness can change and become fit for the descent. Otherwise there will always be these ups and downs in some part of the being at least, delay, confusion and disorder. This is the only true basis for fixity in the true consciousness and for a smooth course in the sadhana.

14 December 1931

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For the rest, it is not a fact that the Mother is retiring more and more or that she has any intention of going inside entirely like me. Your remarks about the privileged few are incomprehensible to me; we are not confiding in a few at the expense of others or telling them what is happening while keeping silent to you. I have, I think, written more to you than to anybody else about these matters and the Mother has not been confiding to anybody anything in that field which has been held back from you. This—about the privileged few—is an old complaint of yours and it has no foundation. If anybody claims to have the special confidence of the Mother, he is making an egoistic claim which is not justifiable. Your real point seems to be about the Mother's not taking up the soup and its accompaniments again. I have told you already why she was compelled by the experience of her illness to stand back from the old routine—which had become for most of the sadhaks a sort of semi-ecclesiastical routine and nothing more. It was because of the mistaken attitude of the sadhaks which had brought about an atmosphere full of movements contrary to the Yoga and likely to lead to disaster—as it had already begun to do. To resume the soup on the old footing would be to bring back the old conditions and end in a repetition of the same round of wrong movements and the same results. The Mother has been slowly and carefully taking steps to renew on another footing her control of things after her illness, but she can take no step which will allow the old dark movements to return—movements of some of which I think

you yourself were beginning to take notice. The next step is for the sadhaks themselves to take; they must make it possible (by their change of attitude, by their resolution to rise on the lower vital and physical plane into the true consciousness) for a union with the Mother on that plane *in the right way and with the right result* to become possible. More I cannot say just now; but I fully intend to be more explicit hereafter — so far as I can without special reference to individuals; for these are things personal to people's Yoga that can often be spoken of only to themselves and not to others.

As for your other questions I shall consider them in another letter; it is too late tonight. It is already 3.30 a.m. I will only say that what happens is for the "best" in this sense only that the end will be a divine victory in spite of all difficulties — that has been and always will be my seeing, my faith and my assurance — if you are willing to accept it from me. But that does not mean that your sadness and depression are necessary to the movement! The sooner they disappear never to recur again, the more joyously the Mother and I will advance on the steep road to the summits, and the easier it will be for you to realise what you want, the complete Bhakti and Ananda.

28 December 1931

*

You will say, "But at present the Mother has drawn back and it is the supramental that is to blame, because it is in order to bring down the supramental into matter that she retires." The supramental is not to blame; the supramental could very well have come down into matter under former conditions, if the means created by the Mother for the physical and vital contact had not been vitiated by the wrong attitude, the wrong reactions in the Asram atmosphere. It was not the direct supramental Force that was acting, but an intermediate and preparatory force that carried in it a modified Light derived from the supramental; but this would have been sufficient for the work of opening the way for the highest action, if it had not been for the irruption of these wrong forces on the yet unconquered lower (physical) vital and material plane. The interference was creating

adverse possibilities which could not be allowed to continue. The Mother would not have retired otherwise; and even as it is it is not meant as an abandonment of the field but is only (to borrow a now current phrase from a more external enterprise) a temporary strategic retirement, *reculer pour mieux sauter*. The supramental is therefore not responsible; on the contrary, it is the descent of the supramental that would end all the difficulty.

12 January 1932

Three Aspects of the Mother

Individual, Universal, Transcendent

I am or was under the impression that Mother is the Cosmic and Supracosmic Mahashakti.

I don't quite understand the question. I have explained in *The Mother* that there are three aspects, transcendent, universal and individual, of the Mother.

31 May 1933

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As I see it, there are two Shaktis in the world: the Cosmic Shakti and the individual Shakti—our Mother. I believe it is difficult to remain in direct connection with the Cosmic Shakti, while the individual Shakti is always here before us. I would like to know more about these Shaktis.

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all three, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine Force.

16 June 1933

The Universal Mother and the Individual Mother

The universal and individual Mother are the same—these are two aspects of the Supreme Mother—but the differentiation is for the multiple action and play. So also one feels the self as one's own self in an individual way but also that there is the same self

individualised in others and all are one.

4 November 1934

*

What people mean by the formless *svarūpa* of the Mother,—they mean usually her universal aspect. It is when she is experienced as a universal Existence and Power spread through the universe in which and by which all live. When one feels that Presence one begins to feel a universal peace, light, power, bliss without limits — that is her *svarūpa*. One meets this more often by rising in consciousness above the head where one is liberated from this limited body consciousness and feels oneself also as something wide, calm, one self with all beings — free from passion and disturbance in an eternal peace. But it can be felt through the heart also — then the heart too feels itself wide as the world, pure and blissful, filled with the Mother's presence.

There is also the Mother's personal and individual presence in the heart which brings immediately love and bhakti and the sense of a close intimacy and personal oneness. 9 June 1935

The Mother's Universal Action and Her Embodied Physical Action

Being sincere to the Mother demands communication of all our secret thoughts. There should be no secrecy between the mother and the child. But apart from this, is there any other utility of confessions?

There is the utility of the physical approach to the Mother — the approach of the embodied mind and vital to her embodied Power. In her universal action the Mother acts according to the law of things — in her embodied physical action is the opportunity of a constant Grace, — it is for that that the embodiment takes place.

12 August 1933

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Is there any law of the working of the Mother's Grace? Why does the Mother in her universal action act according to the law of things, but in her embodied physical by constant Grace?

It is the work of the Cosmic Power to maintain the cosmos and the law of the cosmos—transforming it by a slow evolution. The greater transformation comes from the Transcendent above the universe, and it is that transcendent Grace which the embodiment of the Mother is there to bring into action.

13 August 1933

Concentration on the Embodied Mother

When calling down the Force, should I concentrate on the embodied Mother or open to and concentrate on the consciousness of the Universal Mother?

The embodied Mother must be the foundation of the concentration—even when you receive from the universal Consciousness above you, it is from her consciousness that you are receiving.

5 March 1934

The Transcendental Mother and the Embodied Mother

There are many Mothers in the cosmic and spiritual planes who help people in their search for the Divine. Above them, I have read, is the transcendental Mother and above her comes the supreme Mother. X and Y profess to have seen and spoken to the transcendental Mother in her embodied aspect. This is hard to believe.

There are not many Mothers, there is One in many forms. The transcendental is only one aspect of the Mother. I don't know what is meant by the embodied aspect of the transcendental Mother. There is the embodied aspect of the One Mother—what she manifests through it depends on herself. 7 July 1936

The Transcendent Mother and the Higher Hemisphere

"At the summit of this manifestation of which we are a part there are worlds of infinite existence, consciousness, force and bliss over which the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal

Power.”¹ The Transcendent Mother thus stands above the Ananda plane. There are then four steps of the Divine Shakti:

- (1) The Transcendent Mahashakti who stands above the Ananda plane and who bears the Supreme Divine in her eternal consciousness.
- (2) The Mahashakti immanent in the worlds of Sat-Chit-Ananda where all beings live and move in an ineffable completeness.
- (3) The Supramental Mahashakti immanent in the worlds of Supermind.
- (4) The Cosmic Mahashakti immanent in the lower hemisphere.

Yes; that is all right. One speaks often however of all above the lower hemisphere as part of the transcendence. This is because the Supermind and Ananda are not manifested in *our* universe at present, but are planes above it. For us the higher hemisphere is पर [para], the Supreme Transcendence is परात्पर [parātpara]. The Sanskrit terms are here clearer than the English.

27 January 1932

*

X asked me the meaning of the term “transcendent”. He also asked if the Supermind is a world of transcendence. So far as I can see, the gradations of the upper hemisphere are, in a sense, the heights of transcendence, with the Mother at the summit.

Yes.

Is it here at the summit that the Mother is the Transcendent Mother and the Divine is the Transcendent Divine?

Yes; but from the point of view of the present triple world of mind, life and body governed by the Overmind (Maya), the Supermind and the supramental Divine (all the upper hemisphere in fact) can be spoken of as Transcendent.

27 January 1932

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 15.

The Eternal Mother

X came to our house. I asked him, "First, one Mother must be born, then another Mother, then another Mother, is it not so? Who is the Mother who was first born before the others were born? How did She come to exist?" He said he did not know, but that Sri Aurobindo and Mother would know and can tell me. Therefore please reply so that I can know everything clearly.

The first mother is the "Mother" — the eternal Mother; she always exists, she has no beginning or end. 4 March 1933

The Mother, the Divine and the Lower Nature

The Consciousness and Force of the Divine

Please explain to me what is meant by the Divine Mother.

The Divine Mother is the Consciousness and Force of the Divine
— which is the Mother of all things. 24 June 1933

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You have written in *The Mother* that the Mother is the consciousness and force of the Ishwara, but here my experience is that the Ishwara is the consciousness and force of the Supreme Mother. Could you please make it clear to me?

The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Divine — or, it may be said, she is the Divine in its consciousness-force. The Ishwara as Lord of the Cosmos does come out of the Mother who takes her place beside him as the cosmic Shakti — the cosmic Ishwara is one aspect of the Divine. The experience therefore is correct so far as it goes. 16 November 1934

The Mother in the Tantra

The experience of the Mother being the Supreme is the Tantrik experience — it is one side of the Truth.

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The Tantrics used to invoke Shakti in their sadhana. Was it the same Force and Consciousness that is in the Mother here?

It depends on what they invoked — it was usually some aspect of the Mother that they called.

The Mother in the Gita

The Gita does not speak expressly of the Divine Mother; it speaks always of surrender to the Purushottama — it mentions her only as the Para Prakriti who becomes the Jiva, i.e., who manifests the Divine in the multiplicity and through whom all these worlds are created by the Supreme and he himself descends as the Avatar. The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it; the Tantrik tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother, because its object is to possess and dominate the world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation through it. This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential, for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the Yoga.

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and the Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.

18 August 1932

The One and the Supreme Mother

The Shankara knowledge is, as your Guru pointed out, only one side of the Truth; it is the knowledge of the Supreme as realised by the spiritual Mind through the static silence of the pure Existence. It was because he went by this side only that Shankara was unable to accept or explain the origin of the universe except as illusion, a creation of Maya. Unless one realises the Supreme on the dynamic as well as the static side, one cannot experience the true origin of things and the equal reality of the active

Brahman. The Shakti or Power of the Eternal becomes then a power of illusion only and the world becomes incomprehensible, a mystery of cosmic madness, an eternal delirium of the Eternal. Whatever verbal or ideative logic one may bring to support it, this way of seeing the universe explains nothing; it only erects a mental formula of the inexplicable. It is only if you approach the Supreme through his double aspect of Sat and Chit-Shakti, double but inseparable, that the total truth of things can become manifest to the inner experience. The other side was developed by the Shakta Tantrics. The two together, the Vedantic and the Tantric truth unified, can arrive at the integral knowledge.

But philosophically this is what your Guru's teaching comes to and it is obviously a completer truth and a wider knowledge than that given by the Shankara formula. It is already indicated in the Gita's teaching of the Purushottama and the Parashakti (Adya Shakti) who becomes the Jiva and upholds the universe. It is evident that Purushottama and Parashakti are both eternal and are inseparable and one in being; the Parashakti manifests the universe, manifests too the Divine in the universe as the Ishwara and herself appears at his side as the Ishwari Shakti. Or, one may say, it is the Supreme Consciousness-Power of the Supreme that manifests or puts forth itself as Ishwara Ishwari, Atma Atmashakti, Purusha Prakriti, Jiva Jagat. That is the truth in its completeness as far as the mind can formulate it. In the Supermind these questions do not even arise — for it is the mind that creates the problem by erecting oppositions between aspects of the Divine which are not really opposed to each other but are one and inseparable.

This supramental knowledge has not yet been attained, because the supermind itself has not yet been attained, but the reflection of it in intuitive spiritual consciousness is there and that was what was evidently realised in experience by your Guru and what he was expressing in mental terms in the quoted passage. It is possible to go towards this knowledge by beginning with the experience of dissolution in the One, but on condition that you do not stop there, taking it as the highest Truth, but proceed to realise the same One as the supreme Mother, the

Consciousness Force of the Eternal. If on the other hand you approach through the supreme Mother, she will give you the liberation in the silent One also as well as the realisation of the dynamic One and from that it is easier to arrive at the Truth in which both are one and inseparable. At the same time the gulf created by Mind between the Supreme and his Manifestation is bridged and there is no longer a fissure in the truth which makes all incomprehensible. If in the light of this you examine what your Guru taught, you will see that it is the same thing in less metaphysical language.

The Cosmic Divine and the Mother

What is the difference between the cosmic Divine and the Mother?

It is a matter of realisation. In the yoga of the Gita the cosmic Divine is realised as Vasudeva (Krishna). The Vaishnavas realise it as Vishnu, the Shaivas as Shiva. The Tantrics (Shaktas) realise the Devi (Goddess) as the Cosmic and even as the Transcendent Divine.

22 October 1935

The Self, the Divine and the Mother

My heart is aspiring for the Self, the Atman. I feel this Atman as the Lord of my being. I have to do all that I do for its sake, in order to make it the absolute master of myself.

It is the Divine who is the Master—the Self is inactive, it is always a silent wideness supporting all things—that is the static aspect. There is also the dynamic aspect through which the Divine works—behind that is the Mother. You must not lose sight of that, that it is through the Mother that all things are attained.

Again I feel that this Self is not only the Lord of this being, but that I myself am this Self. All these feelings are within myself, not above me; they come down from above.

Essentially everybody is the Self—but take care to avoid the idea that you are the Lord—for that may raise up the ego.

8 October 1934

*

After getting your letter [*above*], I was frightened, thinking that all my experiences about the Self were untrue and were misleading influences. Then I thought I would not aspire for the higher opening any more; what is necessary for me now is the growth of the psychic. So I began to concentrate on the heart and have been trying to depend on the psychic strength.

You must not try to stop any opening. My remarks were only meant to keep you on your guard against certain errors that sadhaks often make when the cosmic consciousness opens. If there is the psychic opening with its surrender and the higher opening with its wideness and self-realisation, the two together, there is little danger of any such error.

11 October 1934

*

You have told me to keep on my guard against errors. What is your opinion of my recent higher experiences? I used to feel a Consciousness, a vast Wideness which has become each individual. This Consciousness contains all and is in all. I used to feel that each is a part of me since I am that vast Consciousness. I felt that whatever I was doing, I was doing for myself, which is above. Will you tell me what all this means and why you warned me to take care? Was there a chance of making an error?

The experiences were all right—but they give only one side of the Divine Truth, that which one attains through the higher mind—the other side is what one attains through the heart. Above the higher mind these two truths become one. If one realises the silent Atman above, there is no danger, but there is also no transformation, only Moksha, Nirvana. If one realises the cosmic self, dynamic and active, then one realises all as the Self, all as myself, that self as the Divine, etc. This is all true; but the danger is of the ego catching hold of the “my” in that conception

of all as "myself". For this "myself" is not my personal self but everybody's self as well as mine. The way to get rid of any such danger is to remember that this Divine is also the Mother, that the personal "I" is a child of the Mother with whom I am one, yet different, her child, servant, instrument. I have said that you should not stop realising the Self or the cosmic consciousness, but should at the same time remember that all this is the Mother.

13 October 1934

The Mother and Self-Realisation

What is remarkable today is that the consciousness is turning more and more towards oneness with the Mother's Self in the silent peace. I write "Self" simply out of my perception, so I would like to be a little clear about it.

You are seeking for Self-realisation — but what is that Self if not the Mother's self? There is no other. 29 September 1934

6

As the soul is in direct connection with the Divine, is not our Self also in direct connection with it? Why then does one not feel intimacy with the Mother while realising the Self as one does during the soul-realisation?

The Self has two aspects, passive and active. In the first it is pure silence, wideness, calm, the inactive Brahman — in the second it is the Cosmic Spirit, universal not individual. One can feel in it union or oneness with the Mother. Intimacy is a feeling of the individual, therefore of the psychic being. 12 October 1934

The Mother, the Jivatman and the Soul

In the *Chandi* it is said that the Devi is in everyone in the form of consciousness. This is the Bhagavat Chetana in all beings. In the true state, in the psychic and the Jivatman, it is united, a divine portion. In the fallen state, it is the ego. Is this correct?

I don't understand exactly. Chitshakti or Bhagavat Chetana is the Mother — the Jivatman is a portion of it, the psychic or soul a spark of it. Ego is a perverted reflection of the psychic or the Jivatman. If that is what you mean, it is correct.

*

Sometimes I feel as if I am a portion of the Mother come down into the manifestation for her work. As a result, I have to pass through various human births and experience pain, separation, suffering, falsehood and ignorance.

It is true of every soul on earth that it is a portion of the Divine Mother passing through the experiences of the Ignorance in order to arrive at the truth of its being and be the instrument of a Divine Manifestation and work here. 15 February 1937

The Mother's Interest in the World

Is it possible for the Mother or anyone living above the Overmind or even in the silence to take any interest in the world, since the world would be felt from there as a mere speck?

It all depends upon what basis one lives in the silence or above. A speck can be of as much interest to the Divine Consciousness as an infinity. 8 August 1934

The Mother and the Lower Prakriti

The higher Prakriti is the true nature of the Divine, so it can show Light and Ananda to people who are trying to reach the highest Truth; it is a help to sadhaks. But the lower Prakriti is impure and blind and can only show a limited Truth and a brief Ananda.

Everything comes from the Divine; but the lower Prakriti is the power of the Ignorance — it is not therefore a power of Truth, but only of mixed truth and falsehood. The Mother here stands not for the Power of the Ignorance, but for the Power that has

come down to bring down the Truth and rise up to the Truth
out of the Ignorance.

12 April 1933

*

In the past I committed one grand mistake — a total subordination of the consciousness of the Purusha to that of the Prakriti alone. There was not that strong drive of the Will to make the Purusha consciousness dynamic and living.

In order to get the dynamic realisation it is not enough to rescue the Purusha from subjection to Prakriti; we must transfer the allegiance of the Purusha from the lower Prakriti with its play of ignorant Forces to the Supreme Divine Shakti, the Mother.

Sometimes when I feel the necessity of standing apart from the play of Prakriti, I also have the counteracting feeling that this would mean a belittlement of the Mother.

It is a mistake to identify the Mother with the lower Prakriti and its mechanism of forces. Prakriti here is a mechanism only which has been put forth for the working of the evolutionary Ignorance. As the ignorant mental, vital or physical being is not itself the Divine, although it comes from the Divine — so the mechanism of Prakriti is not the Divine Mother. No doubt something of her is there in and behind this mechanism maintaining it for its evolutionary purpose — but what she is in herself is not a Shakti of Avidya, but the Divine Consciousness, Power, Light, Para Prakriti to whom we turn for the release and the divine fulfilment.

26 April 1933

*

X told me that whatever we do, it is the Divine who acts through us. But it seems to me that the Divine cannot be behind *all* we do, because we do not always do the right thing. Is there any truth in what X says?

There is this much truth that the cosmic Force works out everything and the Cosmic Spirit (Virat Purusha) supports her action. But this cosmic Force is a Power that works under the conditions

of the Ignorance,— it appears as the lower nature and the lower nature makes you do wrong things. The Divine allows the play of these Forces so long as you do not yourself want anything better. But if you are a sadhak, then you do not accept the play of the lower nature, you turn to the Divine Mother instead, and ask her to work through you instead of the lower Nature. It is only when you have turned entirely in every part of your being to the Divine Mother and to her alone that the Divine will do all actions through you.

27 May 1933

*

How can I know that the Mother is working in me? I believe that everything is done by the Mother, the good things and the bad, but X believes that very few things are done according to her will. How can I know what is divine and what is undivine?

Why should the Mother do bad things in you? It is Nature that acts for that, not the will of the Mother. You can at least know that anger, jealousy, envy, restlessness, despair, indolence etc. are not divine things and that purity, peace, harmony, zeal, unselfishness etc., are good things and help the growth to the Divine.

Forms, Powers, Personalities and Appearances of the Mother

Nirguna and Saguna (Formless and with Form)

My being rose higher and higher. I saw God's power of creation, and from there worlds, beings and gods were spreading out. Even God, through this power of creation, was getting expressed as different forms: Saguna, Nirguna, etc. God and this creative power are one; this creative power is his Shakti, the Mother. Is this correct?

It is right. There is no difficulty about it. Nirguna, Saguna are only aspects taken by the Divine in the manifestation. It is the Mother who manifests (creation is only manifestation) the Saguna or the Nirguna Ishwara.

28 June 1933

*

This morning I perceived the Mother both as with Form and as the Formless.

Both experiences are correct. What is opposite and incompatible to the mind which thinks by limitations is not so to the Higher Consciousness. Neither Form nor Formlessness is the sole truth by itself excluding the other; the Divine manifests through both, but is bound by neither.

4 September 1933

*

My wife wishes to have explicit instructions from the Mother as to which of the following two procedures would be most conducive to her spiritual evolution:

(1) Should she meditate on the Lotus of the Heart and think of Mother as the Light of Lights situated therein, which is the real Bliss, Omnipresent and Omniscient, which supports everything in the universe and which sustains all by giving support and life to every variety of existence?

(2) Or should she think of Mother in her present form which she sees during Pranam, as separate from her physically and apart from her in her suite at the Ashram?

She has been brought up and moulded spiritually in the first way. She always cognises the Divine as Formless, Immanent and Omnipresent. But now if you advise it, she is willing to worship the Mother in her heart in a personal way.

To meditate on the Mother as the formless Divine is a good meditation and can be continued, but for the full effect in this Yoga it is not enough. To meditate on the personality of the Mother in the heart is also necessary—but whether she should do that now or not depends on the feeling in herself—whether she needs it or feels ready for it.

28 May 1935

Many Powers and Forms

I see the Mother in various forms but I am unable to understand their meaning. Is it true that she shows herself to us in different forms and aspects?

Of course. The Mother has many forms on the supraphysical planes.

12 March 1933

*

Sometimes when I see the Mother I feel as if she is the image of divine Ananda and her form looks like that of a young girl. Is there any truth in my feeling?

Ananda is not the only thing—there is Knowledge and Power and Love and many other powers of the Divine. As a special experience only it may stand.

30 April 1933

*

I can see the Mother in different forms, on every level, in my *ādhāra*. I cannot understand what is the purpose of her taking different forms.

It is always so—the Mother manifests in many forms according to the need of what has to be done.

29 January 1934

Adyashakti

Adyashakti is the original Shakti, therefore the highest form of the Mother. Only she manifests in a different way according to the plane from which one sees her.

22 July 1933

Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati

Yesterday night I saw Maheshwari above my head, Mahakali in my vital being and Mahalakshmi seated in my mind and heart. Each one radiated a different light from her body. Then I saw a few subtle powers descending into my being.

Maheshwari's natural place is in the higher consciousness above mind, for she is the wideness and largeness and wisdom of the Divine. Mahakali acts most naturally through the higher vital which is the instrument of force and power. Mahalakshmi acts through the heart—in your case at present she is acting through the mind also, though that is less usual—ordinarily it is Mahasaraswati.

31 August 1933

Maheshwari

Is Maheshwari on the Intuitive and the Overmind levels?

These Powers can manifest on all levels from the Overmind to the Physical.

25 August 1933

*

I had a talk with X in which he said that Athena is a form or representation of Maheshwari. Some of my visions of Gods like Shiva were in forms resembling human forms, but I thought this was due to my having seen them on the planes relating to the human mind and so my mind saw them in that way. Before the material creation took place, the vital and mental worlds existed and before that the planes of the higher hemisphere existed. But did the Gods on these planes exist with forms and shapes or did they only exist as impersonal forces without forms?

As to the Gods, man can build forms which they will accept; but these forms too are inspired into man's mind from the planes to which the God belongs. All creation has the two sides, the formed and the formless; the Gods too are formless and yet have forms, but a Godhead can take many forms, here Maheshwari, there Pallas Athene. Maheshwari herself has many forms in her lesser manifestations, Durga, Uma, Parvati, Chandi etc. The Gods are not limited to human forms — man also has not always seen them in human forms only.

1 September 1935

Mahakali

Why is the Mother working in the form of Maheshwari in me?
Why is she working so slowly? If she worked in the form of
Mahakali, everything troubling me would flee from fear and
the Mother's luminous Sun would rise in me.

Mahakali can work only when there is a calm inner being and a resolute will facing without disturbance all the difficulties. When there is not that, then it is only possible for Maheshwari to work in order to bring her calm and wideness into the being.

20 November 1933

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Has anyone here concretely experienced the intense action of
Mahakali and successfully come through that?

Yes. There is at least one instance in which it was called down by the sadhaka and he met it full. There was a violent action shattering his old sanskaras, attachments etc. into atoms and he came through it all right.

13 January 1934

Krishna-Mahakali

The Mother in her cosmic power is all things and all divine Personalities, for nothing can be in manifestation except by her and as part of her being. But what was meant in the *Visions*

*and Voices*¹ was that the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti were one Person or Being in two aspects and it puts forward this union of them as Krishna-Mahakali as of great power for the manifestation.

20 October 1936

Mahakali and Kali

What is the essential difference between the Mahakali form as described in the *Chandi* and the Shyama form?

These — Kali, Shyama, etc. — are ordinary forms seen through the vital; the real Mahakali form whose origin is in the Overmind is not black or dark or terrible, but golden of colour and full of beauty, even when formidable to the Asuras. 10 February 1934

*

Sometimes I see the Mother in the form of Mahakali or as the Transcendent and Universal Mother. But I see her in a white colour. I know that Kali is called Shyama because her colour is black, but I saw white. Why is this?

Mahakali and Kali are not the same, Kali is a lesser form. Mahakali in the higher planes appears usually with the golden colour. 13 March 1934

Kali

While praying today I saw the image of Mother Kali. She was black and naked and standing with her foot on the back of Shiva. Why is Kali seen in such a form and on what plane is she seen like this?

It is in the vital. It is Kali as a destroying Force — a symbol of the Nature Force in the ignorance surrounded by difficulties, trampling and breaking everything in a blind struggle to get through till she finds herself standing with her foot on the Divine itself

¹ By K. Amrita. Published in Amrita (Pondicherry: Sri Mira Trust, 1995), pp. 49–67.

— then she comes to herself and the struggle and destruction are over. That is the significance of the symbol. 9 February 1934

Durga

The lion is the attribute of the Goddess Durga, the conquering and protecting aspect of the Universal Mother. 12 July 1929

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Durga is the Mother's power of Protection. 15 April 1933

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The lion with Durga on it is the symbol of the Divine Consciousness acting through a divinised physical-vital and vital-material force. November 1933

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What aspect of the Mother's personality comes out on Prosperity day? Is it something like the goddess Annapurna, who satisfies one's material needs?

I suppose it would be some aspect like that — an aspect of Durga. 2 March 1934

*

Your attitude towards any divine manifestation in the Mother's external consciousness is illuminating, "terrifying not only to the Asuras, but to the sadhaks". And yet it was only a limited and particular force — the Durga power! Others did not go so far as that, but they found her high, far-away, aloof, severe — asked what was the cause of her displeasure against them. And that comes to the same — to be severe against the Asuras is also to be severe against the sadhaks. A few struck a different note, delight at the greatness of the Power they felt, or, even when feeling nothing of that, a sense of the sudden lifting of obstacles. But that is not the general tone. It follows that the Mother cannot manifest anything in her external material because she has to

keep on a level with the sadhaks. And what then? If she is not to be allowed to protect herself, the work, the sadhaks, against the attacks of the Asuras on the physical plane — for it is there that there is the whole question, — then what is to be done? what can be done? Nothing. We can only wait for the supramental descent — and that descent is methodical but slow, for the opposition to that too is obstinate in the material Nature.

However, we must go on and do what can be done under these difficult conditions. I do not know how far it is wise not to come to pranam, — the results in others have not been brilliant but if it is only for a few days, and you insist, I shall not refuse. The real thing is however a change of the mental attitude — getting out of the world of ideas and feelings built by your mind which is a prison into a freedom and openness to the Divine that would be the most helpful to you. There would soon then be a compass and a rudder.

17 October 1934

*

Is Durga a form and name of Mahalakshmi? Recently I heard the name “Durga” repeating itself in me and I felt release from heavy oppression. I am also attracted to the name “Krishna” and sometimes in a semi-sleep condition I find myself repeating “Durga-Mahakali-Krishna”.

Durga combines the characteristics of Maheshwari and Mahakali to a certain extent, — there is not much connection with Mahalakshmi. The combination of Krishna and Mahakali is one that has a great power in this Yoga and if the names rise together in your consciousness, it is a good sign.

21 March 1938

Mahalakshmi

A verse from the *Chandi* on Mahalakshmi came to me a minute or two after the Mother began to meditate with me. Afterwards the Mother explained that three forms of Mahalakshmi appeared in the meditation in response to my invocation. The first, the Mother said, was the original (Overmental) form of

Mahalakshmi, and the second was the traditional one. About the third, the Mother did not speak fully. The form was three-faced with something like a crown on top. Is there any tradition in India or outside of a three-faced form of Mahalakshmi? And what is the significance of the same goddess-personality of the Mother — Mahalakshmi — appearing in three successive forms?

The Mother told you all that she saw about the last form — it disappeared almost immediately. The first form was the true one, that which she wears on the Overmind Plane which is the home of the greater Gods — as soon as it touched your mind, it took the traditional form which is the one with which your mind is familiar. The third shape must be a symbolic one (not traditional) — it would seem to be a correspondent one on the Shakti side to the Trimurti, indicating the unity in difference of three powers in the Cosmic Consciousness — in it is the same manifestation in different forms, — the Overmind Power, the traditional Lakshmi and the One Power in the Mother here.

3 September 1936

Mahasaraswati

Today, immersed in deep meditation, I saw a beautiful chakra opening above my head, and on that chakra two lotuses were blooming and on those lotuses you and the Mother were sitting. After that, I invoked the Mother in my entire being and then I saw Mahasaraswati descending. Why did Mahasaraswati descend at my call and why did the chakra open above my head?

It is Mahasaraswati's work to use the power and light and experiences that come in from above so as to change in detail the whole outer nature.

24 April 1933

*

Is it mostly the Mahasaraswati aspect of the Mother that works in our sadhana here?

At present since the sadhana came down to the physical consciousness—or rather it is a combination of Maheshwari-Mahasaraswati forces.

25 August 1933

*

What is the wisdom that brought deeper gyri in the human brain, the perfect septa in the ventricles of the heart and such other details of structure? Is it the work of Mahasaraswati?

Yes—all perfection in intricacy of detail shows the touch of Mahasaraswati.

19 September 1933

*

Sitting in meditation today I saw a river flowing from the higher consciousness level to the heart level in me. On this river was a golden boat and seated in it was Mahasaraswati, travelling down the river in golden and white light. What is the meaning of this?

That is the work of Mahasaraswati to move between the higher consciousness and the heart and through them establish the rule of the Truth in all details of the mind and life and physical nature.

7 December 1933

The Radha-Power

In the *Chandi* the names of the four Cosmic Powers of the Mother—Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—are mentioned along with others, but the name Radha is not mentioned. This is a clear proof of the fact that when the *Chandi* was composed the Radha-Power was not manifested to the vision of the saints and that the *Chandi* mentions only the Cosmic Powers of the Mother and not her supramental Powers. In the book *The Mother*, after describing the four Powers of the Mother, you have said: "There are other great Personalities of the Divine Mother, but they were more difficult to bring down and have not stood out in front with so much prominence in the evolution of the earth-spirit. There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation,—most of all one who is her Personality of that

mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secracies the work of all the other Powers of the universe.” [pp. 23–24] Is not the Personality referred to in this passage the Radha-Power, which is spoken of as Premamayi Radha, Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti?

Yes — but the images of the Radha-Krishna lila are taken from the vital world and therefore it is only a minor manifestation of the Radha Shakti that is there depicted. That is why she is called Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti. What is referred to is not this minor form, but the full Power of Love and Ananda above.

7 February 1934

The Mother's Vibhutis

You write in *The Mother* that there are Vibhutis of the powers and personalities of the Ishwara and Vibhutis of the Mother, but that in both cases it is the action of the Grace of the Mother that alone can effect a transformation of the Vibhuti [p. 16]. I would like to know the difference. Take for example Christ, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Confucius, Zarathustra, Buddha, Shankara, Mohammed, Alexander, Napoleon — among these well-known figures, which are Vibhutis of the Mother and which are Vibhutis of the Ishwara? And what about the Mother's action in Avatars like Rama and Krishna?

The Mother's Vibhutis would normally be feminine personalities most of whom would be dominated by one of the four personalities of the Mother. The others you mention would be personalities and powers of the Ishwara, but in them also as in all the Mother's force would act. I do not quite catch the question about the transformation of the Vibhutis. All creation and transformation is the work of the Mother.

29 October 1935

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Since all creation is the Mother's work, can it be taken that it is the personalities of the Mother who, behind the veil, prepare the conditions for the descent of the Avatar or Vibhuti?

If you mean the divine Personalities of the Mother — the answer is yes. It may even be said that each Vibhuti draws his energies from the Four, from one of them predominantly in most cases, as Napoleon from Mahakali, Rama from Mahalakshmi, Augustus Caesar from Mahasaraswati.

31 October 1935

Different Appearances of the Mother

When I look at the Mother during the morning pranam, she looks different than in the evening when she walks on the terrace or when I go to see her. Is it only my eyes or does she actually do something?

The Mother has not only one appearance, but many at different times.

14 May 1933

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Today while seeing the Mother on the terrace, I clearly saw the Mother's light and that her height was a bit taller than normal. Was this true?

Yes. Many see like that, as if the Mother were taller than her ordinary physical appearance.

29 September 1933

*

The Mother has many different personalities and her appearance varies according as one or another predominates. The something common, of course, exists. There is first, the one whom all these personalities manifest but that cannot be expressed in name or word — there is also the supramental personality which from behind the veil presides over the aim of the present manifestation.

9 November 1933

*

Why does the Mother appear different at different times, as at Pranam or Prosperity or while giving interviews? Sometimes even anatomical differences are visible. What is the reason for these differences in her appearance? Does it depend on the extent to which she turns outwards?

It is rather, I think, dependent on the personality that manifests in front — as she has many personalities and the body is plastic enough to express something of each when it comes forward.

4 December 1933

False Appearances of the Mother

In a dream I saw the Mother and made pranam to her. She was weeping and pitying me in my unfortunate state. But now I feel that the personality to whom I made pranam was not the Mother, but someone disguised as her.

It must obviously have been some force taking the form of the Mother — that often happens on the vital plane. Suggestions are given by these disguised forces which have to be rejected as you rejected this one.

7 September 1938

Section Two

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo
and the Integral Yoga

Two in One

One Consciousness

The opposition between the Mother's consciousness and my consciousness was an invention of the old days (due mainly to X, Y and others of that time) and emerged in a time when the Mother was not fully recognised or accepted by some of those who were here at the beginning. Even after they had recognised her they persisted in this meaningless opposition and did great harm to them and others. The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play. Nothing can be done without her knowledge and force, without her consciousness—if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers. If a separation is made like that (I leave aside the turns which their minds so strongly put upon these things), how can the Truth establish itself—from the Truth there is no such separation.

13 November 1934

One Force

Is there any difference in your working and the Mother's working—I mean any difference in the force or effectivity?

No, it is a single Power.

23 May 1933

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Of course you are right in saying we are one and whatever is given is from both. If I give, the Mother's Force goes with it, or else the sadhak would get nothing, and if the Mother gives, my support goes with it and gives it my light as well as the Mother's. It is two sides of one indivisible action, one carrying with it the

other. It is the Mother's Force that gives the push, but also the peace.

16 July 1936

*

Whatever one gets from the Mother, comes from myself also — there is no difference. So, too, if I give anything, it is by the Mother's Force that it goes to the sadhak.

20 August 1936

One Path

There is something undivine in the world, a part that seems obscure; I said to the Mother that its truth here is expressed by the Mother's Light. The other truth is expressed by Sri Aurobindo's Light. They are two different paths and seem to be poles apart, yet they meet some place above.

If you allow such strange and wrong ideas to get hold of you, it is not surprising that you get confusion and find it difficult to make any steady progress.

The Mother's consciousness is the divine Consciousness and the Light that comes from it is the light of the divine Truth; the Force that she brings down is the force of the divine Truth. One who receives and accepts and lives in the Mother's light, will begin to see the truth on all the planes, the mental, the vital, the physical. He will reject all that is undivine; the undivine is the falsehood, the ignorance, the error of the dark forces; the undivine is all that is obscure and unwilling to accept the divine Truth and its light and force. The undivine, therefore, is all that is unwilling to accept the light and force of the Mother. That is why I am always telling you to keep yourself in contact with the Mother and with her Light and Force, because it is only so that you can come out of the confusion and obscurity and receive the Truth that comes from above.

When we speak of the Mother's Light or my Light in a special sense, we are speaking of a special occult action — we are speaking of certain lights which come from the Supermind. In this action the Mother's is the white Light which purifies, illuminates, brings down the whole essence and power of the Truth

and makes the transformation possible. But in fact all light that comes from above, from the highest divine Truth is the Mother's.

There is no difference between the Mother's path and mine; we have and have always had the same path, the path that leads to the supramental change and the divine realisation; not only at the end, but from the beginning they have been the same.

The attempt to set up a division and opposition of this kind, putting the Mother on one side and myself on another and opposite or quite different side, has always been a trick of the forces of the Falsehood when they want to prevent a sadhaka from reaching the Truth. Dismiss all such falsehoods from your mind.

Know that the Mother's light and force are the light and force of the Truth; remain always in contact with the Mother's light and force, then only can you grow into the divine Truth.

10 September 1931

*

I want to ask whether the idea of the Mother is the same as that of God. I thought that what we call Sri Aurobindo's Light or the Supramental Light leads to the realisation of God, while the realisation of the Mother is the realisation of Consciousness going parallel and also beyond in its separateness. If the One is the Mother, then does Sri Aurobindo's Light lead to something different, such as the ideals of the Upanishads —the realisation of the Purusha etc.? These differences never seem to meet in oneness.

I wrote once before that these ideas about the separation between the Mother and myself and our paths being different or our goal different are quite erroneous. Our path is the same; our goal too is the same—the Supramental Divine.

24 February 1932

*

Mother was doing Yoga before she knew or met Sri Aurobindo; but their lines of sadhana independently followed the same course. When they met, they helped each other in perfecting the

sadhana. What is known as Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the joint creation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; they are now completely identified—the sadhana in the Asram and all arrangement is done directly by the Mother, Sri Aurobindo supports her from behind. All who come here for practising Yoga have to surrender themselves to the Mother who helps them always and builds up their spiritual life.

No Less nor Greater

I feel the Divine as spirit everywhere, pulling me towards Him. He is the Self of all and the Master of all. I feel He is greater than the Mother. I feel He is the Divine who is embodied in my Father Sri Aurobindo.

It is one aspect of the Divine—but the Divine as the Self and Lord and the Divine as the Mother are the same—there is no less nor greater.

31 March 1934

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Why do some people here consider you greater than the Mother? Are not both of you from the same plane? Is it not a veil over the human vision that makes such a distinction?

It is the minds that see surface things only and cannot see what is behind them.

28 March 1935

One in Two Bodies

Mother and I are one but in two bodies; there is no necessity for both the bodies to do the same thing always. On the contrary, as we are one it is quite sufficient for one to sign, just as it is quite sufficient for one to go down to receive Pranam or give meditation.

*

The Mother and I are one and equal. Also she is supreme here and has the right to arrange the work as she thinks best for the

work, no one has any right or claim or proprietorship over any work that may be given him. The Asram is the Mother's creation and would not have existed but for her, the work she does is her creation and has not been given to her and cannot be taken from her. Try to understand this elementary truth, if you want to have any right relation or attitude towards the Mother. June 1935

APPENDIX

Two Texts

Sri Aurobindo wrote these two pieces around 1927, soon after the Mother took up the charge of the Ashram. In the first, he speaks from the point of view of the Mother; in the second, he speaks from the point of view of “the God of Wealth”. The second piece may have been written for a disciple who had undertaken to collect money for the Ashram.

1

I am *the Shakti of Sri Aurobindo alone*, and the Mother of all my children.

My children are all *equally* part of my consciousness and of my being. When transformed and realised, all will have an equal right to manifest each one an aspect of myself and Sri Aurobindo.

It is the unity of all in the solidarity of a common manifestation that will allow the creation of the new and divine world upon the Earth. Each will bring his part, but no part will be complete except as a power in the solidarity of the whole.

2

I am the God of Wealth, the Strong and Splendid, I am the Master of the thousands and the Regent of the millions, I am the puissant Creator, the full-handed gatherer, the opulent disposer of treasures. All the riches of every kind that are in the earth and on the earth and below it and all the riches that are in the waters are mine by right; I have power over all their plenitudes. My power is for the Mother; I call all these riches for her, that I may dedicate them to her, that I may lay them at the feet of the Mother of Radiances. अं तथास्तु

Incarnation and Evolution

The Mystery of Incarnation

Many years ago, the Mother wrote regarding life in the Asram: “In our daily practices we are endeavouring to express the great mystery of the Divine Incarnation.”¹ I pray that this message may be explained to me—and that I be enabled to understand its meaning fully and clearly.

It means that we act as we do because we take it as a fact that the Divine can manifest and is manifested in a human body.

Is this a message which can be circulated to all the members of the Asram?

Yes, they ought to know it.

To outsiders?

Not unless they are interested and seek the meaning of what we do.

I am also eager to know whether in my occupations at Madras, professionally and otherwise, I can pursue the life outlined in the message? Whether this message has any relation to such a life as mine?

Yes, of course, it applies to everybody who accepts the fundamental truth on which Mother based what she wrote.

29 December 1933

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¹ *The Mother, Words of the Mother—III (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2004), Collected Works of the Mother (second edition), vol. 15, p. 32.*

What is the utility of making an effort for other realisations once we have known the supreme secret (*uttamam rahasyam*) that you are the Divine Incarnate and the Mother is the Para-Shakti? That is the highest realisation, I think, and all others — the realisation of the cosmic consciousness, of the presence of the immanent Divine, even of the silent immutable Brahman — are secondary in comparison with it. Whatever is to be done in the world will be done by you and the Mother.

Yes, but for that to be a constant realisation in its fullness the same effort has to be made and if made will bring the other realisations with it as parts of the main realisation.

30 October 1936

The Reason for Their Embodiment

The supramental creation, since it is to be a creation upon earth, must be not only an inner change but a physical and external manifestation also. And it is precisely for this part of the work, the most difficult of all, that surrender is most needful; for this reason, that it is the actual descent of the supramental Divine into Matter and the working of the Divine Presence and Power there that can alone make the physical and external change possible. Even the most powerful self-assertion of human will and endeavour is impotent to bring it about; as for egoistic insistence and vital revolt, they are, so long as they last, insuperable obstacles to the descent. Only a calm, pure and surrendered physical consciousness, full of the psychic aspiration, can be its field; this alone can make an effective opening of the material being to the Light and Power and the supramental change a thing actual and practicable. It is for this that we are here in the body, and it is for this that you and other sadhaks are in the Asram near us. But it is not by insistence on petty demands and satisfactions in the external field or on an outer nearness pleasing to the vital nature and its pride or desire that you can get the true relation with the Divine in this province. If you want the realisation there, it is the true nearness that you must seek, the descent and presence of the Mother in your physical consciousness, her constant inner touch

in the physical being and its activities, her will and knowledge behind all its work and thought and movement and the ever present Ananda of that presence expelling all vital and physical separateness, craving and desire. If you have that, then you have all the nearness you can ask for and the rest you will gladly leave to the Mother's knowledge and will to decide. For with this in you there can be no feeling of being kept away, no sense of "gulf" and "distance", no complaint of a unity that is lacking or an empty dryness and denial of nearness. 6 December 1930

*

You have written in a letter, "A surrender by any means is good, but obviously the Impersonal is not enough, for surrender to that may be limited in result to the inner experience without any transformation of the outer being."² I do not understand.

It is rather surprising that you should be unable to understand such a simple and familiar statement; for that has been always the whole reason of this Yoga that to follow after the Impersonal only brings inner experience or at the most mukti. Without the action of the integral Divine there is no change of the whole nature. If it were not so the Mother would not be here and I would not be here—if a realisation of the Impersonal were sufficient. 15 September 1936

Connections in Past Lives

By what *punya* of ours has the Grace granted to us, mere humans, this rare privilege of coming here at the Divine's Feet?

It is the call of your soul that brought you here and also some aspiration or connection with the Mother and myself in past lives. 6 May 1933

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² Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, vol. 23, p. 613.

What sort of *bhakti* in my past lives has brought me to the Mother's feet?

The aspiration for union with the Divine and perhaps also for the descent of the Divine on the earth.

8 May 1933

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People make all sorts of effort to have God's darshan; some even weep and weep, yet they fail to obtain it. We in the Asram don't seem to have done very much, and yet we are here with you. What has brought this about?

There are many things that have brought it about — a connection in past lives with the Mother and myself, the development of your nature in former births which made it possible for you to seek the Divine, *bhakti* in those lives bearing its fruit now — finally, the Divine Grace.

October 1935

Carrying on the Evolution

It is said that you and the Mother have been on the earth since its creation. But what have you been doing for so many millions of years in disguise? I say "disguise" because it is only now that you are showing yourselves to the world in your real nature.

Carrying on the evolution.

25 September 1935

*

I fail to understand what you mean by "Carrying on the evolution." Could you explain this more fully?

That would mean writing the whole of human history. I can only say that as there are special descents to carry on the evolution to a farther stage, so also something of the Divine is always there to help through each stage itself in one direction or another.

26 September 1935

*

I can understand how ordinary people in the past may not have recognised your presence, especially when you lived outwardly like human beings. But how is it that even Sri Krishna, Buddha or Christ could not recognise your presence in this world?

Presence where and in whom? If they did not meet, they would not recognise, and even if they met there is no reason why the Mother and I should cast off the veil which hung over these personalities and reveal the Divine behind them. Those lives were not meant for any such purpose. 27 September 1935

*

If you and the Mother were on earth all the time, it would mean that you were here when those great beings descended. Then whatever your external cloak, how could you hide your inner self — the true divinity — from them?

But why cannot the inner self be hidden from all in such lives? Your reasoning would only have some force if the presence on earth then were as the Avatar, but not if it was only as a Vibhuti.

So, in answer to the question, "Presence where and in whom?" I would say, "Presence in this world and in Thyself and the Mother."

"Presence in Thyself" means nothing. It is "presence" in or behind some body and behind some outer personality. Also "presence" in what part of the world? If Mother were in Rome at the time of Buddha, how could Buddha know as he did not even know the existence of Rome?

I did not mean that you or the Mother needed to cast off your veil. It is those great men who should have recognised you in spite of the veil.

One can be a great man without knowing such things as that. Great men or even great Vibhutis need not be omniscient or know things which it was not useful for them to know.

27 September 1935

*

You write: "But why cannot the inner self be hidden from all in such lives?" I fail to understand how anyone could hide one's inner self from Avatars and Vibhutis.

An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work; they need not have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what was going on in Rome. An Avatar even does not manifest all the Divine omniscience and omnipotence; he has not come for any such unnecessary display; all that is behind him but not in the front of his consciousness. As for the Vibhuti, the Vibhuti need not even know that he is a power of the Divine. Some Vibhutis, like Julius Caesar for instance, have been atheists. Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God, only in some impersonal and indescribable Permanent.

Still I can't understand one thing: even though you did not cast off your veil, how could Krishna, Buddha and Christ not help casting off their veil in order to recognise you?

Why should they? The veil was there necessary for their work. Why should it be thrown off? So if the Mother was present in the life of Christ, she was there not as the Divine Manifestation but as one altogether human. For her to be recognised as the Divine would have created a tremendous disorder and frustrated the work Christ came to do by breaking its proper limits.

Moreover, you must have heard that just before Christ was born some Rishis from India knew of the divine Descent and set out for Jerusalem merely by their inspiration, though they had not known what and where Jerusalem was.

I never heard of Rishis from India going there. There is a legend of some Mages getting an intimation that a divine Birth was there on earth and following a star that led them to the stable in which Christ was born. But this is a legend, not history.

29 September 1935

*

Since you and the Mother were on earth constantly from the beginning what was the need for Avatars coming down here one after another?

We were not on earth as Avatars.

15 December 1935

*

You say that you both were not on earth as Avatars and yet you were carrying on the evolution. Since the Divine Himself was on the earth carrying on the evolution, what was the necessity for the coming down of the Avatars who are portions of Himself?

The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crises of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation, while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti.

18 December 1935

The Guru, the Divine and the Truth

Is there really any difference between the Guru, the Divine and the Truth in our Yoga? I have been considering that the Mother and yourself are not only the Gurus but also the Divine, and that whatever either of you say is the law of the Truth. Why then are you using these three different words?³

I wrote the general law of spiritual life and obedience. You have to know that as well as its special application here. Moreover many here are satisfied with saying "The Mother is divine," but they do not follow her commands. Others do not really regard her as Divine — they treat her as if she were an ordinary Guru.

13 June 1933

*

Yesterday you spoke about the Mother's commands. What are they? I want to try to follow them.

³ See letter of 12 June 1933, published on page 672 of Letters on Himself and the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.—Ed.

They are supposed to be known. You have to do the right thing
and follow the Yoga sincerely.

14 June 1933

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Overmind

Even the Overmind is for all but the Mother and myself either unrealised or only an influence, mostly subjective.

24 March 1934

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Supramental Descent

X has made the following remark: "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo." Is it correct?

[*Sri Aurobindo bracketed "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical", and wrote:*] Not quite correct in all points. The things to be brought down were in us no doubt—but not all outwardly manifested, from the beginning. Of course X's statement is altogether true only as far as the bracket goes.

14 September 1935

*

When you wrote "as far as the bracket goes", did you not notice that you cut off the last part of X's answer?

Yes, of course. What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the supermind in the earth-consciousness down to Matter itself, so it can't be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone.

15 September 1935

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It seems to me that if the Supermind has not descended into Mother's body-consciousness, it is not because she is not ready for it, but because she has first to prepare the physical of the sadhaks and of the earth to a certain extent. But some people here take it in the wrong way; they think that the Supermind has not yet descended into her body because she has not yet reached perfection. Am I right?

Certainly. If we had lived physically in the Supermind from the beginning, nobody would have been able to approach us nor could the sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men. Even as it is, Mother has to come down towards the lower consciousness of the sadhaks instead of keeping always in her own, otherwise they begin to say, "How far away, how severe you were; you do not love me, I get no help from you etc. etc." The Divine has to veil himself in order to meet the human.

18 October 1935

The Triple Transformation and Control over Death

There are three stages of the sadhana, psychic change, transition to the higher levels of consciousness—with a descent of their powers, conscious forces—the supramental. In the last even the control over death is a later, not an initial stage. Each of these stages demands a great length of time and a high and long endeavour. The legend related to you comes partly from a false idea that Mother and Sri Aurobindo will bring down everything and the sadhaks have only to wait and receive, a misconception responsible for much inner indolence and inertia, and the fact that for a long time a certain protection was over the Asram so that there was no death of any sadhak and little illness—the legend survives, though the circumstances are not now the same.

26 July 1937

Difficulties of the Pathfinders

The Burden of Humanity

Mother spoke to me of the right attitude as one without tension and strain, one which is full of sunshine and as spontaneous as a flower opening to the light. This is all very well for beings like you and the Mother, who are Avatars, but how can we poor mortals take this vague prescription for guidance? And how to get this attitude if not through constant prayer, arduous meditation and a constant effort to reject wrong movements?

You say that this way is too difficult for you or the likes of you and it is only “avatars” like myself or the Mother that can do it. That is a strange misconception, for it is on the contrary the easiest and simplest and most direct way and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet, even those who have a tenth of your capacity can do it. It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endeavour that is difficult and needs a great force of Tapasya. As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in this Asram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer, a work such as I am certain none else had to do before us. For the Leader of the Way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience not in a mere play or *līlā* but in grim earnest all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled and hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the Path. But it is not necessary nor tolerable that all that should be repeated over again to the full in the experience

of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others, “Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly upbearing you—if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time,—do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey.” 5 May 1932

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As for the question about the illness, perfection in the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body. We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes—but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight there continues and, though there may be and is a force of Yogic action and defence, there cannot be immunity. The Mother’s difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of others also and those that are inherent in the general action and working for transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter.

August 1936

*

The Mother has often lost flesh and put it on again. It is lasting longer this time because of the pressure of the struggle in the material part of Nature—for the main burden of the struggle on each plane has always fallen on her, since it is she who bears up all the others.

22 October 1936

Difficulties and the Sunlit Path

You are quite mistaken in thinking that the possibility of the sunlit path is a discovery or original invention of mine. The very first books of Yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and the sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the second over the other.

It is not either because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and the Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer. No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we have had to struggle hundreds of times (in fact, that is an understatement) before we could overcome; many still remain protesting that they have a right until the perfect perfection is there. But we have never consented to admit their inevitable necessity for others. It is in fact to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden. It was with that object that the Mother once prayed to the Divine that whatever difficulties, dangers, sufferings were necessary for the path might be laid on her rather than on others. It has been so far heard that as a result of daily and terrible struggles for years those who put an entire and sincere confidence in her *are* able to follow the sunlit path and even those who cannot, yet when they do put the trust find their path suddenly easy and, if it becomes difficult again, it is only when distrust, revolt, abhiman, or other darknesses come upon them. The sunlit path is not altogether a fable. November 1935

Vital Sensitiveness

Does everybody have to pass through the stage of vital sensitiveness?

The Mother and myself have passed through it. It comes inevitably in the full opening of the being to the universal.

17 April 1936

Self-imposed Bareness

After realisation whatever the Higher Will demands is the best¹—but first detachment is the rule. To reach the Freedom without the discipline and detachment is given to few. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life.

15 November 1933

Joyous Sacrifice

By the way, do you think that the Mother or myself or others who have taken up the spiritual life had not enjoyed life and that it is therefore that the Mother was able to speak of a joyous sacrifice to the Divine as the true spirit of spiritual sacrifice? Or do you think we spent the preliminary stages in longings for the lost fleshpots of Egypt and that it was only later on we felt the joy of the spiritual sacrifice? Of course we did not; we and many others had no difficulty on the score of giving up anything we thought necessary to give up and no hankerings afterwards. Your rule is as usual a stiff rule that does not at all apply generally.

17 October 1935

No Grand Trunk Road

I have heard that X has come down to this sorrowful world of ours from one of those rarefied invisible worlds; for one like him, everything becomes a Grand Trunk Road.

Nobody has found this Yoga a Grand Trunk Road, neither X nor Y nor even myself or the Mother. All such ideas are a romantic illusion.

August 1935

¹ This reply was written in answer to a sadhak's remark concerning the wearing of beautiful clothing.—Ed.

Helpers on the Way

Sadhana through the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

These are questions that I cannot answer — it is not for me to reply to such queries.¹ I can only say that the final aim of the Yoga here is to bring down the supramental Truth (all other aims and stages being preliminary and instrumental) and organise its action. The Asram proceeds on the assumption that this has to be done through myself and the Mother and in accepting this aim and the descent of this Truth the sadhaks accept myself and the Mother and must be guided by us and receive from us what is descending and cannot attain it otherwise. If they follow or want some other Truth, they are free to do so but they cannot do it here, because here they will not succeed, as it is not the end for which the Divine Force is working here. And it has been found that if they reject the Power that comes from us to follow something which is not that, it leads them out of this way and they cannot profit by our presence or by the Yoga or form a harmonious unit in the work that is to be done here. That is all I am prepared to say in this matter.

30 December 1932

The Only Way to Advance

This morning when I saw the Mother I got some contact with her consciousness. I was very impressed by her saying that she thought I am sincerely doing sadhana and by her giving me the flower called Supramental Future. Both these things gave me hope, especially the latter, for I have been wondering whether I would realise up to the supramental consciousness.

These days many forces have been pulling me in different directions; in this way I don't arrive at the Truth or at the organisation of my being. Now and then I get experiences,

¹ *The questions Sri Aurobindo was asked are not available. — Ed.*

but I also get confusion and nothing is settled. Sometimes the very law of life seems to be fight and disagreement.

Today I felt a quiet peace in the vital and the Mother's consciousness. For a long time I remained quiet after seeing the Mother. I am getting many experiences, but the consciousness gets diverted by suggestions and by activity.

1. A quiet mind makes consciousness easier.

2. If you keep a quiet mind and a constant contact with myself and the Mother and the true Light and Force, then things will become easy and straight — it is the *only* way to get to the realisation.

3. It is a mistake to think that this method will not lead you to the supramental realisation. It is the only way to advance towards the supramental change.

4. It is because you become doubtful and begin to follow after other ways and other (lower) experiences that you get again confused and full of incertitudes.

5. Keep to *one* way, the way shown to you by me. It is by following this way that you can reach the wideness you want — if you run about on many ways, that will bring not wideness but confusion.

6. Here in the lower nature there are many things, but they are in a state of disharmony, so to follow them all together means disharmony, confusion, want of organisation, fight. In the higher (supramental) nature there is a greater wideness and much more is there than in the lower nature; but all is harmony, organisation, peace. Follow therefore the one way that leads to the higher supramental nature.

7. Do not be impatient, because full knowledge does not come to you at once. In quietude of mind keep the contact, let the true Light and Force work and with time all knowledge will come and the Truth will grow in you.

2 February 1932

Taking Refuge in Their Protection

You may be sure that we shall not desert you and that we would never dream of doing so. You say truly that what drives you

into these moods is the Asuric Maya or a goad from the Asura — it is what we speak of as the hostile Force. What answers to it is a part of the human vital that has an attraction or habit of response to suffering, self-torment, depression and despair. But in itself what comes is from outside and not from within you. It is, as I have more than once told you, a formation that has been made and repeats itself and this is shown by the fact that once it starts it goes round always in the same course of ideas, suggestions and feelings. The first thing you have to do is to recognise it for what it is. It was not, for instance, "all your nature" that advised you not to write to the Mother, but it was the suggestion of this Force. If you recognise these things as suggestions — and of a Force adverse to you and your sadhana — it is easier to meet and answer than if you see it as something in yourself. The second thing is to take refuge in your better and higher self against that vital part which responds to these suggestions. You must not regard this part as all your nature, but only a part of your vital which has taken an exaggerated prominence. Even in the vital the larger part by far was that which had high ambitions, generous feelings, a large-heartedness which everybody was obliged to recognise. That is what you must regard as your real self and you must believe that the Divine has a use for that and for the faculties that have been given you — believe not in a rajasic or egoistic spirit but in the spirit of the instrument called and chosen to purify itself and be fit for its work and service — and because of that you have no right to throw it or yourself away, but have to persevere quietly till you are rid of the lower nature and the Asuric Maya. And, last but not least, you have to develop the power and the habit of taking refuge in the protection of the Mother and myself. It is for this reason that the habit of criticising and judging by the outer mind or cherishing its preconceived ideas and formations must disappear. You should repeat always to yourself when it tries to rise, "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother know better than myself — they have the experience and knowledge which I have not — they must surely be acting for the best and in a greater light than that of ordinary human knowledge." If you can fix that idea in

yourself so that it will remain even in clouded moments, you will be able to face much more easily the suggestions of the Asuric Maya.

The idea of suicide is always a sign of these Asuric formations. Like all the rest it is perfectly irrational — for the suicide after death goes through a hell of misery far worse than was possible in life and when he is reborn he has to face the same problems and difficulties he fled from, but in an acuter form and in much less favourable circumstances. The other justifying suggestions were equally irrational and untrue. Wherever you went, the blow would always fall on ourselves and the Asram, for you are and would remain too intimately identified with us for it to be otherwise and distance would make no difference. And certainly the verse in the Gita does not cover a case of suicide, but refers to the consciousness and concentration of the Yogi in his departure.

18 October 1934

Their Attitude towards the Sadhaks

You need not think that anything can alter our attitude towards you. That which is extended to you is not a vital human love which can be altered by external things: it remains and persistently we shall try to help and lift you up and lead you towards the Light where in the union of soul and heart you will recognise the Friend and the Mother.

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I was overjoyed to read your letter — first because it relieved me from the anxiety which your persistent trouble had given and, most, because of the clarity of consciousness which has liberated you. Yes, that was the main difficulty — that and the clinging to wrong ideas which it has created. You should never doubt about the reality and sincerity of our feeling towards you, mine and the Mother's — for it creates a veil and separates, where there should be no separation, and it is a first barrier against that openness which is necessary if one is to receive fully or even at all from the Guru. Of course, I saw that something had blinded you and

was keeping you unconscious of the source of the trouble, but there was needed a certain clarity of the soul to remove it. Now that it has come, I trust that it will keep the mind clear and free the ways of the spirit.

*

When these moods come upon you, why do you run away from the Mother and avoid her? Why do you not come to her, tell her frankly what you feel and what is in your mind and let her take the trouble from you?

The reasons you give for wishing to leave us are no good reasons at all. If you want to see the richness and greatness of God, you will, if you wait, see more of it with us than you ever can outside. And if you want to see the Himalayas, it will be much better for you to see them hereafter with your Mother beside you.

You are quite mistaken when you say that if you will go, there will be no Devil left in the Asram. The Devil is not here because of you; he is here because he wants to give trouble to the Mother and spoil her work. And what he chiefly wants is to drive her children away from her, and especially those who like you are nearest to her. If you go, he will remain; and not only he will remain, but he will feel that he has won a great victory and will set himself with a double vigour to attack her through others.

You talk of not giving trouble to the Mother and to me; but do you not realise that nothing can be worse trouble to us than your going away? The moods of revolt that come upon you are clouds that pass; but to see you leave us in this way and feel our love rejected and your place near us empty would be indeed a real trouble to us and we would feel it more deeply than anything else you could do.

You know that it is not true that your sole desire is to go away. It is only so when you are in these moods. And you know that these are moods that pass, and if you allow the Mother to take them away, they go at once. The trouble is that when they come, you take them too much to heart and you begin to

think that there is nothing else to do but go away. I assure you that that is no solution and that we would much rather have you with us even with these moods than be separated from you; compared with our love for you, the trouble they give us is mere dust in the balance.

Read this letter, talk with the Mother and act according to your true self; never mind the rest. 7 March 1930

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I hope you have been able to recover or have begun to recover from the mass of suggestions that fell upon you with regard to the Mother's relations with you and her feeling towards you which have not varied from a constant loving kindness, affection and good will. Especially since the time you returned from Bengal her appreciation of the good work you have done for us there has been constant and never varied for a moment. The suggestions that fell upon you were certainly the result of a passing despondency and nervous upset: there was nothing on our side, no coldness, no displeasure, no indifference and, had these or any similar feelings been there — and there never was any reason for her feeling them — she could not have and had no wish to manifest anything of the kind either by gesture or otherwise. These were the suggestions of an adverse force which wanted to push you away from her and create a distance between her and you so that you might be discouraged in your sadhana and, if possible, induced to go away from us. It is impossible that we should ever accept the idea of your leaving us and unthinkable that we should ever admit any sunderance between us. This attack upon you, the depression and nervous upset and all these suggestions were part of a general attack which has been raging against us from adverse forces for some time past, but I hope that the worst of it is over for you and that you will be able to go on untroubled in your sadhana. It is needless then to insist that she never thought of you as excluded from her Light which is also mine; that Light will be with you and will, I hope, help to light you on your path towards the realisation you long for.

4 April 1950

Faithfulness to the Light and the Call

When I spoke of being faithful to the light of the soul and the divine Call, I was not referring to anything in the past or to any lapse on your part. I was simply suggesting the great need in all crises and attacks,—to refuse to listen to any suggestions, impulses, lures and to oppose to them all the call of the Truth, the imperative beckoning of the Light. In all doubt and depression, to say “I belong to the Divine, I cannot fail”; to all suggestions of impurity and unfitness, to reply “I am a child of Immortality chosen by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; I have but to be true to myself and to them — the victory is sure; even if I fell, I would be sure to rise again”; to all impulsions to depart and serve some other ideal, to reply “This is the greatest, this is the Truth, this alone can satisfy the soul within me; I will endure through all tests and tribulations to the very end of the divine journey.” This is what I mean by faithfulness to the Light and the Call.

31 March 1930

Openness to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Is it the same whether we write to Sri Aurobindo or to the Mother? Some say that both are one, so whether we write to Sri Aurobindo or to the Mother we are open to the Mother. Is this correct?

It is true that we are one, but there is also a relation, which necessitates that one should be open to the Mother.

Can it happen that one who is open to Sri Aurobindo is not open to the Mother? Is it that whoever is open to the Mother is open to Sri Aurobindo?

The Mother proposition is true. If one is open to Sri Aurobindo and not to the Mother it means that one is not really open to Sri Aurobindo.

Very often Sri Aurobindo says one should allow the Mother's

force to govern. Does it mean that there is a difference between the two forces?

There is one force only, the Mother's force—or, if you like to put it like that, the Mother is Sri Aurobindo's Force.

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Somebody told me: "When I came here, Sri Aurobindo never used to teach us anything about the Yoga. He told us to follow our own knowledge." Is this so?

I am not aware of that. But now also the Mother does not teach, she asks all to open and receive. But she does not tell them and I don't think I told people to follow their own "knowledge".

26 April 1933

Their Presence

It is quite sure that we are with you day and night; even if you do not yet see the Mother in your dreams or feel her presence, you should think of her as there and supporting you and that will surely help you.

If there is a natural movement of your mind to identify Shiva in the way you speak of and it jumps to myself and the Mother, why not let it take the jump? Perhaps it is not a jump but a natural transition, and reconciliation and not a conflict. Certainly, your pranams are always accepted by us and always will be.

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Our presence, force, peace, love are always with you. That is a thing you must realise and learn to keep the consciousness of it. If you do that, all the rest is of minor importance (your difficulties, the old nature etc.) and will be set right in due time.

Calling the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

While aspiring towards the Mother and repeating her name, your name comes in as well. Strange!

You must always aspire towards the Mother, because hers is the force which can alone give you the true realisation of the Divine. If your mind wants to do otherwise, you must control it. Any separation made by it between the Mother and myself (like substituting my name for hers) must be discouraged — because when that happens, errors may creep into the inner experience.

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When I aspire to feel Mother with me and call "Mother, Mother", something in me calls "Lord, Lord" and I feel him near me! What is this you are doing, Lord?

Probably I come to work in you so that it may become easier for you to feel the Mother with you always.

Receiving Their Influence

There are no conditions for receiving the influence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother² except faith, an entire sincerity in following the spiritual path and a will and capacity to open oneself to the influence; but this capacity usually comes as the result of sincerity and faith.

It is quite possible to follow the Yoga while remaining outside the Asram. There are many both in Northern and Southern India who do it.

You can submit your doubts for elucidation to Sri Aurobindo, if brief answers are sufficient, as he has little time. If longer and more detailed answers are necessary, it could only be done through one of his disciples. 28 October 1934

We are doubtful about the advisability of your coming here the next winter. Your illness and the fact that you suffer from the heat stand in the way, for in Southern India the heat is extreme. The sudden change of climate and ways of life may be hard to

² Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.—Ed.

bear. Moreover there will not be truly competent medical aid and advice available here as it would be in America. Finally, you do not know perhaps that I am living for the present in an entire retirement, not seeing or speaking with anyone, even the disciples in the Asram, only coming out to give a silent blessing three times in a year. The Mother also has not time to give free or frequent access to those who are here. You would therefore probably be disappointed if you came here with the idea of a personal contact with us to help you in your spiritual endeavour. The personal touch is there but it is more of an inward closeness with only a few points of physical contact to support it. But this inner contact, inner help can very well be received at a distance. We have not any disciples in America, though several Americans have come recently here and became interested in the Yoga. But we have disciples in France and some of these have been able already to establish an inner closeness with us and to become aware of our nearness and help in their spiritual endeavour and experience. We would advise you therefore to try this way where you are rather than face the difficulty and inconveniences of a journey and stay here which, if necessary, could be undertaken with more advantage after you have gone some way on the path rather than at present.

9 September 1936

Following a Hostile Influence

If you want the plain and simple truth, the plain truth is this that you have entered into a complete falsehood and have put yourself into the hands of a hostile Influence that lives by confusion and ignorance. You began by setting your own imperfect thinking power against a superior Truth and Knowledge. And by false and fantastic reasonings you have so clouded your mind that it has become entirely muddled and confused and incapable of understanding the plainest distinctions or discriminating between falsehood and Truth. This is evident in all you are saying and doing; it is not Truth and religion, but the false and inadequate ideas of your own confused and weakened mind that you are trying to force upon others.

The letter you wrote to me shows a surprising inability to understand the plainest distinctions and the simplest truths. The one who was an instrument for giving birth to the physical body of X was no doubt in her lifetime his material mother. But the relation which exists between the Mother here and X (and between the Mother and all who accept her), is a psychic and spiritual motherhood. It is a far greater relation than that of the physical mother to her child; it gives all that human motherhood can give, but in a much higher way, and it contains in itself infinitely more. It can therefore, because it is greater and more complete, take altogether the room of the physical relation and replace it both in the inward and the outward life. There is nothing here that can confuse anyone who has common sense and a straightforward intelligence. The physical fact cannot in the least stand in the way of the greater psychic and spiritual truth or prevent it from being true. X is perfectly right when he says that this is his true mother; for she has given him a new birth in an inner life and is creating him anew for a diviner existence.

The idea of spiritual Motherhood is not an invention of this Asram; it is an eternal truth which has been recognised for ages past both in Europe and in Asia. The distinction I have drawn between the physical relation and the psychic and spiritual relation is also not a new invention; it is an idea known and understood everywhere and found to be perfectly plain and simple by all. It is the present confused state of your own mind which prevents you from understanding what men have found natural and intelligible everywhere.

As for X and Y, you have no claim over them and no right to control their thoughts and actions. X is of an age to choose and decide; he can think and act for himself and has no need of you to think and act for him. You are not his guardian nor Y's; you are not even the head of the family. On what ground do you claim to decide where he shall go or where he shall stay? Your pretension to have the responsibility for him or her before God is an arrogant and grotesque absurdity. Each one is responsible for himself before God unless he freely chooses to place the responsibility upon another in whom he trusts. No one has the

right to impose himself as a religious or spiritual guide on others against their free will. You have no claim at all to dictate to X or Y either in their inner or their outer life. It is again the confusion and incoherence of your mind in its present state that prevents you from recognising these plain and simple facts.

Again, you say that you ask only for the Truth and yet you speak like a narrow and ignorant fanatic who refuses to believe in anything but the religion in which he was born. All fanaticism is false, because it is a contradiction of the very nature of God and of Truth. Truth cannot be shut up in a single book, Bible or Veda or Koran, or in a single religion. The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of the Mussulmans or of the Semitic religions only,— those that happened to be in a line from the Bible and to have Jewish or Arabian prophets for their founders. Hindus and Confucians and Taoists and all others have as much right to enter into relation with God and find the Truth in their own way. All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth; all are created in time and finally decline and perish. Mahomed himself never pretended that the Koran was the last message of God and there would be no other. God and Truth outlast these religions and manifest themselves anew in whatever way or form the Divine Wisdom chooses. You cannot shut up God in the limitations of your own narrow brain or dictate to the Divine Power and Consciousness how or where or through whom it shall manifest; you cannot put up your puny barriers against the divine Omnipotence. These again are simple truths which are now being recognised all over the world; only the childish in mind or those who vegetate in some formula of the past deny them.

You have insisted on my writing and asked for the Truth and I have answered. But if you want to be a Mussulman, no one prevents you. If the Truth I bring is too great for you to understand or to bear, you are free to go and live in a half-truth or in your own ignorance. I am not here to convert anyone; I do not preach to the world to come to me and I call no one. I am here to establish the divine life and the divine Consciousness in

those who of themselves feel the call to come to me and cleave to it and in no others. I am not asking you and the Mother is not asking you to accept us. You can go any day to Hyderabad and live either the worldly life or a religious life according to your own preference. But as you are free so also are others free to stay here and follow their own way. You are not entitled to try to make yourself a centre of disturbance and an obstacle to their peace and their spiritual progress.

In answering you I am answering the ideas which have been put in you by the Power of darkness and ignorance that is just now using you for its own purpose. This Power is very obviously not the divine Power. It is a Power of Falsehood that is making you do and say extravagant things which are not Islamic but a caricature of Islamic faith and action; its intention is to make not only Islam but all spirituality and religion ridiculous through you. It hopes to disturb the divine work upon earth, even if it can only do it a little. It is trying to spoil your brain and destroy your intelligence, to make you say and do foolish and extravagant things and turn you into an object of sorrow and pity for your friends and well-wishers and a laughing-stock to others. If you have any respect for yourself or for God or religion, if you truly hope for the Truth and Light, if you wish for the awakening and salvation of your soul, you must stop speaking and doing these extravagant things and you must throw away the Influence that is now driving you.

23 October 1929

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Your remark of yesterday, "There is no quarrel on the Mother's part, the quarrel is with me", intrigues me. The basis of my quarrel with the Mother is that I do not feel her, so we have no dealings with each other. Whereas you are always with me, so how can there be any quarrel with you? I recognise, of course, my arrogance, egoism and pride in this matter.

If you listen to the inspirations of the Asura against the Mother that brings a quarrel with me—just as if you did anything against me, it will land you in a quarrel with her. It is precisely

this arrogance, egoism and pride that make it difficult for you
to feel the Mother.

11 April 1933

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If all that you write against us is correct, there is only one logical conclusion possible that the Mother and myself are a queer combination of impotent imbecile and selfish mean-minded oppressive Asura. Perhaps we are, though I am not yet persuaded to recognise myself or the Mother in the picture. But why do you want to be docile and devoted to such people?

The other conclusion to be gathered from your remarks is that our life work is likely to be and is indeed already a failure because of our insincerity and tyrannical meanness and our leniency and love for the insincere and oppression of the sincere and our unspiritual conduct in all ways. It may be so. I have tried to offer what I felt to be the Light and the Truth to the Earth and her children—if the Earth and her children do not want it or if my Truth is falsehood and my Light is Darkness and Evil in the eyes of men—well, be it so. If there is nothing to be done on earth, the Mother and I can always return into our own Self and see the thing better done by others.

24 April 1933

Misinterpreting Their Words

These doctrines still sound strange to me. I should also be very glad to know of the swift and easy method of Yoga by which all that can be done in a few years—or else not at all, for that seems to be your alternative. What I see in this Asram is that people catch hold of something said or written by the Mother, give it an interpretation other than or far beyond its true meaning and deduce from it a crudely extreme logical conclusion which is quite contrary to our knowledge and experience. If we protest against these crude ideas being put upon us, the “disciples” cling to their own deductions and delusions and push aside our protests as inconsistent with what we have once said, insincere or unintelligible. The Mother has long ago given up trying to correct these things, for she finds that they do not listen to

her but to something in their own minds which they follow and announce as hers. I still sometimes try, but with no great success. As for the logical conclusion drawn — well! It is natural, I suppose, and part of the game. It is so much easier to come to vehement simple logical conclusions than to look at the truth as it is, many-sided and whole.

16 April 1935

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I have always told you that you should not take what any sadhak says or thinks as authoritative or coming from me or the Mother. Even when they say that it is from me or her, it cannot be accepted, for it is often an idea of their own minds which they “think” to be ours also or a onesided misunderstanding of what we may have said in a particular connection but which their minds apply to something with which it was not connected or to all things in general. But when they simply write to you their own ideas without referring to us at all, why on earth should you suppose or imagine that it comes from us? I know nothing of what X wrote to you, except from your own letter. What X writes is X’s, we must not be held responsible for it. For that matter no sadhak, whoever he or she may be, can stand for us in our place or speak for us. Each must be taken as speaking on his own account his own thought or feeling.

3 June 1937

Criticisms, Humility and Faith

First of all, why get upset by such slight things, a phrase in a poem, a tap on the head of doubt? I do not see at all why you should take it as a personal assault on yourself. It is clear from the poems themselves that they are not an assault but a riposte. Some have been criticising and ridiculing X’s faith and his sadhana, there have been criticisms and attacks on the Mother indicating that it is absurd to think of her as divine. X justifies his faith in his own way — and in doing so hits back at the critics and scorners. No doubt, he ought not to do so, he ought to disregard it all, as we have told him to more than once. But it is a hard rule to follow for a militant enthusiasm endowed

with a gift of expression. But what is there in all that to affect you who do not gibe at faith, even if you yourself doubt, and do not attack or criticise the Mother.

As for the sense of superiority, that too is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness, unless one is already of a saintly and humble disposition. There are men like Nag Mahashoy in whom spiritual experience creates more and more humility, there are others like Vivekananda in whom it erects a giant sense of strength and superiority—European critics have taxed him with it rather severely; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine. Each position has its value. Take Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions, "But Shankara does not say so." To which Vivekananda replied, "No, Shankara does not say so, but I, Vivekananda, say so", and the Pundit sank back amazed and speechless. That "I, Vivekananda" stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. This was not mere egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of non-egoism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if I have to express my spiritual experiences, I must do it with truth—I must record them, their *bhāva*, the thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What can I do with the experience in which one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one's being and nature or the certitude of one's faith against all doubts and doubters or one's oneness with the Divine or the smallness of human thought and life compared with this greater knowledge and existence? And I have to use the word "I"—I cannot take refuge in saying "this body" or "this appearance",—especially as I am not a Mayavadin. Shall I not inevitably fall into expressions which will make X shake his head at my assertions as full of pride and ego? I imagine it would be difficult to avoid it.

Another thing, it seems to me that you identify faith very much with mental belief — but real faith is something spiritual, a knowledge of the soul. The assertions you quote in your letter are the hard assertions of a mental belief leading to a great vehement assertion of one's creed and god because they are one's own and must therefore be greater than those of others — an attitude which is universal in human nature. Even the atheist is not tolerant, but declares his credo of Nature and Matter as the only truth and on all who disbelieve it or believe in other things he pours scorn as unenlightened morons and superstitious half-wits. I bear him no grudge for thinking me that; but I note that this attitude is not confined to religious faith but is equally natural to those who are free from religious faith and do not believe in Gods or Gurus.

I don't think that real faith is so very superabundant in this Asram. There are some who have it, but for the most part I have met not only doubt, but sharp criticism, constant questioning, much mockery of faith and spiritual experience, violent attacks on myself and the Mother — and that has been going on for the last fourteen years and more. Things are not so bad as they were, but there is plenty of it left still, and I do not think the time has come when the danger of an excessive faith is likely to take body.

You will not, I hope, mind my putting the other side of the question. I simply want to point out that there is this other side, that there is much more to be said than at first sight appears, and the moral of it all is that one must bear with what calm and philosophy one can the conflicts of opposing tendencies in this welter of the Asram atmosphere and wait till the time has come when a greater Light and with it some true Harmony can purify and unite and recreate.

28 June 1934

Taking on the Sadhaks' Difficulties

I thank you for a perfect night of rest and repose. I felt your presence throughout the night. Was it merely by your presence that the disquiet was dismissed as the rising sun dispels the

night's darkness? Or do you take upon yourself the disquiet as some yogis do to relieve their disciples?

No, I don't take them on myself — though sometimes they try to throw themselves on me, but that is from the general atmosphere. The method of taking upon oneself had its utility at one time (the Mother used always to do it); but it is useful no longer. The thing has to be driven out, its right to remain altogether denied.

25 November 1932

Dealing with the Sadhaks

It is very silly and childish to have *abhimāna*; for it means that you expect everyone including the Mother and myself to act always according to your ideas and do what you want us to do and never do anything which will not please you! It is for the Mother to do whatever she finds to be right or necessary; you must understand that; otherwise you will always be making yourself miserable for nothing.

28 April 1932

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It is no question of fault or punishment — if we have to condemn and punish people for their faults, and deal with the sadhaks like a tribunal of justice, no sadhana could be possible. I do not see how your reproach against us is justifiable. Our sole duty to the sadhaks is to take them towards their spiritual realisation — we cannot behave like the head of a family intervening in domestic quarrels, supporting one, putting our weight against the other! However often X may stumble we have to take him by the hand, lift him up again and get him to move once more towards the Divine. We have always done the same with you. But we could not support any demand of yours upon him. We have always treated it as something between him and the Divine. For you, the one thing we have insisted on and that with your full consent and with your prayers to us to be helped in doing it, is to cut the vital relation with him altogether and to base nothing upon it any more. Yet now you write to us that because we have not approved of your action of what you

said to Y, no matter what that might be,—you renounce us forever.

I must ask you to return to your better self and your true consciousness and throw off these moods of vital passion which are unworthy of your soul. You have repeatedly written of your love for the Mother, the Ananda which you received from her and the number of spiritual experiences. Remember that and remember that that is your true way and your true being and nothing else matters. Get back your poise and throw off the lower nature and its darkness and ignorance. 29 March 1933

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The Mother and myself deal with all according to the law of the Divine. We receive alike rich and poor, those who are high-born or low-born according to human standards, and extend to them an equal love and protection. Their progress in sadhana is our main concern — for they have come here for that, not to satisfy their palates or their bellies, not to make ordinary vital demands or to quarrel about position or place or comforts. That progress depends on how they answer to the Mother's love or protection — whether they receive the forces she pours on all alike, whether they use or misuse what she gives them. But the Mother has no intention or obligation to deal with all outwardly in the same way — the demand that she should do so is absurd and imbecile — and if she did it, she would prove false to the truth of things and the law of the Divine. Each sadhak has to be dealt with according to his nature, his capacities, his real needs (not his claims or desires) and according to what is best for his spiritual welfare. As to how it is to be done, we refuse to be dictated to by the ignorance of those of the sadhaks who consider that the Mother must act according to their standards or their ideas of equality or justice or the demands of their vital or the notions they have brought with them from the outside world. We act according to the Light within us and for the Truth that we are striving to establish in this earthly Nature. 11 December 1933

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The human consciousness is made of many materials and all cannot bear quickly a constant spiritual endeavour — they have to be trained, enlightened, changed in their habits. That is why the Mother and I always give time for the soul to grow upon the other parts and we do not mind if it takes time, provided there is a central sincerity and will — as certainly there is in you. Do not be impatient or easily discouraged because things do not go fast. Aspire, try to keep yourself in the sunshine of confidence and let the seed grow.

18 June 1934

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X told me that Y has been insulting him often. But why does he allow himself to be insulted so badly that he has to go to his room and weep over it? Of course it is because he is afraid of bringing things down to the physical level and breaking them. But X also seems to have a good deal of hatred for Y and others too. How long can these hatreds be contained? What can be done for either of these men?

Each has to get rid of his wrong reactions — they are here for that. What other remedy is there? If they are not prepared to do that, then we remain on the ground of the ordinary life where one has to do as in a big family, intervening in quarrels, reconciling, soothing, rebuking, punishing, lecturing, somehow getting things going until the next clash. There is no end to that and we gave it up long ago. Each must mend himself — there is no other way out of it.

17 June 1935

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From your answers to me it seems that the tamasic and rajasic elements of my nature have been at work for a long time and it will now take more time to get rid of them. But since you saw these wrong things entering me, would it not have been better to warn me of their intrusion so that I could keep a vigilant eye on them?

Here again is the rajasic ego in you dictating to us what we should have done and showing us our mistakes.

14 October 1935

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A suggestion sometimes comes to me: "As Mother has become stricter with you at pranam, so Sri Aurobindo is becoming stricter with you in his letters." Is what I have written all right?

You attributed too many motives — e.g. that the Mother tries to allure the vital by indulging it in the beginning. She has no such intention. She behaves naturally and simply with the being—whatever change there is in the vital's impressions about her action rather than in the action itself—except in so far as there is a change necessitated by the change in the consciousness. Formerly you were writing from the higher mind mostly, but partly from the vital—the vital was often dissatisfied with my answers, so I ceased answering to it and wrote only what would help your higher mind and psychic. Now it is from the physical mind and vital that you often write and so my answers must be to them and they feel they are not given the answers they want or in the tone of indulgence they would like. But to satisfy and indulge them would not be helpful to your sadhana.

9 December 1935

*

It seemed to me that the Mother did not respond to my smile yesterday and that she put unnecessary pressure on me in regard to X's letter. And when you replied to my note in the evening with a simple "all right", I felt a terrible emptiness and a want of sympathy. It seemed as if your "all right" was also a sort of pressure in regard to X's letter.

The Mother put no pressure whatever about X's letter and there was no reason why she should do so. As for myself, I never even thought of it when I wrote the "all right". The word "pressure" besides is an entirely wrong one to use; the only thing we put is a supporting force to help you in your difficulties or else to bring down more peace and more of the higher consciousness. I do not see how that can be described as an unnecessary pressure or produce bad consequences. But the idea that we were displeased about X's letter or withdrew our support or were putting any kind of pressure about it is absolutely groundless. You ought not

to make constructions of the mind like that or believe in them; for it is always these wrong constructions that upset you.

5 June 1936

*

Unfortunately X seems to think that the Mother is harder than you: she is grim and does not love etc.

That is because Mother's pressure for change is always strong — even when she does not put it as force it is there by the very nature of the Divine Energy in her.

11 March 1937

Awareness of the Sadhaks' Movements

You and the Mother know what is going on in us, how and what we are aspiring for, how our nature is reacting to your help and guidance. What is then the necessity of writing all that to you?

It is necessary for you to be conscious, and to put your self-observation before us; it is on that that we can act. A mere action on our own observation without any corresponding consciousness on the part of the sadhak would lead to nothing.

7 January 1936

*

I thought that it is not possible for us to have spiritual experiences, especially major ones, without your previously knowing that so-and-so is having such-and-such an experience.

Previously? My God, we would have to spend all our time prevising the sadhaks' experiences. Do you think Mother has nothing else to do? As for myself, I never previse anything, I only vise and revise. All that Mother prevised was that there was something not right in X, some part of him at odds with his aspiration. That might lead to trouble. That is why, *entre nous*, I want him to find out what part of him didn't want the descent.

18 October 1936

Their Knowledge of Human Nature

Sometimes we feel that your answers (not so much the Mother's) come from such a high plane that they seem to have no connection with our lives and do not consider the dualities, weaknesses, ignorance, etc. of human nature. Is it because it is a plane or planes of eternal and infinite Light, Power, Ananda, infallible Will-Force, which sees the human plane in the same way?

I think I know as much about the dualities, weaknesses, ignorance of human nature as you do and a great deal more. The idea that the Mother or I are spiritually great but ignorant of everything practical seems to be common in the Asram. It is an error to suppose that to be on a high spiritual plane makes one ignorant or unobservant of the world or of human nature. If I know nothing of human nature or do not consider it, I am obviously unfit to be anybody's guide in the work of transformation, for nobody can transform human nature if he does not know what human nature is, does not see its workings or, even if he sees, does not take them into consideration at all. If I think that the human plane is like the plane or planes of infinite Light, Power, Ananda, infallible Will-Force, then I must be either a stark lunatic or a gibbering imbecile or a fool so abysmally idiotic as to be worth keeping in a museum as an exhibit. I am glad however to know that this is the opinion that you and all the other members of the Asram (I suppose this is what "we" means) have about me. I am glad however to know that you think the Mother is less of an exalted imbecile than myself.

30 April 1937

Their Patience

I am overwhelmed at the patience and compassion with which you put up with our insincerities, disobediences and loosenesses.

Human nature is like that in its very grain; so if we are not patient, there would be little hope of its changing. But there is

something else in the human being which is sincere and can be a force for the change. The difficulty in people like X is to get at that something (it is so covered up) and get it to act.

8 July 1934

Their Help

Well, what an amazing mass of extraordinary mental constructions you have built up about the Mother and myself! The Mother is a great Yogi of a rather grave and impersonal type! I am Vedantic and vast and cosmic and impersonal and what not! What not indeed! Nothing is impossible after that!! However, I won't protest — for mental constructions are to the mind like his favourite productions to an author, the more you criticise them the more the mind clings to them. Let me point out however by example how they come unnecessarily in your way and how very unnecessarily you let them do that, so that my insistence — in *The Mother* or elsewhere — on getting rid of mental constructions is not so groundless after all. The Mother told you very simply that if you prayed to her (your prayers to Krishna having according to you no effect) you would have received quicker help. That was simply to help you — she is here close to you and the others and any number here have received help by calling to her simply and directly, of course without any questions or misgivings. Even now there are several who are emerging out of the same illness as yours, a habit of many years of long attacks of black despondency with the usual round of suggestions, "unfitness, this Yoga hopeless for me, no response, no experience, the Divine does not love me, Mother is distant and far, how long can I go on, how can anyone live like this, running away, suicide etc.," and they are emerging because they have suddenly managed to turn simply and directly towards her. So what the Mother said was not something unfounded and a mere idea of hers. But it was simply a suggestion to help you. How did your mind come to the conclusion that it was a command to be followed on pain of displeasure, spiritual hanging or rejection and exile? The habit of mental constructions, that is all. Fear?

But the fear itself is a mental construction which could have no real foundation if you had remembered the constant indulgence and patience the Mother has always shown to you.

*

The doubt about the possibility of help is hardly a rational one, since all the evidence of life and of spiritual experience in the past and of the special experience of those, numerous enough, who have received help from the Mother and myself, is against the idea that no internal or spiritual help from one to another or from a Guru to his disciples or from myself to my disciples is possible. It is therefore not really a doubt arising from the reason but one that comes from the vital and physical mind that is troubling you. The physical mind doubts all that it has not itself experienced and even it doubts what it has itself experienced if that experience is no longer there or immediately palpable to it — the vital brings in the suggestions of despondency and despair to reinforce the doubt and prevent clear seeing. It is therefore a difficulty that cannot be effectively combated by the logical reason alone, but best by the clear perception that it is a self-created difficulty — a self-formed sanskara or mental formation which has become habitual and has to be broken up so that you may have a free mind and vital, free for experience.

As for the help, you expect a divine intervention to destroy the doubt, and the divine intervention is possible, but it comes usually only when the being is ready. You have indulged to a great extreme this habit of the recurrence of doubt, this mental formation or sanskara, and so the adverse force finds it easy to throw it upon you, to bring back the suggestion. You must have a steady working will to repel it whenever it comes and to refuse the tyranny of the sanskara of doubt — to annul the force of its recurrence. I think you have hardly done that in the past, you have rather supported the doubts when they came. So for some time at least you must do some hard work in the opposite direction. The help (I am not speaking of a divine intervention from above but of my help and the Mother's) will be there. It can be effective in spite of your physical mind, but it will be more

effective if this steady working will of which I speak is there as its instrument. There are always two elements in spiritual success — one's own steady will and endeavour and the Power that in one way or another helps and gives the result of the endeavour.

I will do what is necessary to give the help you must receive. To say you cannot would not be true, for you have received times without number and it has helped you to recover.

26 January 1934

*

I don't feel any devotion at all. I think you know how much I suffer and how helpless I am to do anything. Have pity on me, cure me by your Grace. Help me out of this pit of darkness by your mercy.

I will try to do so.

But it is a pity you cannot form the habit and stabilise the power to reject this thing when it comes—for it would mean that the difficulty was practically over and the whole being under the right direction and on the right way. Other difficulties are of minor importance, it is this one thing that is standing obstinately in the way of the soul's deliverance.

I will put my force to pull you out—I hope I shall get the full response.

9 June 1934

*

Something in me is open to you and the Mother, for I can feel Peace coming into me. But I do not see how I can call for your help—selfishness, blindness and distrust of spiritual things are supreme in me.

I do not see why your having difficulties or the external consciousness denying the inner truth should prevent you from calling our help. At that rate hardly anybody could call for help. Almost everybody in the Asram except a few have this difficulty of the external consciousness denying or standing in the way of the inner experience and trying to cling to its old ways, ideas, habits and desires. This division in human nature is a universal fact and one should not make too much of it. Once the Peace

and Power are there, it is best to trust to that to remove in time the opposition and enlighten and occupy the external nature.

19 July 1934

*

We are sorry that you have suffered so much. It was not to hurt you that the Mother put the pressure, but to liberate. It has always been with a deep affection and sympathy with you in your struggles that she has tried to help you. I trust you will recover soon your ease of mind and peace. I will try to give you all the help possible.

23 January 1935

*

The Mother and I will do all to get rid of the cloud which the physical mind presents against the permanent consciousness of your soul's connection with the Mother; but let your thinking mind be firm in its will to be rid of it and to call the aid of our Force.

6 February 1936

*

Last night I got stuck at every stanza and had to send you and Mother frequent S.O.S.'s to rescue me. Do you really receive these signals, or do your impersonal Forces intercept them and do the necessary?

As we receive some hundreds of such signals daily, we are obliged to be impersonal about it, otherwise we would have no time for anything else.

6 November 1938

*

It is very painful for us to see you in this condition and it makes us very sad and anxious. Will you not make an effort and throw off the cloud that has fallen upon you? There is surely something you are not telling us, for nothing has happened to our knowledge that could make you go so far as to refuse food and reject persistently the love and solicitude of the Mother. Will you not tell us what is your reason and relieve your mind of its burden?

You are our beloved child. Nothing should be able to

throw a shadow between you and our love. Throw off whatever shadow there is. I ask you to take your food as usual. Speak to the Mother; turn to us once more; call back the happiness and the sunshine.

Speaking One's Thoughts Freely

X wants me to tell him all my thoughts. Can one tell to others what should be told to you? Since I have not told him everything, he says that I am stubborn and even the Mother finds it difficult to work in me. Is it true that the Mother finds it difficult to work in me?

It is quite unnecessary to say all your thoughts to X and it would not be good either. It is only to the Mother and myself that you can say freely all that is in you, not to anybody else. There is no reason why the Mother's force should not be able to work in you as in others.

Sri Aurobindo's Coming out of Retirement

I want to know clearly whether you have any idea of coming out to lead us and guide us as the Mother did in 1926.

I have no ideas about the matter, no mental decisions; when the time comes, the Mother and I will know what is to be done and do it according to the Truth.

21 November 1932

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Dreams, Visions and Experiences

Visions, Dreams and Experiences of Their Unity

From the intimations frequently received from the play of lights seen in visions, I am having a deep feeling that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the same though we see them in different bodies. Is my feeling right?

Yes.

25 April 1933

*

In the centre of the flower “The Supramental manifestation upon earth”, I saw both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I saw only their faces and they were in the same figure and at the same time. What does this signify?

It is our joint or united presence in the manifestation.

10 November 1933

*

Today while the Mother was blessing me, I felt Sri Aurobindo’s hand beside the Mother’s hand. But when I opened my eyes, I saw only the Mother sitting there. Why did I experience this? Did Sri Aurobindo come at this time?

I am always with the Mother — it was therefore quite natural that you should feel the double blessing. 17 November 1933

*

The Mother and myself stand for the same Power in two forms — so the perception in the dream was perfectly logical. Ishwara-Shakti, Purusha-Prakriti are only the two sides of the one Divine (Brahman). 1933

*

It is a very common experience — that of the identity between myself and the Mother (the perception that we are one) expressed in the fusing of the two images. 4 November 1935

Other Dreams and Experiences

Is there any significance in Mother's standing on the right side and your standing on the left in my experience?

Yes, she is the executive power and must have the right arm free for action. The symbolism which puts her on the left side belongs to the Ignorance. In the Ignorance she is on the left side, not free in her action, all is a wrong action or half result. For the supramental work the true symbol is the Mother on the right side.

20 February 1932

*

While meditating today I received the Mother's peace and light and joy. Then for a short time I went deep inside and suddenly saw a tiger standing in front of me. Seeing the tiger, I kept calling the Mother and went near it. Then the tiger vanished and in its place stood a very beautiful boy and girl. A blue light came out from the boy's body and a white light from the girl's. They told me, "Let us go to the infinite God." I was walking with them and then I woke up. Who was the tiger and the boy and girl? Why did they tell me that?

The tiger is some force that appears hostile. If you face it with the Mother's name, the hostile force disappears and in its place come two Powers (the children) from myself (the blue light) and the Mother (the white light). It is probably an image of the vital under the influence of the psychic. At first it is inhabited by the tiger (anger, passion, desire etc.) — but as soon as the psychic influence masters it, that disappears and it is replaced by the Divine Children calling you to the Divine.

3 April 1933

*

When I look into the tuberose flowers which are growing

on our terrace, I sometimes see Sri Aurobindo's figure and sometimes the Mother's and sometimes both together.

It is the flower of the new creation, so it is natural that you see us there.

6 November 1933

*

The dream was an indication of what the Mother and myself are and represent—I do not think that it is necessary to say more than that. It indicates that the fulfilment of what we stand for is the Divine Love and Ananda.

1933

*

On Darshan Day and the day before it I felt an intense love for you and for the Mother. It possessed my whole being for some time. There was a high and profound reverence for both of you and "a happiness that no worldly pleasure can give us".

That is obviously psychic.

25 August 1934

*

In my dream two nights ago, I bowed down to a dark-complexioned gentleman who was the devil, and devotionally too! How to discriminate before such a thing is done? Powers come to allure one and it is harmful to accept them, but how to recognise them? And in this case I recognised that this devil did not resemble you, but still I bowed. Sometimes in dream we have met the Mother in quite a different appearance, and still you said it was the Mother who came to us. Then?

Necessarily, Mother can manifest in many other forms besides her physical one, and though I am rather less multitudinous, I can also. But that does not mean that you can take any gentleman for me or any she for her. Your dream-self has to develop a certain discrimination. That discrimination cannot go by signs and forms, for the vital beggars can imitate almost anything, it must be intuitive.

23 May 1935

*

Well, it is quite natural that I should like to write rather about the Mother than about myself. But I suppose you refer to the experience with the photograph — it can be had of course with mine also, but it comes more easily with the Mother's because her physical contact with the sadhaks is closer than mine.

The feeling of being a child comes often when there is the psychic influence behind.

4 May 1936

*

My being meets you or the Mother in dreams and receives your blessings. Has it any concrete value — as concrete as the Pranam touch?

What do you mean by concrete? It is concrete there just as the Abyssinian or Spanish wars are concrete here. 26 August 1936

*

X wishes to know what you and the Mother decide in reply to her last letter. She asked me to write to her. Shall I ask Mother tomorrow or would you prefer to write what I am to communicate to her?

I think I had better write it and you can communicate to her. It was an experience in a conscious dream in which she was becoming as if unconscious and her body was benumbed and then felt my hand on her forehead, the weight felt not only there but as if something was crushing her whole body, particularly a distinct pressure on the 3rd or 4th rib on the right side. The numbness was still there when she opened her eyes. She thinks it was my hand because of the weight, the strength of it. She wants to know also about our presence, how it comes, whether we are conscious of the call or it is only our Force that is working which is everywhere without the necessity of our personal knowledge. This is the answer.

"As to the dream, it was not a dream but an experience of the inner being in a conscious dream state, *svapna-samādhi*. The numbness and the feeling of being about to lose consciousness are always due to the pressure or descent of a Force to

which the body is not accustomed, but feels strongly. Here it was not the physical body that was being directly pressed, but the subtle body, the *sūkṣma śarīra* in which the inner being more intimately dwells and in which it goes out in sleep or trance or in the moment of death. But the physical body in these vivid experiences feels as if it were itself that was having the experience; the numbness was the effect on it of the pressure. The pressure on the whole body would mean a pressure on the whole inner consciousness, perhaps for some modification or change which would make it more ready for knowledge or experience; the 3rd or 4th rib would indicate a region which belongs to the vital nature, the domain of the life-force, some pressure for a change there.

The strength of the hand, the weight would not necessarily indicate that it was mine—for it was an experience not of the physical hand or in the physical body, but in the subtle realms of the being and there the Mother's touch and pressure might well be stronger and heavier than mine. The Mother does not remember the date, but one night about that period she was thinking strongly about her and putting a pressure for the removal of some obstacle to a spiritual opening. It is possible that this was what produced the experience. If it was myself, it must have been at a time when I was concentrating and sending the force to different people, but I remember nothing precise. I have often thought of her of course and sent a Force to help her.

It is not necessary for us always to be physically conscious of the action, for it is often carried out when the mind is occupied with outward things or when we sleep. The Mother's sleep is not sleep but an inner consciousness, in which she is in communication with people or working everywhere. At the time she is aware, but she does not carry all that always into her waking consciousness or in her memory. A call would come in the occupied waking mind as the thought of the person coming—in a more free or in a concentrated state as a communication from the person in question; in concentration or in sleep or trance she would see the person coming and speaking to her or

herself going there. Besides that wherever the Force is working,
the Presence is there.”

27 September 1936

*

It is quite normal in dream to see the Mother or myself with
another appearance than the present. These dreams are experi-
ences on the vital plane where forms are not so rigid as in the
physical world.

1 June 1937

Section Three

The Mother and the Practice of the Integral Yoga

Aspiration and Surrender to the Mother

Yoga, Sadhana, Dhyana

Yoga is union with the Divine, sadhana is what you do in order to unite with the Divine. You have to get away from the ordinary human consciousness and get into touch with the divine Consciousness.

For that call always on the Mother, open yourself to her, aspire and pray for her Force to work in you so as to make you fit—reject desire, restlessness, disturbances of the mind and vital. Dhyana means to make the mind and vital quiet and concentrate in aspiration for the Mother's Peace, the Mother's Presence, her Light, Force and Ananda.

10 October 1933

Aspiration

Nowadays I feel utterly disturbed and upset. Wherever there is disturbance or confusion I take my consciousness away from it. I have a kind of faith, but there is nothing regular or systematic in it. My mind has wandered very much trying to find the true way of doing sadhana.

It is only by constantly aspiring to the Mother's light and force that you can make true and steady progress. It is only by the constant repetition and persistence of the Mother's light and force that the habit of disturbance and lack of organisation can diminish and finally disappear. Only so can the lower being be prepared and the decisive descent of the Truth and Light be finally made possible.

23 August 1931

*

The Mother's Peace is above you—by aspiration and quiet self-opening it descends. When it takes hold of the vital and the body,

then equanimity becomes easy and in the end automatic.

28 August 1933

*

O Mother, come down in me. So many times I have promised to offer myself to you, and every time the promise has been broken, leaving me suspended in the air. But if I am reminded of my unfitness, what shall I do? I can't do anything.

The fitness comes with the aspiration.

15 March 1934

*

Please give your Grace to this unfortunate lady, whose letter I enclose. Be kind enough to instruct me what I should write to her. She prays for your *upadeśa* and blessings.

But it is not by *upadeśa* that this sadhana is given or carried on. It is only those who are capable by aspiration and meditation on the Mother to open and receive her action and working within that can succeed in this Yoga.

21 June 1937

*

Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid any mixture or substitution, in its place, of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

Aspiration and the Psychic

Nowadays I often get psychic feelings and gratitude. Then the aspiration comes to concentrate above, as I was doing some days back. But from time to time I get the feeling that I should not change the form of my meditation and aspiration so frequently. Should I stick to one form of practice or should the form of practice be allowed to change naturally according to the Light that descends?

To be in contact with the Mother's Light and Force is the one important thing (fundamental) to which you must aspire. For

this the psychic feeling is the indispensable condition; for it is through the psychic that this contact becomes easy and natural. It gives the psychic basis. Once the basis is there firmly established the rest can be done according to need and it will be much better done, because then there will be the safety from hostile attack and the right guidance.

12 November 1930

The Psychic Fire and Offering

I saw a fire in my heart and my offering falling into it like bits of paper. I heard someone say: "Offer everything into the fire!" But when obscurities and resistance arise, I feel a hesitation to offer them to the Mother. The thought comes: offer the best things to the Mother, not ugly things.

The fire is the purifying psychic fire. Offering to the psychic fire is not contrary to the worship of the Mother. To purify all in the psychic fire rather than throw the obscurities and resistance on the Mother is obviously the right way.

9 June 1936

Aspiration, Rejection, Surrender

What you say of sadhana is true. Sadhana is necessary and the Divine Force cannot do things in the void but must lead each one according to his nature to the point at which he can feel the Mother working within and doing all for him. Till then the sadhak's aspiration, self-consecration, assent and support to the Mother's workings, his rejection of all that comes in the way is very necessary — indispensable.

25 September 1936

*

It is quite true that aspiration, rejection and the remembrance of the Mother and surrender to her and union with her consciousness are the main means of the sadhana. It is also true that to seek the supramental for oneself by one's own means is a folly; that I have said from the beginning and emphasised it recently more and more. It is true also that to make the union with the Divine the cardinal aim and all the rest subsidiary

and a consequence of it, not to seek progress, experiences, etc. for their own sake or for the sake of the ego is the proper attitude for the sadhak. It is true finally that meditation, vision and almost all else in the Yoga can be misused if the sadhak is self-centred, egoistic and obscure. But that does not mean that meditation, vision etc. are of no use and should be avoided in the sadhana.

The theory that once you remember the Mother always, everything you do flows from the Divine and therefore it does not matter what you do is rather a dangerous one. It may end by giving sanction instead of rejection to many things that ought to go out of the nature.

As for living a free outer life it cannot be said that that is good for everybody at every stage any more than living a retired life is good for everybody or at every stage. The disadvantage of a free jolly outward social life without restrictions is that one becomes entirely or mostly externalised and that all sorts of vital interchanges are part of it which can hamper the inner growth or the total self-consecration to the Divine. The disadvantage of too complete a retirement is that it makes the person one-sided and shut up in himself, subjective, without the stabilising contact with earth and consequently with the danger of morbidity and self-delusion. A middle path with the rule of living more and more within, standing back from outward things but not throwing them aside, looking at them with a new consciousness, a new view and acting on them from this inner consciousness is the best way. But there is need for some at some stages to minimise outward contacts without abolishing them during part of the process of this shifting of the consciousness. No absolute rule can be laid down in this matter.

14 October 1936

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I always thought that in other Yogas seekers first had to undergo a rigorous disciplined period of 12 years of Brahmacarya, and only when the Guru certified their physical, vital, mental immunity were they allowed to enter into its practical course.

Never heard of this 12 years affair or of any certificate. Perhaps in European occultism there are noviciates, stages, ordeals, grades etc. In India the Guru gives a mantra as soon as he accepts a disciple and tells him to go ahead with it. We have no mantra except the Mother's name. But usually we give work, tell them to aspire, reject, open to the Mother. I don't know whether you call that the practical course. Anyhow people have got into difficulties here even without any practical course, most while doing their "twelve years" and in some cases we have had to push them into active sadhana as the only way to control the lower forces and get them out of it.

Here the merry lot fancy they can do all manner of things.

What things? I find only a small minority doing anything at all except gossiping, discussing, quarrelling, complaining etc. etc. A certain number do the aspiration, rejection, Motherward turn — but nothing more. They have enough difficulty with that even.

Even when strenuous measures are adopted for practising the nearest approximation to real Yoga, ought not there to be a question of a triple fitness first?

How are they to develop it without any sadhana? Just by sitting still? No one has it to start with. 20 October 1936

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The effort demanded of the sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done the rest is to come of itself by the Grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty. There is no rule that trust and confidence can only remain if aspiration is there. On the contrary, when even aspiration is not there because of the pressure of inertia, trust and confidence and patience can remain. If trust and patience fail when aspiration is quiescent, that would mean that the sadhak is relying solely on his own effort — it would mean, "Oh, my aspiration has failed,

so there is no hope for me. My aspiration fails, so what can Mother do?" On the contrary, the sadhak should feel, "Never mind, my aspiration will come back again. Meanwhile I know that the Mother is with me even when I do not feel her; she will carry me even through the darkest period." That is the fully right attitude you must have. To those who have it depression can do nothing; even if it comes it has to return baffled. That is not tamasic surrender. Tamasic surrender is when one says, "I won't do anything; let Mother do everything. Aspiration, rejection, surrender even are not necessary. Let her do all that in me." There is a great difference between the two attitudes. One is that of the shirker who won't do anything, the other is that of the sadhak who does his best, but when he is reduced to quiescence for a time and things are adverse, keeps always his trust in the Mother's force and presence behind all and by that trust baffles the opposition force and calls back the activity of the sadhana.

26 October 1936

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How long will it take for all the parts of my being to turn to
and surrender to the Mother?

It depends on yourself—if there is a strong aspiration and quiet persistence, it can be done soon.

Surrender to the Mother

There is not much spiritual meaning in keeping open to the Mother if you withhold your surrender. Self-giving or surrender is demanded of those who practise this Yoga, because without such a progressive surrender of the being it is quite impossible to get anywhere near the goal. To keep open means to call in her Force to work in you, and if you do not surrender to it, it amounts to not allowing the Force to work in you at all or else only on condition that it will work in the way you want and not in its own way which is the way of the Divine Truth. A suggestion of this kind is usually made by some adverse Power or by some

egoistic element of mind or vital which wants the Grace or the Force, but only in order to use it for its own purpose, and is not willing to live for the Divine Purpose,—it is willing to take from the Divine all it can get, but not to give itself to the Divine. The soul, the true being, on the contrary, turns towards the Divine and is not only willing but eager and happy to surrender.

In this Yoga one is supposed to go beyond every mental idealistic culture. Ideas and ideals belong to the mind and are half-truths only; the mind too is, more often than not, satisfied with merely having an ideal, with the pleasure of idealising, while life remains always the same, untransformed or changed only a little and mostly in appearance. The spiritual seeker does not turn aside from the pursuit of realisation to mere idealising; not to idealise, but to realise the Divine Truth is always his aim, either beyond or in life also—and in the latter case it is necessary to transform mind and life which cannot be done without surrender to the action of the Divine Force, the Mother.

To seek after the Impersonal is the way of those who want to withdraw from life, but usually they try by their own effort, and not by an opening of themselves to a superior Power or by the way of surrender; for the Impersonal is not something that guides or helps, but something to be attained and it leaves each man to attain it according to the way and capacity of his nature. On the other hand by an opening and surrender to the Mother one can realise the Impersonal and every other aspect of Truth also.

The surrender must necessarily be progressive. No one can make the complete surrender from the beginning, so it is quite natural that when one looks into oneself, one should find its absence. That is no reason why the principle of surrender should not be accepted and carried out steadily from stage to stage, from field to field, applying it successively to all the parts of the nature.

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It is necessary if you want to progress in your sadhana that you should make the submission and surrender of which you speak

sincere, real and complete. This cannot be as long as you mix up your desires with your spiritual aspiration. It cannot be as long as you cherish vital attachment to family, child or anything or anybody else. If you are to do this Yoga, you must have only one desire and aspiration, to receive the spiritual Truth and manifest it in all your thoughts, feelings, actions and nature. You must not hunger after any relations with anyone. The relations of the sadhaka with others must be created for him from within, when he has the true consciousness and lives in the Light. They will be determined within him by the power and will of the Divine Mother according to the supramental Truth for the divine life and the divine work; they must not be determined by his mind and his vital desires. This is the thing you have to remember. Your psychic being is capable of giving itself to the Mother and living and growing in the Truth; but your lower vital being has been full of attachments and sanskaras and an impure movement of desire and your external physical mind was not able to shake off its ignorant ideas and habits and open to the Truth. That was the reason why you were unable to progress, because you were keeping up an element and movements which could not be allowed to remain; for they were the exact opposite of what has to be established in a divine life. The Mother can only free you from these things, if you really want it, not only in your psychic being, but in your physical mind and all your vital nature. The sign will be that you no longer cherish or insist on your personal notions, attachments or desires, and that whatever the distance or wherever you may be, you will feel yourself open and the power and presence of the Mother with you and working in you and will be contented, quiet, confident, wanting nothing else, awaiting always the Mother's will.

6 January 1928

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However hard the fight, the only thing is to fight it out now and here to the end.

The trouble is that you have never fully faced and conquered the real obstacle. There is in a very fundamental part of your nature a strong formation of ego-individuality which has

mixed in your spiritual aspiration a clinging element of pride and spiritual ambition. This formation has never consented to be broken up in order to give place to something more true and divine. Therefore, when the Mother has put her force upon you or when you yourself have pulled the force upon you, this in you has always prevented it from doing its work in its own way. It has begun itself building according to the ideas of the mind or some demand of the ego, trying to make its own creation in its "own way", by its own strength, its own sadhana, its own tapasya. There has never been here any real surrender, any giving up of yourself freely and simply into the hands of the Divine Mother. And yet that is the only way to succeed in the supramental Yoga. To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done by a force infinitely greater than your own; it can only be done by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.

7 June 1928

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A lady has written a letter to me. She has been attracted to follow this path. She seems to be in affliction and so she wants peace. Shall I reply to her?

You can write to her briefly — telling her that the life of sansar is in its nature a field of unrest — to go through it in the right way one has to offer one's life and actions to the Divine and pray for the peace of the Divine within. When the mind becomes quiet, one can feel the Divine Mother supporting the life and put everything into her hands — these are the first things to do, if she wants to have peace.

16 April 1933

*

In these moods the thoughts that assail you are so much out of focus! The essence of surrender is not to ask the Mother before doing anything — but to accept whole-heartedly the influence and the guidance, when the joy and peace come down to accept them without question or cavil and let them grow, when the

Force is felt at work to let it work without opposition, when the Knowledge is given to receive and follow it, when the Will is revealed to make oneself its instrument. It is also, no doubt, to accept the guidance and control of the Guru who is at least supposed to know better than oneself what is or is not the Truth and the way to the Truth. All that is nothing very terrible, it is simple common sense. As to the particular kind of control you speak of, it is not imposed on anybody; it is only a few in the Asram who at all follow any such rule. X whom you mention would not have dreamed a year or two ago of asking the Mother before doing anything; if he does so now, it is not because the Mother told him to do so or "imposed" it on him, but because he felt the need for it for his sadhana. The Mother never imposed any rule on Y; he made his own rule of life of his own accord according to his own perception of the best way for him to concentrate and took the sanction of the Mother. You yourself were told by the Mother that you had no need to do what Z was trying to do in this respect at that time of her own motion — that for each it was only when he felt the need that he should do it. I do not see therefore why you should fear so much for your liberty — when in the whole Asram of 120 people there are hardly half a dozen who follow any such rule of strict external surrender. And I cannot understand what you mean by the reproach that we have made some people stiff and speechless. Who are they? X, Y, A? As far as I know, they are quite indefatigable and eloquent or fluent talkers. I am guiltless of the crime you charge against me.

Another thing let me correct. It is not at all correct to say that we — in this instance the Mother, never warned B and C of their deterioration — they were warned and plainly warned and also of the influences from outside the Asram to which they were succumbing. The Mother had even foreseen from the beginning that this might happen and put them on their guard in due time. If they fell, it was because they preferred to follow their lower nature and side with the lower forces. The Divine can lead, he does not drive. There is an internal freedom permitted to every mental being called man to assent or not to assent to the Divine

leading — how else can any real spiritual evolution be done?

If there is so serious an obstacle to your going forward, it consists only of two things, your vital depressions and your mental doubts which make you challenge even the experiences you have and belittle any progress you make. Never have we told you to be stiff and gloomy and speechless — on the contrary we have pressed upon the other side. Other obstacles or difficulties there are, but they could be overcome if these two things were out of the way or rejected and inoperative.

If I constantly encourage you, it is not because I see you deteriorating and want to hide it — I see nothing of the kind, — but because I have faith in your capacities and see the nobler *D* behind all outward weakness. I would not speak what I know to be false — that much credit you can give me.

P.S. What put this into your head that you are regarded as an untouchable and a bad influence? If every man who had difficulties were so regarded, the whole Asram would be an asylum of untouchables.

13 May 1933

*

Sometimes my mental, vital and physical beings work together in harmony. At other times one being dominates the others, and there is disorder. How can this disorder be removed?

The best way is to live in the psychic being, for that is always surrendered to the Mother and can lead the others in the right way. For control one has to centralise somewhere — some do it in the mind or above the mind, others do it in the heart and through the heart in the psychic centre.

11 June 1933

*

Now that you are here, try to enter into the higher ways of the sadhana. Withdraw from the vital and its demands and desires, make the inner heart and the psychic being your centre and seek union with the Mother's consciousness through self-giving and surrender.

22 August 1933

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You have to make your vital single-pointed towards the Mother, peaceful, without demands and desires, aspiring only for surrender and to be one with the Mother's consciousness and filled with her.

24 September 1933

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I can only say—it is your vital you have to change. Make it perfectly straight and clear and pure. Make it free from all selfishness, blindness, insincerity, anger, abhiman, self-indulgence, vital desire—and give it as a pure offering to the Mother.

28 September 1933

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The body as well as all else came from the Mother and has to be surrendered to her as an instrument. That is all that is needed.

15 November 1933

*

Surrender means to look to the Divine Mother only—to reject all desires and do only her will, not to insist on one's own ideas and preferences, but to ask for her Truth only, to obey and follow her guidance, to open oneself and become aware of her Force and its workings and to allow those workings to change the nature into the divine nature.

24 March 1934

*

At present my subnature is still resisting and it is difficult to bring it under permanent control. But why does this difficulty hold on when my lower vital has already put itself in the Mother's hands?

Yes, but it is not enough that the lower vital should put itself into the Mother's hands. The whole physical and subconscious and everything else must do likewise.

4 January 1935

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Put all before the Mother in your heart so that her Light may work on it for the best.

21 April 1935

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If I cannot concentrate or meditate, I simply imagine myself lying eternally in the Mother's lap and going out when she sends me out.

This is the best possible kind of concentration.

12 August 1935

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It is the true attitude so to leave all to the Mother and trust entirely in her and let her lead you on the path to the goal.

2 March 1936

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You have asked me, "How do you surrender to the psychic if you are not conscious of its action?" I do it in the same way that I surrender to the Force above. I simply imagine that there is the Force above or that there is a psychic being in the heart centre. Imagining so, I surrender myself to it.

It is then a *sankalpa* of surrender. But the surrender must be to the Mother — not even to the Force, but to the Mother herself.

But I do not know whether surrender to the psychic is necessary at present. My being is not yet capable of surrendering to the Force and to the psychic simultaneously.

There is no need of all this complication. If the psychic manifests, it will not ask you to surrender to it, but to surrender to the Mother.

4 October 1936

*

I had said that the human vital does not like to be controlled or dominated by another and I said that that also was a reason why sadhaks found it difficult to surrender to the Mother. For the vital wants to affirm its own ideas, impulses, desires, preferences

and to do what it likes, it does not want to feel another force than that of its own nature leading or driving it; but surrender to the Mother means that it must give up all these personal things and allow her Force to guide and drive it in the ways of a higher Truth which are not its own ways: so it resists, does not want to be dominated by the Truth Light and the Mother's Force, insists on its own independence and refuses to surrender.

These ideas of breakdown and personal frustration are again wrong suggestions and the dissatisfaction with yourself is as harmful almost as dissatisfaction with the Mother would be. It prevents the confidence and courage necessary for following the path of the sadhana. You must dismiss these suggestions from you.

8 October 1936

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Frequently when I put a strong suggestion or pressure upon you, your inner being becomes conscious of it and something of it comes to your surface perceptions; but also, usually, your external mind, which is always busy and active trying to take a hand in everything, gives it a wrong turn or twist.

What I wanted you to do was (1) to surrender wholly to the Mother, sincerely, simply and without any reserves of the ego, (2) to become conscious of the habitual defects of your external being and reject them, (3) to open these obscure parts to the light and change their movement.

This was the twist — the mental turn of giving up all reserve — interpreted not as a complete surrender to the Divine Shakti, but as giving yourself up to anything that came, which might very well be a wrong movement of the lower vital Nature or even a hostile force.

I have repeatedly said that this kind of passivity is not the meaning of surrender. You cannot surrender at the same time to the Divine Shakti and to the movements of the lower cosmic Nature. To allow everything as her movement is to contradict the very sense and object of this Yoga. To surrender to the Mother means that you stop giving yourself to these other forces. Therefore discrimination (by the psychic feeling and the seeing

conscious mind, more even than by the thinking part) and rejection are necessary accompaniments and helps to consecration and surrender.

Naturally, with this wrong turn, the first result was that certain things in you to which the mind had refused free outward play but of which you had not been sufficiently conscious or else not able to reject from your nature got their chance and manifested in a very extravagant manner.

Opening, Sincerity and the Mother's Grace

The Meaning of Opening

What is real opening?

It is the receptivity to the Mother's presence and her forces.

What is the right and perfect rule of opening?

Aspiration, quietude, widening of oneself to receive, rejection of all that tries to shut you to the Divine.

How shall I know that I am opening to the Mother and not to other forces?

You have to be vigilant and see that there is no movement of disturbance, desire, ego.

What are the signs of a real opening to the Mother?

That shows itself at once—when you feel the divine peace, equality, wideness, light, Ananda, Knowledge, strength, when you are aware of the Mother's nearness or presence or the working of her Force, etc., etc. If any of these things are felt, it is the opening—the more are felt, the more complete the opening.

What is the way to open all the knots of the being?

By aspiration, by consent of the being to the workings of the Divine Force, by the descent and working of that Force.

25 April 1933

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What does "opening" mean? Is it "not to keep anything secret from the Mother"?

That is the first step towards opening.

17 June 1933

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How does one "open"?

By faith and surrender in a quiet mind.

18 June 1933

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To be open is simply to be so turned to the Mother that her Force can work in you without anything refusing or obstructing her action. If the mind is shut up in its own ideas and refuses to allow her to bring in the Light and the Truth, if the vital clings to its desires and does not admit the true initiative and impulsions that the Mother's power brings, if the physical is shut up in its desire, habits and inertia and does not allow the Light and Force to enter in it and work, then one is not open. It is not possible to be entirely open all at once in all the movements, but there must be a central opening in each part and a dominant aspiration or will in each part (not in the mind alone) to admit only the Mother's workings, the rest will then be progressively done.

28 October 1934

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To remain open to the Mother is to remain always quiet and happy and confident, not restless, not grieving or desponding, to let her force work in you, guide you, give you knowledge, give you peace and Ananda. If you cannot keep yourself open, then aspire constantly but quietly that you may be open.

Opening to the Mother and the Integral Yoga

I cannot understand whether I am doing Yoga. Can it be said that I am doing your Purna Yoga?

Everyone who is turned to the Mother is doing my Yoga. It is a great mistake to suppose that one can "do" the Purna Yoga — i.e. carry out and fulfil all the sides of the Yoga by one's own effort. No human being can do that. What one has to do is to put

oneself in the Mother's hands and open oneself to her by service, by bhakti, by aspiration; then the Mother by her light and force works in him so that the sadhana is done. It is a mistake also to have the ambition to be a big Purna Yogi or a supramental being and ask oneself how far have I got towards that. The right attitude is to be devoted and given to the Mother and to wish to be whatever she wants you to be. The rest is for the Mother to decide and do in you.

April 1929

*

I offer myself at your feet. Accept me as your child and show me the divine path. Give me directions and inform me what will be the attitude in my sadhana.

Write to him¹ that he can begin sadhana, if he feels truly the call. He need do nothing at first but sit in meditation for a short time every day and try to open himself to the Mother's power, aspiring for the opening, for a true change of consciousness, for peace, purity and strength to go through the sadhana, for her protection against all difficulties and errors and for an always increasing devotion. Let him see first if he can thus successfully open himself.

2 November 1929

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Today at soup time I remained concentrated. I felt all kinds of eccentric movements rise up, but they were not in contact with the Mother. Sometimes when I concentrate to get contact with her force and touch, I feel that my head is becoming a solid block, compact, and that my mind has become a vacuum. But I think this prevents the opening and permits attacks from above when the consciousness goes below.

You write always as if all opening must be to the confused mental and vital movements, thoughts, voices etc. That is not so. You can be open in all your being, but to the Mother alone, to the Divine alone and to nothing else.

¹ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer.—Ed.

When the consciousness is filled with the Mother's force, then there is the condition you speak of as felt in the head—a solid block, compact, silent, free from all random thoughts and movements. But this can be felt not only in the head, but in all the body and also in all the consciousness above, around and below the body. When it is like that then all foreign intrusions are either automatically excluded or if they come, easily observed and rejected as not one's own and not the Divine's. One feels full of the Divine, full of the Mother's force and presence so that nothing else can enter and misuse the mind, the vital or the body.

6 April 1931

*

Sita suffered without Rama, the Gopis without Krishna — how they longed for God! This will not happen to us because you and the Mother are here with us. If this is the Truth, why do we still feel dissatisfied at times? How to establish the Truth in the mind and vital so that we have an end to the feelings of dissatisfaction?

The Truth for you is to feel the Divine in you, open to the Mother and work for the Divine till you are aware of her in all your actions. The physical presence here is not enough; there must be this consciousness of the divine presence in your heart and the divine guidance in your acts. This the psychic being can easily, swiftly, deeply feel if it is fully awake; once the psychic has felt it, it can spread to the mental and vital also.

16 February 1932

*

The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of the mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect and not definitive. It is only in the Supermind that Awareness, Will,

Force are always one movement and automatically effective.

7 May 1932

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You have only to aspire, to keep yourself open to the Mother, to reject all that is contrary to her will and to let her work in you—doing also all your work for her and in the faith that it is through her force that you can do it. If you remain open in this way the knowledge and realisation will come to you in due course.

15 May 1932

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Keep yourself open to the Mother in the right attitude of surrender and you will receive from her gradually all that you need within you.

21 November 1932

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I began work on this masonry project a month ago. At first I had only a general idea of the work. Then I got the necessary energy and interest. Now I think that the fourth aspect of the Mother—richness in detail, completeness, perfection—is coming. I await further suggestions.

It is very good. By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or sadhana develops progressively, that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the sadhana.

13 February 1933

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There is no part of you that is not open, but you have to make the opening always wider and the reception more complete; but that too will be done progressively if you remember and call the Mother's force at all times and remain confident, vigilant and devoted, as you have been and are.

25 February 1933

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Sri Aurobindo says in reply to your letter² that you can meditate on the Mother in the heart and call on her—remember her and

² Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer.—Ed.

dedicate or offer to her all your life and thoughts and actions. If you like you can make a japa of her name. You can call to her to purify your being and change your nature.

Or you can concentrate to call down from above you (where it always is) first her calm and peace, then her power and light and her ananda. It is always there above the head — but super-conscious to the human mind — by aspiration and concentration it can become conscious to it and the adhar can open to it so that it descends and enters into mind, life and body. 14 March 1933

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If a sadhak even after a long time cannot open himself fully and constantly to the Mother owing to great obstacles in his nature, will he die in the middle and not be accepted by the Mother?

There is no meaning in such a question. Those who follow the Yoga here are accepted by the Mother — for “accepted” means “admitted into the Yoga, accepted as disciples”. But the progress in the Yoga and the siddhi in the Yoga depend on the degree to which there is the opening. 24 June 1933

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Keep open to the Mother — throw away the faults and defects of character you can change of yourself — allow the Mother’s power to work in you — then these difficulties can be made to disappear, the mind will open. 3 May 1934

*

A cloud surrounds me. Protect me and give me strength. Let me open completely to the Mother.

To be open to the Mother *entirely*, you should be open both within and without. You should be perfectly frank and tell her everything — do not shrink from showing to her candidly all that is within you. That will at once enable you to be completely open and her also to help you fully. 22 July 1934

*

I am not getting much time to sit down for meditation, but the calmness is maintained throughout my work. What should I do when I can make no time for meditation?

Keep yourself open, remember the Mother always — call for her help and guidance in your work. You must get into a condition in which not only the calmness remains always but the sadhana is going on all the time in work and rest as well as in meditation.

20 September 1934

*

I understand that once the Mother accepts us as disciples, we should simply go to her. One should not be miserable if one does not see her in the heart. One has only to remain with her in the Asram.

No, it is not enough to be in the Asram — one has to open to the Mother and put away the mud which one was playing with in the world.

25 September 1934

*

I could not decide whether to give up my present work or to change it. Then I thought I will leave the work in order to meditate. But I do not know what is good for me. You alone know everything.

It is a mistake to exercise the mind about these things and try to arrange them with the ordinary mind. It is by confidence in the Mother that the opening needed will come when your consciousness is ready. There is no harm in arranging your present work so that there will be time and energy for some meditation, but it is not by meditation alone that what is needed will come. It is by faith and openness to the Mother.

9 October 1934

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Openness is not always complete from the first — a part of the being opens, other parts of the consciousness remain still closed or half open only — one has to aspire till all is open. Even with the best and most powerful sadhak the full opening takes time;

nor is there anyone who has been able to abandon everything at once without any struggle. There is no reason to feel therefore that if you call, you will not be heard—the Mother knows the difficulties of human nature and will help you through. Persevere always, call always and then after each difficulty there will be a progress.

20 April 1935

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What poise or mode should we keep for the supramental descent?

As for poise or mode—that you need not trouble yourself about. An entire faith, opening, self-giving to the Mother are the one condition necessary throughout.

23 September 1935

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It seems to me that the best place for getting rid of wrong movements is the Asram, under the Mother's grace, help, protection and physical nearness.

That is only true if one can open oneself to the Mother. To be here and shut up to it and under another control does not help.

8 March 1936

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That is what must be done. Trust in the Mother and will only to be open to her always and as quietly confident as may be. The work to be done is too great for the outer mind to understand how it is to be done; it is only by growing light and experience that one day it begins to understand—it is also too great and difficult for it to do by itself,—it can only help the Power that is working by its readiness, aspiration, faith, quietude. But in no sadhak are these things constant—the aspiration gets suspended, the faith wavers, the quietude is disturbed or shaken—but still the Mother is there at work and one has only to persevere,—finally the perseverance will be justified by the result. To give up is the one thing one must never do.

14 May 1936

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That the mind is turning away more and more from outward things and the will to be turned wholly to the Mother is growing is very good, for that is the first necessity. The condition of being so turned and wholly open can then more easily develop. The two minutes' flash of opening showed you how it will come; for it comes like that, by glimpses at first of brief duration, but afterwards it grows in hold and duration till it is ready for permanence. It is a new birth in the nature and so it can't come all at once, but once begun it grows till it is perfect. Of course the more quiet the consciousness can remain in a steady way, the more the condition is favourable for this to be.

19 July 1936

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The first thing one has to be careful not to do, is not to shut oneself in any way to the Mother. If one conceals what is happening in one from the Mother, something gets shut up. It is the mistake X has been making. Formerly she was quite open and unreserved and whenever there came a difficulty she got the full help. The Mother has told her to be perfectly open and hide nothing; if she does that, she will soon recover.

The Mother can not only know everything but do everything if she decides to do so—but if she did, where would be the sadhana? All would be only puppets moving in her hands. There are certain conditions which the sadhak must satisfy, and the Divine veils his power and knowledge so that the sadhak may have the occasion to love and will and think and act and grow into the true consciousness.

As for writing, the Mother has no time any longer, that is why she leaves it to me. X formerly used to tell the Mother to take full rest and not wear herself out etc.—how is it now she weeps because the Mother does not write? Her former attitude was the true one—she was in the psychic consciousness and always with the Mother's presence close to her.

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In meditation you must call on the Mother and concentrate on

the call in your heart till you feel an opening to her or some inner contact with her.

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I cannot meditate, for when I sit many thoughts come in.
Which path must I take, then, to advance and make it easier
for the Mother to work in me?

If you cannot meditate, pray. Offer all you do to the Mother and pray to her to take control of your actions and your nature. Love and worship. What is needed is to get a full opening in which you will become conscious of the Mother. These things will bring the opening. Only, even if it takes time, you must not get depression, despair or revolt—for these things get into the way of the opening.

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The whole thing is to keep yourself open to the Mother. The preparation of the nature for the decisive experiences always takes time and should be a continuous self-opening without discouragement or impatience for immediate results.

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Confidence in the Mother followed by a full opening to her is the best way.

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O Mother, how long will you remain far from me? Am I not your child?

The Mother is never far from you. If you keep open, you will always feel her with you.

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My sweet Mother, let me live in you.

Keep open to the Mother's peace and joy—by living in it you will come to live in her.

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Am I right in believing that Mother will do everything for me?

Yes, but it must be done with your inner assent and you must take the right attitude and openness to the Mother.

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Mother, how can one always receive Ananda from you?

By thinking less and less of oneself and more and more of the Divine.

Mother, how can I open myself to you?

By quieting the mind and vital, by concentrating more on the Mother and by calling for her Force to enter and work in the being.

Mother, why is one harmed when one enters into relation with someone?

It is because one receives mental and vital influences from others and some of these are harmful.

Lord, when will all my undesirable activities be abolished and only daivic activities remain? That is to say, when will I behave only as the Mother wants?

When the psychic being comes in the front.

Mother, how can one develop the buddhi?

The ordinary way is to read and study or to observe and try to understand all things; the sadhak's way is to open his mind to the light from above.

Loyalty and Fidelity

If an adverse Force comes, one has not to accept and welcome its suggestions, but to turn to the Mother and refuse to turn away

from her. Whether one can open or not, one has to be loyal and faithful. Loyalty and fidelity are not qualities for which one has to do Yoga; they are very simple things which any man or woman who aspires to the Truth ought to be able to accomplish.

21 April 1937

The Psychic and Opening

When I opened myself to the Mother in meditation, I saw her approaching me with an infant in her arms. As she came near, the golden Purusha frowned at her and she drew back behind you. I have seen this vision several times. What am I to do? You fill my whole being but, despite opening myself to the Mother, she is not allowed to approach me.

The infant in the Mother's arms is the symbol of the psychic being. The soul in direct touch with the divine Truth is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature (*manas, prāṇa, anna* of the Taittiriya Upanishad); one may practise Yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason, power and all kinds of experiences in the vital, even physical siddhis, but if the true soul-power behind and the psychic nature do not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this Yoga, the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. If the soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then the Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the mere power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible. It is this new birth, this awakening of the psychic consciousness, that the Mother is offering in the vision. If the golden Purusha refuses it, it must be because he is bound by some kind of attachment, probably to mere "knowledge". In that case, he is not very consistent; for it was he who demanded surrender to the Mother and now he rejects the very heart and meaning of the surrender. Probably this repeated experience is an indication of the principal difficulty in the sadhana. If there is refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual

knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the sadhana. Only if it is accepted, can his coming and doing sadhana here be fruitful. 26 November 1929

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Keep yourself open to the Mother's Force, but do not trust all forces. As you go on, if you keep straight, you will come to a time when the psychic becomes more predominantly active and the Light from above prevails more purely and strongly so that the chance of mental constructions and vital formations mixing with the true experience diminishes. As I have told you, these are not and cannot be the supramental Forces; it is a work of preparation which is only making things ready for a future Yoga-siddhi.

18 September 1932

*

What is the conscious way to bring the psychic to the front?
Does awakening of the psychic being mean its coming to the front?

No. Awakening is a different thing, it means the conscious action of the psychic from behind. When it comes to the front it invades the mind and vital and body and psychicises their movements. It comes best by aspiration and an unquestioning and entire turning and surrender to the Mother. But also it sometimes comes of itself when the Adhar is ready.

5 May 1933

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Is our inner being already open to the Mother or does it open in the course of the sadhana?

The inner being does not open except by sadhana or by some psychic touch on the life.

30 November 1933

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When I think of the Mother's compassion, I start weeping with gratefulness. Never before in my life have I felt so much

affection. If my mind is a bit quiet, will I be able to feel her help?

Yes, it is by quieting the mind that you will become able to call the Mother and open to her. The soothing effect was a touch from the psychic — one of the touches that prepare the opening of the psychic with its gift of inner peace, love and joy.

17 September 1934

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Today again after pranam there were some vital dissatisfactions. But they have a great effect on the heart which has now begun to open to the Mother.

Get rid of these dissatisfactions, they prevent the permanent psychic opening.

29 September 1934

*

The heart is beginning to open to the Mother, but it is still easily touched by lower vital suggestions. That is probably why the vital is not always happy with the way the Mother deals with me at pranam.

What the psychic always feels is "What the Mother does is for the best", and it accepts all with gladness. It is the vital part of the heart that is easily touched by the suggestions.

29 September 1934

*

I am not sure whether a direct psychic opening could have been done in my case without any difficulty.

The direct opening of the psychic centre is easy only when the ego-centricity is greatly diminished and also if there is a strong bhakti for the Mother. A spiritual humility and sense of submission and dependence is necessary.

16 July 1936

Sincerity

This child of the Mother is so unworthy. Only she knows when the child will be fit to have a place in her lap.

There is only one thing needed to make anyone fit for the Mother's grace — it is a perfect sincerity and a truthful openness to the Mother in all the being.

2 February 1934

*

I see many defects in my nature — for instance my tendency to get angry and to argue. I request the Mother to change all this, for it is in her hands to transform me.

It depends not only on the will of the Mother but on the sincerity of the sadhak. I do not see that you have any sincere will to do Yoga or to change.

13 July 1934

*

X once said to the Mother that if the sincerity was perfect there would be transformation in a day; to this the Mother replied "Yes". I do not understand how that could be possible — a long process of conversion of consciousness compressed into one day's work. Perhaps the Mother said yes to emphasise the importance of sincerity.

By sincerity Mother meant being open to no influence but the Divine's only. Now, if the whole being were sincere in that sense even to every cell of the body, what could prevent the most rapid transformation? People cannot be like that, however much the enlightened part of them may want to, because of the nature of the Ignorance out of which the ordinary Prakriti has been built — hence the necessity of a long and laborious working.

26 July 1934

*

Why do people often say that this Yoga is a very arduous one, full of difficulties and obstacles? One who is sincere and open exclusively to the Divine Mother would not believe this. It is

difficult only for those who refuse to take her as their all.
Of course; but most do not find it easy to take the Mother as
their all.

22 March 1935

*

We are told the Mother can act best if a sadhak is sincere. But
what is meant by this?

What is meant by sincere sadhana? In the Mother's definition
of sincere, it means "opening only to the Divine Forces", i.e.
rejecting all the others even if they come.

21 April 1936

The Mother's Grace

Do calm and equality come down from above by the Mother's
Grace?

When they descend, it is by the soul's aspiration and the Mother's
grace.

*

The Mother's grace is there always; open yourself to it in
quietude and confidence.

*

I don't feel Mother's grace as before. Sometimes I get the
suggestion that I am not fit for her service and for Yoga.

What is all this nonsense? The grace of the Mother does not
withdraw; open yourself and you will feel it.

1 May 1929

*

The presence whose fading he regrets can only be felt if the
inner being continues to be consecrated and the outer nature
is put into harmony or at least kept under the touch of the
inner spirit. But if he does things which his inner being does not
approve, this condition will be inevitably tarnished and, each
time, the possibility of his feeling the presence will diminish. He

must have a strong will to purification and an aspiration that does not flag and cease, if the Mother's grace is to be there and effective.

6 May 1930

*

To practise Yoga implies the will to overcome all attachments and turn to the Divine alone. The principal thing in the Yoga is to trust in the Divine Grace at every step, to direct the thought continually to the Divine and to offer oneself till the being opens and the Mother's force can be felt working in the Adhara.

26 July 1932

*

When a sadhak feels the Mother's Grace coming down in him,
is it by the consent of the Purusha in him?

What do you mean "by the consent"? The Mother's Grace comes down by the Mother's will. The Purusha can accept or reject the Grace.

22 April 1933

*

Is there any law of the working of the Mother's Grace?

The more one develops the psychic, the more is it possible for the Grace to act.

13 August 1933

*

Is the Mother's Grace always general?

Both general and special.

8 February 1934

*

How to receive what the Mother gives generally?

You have only to keep yourself open and whatever you need and can receive at the moment will come.

10 February 1934

*

Some like me have exceptionally great imperfections and defects. We have no claim for any Yoga, much less for the Integral Yoga. Sheerly out of her care and grace, the Mother has managed to keep us here; but the only return we have given is to tire her out.

It is so—if the sadhaks had been different in their reaction to the Mother's grace, the work in the physical would have been much easier and less perilously subject to hostile attacks; perhaps it would have been done by now.

12 July 1936

Opening and Presence

Make yourself quiet and open—have complete confidence and you will feel the Mother's presence with you. 9 October 1933

*

It is by the constant remembrance that the being is prepared for the full opening. By the opening of the heart the Mother's presence begins to be felt and by the opening to her Power above the Force of the higher consciousness comes down into the body and works there to change the whole nature. 7 August 1934

*

The Mother says, "Keep yourself always open to me" and "I am always with you and around you." How am I to feel her presence always? Also, what does "conscious" mean and how does one become conscious?

The Divine Mother is everywhere and at all times she is with you. If one opens and becomes conscious, then one can feel her presence. It is because the nature is ignorant, full of itself and its desires that one cannot feel the presence. If one turns from self and desires and lives inwardly and outwardly for the Divine, then one begins to feel the divine Presence.

*

The condition you describe is a very good one and it is evident from it that you opened sincerely to the Mother when you met

her. Keep that sincere opening always and eventually a state of peace and joy and the sense of the Mother's presence will become permanent.

*

My dear Mother, peace in my vital, peace in my heart, peace everywhere.

Let the vital and the heart open always to the Mother's presence — the true source of peace.

The Mother's Presence

She Is Always Present

Why do I sometimes feel myself far from the Mother? I want to be able to feel her constantly with me.

The Mother is always there with you. You have only to throw away the forces of Ignorance to feel her with you always.

1 August 1933

*

You have said: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present."¹ Does this mean that the Mother knows all our insignificant thoughts at all times, or only when she concentrates?

It is said that the Mother is always present and looking at you. That does not mean that in her physical mind she is thinking of you always and seeing your thoughts. There is no need of that, since she is everywhere and acts everywhere out of her universal knowledge.

It seems to me that the more we communicate our thoughts to her, the more we open ourselves to her forces and the more effective becomes our surrender to her. Am I right?

Yes, quite right.

12 August 1933

*

In what sense is the Mother "everywhere"? Is it because she has descended to the universal and has complete knowledge

¹ This message of Sri Aurobindo was first hung in the dining hall of the Ashram on 28 March 1928.—Ed.

of the forces working there? I suppose the universal or “everywhere” includes the physical plane. If so, does the Mother know all the happenings and events on the physical plane?

Including what Lloyd George had today for breakfast or what Roosevelt said to his wife about their servants? Why should the Mother “know” in the human way all such happenings on the physical plane? Her business in her embodiment is to know the working of the universal forces and use them for her work; for the rest she knows what she needs to know, sometimes with her inner self, sometimes with her physical mind. All knowledge is available in her universal self to her, but she brings forward only what is meant to be brought forward so that the work may be done.

13 August 1933

*

I had a dream in which I was walking alone in the desert. Was the meaning of the dream that this sadhana is very dry and difficult?

No. It is perhaps how some part of the vital or physical consciousness figured it. But the path is not a desert nor are you alone, since the Mother is with you.

2 November 1933

*

My vital does not seem to have devotion for the Mother. Instead of loving her, it gets mixed with undivine forces. Protect me from these vital obstructions. I wish to feel that I am lying in the Mother’s lap.

The Mother is always with you. The vital has its desires and therefore does not believe in the Mother’s presence. You have to call down the Mother’s Force into it to remove its doubts and desires.

11 November 1933

*

The Mother is always with you. Put your faith in her, remain quiet within and do with that quietude what has to be done. You will become more and more aware of her constant Presence, will

feel her action behind yours and the burden of your work will no longer be heavy on you.

21 April 1935

*

You have written: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present." On the other hand, you wrote to me recently that it was not physically possible for her to be present everywhere. When I asked the Mother about this, she said that she could be present in many places. How to reconcile these contradictory statements?

If by physically you mean corporeally, in her visible tangible material body, it is obvious that it cannot be. When you asked Mother the question she did not understand you to mean that — she said she could be present everywhere, and she meant, of course, in her consciousness. It is the consciousness and not the body that is the being, the person; the body is only a support and instrument for the action of the consciousness. Mother can be personally present in her consciousness. The universal presence of course is always there and the universal and personal are two aspects of the same being.

25 August 1936

*

Sometimes the thought comes to me: "Outwardly and inwardly, I am very far from the Mother." Why does it come?

It is the feeling of the physical or outward being which is by its ignorance unable to feel the Mother's nearness.

How can I convince myself of the falsity of this thought and drive it away?

The Mother is always near and within, it is only the obscurity of mind and vital that do not see or feel it. That is a knowledge which the mind ought to hold firmly.

29 April 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence

Live always as if you were under the very eye of the Supreme and of the Divine Mother. Do nothing, try to think and feel nothing that would be unworthy of the Divine Presence. 16 April 1930

*

The constant presence of the Mother comes by practice; the Divine Grace is essential for success in the sadhana, but it is the practice that prepares the descent of the Grace.

You have to learn to go inward, ceasing to live in external things only, quiet the mind and aspire to become aware of the Mother's workings in you. 2 July 1930

*

How and when can one feel the Mother's concrete presence all the time?

It is a matter, first, of the constant activity of the psychic and secondly of the conversion of the physical and its openness to inner supraphysical experience. Apart from the vital and its disturbances the physical is the chief difficulty in establishing a continuity of Yogic consciousness and experience. If the physical is thoroughly transformed — opened and conscious — then stability and continuity become easy. 16 October 1933

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It is quite necessary to realise the Mother in her formless presence and not only in her form. December 1933

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But I do not see why you call the feeling sentimental or think that your sense of the presence of the Mother in the heart-beats etc. was unreal. It was your psychic being that suggested it to you and the response showed that the consciousness was ready. Mother felt that something was happening in you and felt that it was the beginning of a realisation — she was encouraging it and

did not discourage. If it had been a wrong or vital movement
she would not have felt like that. 13 August 1934

13 August 1934

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We believe that it is the Mother who does the sadhana in us, but we scarcely feel it. I suppose there must be some veil in us.

It is a veil which disappears when the Mother's working as well as her presence is consciously felt at all times. 7 January 1935

*

Is there any difference between the Mother's Presence and the Divine Consciousness?

One can feel the Divine Consciousness impersonally as a new consciousness only. The Mother's Presence is something more — one feels herself there present within or above or enveloping one or all these together.

8 July 1935

*

The feeling of the Mother's Presence or nearness does not depend on whether you write or do not write. Many who write often do not feel it, some who write seldom feel her always close.

11 June 1936

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You write: "One can feel the Divine Consciousness impersonally as a new consciousness only"² but that the Mother's presence is something more. You also wrote in another letter that the Divine Presence in the heart is much more than the consciousness. In what way is the Presence more than the consciousness?

I meant that one can feel the divine consciousness as an impersonal spiritual state, a state of peace, light, joy, wideness without feeling in it the Divine Presence. The Divine Presence is felt as

² See letter of 8 July 1935 above.—Ed.

that of one who is the living source and essence of that light etc., a Being therefore, not merely a spiritual state. The Mother's Presence is still more concrete, definite, personal — it is not that of Someone unknown, of a Power or Being, but of one who is known, intimate, loved, to whom one can offer all the being in a living concrete way. The image is not indispensable, though it helps — the presence can be inwardly felt without it.

2 July 1936

*

There is no such necessary precedence as that first one must feel the Presence and then only can one feel oneself the Mother's; it is more often the increase of the feeling that brings the Presence. For the feeling comes from the psychic consciousness and it is the growth of the psychic consciousness that makes the constant Presence at last possible. The feeling comes from the psychic and is true of the inner being — its not being yet fulfilled in the whole does not make it an imagination; on the contrary, the more it grows the more is the likelihood of the whole being fulfilling this truth; the inner *bhāva* takes more and more possession of the outer consciousness and remoulds it so as to make it a truth there also. This is the constant principle of action in the Yogic transformation — what is true within comes out and takes possession of the mind and heart and will and through them prevails over the ignorance of the outer members and brings the inner truth out there also.

16 September 1936

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What stands in the way is the recurring circle of the old mixture. To break out of that is very necessary to arrive at an inner Yogic calm and peace not disturbed by these things. If that is established, it will be possible to feel in it the Mother's Presence, to open to her guidance, to get, not by occasional glimpses but in a steady opening and flowering, the psychic perception and the descent of the spiritual Light and Ananda. For that help will be with you.

7 March 1937

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It is quite right and part of the right consciousness in sadhana that you should feel drawn in your heart towards the Mother and aspire for the vision and realisation of her presence. But there should not be any kind of restlessness joined to this feeling. The feeling should be quietly intense. It will then be easier for the sense of the presence to come and to grow in you.

*

I feel some movement coming down from above and as if it was broadening my head and face. The whole movement is towards the Mother. What can this be? Has it any direct relation with my artistic creations?

Yes. It is the result of the pressure put by the Mother to see and do things in the true light. What you feel coming down is the true consciousness with the presence and action of the Mother.

*

Mother gave me a quiet mind today. Ever since pranam I have been feeling her atmosphere; some force which I feel to be hers is upon my head and around me. My restlessness is much less, almost gone.

It is the Mother's touch that you feel upon you—and that indicates her presence. In the state of the consciousness it is the Force working on the system which brings what is needed or aspired to, peace or light or happiness and the psychic opening.

Peace, quiet, followed by a happy state and a psychic opening is what you need—let that grow always.

Spiritual Possibility due to the Mother's Presence

How much freedom is given to every sadhak here! But how many of us know what is meant by a Guru and how to respect him and treat him?

Certainly very few seem to realise what a possibility has been given them here—all has been turned into an opportunity for the bubbling of the vital or the tamas of the physical rather than

used for the intended psychic and spiritual purpose.

7 March 1936

*

You write, "Certainly very few seem to realise what a possibility has been given them here." What precisely do you mean by "possibility"—possibility of what?

I was not speaking of any particular thing—but the whole spiritual possibility due to the Mother's presence here. Very few realise what that means and even those who have some idea of it take little advantage and allow their lower nature to block the progress.

9 March 1936

The Mother's Presence and the Adverse Forces

X writes: "One thing I do not understand. Though I feel the Mother so near to me, these forces still dare to come and disturb me. How is this possible?" Please tell me what to reply to him.

The forces can always be there so long as there is not the transformation of the whole nature. They manifest themselves whenever they can. But if the Presence of the Mother can always be felt vividly and continuously, then one need not be troubled by their endeavours; one can face and repel them in the full consciousness of the Mother's grace and protection.

1936

The Mother's Presence and Human Imperfection

Do doubt and ego continue even after one has the realisation of the Divine Consciousness and the Mother's Presence?

No doubt can remain if there is the realisation of the Divine Consciousness and the Mother's Presence. Imperfections may remain in the outer being, but they do not trouble the inner being and can be got rid of quietly.

*

In your letters you say always that the Mother has withdrawn from you and you think she does it deliberately because of some fault or defect in your nature. This is an error. The Mother is always present with you; she does not withdraw. But if you believe otherwise, if you always expect her to withdraw, it will cloud your perception and prevent you from realising her presence. On the contrary, have the faith that, whether you feel it or not, her presence and her protection are always there. When old feelings or attachments rise from the subconscious, call her force and light in to clear all that is obscure, for they are there always ready to act. Do not admit any thoughts or ideas that lead to despondency or any kind of tamas.

6 May 1930

*

It is quite true that if the consciousness remains always centred in the Mother, then there would be no place for any kind of obscuration or disturbance; but that is not easy for the human mind and vital to get at once. One has to go on perseveringly till one has reached it.

The quickness with which the consciousness changes is a feature of the ordinary action of the physical consciousness when it is active and not inert. But many of the things you now feel (of which you speak in your letters), e.g. the idea of the Mother's presence and her regard on you, the reference in what you think and do to her with the idea of her approval or disapproval, are signs that the psychic is acting in your lower vital and physical mind and increasing its rule over their movements.

The forms that came before your eyes are sometimes glimpses of the things on other planes, sometimes symbols; e.g., the golden water, golden tree, rising moon. At certain stages of the inner opening such things come in great number before the inner vision. The feet of which you saw the golden footprints must have been the Mother's in one of her divine forms descending from the higher plane. The pricking and the heat are both of them signs of an action of the Force taking place within and so affecting the body.

The psychic relations I spoke of are those which men form

in life which help the power of the psychic to grow and prepare it for the time when it will be ready to come forward and govern the mind, vital and body instead of allowing the mind or the vital to lead the rest. There is a difference between the psychic and the self. The self is the Atman above which is one in all, remains always wide, free, pure, untouched by the action of life in its ignorance. Its nature is peace, freedom, light, wideness, Ananda. The psychic (*antarātmā*) is the individual being which comes down into life and travels from birth to birth and feels the experiences and grows by them till it is able to join itself with the pure Atman above.

9 April 1936

The Mother's Emanations

I saw the Mother in an experience. Is it an emanation of hers that I saw or is it her whole body and whole consciousness?

An emanation. How can her physical body be seen in a dream experience?

7 July 1933

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The Mother when she works in the supra-physical levels goes out in a different emanation to each sadhak.

11 December 1933

*

During the afternoon sleep I often come in contact with the Mother. Is it the Mother who sends her emanation?

Yes. Or rather something of her is always with you.

14 December 1933

The Mother's Knowledge and Her Emanations

In the case of X, I was under the impression that Mother could at once know of such things. Some even say that she knows everything — all that is material or spiritual.

Good Lord! you don't expect her mind to be a factual encyclopaedia of all that is happening on all the planes and in all the

universes? Or even on this earth — e.g. what Lloyd George had for dinner yesterday?

Others maintain that she knows when the question of consciousness is involved . . .

Questions of consciousness of course she always knows even with her outermost physical mind. Material facts she can know but is not bound to do it. The matter however is too complex for answer in a short space.

but as for material details, she does not know.

What would be true to say, is that she can know if she concentrates or if her attention is called to it and she decides to know. I often know from her what has happened before it is reported by anyone. But she does not care to do that on a general scale.

But if she does not know, what is the meaning of your message:
“Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because
she is, indeed, always present”?

It is the emanation of the Mother that is with each sadhak all the time. In former days when she was spending the night in a trance actively working in the Asram, she brought back with her the knowledge of all that was happening to everybody. Nowadays she has no time for that.

This question of Mother's knowledge became even more interesting for me today. She gave me the flower signifying “Discipline”. I began to wonder why this particular flower was given; then I remembered that yesterday I had not observed the right discipline by taking a little hot khichari with Y and Z.

In this respect the Mother is guided by her intuitions which tell her which flower is needed at the moment or helpful. Sometimes it is accompanied by a perception of a particular state of consciousness, sometimes by that of a material fact; but only

the bare fact, usually — e.g. it would not specify that it was hot khichari that was cooked or how Y or Z came in. Not that that is impossible, but it is unnecessary and does not happen unless needed.

Anyway, please tell me how far Mother and you know about our physical, material affairs.

In this case it was a general hint with no special reference to khichari.

16 July 1935

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What you say about emanations is very interesting. The Mother then has about 150 emanations; adding 150 of yours, we find that we are each protected by one god and one goddess.

I am not aware of any emanations of mine. As for the Mother's, they are not there for protection, but to support the personal relation or contact with the sadhaka and to act so far as he will allow them to act.

16 July 1935

*

Kindly tell us a little more about emanations. How do they support the personal relation or contact the Mother has with us? I thought that all personal relations were with the Mother direct, not through a deputy!

It is terribly difficult to write of these things, for you are all as ignorant as blazes about these things and misunderstand at every step. The Emanation is not a deputy, but the Mother herself. She is not bound to her body, but can put herself out (emanate) in any way she likes. What emanates, suits itself to the nature of the personal relation she has with the sadhak which is different with each, but that does not prevent it from being herself. Its presence with the sadhak is not dependent on his consciousness of it. If everything were dependent on the surface consciousness of the sadhak, there would be no possibility of the divine action anywhere; the human worm would remain the human worm

and the human ass the human ass for ever and ever. For if the Divine could not be there behind the veil, how could either ever become conscious of anything but their wormhood and asshood even throughout the ages?

When X says that he feels the Mother's physical touch or approach, with whom does he have the contact — the Mother or the emanation?

With the Mother, the emanation helping — which is its business.

19 July 1935

The Mother's Awareness of Thoughts and Actions

The Mother can know our thoughts, but can she also know the exact words in the thoughts?

If the mind of the person is very clear, yes: otherwise it may be only the substance that comes or a part of the thought or some general idea.

19 May 1933

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In the case of X, the Mother fined the servant boy on such apparently insufficient grounds that it looks illogical. I cannot help thinking that she acted on a strong intuition which she felt and knew to be correct.

Mother acted on her inner perception about the whole affair; she does not act only on the outer facts but on what she feels or sees lying behind them.

29 August 1935

*

What you write about X is true. She does not realise that Mother knows all these things by other means and any information given to her only adds certain physical precisions to what she knows already.

How can she be open when she has such ideas against the Mother? They must necessarily shut her up to the Mother's influence.

Mother has written to her that Y had said nothing and that she knew things about X, independently of any information, from X's inner being itself which comes to her constantly and tells her or shows her what is in the nature.

The Mother besides sees things in vision and receives the thoughts of the sadhaks at Pranam and other times. Only the Mother never acts on these supraphysical intimations, unless there is a physical confirmation like the letter itself in this case. For nobody would understand her action — the sadhaks living in the physical mind would state her action unfounded and those affected would deny loudly — as many have done in the past — their secret thoughts, feelings and actions. I tell you all this in confidence so that you may understand what is the real cause of Mother's letters to X.

10 September 1936

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Are our physical movements reflected in the Mother's mind and seen by her as images, or do they occur in her consciousness at the same time as we do them? But that would be very puzzling. The movements of two hundred people would appear before her eyes every minute or occur in her consciousness. Besides, it would be a very material kind of telepathy.

It would not be worthwhile. Mother can see what people are doing by images received by her in the subtle state which corresponds to sleep or concentration or by images or intimations received in the ordinary state; but much even of what comes to her automatically like that is unnecessary and to be always receiving everything would be intolerably troublesome as it would keep the consciousness occupied with a million trivialities; so that does not happen. What is more important is to know their inner condition and it is this chiefly which comes to her.

29 June 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence and Seeing Visions

Is it true that when the Presence (image) is seen in the heart all the habits and movements of the lower nature will disappear

and there will be no more disturbances from it?

The image and the Presence are not the same. One can feel the Presence without seeing the image. But to produce the results you speak of, the Presence in the heart is not sufficient, there must be Presence in the whole consciousness and the Force of the Mother governing all the action of the nature.

*

You wrote yesterday in regard to X's visions: "Openness is not reckoned merely by visions." Quite so. But to have a fusion of the rays of the sun and moon on each side of the body, and to feel the descent and the Mother's presence in, behind and above oneself, is this not an exceptional vision and experience? Can it occur without sufficient opening to the Mother?

Why should it be exceptional to see the Sun and Moon on each side or to feel the Mother's presence everywhere around? There are plenty of sadhaks who have had these or equivalent experiences. What would be exceptional is to feel the Mother's presence like that always. But occasional experiences like these many have had.

15 September 1936

Feeling the Mother's Presence through a Photograph

When I sit in meditation before the Mother's photographs or the painting of her feet, I get more Force than when I sit at a distance—on my easy chair, for example. I have noticed that this happens invariably and I suppose it is not subjective merely. But I want to know the real truth from you.

No, it is not subjective merely. By your meditating near them, you have been able to enter through them into communion with the Mother and something of her presence and power is there.

14 July 1934

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Your experience about the photograph was a very fine and true experience. The Mother's presence can be felt through the photograph by one who regards it with devotion towards her. It was her true presence that was there, her subtle physical presence and all you felt was true. It shows that your physical mind is opening to the true consciousness. It is quite sure that this will grow and the remnants of the old movements are bound to disappear.

2 May 1936

Remembering the Mother and Feeling Her Presence

Today I felt that the only thing important is the Divine, nothing else. I tried to keep this experience all day long, but just before I sat down to write, I felt depression and confusion coming. But still I remembered my experience.

That is what should always be done. If, instead of yielding to the depression and confusion when they come, you immediately remembered and turned to the Mother, calling the Light and Force, remembering the Divine, rejecting everything else, then these lapses would diminish and light would come into the whole nature.

1 July 1930

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It is the outer nature that is obscure and when it is at ease, feels no necessity of remembering the Mother — when the difficulty comes, then it feels the necessity and remembers. But the inner being is not like that.

11 May 1933

*

There must be something soiled in human love — otherwise why should I feel like this? After some problem with X in which he told me some unpleasant things, my vital got disturbed and my mind got confused. I kept remembering the incident over and over instead of remembering the Mother. I have come here for her — why then do my mind and vital want to make contact with human beings and acquire their narrow love and affection? Tell me now what I should do.

These are the usual weaknesses of the human nature when it makes relations with human beings—there are always these clashes and difficulties and turmoil in the vital. If you want to be free from them, do what we have already told you—look on all with a kindly feeling, as children of the Mother, but without any special relation and without any expectation from anybody. Yoga demands an equanimity of mind towards all things and persons.

17 November 1933

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What you have seen as the thing to do is quite correct. To remember the Mother always and to offer up to her all that comes is just the thing to do. There must come a condition in which you live within in the psychic consciousness with the feeling of the Mother's constant presence, while all the outer activities go on only on the surface and the Mother's Force acts on them to change them into more and more true psychic and spiritual action. The way you speak of is the best for bringing about that condition. Offer all to the Mother in complete confidence and do not be troubled or anxious about the difficulties that rise, but go on calmly and patiently till they pass.

28 March 1936

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I will be seeing the Mother tomorrow, but I would also like some message from you. Please tell me something which I can always turn to for help and contact during my stay in Bombay. I pray that I may feel the presence of the Mother and yourself throughout my days far away and come back safely to my home here at your feet.

Remember the Mother and, though physically far from her, try to feel her with you and act according to what your inner being tells you would be her will. Then you will be best able to feel her presence and mine and carry our atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere.

12 December 1936

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It is quite possible for you to do sadhana at home and in the midst of your work—many do so. What is necessary at the beginning is to remember the Mother as much as possible, to concentrate on her in the heart for a time every day, if possible thinking of her as the Divine Mother, to aspire to feel her there within you, offer her your works and pray that from within she may guide and sustain you. This is a preliminary stage which often takes long, but if one goes through it with sincerity and steadfastness, the mentality begins little by little to change and a new consciousness opens in the sadhak which begins to be aware more and more of the Mother's presence within, of her working in the nature and in the life or of some other spiritual experience which opens the gate towards realisation.

22 February 1937

The Psychic and the Mother's Presence

The Mother's presence is always there; but if you decide to act on your own — your own idea, your own notion of things, your own will and demand upon things, then it is quite likely that her presence will get veiled; it is not she who withdraws from you, but you who draw back from her. But your mind and vital don't want to admit that, because it is always their preoccupation to justify their own movements. If the psychic were allowed its full predominance, this would not happen; it would have felt the veiling, but it would at once have said, "There must have been some mistake in me, a mist has arisen in me," and it would have looked and found the cause.

25 March 1932

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When I am alone I feel a sweet flow of love for the Mother and surrender to her welling out from my heart. But when I am in her physical presence I do not feel this love. Why does this happen?

It is when you live in the psychic that there is this feeling—but the psychic commands at present only a part of the mind and vital—it does not yet control the most external parts, that is

why you do not feel it when in the Mother's physical presence.

25 December 1933

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If you feel the Mother's presence for the greater part of the day, it means that it is your psychic being that is active and feels like that—for without the activity of the psychic it would not be possible. Therefore your psychic being is there and not at all far off.

14 March 1935

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What you feel is not imagination. You have been going more and more into the psychic consciousness deep within you. When one is in the psychic, one begins to feel the presence of the Mother always with one and this becomes more and more frequent, constant, vivid and real as the psychic develops its power. This presence is felt in different ways by different sadhaks, but it is a true experience of the sadhana. It is what we mean when we say that the sadhak must come to feel always the presence of the Mother in his heart or within him. For in fact she is there always, only her presence is veiled by the ordinary movements of the mind, vital and physical, but when these become quiet and the psychic unveils itself, then one feels the presence of the Divine within.

29 February 1936

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He must go into himself and find the presence of the Divine Mother within and the psychic behind the heart and from there the knowledge will come and also the power to dissolve the inner obstacles.

21 December 1936

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It is good that you have come out of the bad condition. It is true that before the darshan or at that time attacks are apt to be violent—for the forces that oppose are very conscious and use their whole strength to spoil the darshan if they can. What has to be gained is the constant prominence of that part which is

always aware of the Mother — it is of course the psychic — for that though it can be covered over for the time being cannot be misled by the contrary suggestions. Once it is awake, it always reemerges from obscuraction — that is the guarantee of the final arrival at the goal, but if it can be maintained in front or even consciously felt behind in all conditions, then the stages of the way also become comparatively safe and can be passed with greater ease and security.

6 February 1937

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In the evening meditation, there was an intense movement of surrender from the heart. I had the feeling of Mother's presence immediately in front of me and aspiration rose up from below. There was a willing and loving surrender from the heart, from the entire being, as if for fulfilment. I suppose the psychic being came to the front.

You had the psychic condition there and that means a coming of the influence of the psychic being to the front.

But why did I feel the Mother's presence in front of me and not within me?

It is when there is a complete psychic opening within that there is the presence within. The Presence in front means that it was with you, but had still to enter within.

13 July 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence in Sleep

Is what X writes in his poem possible? He says:

"Even in sleep-depths I am wide awake
To thy sweet Presence that is always there."

That does happen, but usually only when the psychic is in full activity.

27 September 1934

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It [*feeling the Mother's presence during sleep*] follows naturally

the presence in the waking state, but it takes a little time.

11 January 1935

Feeling the Mother's Presence at Work

It is for most people not easy to feel the Mother's presence with the work — they feel as if they are doing the work, the mind getting busy and not having the right passivity or quietude.

Union with the Mother

You write যতদিন না আমার psychic being জাগে.³ But your psychic being is already awakened, if it were not, you would not have these experiences. The inner being which you feel in union with the Mother is the psychic being. As you probably have not quite understood what I wrote to you, it might be better if you show Nolini my letter and ask him to explain to you the difference between the three layers (ত্রি) of the being about which I have spoken in the letter —

(1) The inmost psychic being which is now awakened in you.

(2) The external being which you feel doing work while the inner (psychic) is in union with the Mother.

(3) The inner mental, vital and physical consciousness which connects the two, but of which you are not as yet conscious.

9 April 1931

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Is it true that one should feel that it is the Divine Presence which moves one and does everything for one? Would it be possible to feel it without a union with the Divine Mother?

No — that is itself a union with her — to feel the Divine Presence above or in you and moving you. 14 July 1933

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³ "As long as my psychic being is not awakened." — Ed.

Nowadays I feel that even my blood flow is united with the Mother. When I breathe in, it is the Mother breathing in me and when I breathe out it is she who breathes out of me. Please tell me how my sadhana is proceeding.

It is going on all right. The more the union with the Mother increases, the better for the sadhana. 2 October 1933

2 October 1933

I do not understand what some sadhaks mean by union with the Mother. Sometimes one feels a nearness, but that does not give one the same perception that the Mother has or her knowledge, purity, wideness. In what way can it be called a union?

I suppose they are trying to feel the Mother's presence, so if they get some sort of feeling of nearness, they call it union. But of course that is only a step towards union. Union is much more than that. 5 March 1934

5 March 1934

While sitting in the meditation hall, I felt a sort of oneness with the Mother's consciousness. But these days it is not possible to go deep in meditation at all. Perhaps it is not even necessary if there is receptivity in the waking state.

What is most important is the change of consciousness of which this feeling of oneness is a part. The going deep in meditation is only a means and it is not always necessary if the great experiences come easily without it. 8 April 1934

8 April 1934

Yes, that is the true basis. In the perfect equality wholly united with the Mother — so the higher consciousness can be lived and brought even into the outermost parts of the nature.

22 May 1934

I wrote a prayer to the Mother. Her answer to it was: "Open

your heart and you will find me already there." What exactly did she mean by "already there"?

What Mother meant was this that when there is a certain opening of the heart, you find that there was always the eternal union there (the same that you experience always in the Self above).

2 July 1935

*

I saw in a vision a basket full of the flower "Gratitude". What does it symbolise?

It is the gratitude to the Divine that it indicates—which will come as the soul opens to the Light and Truth and gets the experience and the joy of union with the Mother.

The Mother's Force

What Is the Mother's Force?

What is the Yoga shakti? What is Yogic mind-force, Yogic life-force and Yogic body-force?

In the Yogic consciousness one is not only aware of things, but of forces, not only of forces, but of the conscious being behind the forces. One is aware of all this not only in oneself but in the universe. There is a force which accompanies the growth of this new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it to come about and to perfect itself. This force is the Yoga shakti. It is here asleep and coiled up in all the centres of our inner being (chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force — not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, scient, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves — to the power of the Mother. In the mind it manifests itself as a divine mind-force or a universal mind-force and it can do everything that the personal mind cannot do; it is then the Yogic mind-force. When it manifests and works in the vital or physical in the same way, it is then apparent as a Yogic life-force or a Yogic body-force. It can awake in all these forms, bursting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below; or it can descend and become there a definite power for things; it can pour downwards into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into a cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence.

23 March 1933

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You often speak of the Mother's Force. What is it?

It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature. 18 June 1933

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Why do I feel that it is I who do this thing or that? For is it not true that it is the Mother's force which does everything in us?

When I speak of the Mother's force, I do not speak of the force of Prakriti which carries on things in the Ignorance but of the higher Force of the Divine that descends from above to transform the nature. 4 August 1933

Progress in Sadhana and the Mother's Force

When you say to someone, "You are open to the Mother", do you mean open in a general way? Are not all in the Asram more or less open to the Mother as soon as they have accepted her as the Mother? And when the Mother has accepted a sadhak, does her Force not begin to work in him and is it not always with him?

All are not open to the Force. X never was in the least degree and there are others who shut themselves up in their own self-will or their own formations, ideas or desires. If there is no opening, the Force may act for a long time without response—and if there is an insufficient opening then the progress will be slow and chequered by great difficulties.

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Let nothing and nobody come between you and the Mother's force. It is on your admitting and keeping that force and responding to the true inspiration and not on any ideas the mind may form that success will depend. Even ideas or plans which might otherwise be useful, will fail if there is not behind them the true spirit and the true force and influence. 23 March 1928

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The illnesses you have are the signs of the resistance of your physical consciousness to the action of the Divine Power.

If you cannot advance in your sadhana, it is because you are divided and do not give yourself without reserve. You speak of surrendering everything to the Mother but you have not done even the one thing which she asked of you and which you have promised more than once. If after having called the action of the Divine Force, you allow other influences to prevail, how can you expect to be free from obstruction and difficulties?

20 November 1928

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Nowadays my vital nature gets excited about anything and everything, even trifles. From morning to night it is in an unhappy condition. I have my doubts whether it can be changed. I know that it is not in my power to do the work; the Mother's Grace alone can do it. My outer mind needs some rays of hope.

It is to be assumed that you are capable of the change since you are here in the presence and under the protection of the Mother. The pressure and help of the Mother's Force is always there. Your rapidity of progress depends upon your keeping yourself open to it and rejecting calmly, quietly and steadily all suggestions and invasions of other forces. Especially the nervous excitement of the vital has to be rejected; a calm and quiet strength in the nervous being and the body is the only sound basis. It is there for you to receive, if you open yourself to it always.

27 August 1932

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When I look at the way the Mother deals with people, I feel that she does not love them equally in an outward way. Is this feeling true?

The Mother's Force is working in all alike, according to their capacity they will receive it and it will work in them; if there is any difference, it is their own nature that makes it.

6 February 1933

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This restless mind and unquiet vital are not peculiar to you; they are the human nature from which every sadhak starts. What you have to get is the Mother's force and grace bringing with it deliverance, peace and Ananda which you say you from time to time experience. That in the beginning does come only for a short time, but as you persist in the path, it increases in frequency and stays longer until it can be made a permanent experience. It is this that will cure the defects of which you complain.

16 June 1933

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Once you wrote, "Before you read offer it to the Mother and call down her force." Is her force not already in us and working?

If it is, then you will have no difficulty.

4 August 1933

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Is not every sadhak ready to receive and contain the Mother's force at any time and in any circumstance? Who would not want to hold its constant action?

It is not a question of mental wish but of capacity and whether all the parts of the being are ready and can retain it. If everybody were containing the constant action of the Mother's force, the sadhana would be finished by now and the siddhi complete.

7 August 1933

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Is it not time for me to let the Mother's Force take charge of the Yoga, instead of allowing the Adhar to think it is doing the Yoga?

That can be only when all is ready.

In that case is it necessary for the mind to aspire? Because once the Force is there, it will set everything right.

The system has first to be accustomed to the Force working.

9 May 1934

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All has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender. 30 October 1934

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The Mother has already given you orally the answer to your letter and the directions you asked for. As she told you, your concentration should be in the heart centre and all the rest—the rising above the head etc.—should come of itself in the natural process of the sadhana. Through the heart you will get the closer and closer touch of the Mother and the working of her Force in the whole being.

9 December 1934

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In a dream yesterday I was walking in the street, carrying some kind of big flat drum. Just for fun I touched it with my fingers and very sweet musical sounds were produced. Perhaps it was a broken drum, for no one expected any music to come from it, but as I went on playing, fine music was coming out.

It is a symbol of the harmony that can be brought out of the human nature in spite of its present imperfection when one gives it the true touch, that is, puts it under the true psychic influence.

People around me were charmed by the music. I was very happy and played more and more; many new fine tunes were coming from the drum as if they were simply ready made.

Always keep open to the Mother's Force—let the inner consciousness develop—only that will help and deliver from all difficulties as the openness in the physical grows in you.

12 January 1935

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There are some people here who remain constantly in despair and gloom because they have become conscious of their minutest imperfections, but they are unable to get rid of them.

They are unable for two reasons: (1) because they yield to despair and gloom and the illusion of impotence, (2) because they try only with their own strength and do not care or know how to call in the working of the Mother's force. 10 June 1936

*

Sometimes I feel a thick wall between me and the Divine. At other times there is a pressure on me and I feel quietude come into me.

Persevere in spite of the fluctuations. The Mother's force is at work *all the time*, even when the thick wall is there, so that there may be no wall in future. 24 June 1936

*

You have written that "the Force is there". Why then do I not feel it except for a short time after pranam? Formerly I felt that the Force above was doing the sadhana. Why do I not feel it now?

The Mother's Force is not only above on the summit of the being. It is there with you and near you, ready to act whenever your nature will allow it. It is so with everybody here.

15 November 1936

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This evening X told me, "Fill your entire nature with the Mother's power." In my past sadhana I have never consciously invoked power; the entire stress has been on purity and clarity. But if that is the need of my nature, I will pray for power along with other things.

It is not necessary to ask for Power. It is the Mother's Force that must work in the being and if it is there, all necessary power will come. c. 1936

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When a sadhak works with the right attitude and the higher Force acts in him directly, how does the Force work to purify or remove his defects and imperfections?

It acts by awakening the inner consciousness gradually or swiftly, by replacing the principle of ego-service by the principle of service of the Divine, by making him watch his actions and see his own defects and pushing him to rectify them, by establishing a connection between his consciousness and the Mother's consciousness, by preparing his nature to be taken up more and more by the Mother's consciousness and force, by giving him experiences which make him ready for the major experiences of Yoga, by stimulating the growth of his psychic being, by opening him to the Mother as the Universal Being, etc. etc. Naturally it acts differently in different persons.

7 May 1937

Reliance on the Mother's Force

My mind is not yet quiet and that is why I am not getting any joy in my sadhana, any experience or realisation — nothing at all. This makes me very sad and unhappy. May the Mother bestow on me the flow of Peace and help me to open my closed heart-centre.

There has always been too much reliance on the action of your own mind and will — that is why you cannot progress. If you could once get the habit of silent reliance on the power of the Mother — not merely calling it in to support your own effort — the obstacle would diminish and eventually disappear.

14 July 1929

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You should not rely on anything else alone, however helpful it may seem, but chiefly, primarily, fundamentally on the Mother's Force. The Sun and the Light may be a help, and will be if it is the true light and the true Sun, but cannot take the place of the Mother's Force.

28 May 1930

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There is no aspiration in me, no capacity to follow something higher. I feel dullness inside. But I do feel quiet from the pressure on my head. I must be patient and keep faith — then you will make me conscious.

Quietude first; with it confidence in the Mother's Force that is working on you. When the physical mind is obliged to be quiet, it has this impression of inactivity and dullness at first. When it opens more and more to the Force, that impression will disappear.

12 November 1932

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If one gives full and constant consent to the Mother's working, how can the attempt of other beings to enter into one succeed?

If you give consent to the Mother's working alone, then it cannot.

It is not always an attempt. One receives the thoughts and feelings of the others without any attempt or intention of theirs, because they are in the atmosphere.

31 July 1933

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The depression has come upon you because you accepted the thought that you were not doing what you should and not using the chance Mother had given you. Such thoughts should never be indulged for they open the door to depression and depression opens the door to the old movements; they used to come formerly from the idea that you were unfit, now it is this idea that you are not doing all you ought to do. As a matter of fact you have been progressing with a surprising rapidity for the last days at a rate that we ourselves did not expect from you. But whether the progress is rapid or slow, the attitude should always be an entire faith and reliance on the Mother; just as you do not think that the progress was the result of your own effort or merit, but of your taking the right attitude of reliance and the Mother's force working, so you should not think that any slowness or difficulty was due to your own demerit but only

seek to keep this attitude of reliance and let the Mother's Force work,—slowly or rapidly does not matter.

The dream was again one of these experiences of test or ordeal on the vital plane which you have been having—here it was the test of temptation by power, comfort, riches, attractive things, as it was formerly the test by fear, difficulty, trouble. The evidence of all these tests is that your inner being is perfectly ready and free to go unwaveringly to the goal. There is nothing there that is wrong or defective.

Keep the reliance steady in your heart and do not allow self-distrust, depression or sadness to invade you from outside.

14 November 1935

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How can I do Yoga when I know nothing about your Yoga? I do not even know what to do.

There are two ways of doing Yoga, one by knowledge and one's own efforts, the other by reliance on the Mother. In the last way one has to offer one's mind and heart and all to the Mother for her Force to work on it, call her in all difficulties, have faith and bhakti. At first it takes time, often a long time, for the consciousness to be prepared in this way and during that time many difficulties can come up, but if one perseveres a time comes when all is ready, the Mother's Force opens the consciousness fully to the Divine, then all that must develop develops within, spiritual experience comes and with it the knowledge and union with the Divine.

9 April 1937

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You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem—to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature—is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the

higher planes that here much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say, "Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother, and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga." Of course when you come to the point where you make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up—it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call in the Mother's Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens, then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every Yogi does—to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained in steadiness—it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother—for it is her force that is behind it and behind all the progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine—then you will go on more smoothly. Get the psychic opening in the most external physical consciousness. That and not despondency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience.

Becoming Conscious of the Mother's Force

Yesterday I felt a great Peace and Power. I felt the Mother's atmosphere around me and a strange nearness to her. I thought

that the Mother's thought or consciousness must be with me.
Is this true?

The Force is always around you, for the Mother has put her consciousness there — but it works with especial force when we think of you, and that is what you feel. Your consciousness of it — what you describe of your feeling about it, is quite correct — to become clearly conscious in all parts of the being takes time.

6 July 1933

*

X told me that he does not feel it is the Mother's force that works in him, since with his own force he is able to lift 40 lbs. of grain.

What is meant by one's own force? All force is cosmic and the individual is merely an instrument — a certain amount of the force may be stored in him, but that does not make it his own.

There are certain possibilities in the way of the experience. First there is the faith, or sometimes a mental realisation and this of itself is enough to make one open to the Mother's force so that it is always available at need or call. Even if one does not feel the Force coming, yet the results are there and visible. The next is when one feels oneself like an instrument and is aware of the Energy using it. A third is the contact with the Power above and its descent (spontaneous or at call) into the body — this is the more concrete way of having it, for one physically feels the Force working in one. Finally there is a state of awareness of close contact with the Mother (inward) which brings a similar result.

12 May 1934

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What I have to see is that my consciousness supports the working of the Mother's Force in me. For example, if my being constantly supported the Mother's work, there would hardly be any halt in sadhana due to the tamas in me; the tamasic inertia would get transformed into peace without rising up and darkening the other parts of the being.

Yes, that is how it should happen — but it is difficult so long as the inner being is not conscious and receptive at all times and in all conditions — and it is difficult and takes time to establish such a condition.

23 January 1935

Descent of the Mother's Force

What you feel streaming down must be the Mother's overhead Force. It flows usually from above the head and works at first in the mind centres (head and neck) and afterwards goes down into the chest and heart and then through the movement of the whole body.

It is the effect of this working which you must be feeling in the head up to the shoulders. The Force that comes down from above is the one that works to transform the consciousness into that of a higher spiritual being. Before that the Mother's Force works in the psychic, mental, vital and the physical plane itself to support, purify and psychically change the consciousness.

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When you began to meditate, you saw the Mother's face; that is very good, it means that there is an inner connection established. The absence of the smile does not mean that she is displeased or that you have done anything against her will. At the same time the Mother's force descended on you, it was the pressure of her Force that you felt on the head and breast — everybody feels in the beginning this pressure — and what you felt in the breast was the working of the Force. In the Yoga these are signs of the action of the Yoga and you must observe quietly what happens without getting disturbed, remembering the Mother always and trusting in her action upon you.

25 June 1932

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When there is obscurity or habitual thoughts, the narrowness of the physical mind becomes prominent. But now and then, the physical mind seems to become limitless, thoughtless and without obscurity. Is this a true feeling?

Yes. All the parts that have to be changed must widen like that before the higher consciousness can descend into them.

Is there any relation between the Mother's descent into the physical parts and the descent of the forces that are working in me?

Certainly. In a sense, the descent of the higher forces is the Mother's own descent—for it is she who comes down in them.

21 December 1933

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As I sat to pray, I felt an electric force pass through my spinal cord. It was like the electricity from a battery passing from the crown of my head down to the end of my backbone. The more it went downward, the more strong and joyous was the rapture I felt. What is this?

It is the descent of the Mother's Force from above through the spinal cord—it is a well-known movement. There are two or three kinds of descent. One is this touching the base of the centres which rest on the spinal cord. Another is through the head into the body going from level to level till the whole body is filled and opening all the centres of consciousness. Another is a descent enveloping the Adhar from outside. 1 February 1934

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Last night I felt that the Mother's Force, instead of descending through the head as usual, came down directly through the forehead centre.

It can come in anywhere, but the normal way of descent is through the head. 8 May 1934

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When the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional

being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the Sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi. The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the Sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being — the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of Knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them

and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent — of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind, an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed — for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the Power of the Mother comes down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

11 September 1934

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The experiences you have are a good starting-point for realisation. They have to develop into the light of a deeper state in which there will be the descent of a higher consciousness into you. Your present consciousness in which you feel these things is only a preparatory one — in which the Mother works in you through the cosmic power according to your state of consciousness and your karma and in that working both success and failure can come — one has to remain equal-minded to both while trying always for success. A surer guidance can come even in this preparatory consciousness if you are entirely turned towards her alone in such a way that you can feel her direct guidance and follow it without any other influence or force intervening to act upon you, but that condition is not easy to get or keep — it needs a great one-pointedness and constant single-minded dedication. When the higher consciousness will descend, then a closer union, a more intimate consciousness of the Presence and a more illumined intuition will become possible.

17 November 1934

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The stream which you feel coming down on the head and pouring into you is indeed a current of the Mother's Force; it is so that it is often felt; it flows into the body in currents and works there to liberate and change the consciousness. As the consciousness changes and develops, you will begin yourself to understand the meaning and working of these things.

21 August 1936

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Something is growing in you, but it is all inside — still if there is the steady persistence it is bound to come out. For instance, this white dazzling light with currents, it is a sure sign of the Force (the Mother's) entering and working in the *ādhāra*, but it came to you in sleep — that is to say, in the inner being, still behind the veil. The moment it came out, the dryness would disappear.

5 February 1937

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What the Mother did was to light the fire within — if you did not feel it, it must be because the outer covering has not yet allowed it to come through into the outer consciousness. But something in the inner being must have kept it and opened more widely — that is shown by your experience in sleep, for that was evidently an action of the Mother in the inner being. The descent of this current in the spine is always a descent of the Mother's Force working in the centres to open them; the strong force of the current which you felt is an evident proof that the wider opening is there. You have only to persist and the effects both of the fire and the force will come out in the surface consciousness — for always there is a preparatory work behind the veil in the inner being before the veil thins or disappears and all the working can be done with the participation of the outer consciousness.

22 April 1937

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The Mother's force can come down quite nicely and gently — there is no need of palpitations, giddiness or nausea for that.

Pressure of the Descending Force

This is the meaning of your experiences:

(1) The power of the Divine Mother from above is descending upon you and the pressure you feel on your head and the workings of which you are aware are hers.

Put yourself completely into her hands, have entire confidence, observe carefully and accurately all that happens and write that here. There is no need of special instructions since what is needed is being done for you.

(2) The first pressure was on your mind. The centres of the mind are (a) the head and above it, (b) the centre of the forehead between the eyes, (c) the throat and the vital mental (emotional) and sensational mind centres from the breast downward. It is this latter which is the first *prāṇa* of which you became aware. The action of the Power was to widen these two parts of you and raise them up towards the lowest centre of the higher consciousness above your head, so that hereafter they might both be consciously governed from there and that these might both move in a wide universal consciousness not limited by the body.

(3) The other *prāṇa*, the restless one of which you became aware, is the vital being, the being of desire and life-movement. The work of the Power has been directed towards quieting the restless movements and making it wide in consciousness as with the Mind. The large body you felt was the vital body, not the physical, *sthūla śarīra*.

(4) The basis of your Sadhana must be silence and quiet, *śānti, nīravatā*.

You must remain and grow always more and more deeply quiet and still both in yourself and in your attitude to the world around you. If you can do this, the sadhana is likely to go on progressing and enlarging itself with a minimum of trouble and disturbance.

Never mind your family difficulties and say nothing to your people. Go on quietly trusting to the Power that is at work in you.

8 September 1927

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It is the pressure of Mother's force. If you keep quiet and don't resist, then instead of being uneasy, it will make you happy.

11 August 1932

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From time to time there is a feeling of pressure and heaviness in different parts of the body as the pressure comes down. When it passes, the mind is at peace, the heart free, the body light and easy.

The pressure is that of the Mother's force. When there is a resistance, you feel the pressure. When the resistance is cleared away, there is the lightness and ease.

4 October 1932

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Nowadays in the evening I try to remain calm and pray for half an hour. Then I feel a weight or pressure on my head. It is so calm and cool, yet has such force and fire. Then I am disturbed by nothing whatever. Formerly I also felt this on certain days, but then I lost it due to some disorder of the consciousness.

This weight or pressure on the head is always the sign that the Mother's Force is in contact with you and pressing from above to envelop your being and enter the Adhar and pervade it — usually passing by degrees through the centres on its way downward. Sometimes it comes first as Peace, sometimes as Force, sometimes as the Mother's consciousness and her presence, sometimes as Ananda.

When you lost it before, it must have been due either to some uprising of vital imperfections in yourself or an attack from outside. Of course the pressure need not always be there, but if things take the ordinary course, it usually recurs or else continues until the Adhar is open and there is no further obstacle to the descent of the higher consciousness.

18 September 1933

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From time to time, I feel a pressure above my head and also in my head and forehead. For the last few days, when I sit for

meditation, there is a feeling as though ants were crawling at the top of my neck and in the spinal cord. Does this have any value?

You can write to him¹ that the pressure he feels on his head is the pressure of the Mother's force (the force of the higher consciousness) preparing an opening through the three upper centres (brahmarandhra, base of sahasradala; inner mind centre in the forehead; and the heart or psychic-emotional centre). The feeling in the spine is due to a very slight flow of the current of the Shakti from above—the spine being the base of all the centres and the channel through which the Force tends most easily to flow from one centre to another (Sahasradala = the centre where the human or mental and the higher or spiritual consciousness meet).

15 September 1935

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If the term "pressure" is a wrong one to describe the Mother's recent dealings with me,² what is the sense in which it is used in *The Mother*—she "puts on them the required pressure" [p. 18] and "the vehemence of her pressure"? [p. 20]

I was speaking of your case only—it was not my intention to say that the Mother never uses pressure. But pressure also can be of various kinds. There is the pressure of the Force when it is entering the mind or vital or body—a pressure to go faster, a pressure to build or form, a pressure to break and many more. In your case if there is any pressure it is that of help or support or removal of an attack, but it does not seem to me that that can properly be called pressure.

In the same book you say "her hands are outstretched to strike and to succour". [p. 19] What do you mean by "strike" here?

It expresses her general action in the world. She strikes at the Asuras, she strikes also at everything that has to be got rid of

¹ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer.—Ed.

² See letter of 5 June 1936 on pages 118–19.—Ed.

or destroyed, at the obstacles to the sadhana etc. I may say that the Mother never uses the Mahakali power in your case nor the Mahakali pressure.

5 June 1936

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The suggestion that the pressure of sadhana is unbearable has got fixed in my mind, particularly after reading in two places that those whose nerves are weak are better off living outside the Ashram. One place is in one of your letters, and another in the *Conversations*, where the Mother says: "You must have a strong body and strong nerves. . . . If you have to bear the pressure of the Divine Descent, you must be very strong and powerful, otherwise you would be shaken to pieces."³ Are these things applicable to me?

These things refer to beginners who are not open and have not a fit Adhar, yet want to do the sadhana.

Your body is not weak and you have considerable vital strength. Moreover you have the openness to the Force and the habit of receiving it, and there is no reason why there should be any upsetting by the Force. It is not the Force, but the suggestion of these vital Forces that produces the upsetting.

7 September 1936

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The feeling of the vibration of the Mother's force around the head is more than a mental idea or even a mental realisation, it is an experience. This vibration is indeed the action of the Mother's Force which is first felt above the head or around it, then afterwards within the head. The pressure means that it is working to open the mind and its centres so that it may enter. The mind-centres are in the head, one at the top and above it, another between the eyes, a third in the throat. That is why you feel the vibration around the head and sometimes up to the neck, but not below. It is so usually, for it is only after enveloping and entering the mind that it goes below to the emotional and

³ *The Mother, Conversations 1929–1931 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003)*, p. 11.

vital parts (heart, navel, etc.)—though sometimes it is more enveloping before it enters the body.

24 March 1937

Faith and the Working of the Mother's Force

Is it so difficult to have faith and confidence in the Mother? Even with a little of that attitude, the descent was taking place in you.

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If you want to get back your faith and keep it, you must first quiet your mind and make it open and obedient to the Mother's force. If you have an excited mind at the mercy of every influence and impulse, you will remain a field of conflicting and contrary forces and cannot progress. You will begin to listen to your own ignorance instead of the Mother's knowledge and your faith will naturally disappear and you will get into a wrong condition and a wrong attitude.

March 1928

*

Put your faith in the Divine Shakti, set your mind at rest and let the Mother's Force work.

26 August 1933

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There is no reason to be discouraged. Three years is not too much for the preparation of the nature and it is usually through fluctuations that it gradually grows nearer to the point where a continuous progress becomes possible. One has to cleave firmly to the faith in the Mother's working behind all appearances and you will find that that will carry you through.

31 August 1935

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I can try to call down the Mother's Force, but faith and surrender would require a wonderful Yogic poise and power possible only in born Yogis, I think.

Not at all. A wonderful Yogic poise and power would usually bring self-reliance rather than faith and surrender. It is the simple people who do the latter most easily.

10 August 1936

Surrender to the Mother and the Working of Her Force

Is it the Purusha who consents to the Mother's Force acting in the whole being?

Yes.

If the Purusha does not consent to the working of the Mother's Force, does it mean that the other beings (mental, vital, physical and psychic) also cannot come to the front to enable the sadhak to receive the Mother's Grace?

No. The Purusha often holds back and lets the other beings consent or reject in his place. 22 April 1933

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Make the central surrender. The Mother's Force will do the rest.
25 October 1933

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In this process of the descent from above and the working it is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the Divine Mother and claim the being's service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the sadhana. But the ways of Nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always

with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call *samarpana* — rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

11 September 1934

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Nothing is impossible if the nature of the psychic being is awake and leading you with the Mother's consciousness and force behind it and working in you.

19 October 1935

Assimilation of the Mother's Force

Allow a quiet and steady will to progress to be settled in you; learn the habit of a silent, persistent and thorough assimilation of what the Mother puts into you. This is the sound way to advance.

March 1928

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As for the Mother's force, when one receives it the best is to be quiet till it is assimilated; afterwards it is all right, not lost by outward movements or mixing.

24 January 1935

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Ramana Maharshi says that if "you meditate for an hour or two every day, you can then carry on with your duties. If you meditate in the right manner . . . "

A very important qualification.

"then the current of mind induced will continue to flow even in the midst of your work. It is as though there are two ways

of expressing the same idea; the same line which you take in meditation will be expressed in your activities.”⁴

If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that *can* go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation but to remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards and also to avoid things that relax or disperse or dissipate too much — precisely for this reason that so the effects of what she put on them might continue and the change of attitude the Maharshi speaks of will take place. But I am afraid most of the sadhaks have never understood or practised anything of the kind — they could not appreciate or understand her directions.

9 February 1936

Calling the Mother's Force

I tried to meditate, but I simply had to give it up as the mind would not cooperate.

When you cannot meditate, remain quiet and call in the Mother's Peace or Force.

8 April 1933

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Suppose I am in a fix and call down the Mother's force which is above me. Now, how am I to know whether or not it has descended?

By the feeling of it or the result.

And suppose it has descended, and I am doing my lessons — can I then order it to guard me from outer influences and simultaneously keep me in complete touch with the Mother?

⁴ Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (London: Rider & Company, [1934] 1943), p. 156. The quotation is a paraphrase of Ramana Maharshi's words by Brunton.—Ed.

You can't order anything to the Mother's force; the Mother's force is the manifestation of the Mother herself.

I cannot understand how this force can deal with action.

You think the Mother's force has nothing to do with action or that it is too feeble to act? Or what? What is a force meant for but to act?

26 June 1933

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I am again feeling that depression, but I cannot find out its cause. I feel a burning pain inside me and then some part in me becomes very hostile. There is also some inertia in the nature.

These are the two difficulties, one of the vital dissatisfaction and restlessness, the other of the inertia of the physical consciousness which are the chief obstacles to the sadhana. The first thing to do is to keep detached from them, not to identify yourself mentally with these movements — even if you cannot reject them — next to call on the Mother's force quietly but steadily for it to descend and make the obstacles disappear.

31 January 1934

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My mind becomes quiet for some time, but then many absurd thoughts rush in and I cannot quiet them down. Then I feel very much harrassed. How long will it take to calm down my mind?

What is still restless in the vital has to quiet down for the peace of mind to be even and constant. It has to be controlled, but only control will not be enough. The Mother's Power has to be called always.

10 April 1934

*

Please initiate me into a tangible form of Yoga. I make this assurance that I shall follow your instructions to the very letter and refer to you my doubts and difficulties on the way.

There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

30 November 1934

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When these attacks of illness come, remain quiet and call on the Mother's Force to remove them. 17 February 1936

17 February 1936

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To stand separate and not let the mind be overcome, is the first step. The next is to learn how to call down the Mother's Force whenever the attack comes, so that the attack may be pushed away at once or at least very soon before it can affect the outer vital and the body. If that can be done, the body will recover very soon with the inflow of the forces.

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What should I do so that my work becomes an offering? What should I do so that I can always be with the Mother?

What you should do is to have confidence and try to remain always confident and cheerful. If you feel depressed call for the Mother's Force to remove the depression. If you fall ill, call the Mother's Force to cure you. When you work call the Mother's Force to support you and do the work through you.

Receptivity and Openness to the Mother's Force

Do not allow yourself to be troubled or discouraged by any difficulties, but quietly and simply open yourself to the Mother's force and allow it to change you.

10 March 1931

*

When you decided to tell the Mother, it had the effect of opening something in your physical consciousness and the Mother's Force acted. It often happens so—the action of the Mother's Force depends on a certain power of receptivity in the mind or vital or body—and openness is the first necessary condition for the receptivity.

29 May 1933

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How to become one with the Divine?

Open yourself to the Mother's Force and aspire—in time you will become one with the Divine.

15 June 1933

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The vital defects and difficulties are the same in all and also the shortcomings of the mind. One has to open in faith and confidence to the Divine; the Mother's Force will gradually put everything right.

15 September 1933

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I am overcome with disappointment and depression. After reading your last letter, everything crumbled down in a wave. You said you would increase the Mother's light and consciousness in me, but I can't receive them correctly when I feel like this. I used to believe that the Mother was always there to help, but now you have uprooted that blind faith of mine. Why did you write like that? A little encouragement from your side would make me stronger to reach the destination.

I wrote so because the action of the sadhana does not depend on the Mother alone, but also on the attitude, will and openness

of the sadhak. That is a well-known fact of the spiritual life which everybody is supposed to know. The Mother's Force can do everything only when there is a real and true and complete surrender and openness to the Mother. All these things have been written again and again and it ought not to be necessary to repeat it to each one as if it were a new and unheard-of idea.

12 January 1934

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I had a terrible headache today. What is this all about? If it is Yogic in origin, I will have some comfort. Is the Mother breaking some resistances inside?

No. To make people ill in order to improve or perfect them is not Mother's method. But sometimes things like headache come because the brain either tries too much or does not want to receive or makes difficulties. But these Yogic headaches are of a special kind and after the brain has found out the way to receive or respond, they don't come at all.

20 June 1935

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If one remains in full confidence in the Mother and psychically open, then the Mother's force will do all and one has only to give consent and keep oneself open and aspire.

12 November 1935

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It is no use giving way to depression or self-distrust, they are only obstacles to the change you want and which the Mother is working at in you. The suggestions which raise these things are always one-sided and exaggerated and one ought not to listen to them. It is not by his own strength or good qualities that anyone can attain to the divine change; there are only two things that matter, the Mother's force at work and the sadhak's will to open to it and trust in her working. Keep your will and your trust and care nothing for the rest — they are only difficulties that all meet in their sadhana.

13 May 1936

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I feel the descent of the Mother's peace and power and the action of her Force down to the physical. Why then does this trouble still persist? Is the nervous part of my being not receiving the Force or is it receiving it but refusing to change?

The Peace and Force come down, but the nervous weakness also rises up and resists and counteracts their influence and prevents them from settling in the being. That is because your mind assents to the nervous weakness, accepts its suggestions as true, is full of apprehensions and doubts, believes even that it is the Force which creates the nervous trouble. If you fear the action of the Force, how can the Force do its work? 5 September 1936

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It is certain that one's own effort is necessary, though one cannot do the sadhana by one's own effort alone. The Mother's Force is needed, but the sadhak must open himself to it, reject what opposes the Force, put his full sincerity, aspiration, will power into the sadhana. It is only when all is open and there is the full surrender that the Divine Power takes up the sadhana so entirely that personal effort is no longer necessary. But that cannot happen at an early stage — one must go on opening oneself, consecrating oneself, making the surrender till that later stage comes. This has been explained in the book *The Mother*.

17 March 1937

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Open what is closed. The Mother does not withhold her force from anyone — it is there for all in abundance. Her pleasure is in giving her force, not in withholding it. But if you keep your mind filled with thoughts of this kind, about X and others, and your needs and grievances, you shut yourself up in that and there is no room for the higher consciousness and its force to come in.

Pulling the Mother's Force

I am depressed that the Divine has made me meditate the wrong way for three and a half years without letting me know

it was wrong. Why did I feel that I must stimulate my aspiration through great concentration in meditation in order to expedite my progress? Why only now has the Mother told me that I have been meditating in the wrong way, with too much strain and stiffness and tension? This makes me sad beyond words. The more I think about it, the sadder I become. I am so bewildered and confused.

What am I to do? It seems to me that before I was trying to fit the wrong key into the lock of the faery palace, but now I have been left with no key at all.

What is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment. The Mother did not merely point out the impediment; she showed you very expressly how to do it and at that time you understood her, though now (at the time of writing your letter to me) the light which you saw seems to have been clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. It is the reason why I object to the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimāna*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to Siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital force, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness,—the habit of these moods shows a clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is therefore quite incorrect to say that the Mother took away the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace and left you with none at all. For she not only showed you the true key but gave it to you. It was not a mere vague exhortation to cheerfulness she gave you, but she described exactly the condition felt in the right kind of meditation — a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense

of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any unquiet interference. And she asked you if you had not experienced that condition and you said that you had and knew it very well. Now that condition is the beginning of psychic opening and, if you have had it, you know what the psychic opening is; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. What you should have done was to keep the key the Mother gave you present in your consciousness and apply it — not to go back and allow sadness and a repining view of the past to grow upon you. In this condition which we term the right or psychic attitude, there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. The Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil; the results remain packed behind and come out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks through somehow and forces itself upon the external nature. There lies the difference between a mental and vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness, and it is not at all the first time that we have spoken of the difference. The Mother and myself have written and spoken of it times without number and we have deprecated pulling⁵ and straining and advocated the attitude of psychic openness. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way,—either, because of

⁵ There is a steady drawing of the Force possible which is not what I mean by pulling — drawing of the Force is quite common and helpful.

some difficulty, you try to force the lock turning the key this way and that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn and the door opens.

5 May 1932

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What is meant by pulling? When we want something from the Mother with a vital desire, is it pulling? What is its effect on us?

Yes; that is one kind of pulling — its effect is to blind and confuse the consciousness. But there is also a pulling for right things which is not bad in itself, and most people use — e.g. for Light, Force, Ananda. But it brings more reactions than a quiet opening to the Divine.

1 June 1933

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Can you explain in a few master strokes what you mean by "pulling down"? As I understand it, it is when one makes mental efforts of concentration and meditation without having any eagerness for it.

That is not what is meant by pulling. When one is open and too eager and tries to pull down the force, experience etc. instead of letting it descend quietly, that is called pulling. Many people pull at the Mother's forces — trying to take more than they can easily assimilate and disturbing the working.

7 April 1935

The Mother's Force and the Forces of the Lower Nature

There is in me a revolt of the vital against the Light resulting in much vital confusion. I hope that one day all my desires and ambition will go away and I will depend completely on the Mother. In the meantime, as these things too come from the Mother, there is nothing to do but wait.

What things? The vital confusion and desires? It is entirely false to say that these things come from the Mother. They come from the lower Nature and its darkness and ignorance. The Mother's Force is *not* the lower Nature, it is the Power of the Divine

Truth and Light working upon the lower Nature to drive out the confusion and falsehood and desire from it and to transform everything into the Truth and Light.

It is equally false to say "so there is nothing to do but wait". There is something to do and I have repeatedly told you what it is — I have told you not to go down into the lower vital unless you can go there with the Mother's Force and Light supporting you. If you are pushed or fall into the lower vital confusion, then to remain quiet (not discussing or consenting to whirl round in the lower vital chaos), to reject the vital suggestions and experiences and open yourself calling down the Mother's Force to change this part of the being.

Instead of that you begin "experiencing" the chaos and trying to follow every jump and whirl in it and speculating about it with the result that you get falsehoods like these two — the falsehood that "these things too come from the Mother" and the falsehood that "there is nothing to do but wait" and you consent to them!

When will you learn to remember and follow the plain instructions I have given you instead of believing in the ignorant mind and the confused suggestions of this vital chaos?

10 June 1930

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I am practising with the feeling that the Mother is in everything. When I make a mistake, I think: "This also the Mother has done through me to bring me to full consciousness." I believe that the sadhaks cannot consciously commit mistakes.

The Mother does not make people commit mistakes; it is the Prakriti that makes them do it — if the Purusha does not refuse his consent. The Mother here is not this lower Prakriti, but the Divine Shakti and it is her work to press on this lower Nature to change. You can say that under the pressure, the Prakriti stumbles and is unable to reply perfectly and makes mistakes. But it is not the Mother who makes you do wrong movements or does the wrong movements in you — if you think that, you

are in danger of justifying the movements or their continuance.

11 April 1933

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What is the truest and surest means to recognise the Mother's Force when it acts and to distinguish it from other egoistic or ignorant forces?

One has only to be perfectly sincere, not to justify one's own desires and faults by the mind's reasonings, to look impartially and quietly at oneself and one's movements and to call on the Mother's Light — then gradually one will begin to discern everything in that light. Even if it cannot be done perfectly at once, the judgment and feeling will get clearer and surer and a right consciousness of these things will be established.

If a sadhak cannot fully discriminate between the Mother's Force and the egoistic and ignorant forces and cannot reject the lower forces, what will be his condition? And what is the best step for him to take on the path of Yoga?

All these questions are met by my answer. One cannot be perfect in discrimination at once or in rejection either. The one indispensable thing is to go on trying sincerely till there comes the full success. So long as there is complete sincerity, the Divine Grace will be there and assist at every moment on the way.

1 July 1933

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There are two cosmic Forces — one the higher Cosmic Shakti which is a form of the Mother, the other a Power of the Ignorance. You have not to open to the latter, only to the Mother.

25 October 1933

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I told you that when I make some mistake, then the lower forces rise up to trouble me, but you replied: "It is not necessarily due to some mistake or fault that they rise." But my

experience is that so long as the Mother's name is on my lips nothing undivine can touch me. It is only when I am careless and forget to say her name that mistakes occur.

And what does the carelessness come from? It is because the habit of the lower nature makes you forget. That is an action of the lower forces. It is only by the higher force meeting the lower forces and its pressure on them (this is the contact) that the habit of forgetfulness disappears. 25 January 1935

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How is it that the Mother cannot or will not move the hostile forces to action, since even the Asura and Rakshasa and Pisacha are her children?

As for the Asuric forces, their movement is part of the ordinary cosmic movement in the Ignorance, but Mother is not here to encourage that movement, but to bring down the higher Truth in which they have no place. If then she moves the hostile Forces to act against her and her work and the sadhaks (which they are quite ready enough to do of themselves), it would mean that she is working against herself and trying to frustrate her own purpose in being here! Such an action would be absurd in the extreme. 8 April 1935

The Mother's Force and the Three Gunas

When one feels that it is the Mother's Force that acts through one and not one's own force, is it the Mother's Force alone that works in one's actions while the gunas remain quiescent?

No, the gunas are there and not quiescent—for they are the instrumentation. If the force and the inner consciousness are very strong then there is a tendency for the rajas to become like some inferior form of tapas and the tamas to become more like a kind of inert shama. That is how the transformation begins, but usually it is very slow in its process. 29 January 1936

Conditions for the Working of the Mother's Force

When you can receive the Mother's peace in the mind and heart, it will act on the vital also and calm it. Once the vital is calm then force can be there in it and give it strength.

There is no intention of test or ordeal. But for the Mother's force to act certain conditions are necessary. There must be a certain acceptance, a will steady and persistent to reject what comes in the way of her action and to receive her force alone.

But why should you be always thinking about X or others? You have very little to do with X now, and it is no use thinking only of the past. Leave him to the Mother to deal with and forget all that.

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If ego-sense comes back upon you so strongly, it must be because something in you admits it. The Mother's force is there always and can help you to get rid of these things, but you on your part must with faith and sincerity accept the Mother and put yourself entirely on her side so as to make it possible for the Force to work with effect. When bad thoughts come, you must reject them, not assent to them in your mind, not give voice to them in your speech, not believe in them or their suggestions. These things cannot vanish in a day, but if you do like that, they will diminish and lose their power to lay strong hold of you and disturb you, and in the end they will disappear. 21 April 1932

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I wish to become ceaseless in aspiration. I feel that it is the Mother's Force that is aspiring in me. But if the Mother herself does not increase my aspiration through her Grace, how can I become ceaseless in it?

It is true that it is the Mother's Force that aspires in you, but if the personal consciousness does not give its assent, then the Force does not work. If the personal consciousness ceaselessly looks for the Divine and assents to the working, then aspiration

and the working of the Force becomes also ceaseless.

9 April 1933

Discrimination and the Working of the Mother's Force

It is dangerous to think of giving up "all barrier of discrimination and defence against what is trying to descend" upon you. Have you thought what this would mean if what is descending is something not in consonance with the divine Truth, perhaps even adverse? An Adverse Power could ask no better condition for getting control over the seeker. It is only the Mother's Force and the divine Truth that one should admit without barriers. And even there one must keep the power of discernment in order to detect anything false that comes masquerading as the Mother's Force and the divine Truth, and keep too the power of rejection that will throw away all mixture.

Keep faith in your spiritual destiny, draw back from error and open more the psychic being to the direct guidance of the Mother's light and power. If the central will is sincere, each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping-stone to a truer movement and a higher progress.

24 May 1930

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How to recognise that a particular thought, feeling or impulse to action has come from the Mother herself and not from some universal force or anything else? If it is apparently a force from the Falsehood it can be recognised as such, but there are many others of a different character and sometimes one goes on thinking that they are prompted by the Mother from within.

It can only be done by discrimination, care, sincerity, a constant control with regard to the mind's movements and the growth of a certain kind of psychic tact which detects any mental imitation or false suggestion of its being the Mother's.

27 April 1933

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About my weaknesses you have mentioned the "inertia and fundamental resistance in the consciousness". How can I become free of them?

There is only one rule for all these things — to watch oneself closely so as to detect these things always when they show themselves, to reject them always and persistently when seen, to aspire always for their removal, to call always the Force of the Mother to help to remove them. But the most entirely effective thing is if you can feel the Force of the Mother working in you and support its action always.

29 June 1933

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You have written: "But the most entirely effective thing is if you can feel the Force of the Mother working in you and support its action always." What is the meaning of "support its action always"?

To support its action means that one must recognise the Mother's force when it acts and distinguish it from other egoistic or ignorant forces and give assent to the one and refuse the others. It is again a general rule — its application each sadhaka has to see for himself.

1 July 1933

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The Mother's Force may do everything but one has to become more and more conscious of one's own being and nature and what is below in it.

It is not a question of mental judgment, — that is of little use in these matters, — but of the consciousness feeling and seeing.

Supermind is not organised in the lower planes as the others are. It is only a veiled influence. Otherwise the supramental realisation would be easy.

22 May 1934

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As to the Force, you said, "It creates its own activities in the mind or elsewhere." In that case does the mind or any other part on which the Force acts express only what the Force has created?

That is the ideal condition when the Force is the true Force only — but there is too much mixture in the nature for that to be possible at this stage of sadhana.

3 August 1934

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You say: "That is the ideal condition when the Force is the true Force only." Does this mean that what my consciousness feels as the Force is not the real Force of the Mother?

I have said that it gets mixed with the action of the present mind, vital and body. That is inevitable since it has to work upon them. It is only after the transformation that it can be fully the Mother's Force with no mixture of the separate personality. If the Divine Force in all its perfection without mixture were to act from the beginning, not taking any account of the present nature, then there would be no sadhana, only a miraculous substitution of the Divine for the human without any reason or process.

4 August 1934

Mental Knowledge and the Working of the Mother's Force

During the evening meditation my mind tries to become conscious of the thoughts which the Mother brings down. Is this the right activity?

It is not altogether the way — if the mind is active it is more difficult to become aware of what the Mother is bringing. It is not thoughts she brings, but the higher light, force etc.

22 March 1933

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With reference to the Mother you once said, "Ask for the consciousness of her force." Does it mean that I should aspire to know her consciousness and her force?

Yes — not know with the mind only, but to feel them and see them with the inner experience.

18 June 1933

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My mind fails to make out the present state of the being. It does not understand what the Mother's Force is doing.

Plenty of people progress rapidly without understanding what the Force is doing — they simply observe and describe and say "I leave all to the Mother." Eventually the knowledge and understanding come.

17 July 1933

The Mother's Force and the Body

When can it be said that the material being is ready for the Divine?

If the material consciousness is open, feels the Mother's Force working in it and responds, then it is ready.

11 June 1933

*

I feel the Mother's light, peace, beauty, joy and love descending from above into each strand of my hair. The whole body, calm and still, becomes absorbed in deep peace.

It can be there in all the atoms of the body since all is secretly conscious.

5 October 1933

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One thing I wish to say about the condition of my body: Do not arrange any medication for me. Medicines are insignificant compared to the Mother's Force and Compassion. Everything will come all right through her Love and Force — this is my strong faith.

For the Mother's Force to work fully in the body, the body itself and not only the mind must have faith and be open.

9 October 1933

*

I pray that the Mother's Force may help my body. Kindly let me keep her Light and by that Light mould me through Peace and Love.

Aspire and concentrate for the purification and illumination of the vital. The vital once clear with the Mother's Light and Force in it, it will be easier for the Force to work on the body.

11 October 1933

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Today while I was sitting with others, slowly something came down and filled up all my body. The body became very heavy, like a statue — I could not move. My body, especially the chest, was expanding. Peace! Calm! Ananda! Afterwards, the upper portion of my body slowly became smaller and smaller. Then something entered from the soles of my feet, and I came back to the physical consciousness.

That is very good. It is the Force and Presence of the Mother from above that comes down like that into the body — first in the head and chest and afterwards into the whole body. It is the first fundamental experience of the sadhana from which all the rest begins — for until it comes all else is only preparation. Very often it takes people years to bring it into the body, and with most it comes only by degrees. That it should come in a mass like that and even down to the chest shows that what I told you was true — that once you get free from the old obstacles that were obstructing you, you can have the Yoga experiences as well as anyone else here.

3 December 1933

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Is the heat that I felt in the body the heat of the fever or the heat of the Mother's Force? It exerted a tremendous pressure on my mind, life and body.

That has still to be seen. It is most probably the tapas heat; the question is whether it is turned partially in the body into fever.

7 June 1936

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It is quite true that the Mother has been putting a constant pressure of her Force to help you in overcoming this illness. I

am very glad you have been so vividly aware of it. We do not think it is correct that the Mother can only take the pain away but cannot replace the organs in their right place. This also is possible for the spiritual Force to effect in time. But it is desirable that you should not allow any inner condition of yours which makes the working easy to yield to one like those you speak of which would make it difficult by allowing the old forces to return. Even if that happens, the Mother will still work of course to restore the previous condition until the thing is set right. But a continuous openness is very desirable. 22 October 1936

*

Mother is not opposed to your going to Madras for treatment if you feel it necessary; but she is not at all sure that it will result in a radical cure — it may or it may not and, if it does not, it may return worse; so neither can she recommend your going. It depends on your own decision.

The illness has no doubt a physical cause, but there is associated with it a strong resistance to the Force — which is evidently seated in the subconscious, since you are not aware of it. This is shown by the fact that after Mother put a concentrated force there yesterday, the whole thing returned more violently after an hour's relief. That is always a sign of a violent and obstinate resistance somewhere. It is only if this is overcome or disappears that complete relief can come.

Your experiences related in the letter were quite sound and very good. There is no delusion about the Force working in the body, but there are evidently points where there is still much resistance. The body consciousness has many parts and many different movements and all do not open or change together. Also the body is very dependent on the subconscious which has to be cleared and illumined before the body can be free from adverse reactions. 15 April 1938

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The Mother's Force is always pouring down — your body must

now forget its habit of depression or sadness. Let the happiness come into it also.

*

First the Mother organises the inner parts of the being; then she begins to work on the outer being. Does this mean that when the inner parts are brought under control, then she begins to work on the physical nature?

It is the usual course, but some work is always being done in the inner parts at all times, because they are interdependent.

The Mother's Therapeutic Force

While working, I suddenly felt a pressure of weakness, a depression in the chest. When I became conscious of it, I opened myself and called the Mother's force. After a few minutes it disappeared. Was it the divine strength that supported me in some mysterious way, or was it the inherent strength of the body that awakened?

The inherent strength of the body does not do things like that. It is the Mother's force that does it, when one calls and opens oneself. Even people who never did Yoga and are conscious of nothing, get cured like that without knowing the reason or feeling the way in which it was done. The Force comes from above or in descending it envelops and comes from without inside or it comes out from inside after descending there. When you are conscious of the play of the Forces, then you feel the working.

5 May 1933

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When I got up from sleep, I found that a cold had already entered my head. My consciousness brought down the Mother's Force and the cold disappeared. Formerly the consciousness used to say passively, "Let the Force work it out", but the effect was not the same. I want to know if the method adopted for the Force is quite the right way.

It is quite the right way. It is very good that you are learning to use the Force.

27 August 1934

*

Every time I receive the Mother's touch at Pranam, I feel a sense of strong nourishment, even in the physical being. When she presses her fingers on the opening point of the spinal cord at the top of my head, I feel something subtle coming in which makes my inner being overflow with joy. This sense of nourishment (as if a new substance is being created within) is so strong that even when I am unwell and weak, it completely dominates with its sense of joy and security.

As you suffer from ill-health, Mother presses the nourishment of the divine strength and health into your physical being, renewing its substance with that.

4 November 1934

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If we want the Mother to help someone outside with her Force, but we give her wrong information, does the help she sends miss its mark or does it go automatically where it should? Yesterday I suppose the Mother acted before X gave the wrong information about my uncle, but if she had been misinformed from the start, what would have happened?

Yes, Mother had worked before, but wrong information coming across the working creates a confusion so that it is no longer possible to say what is the result of the working. Of course if the wrong information came at the beginning, it would be still worse. It is very necessary that information given should be correct.

10 June 1935

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I remember the Mother once saying that there is hardly a disease that cannot be cured by Yoga. I was surprised, much surprised, and thought, "What about cancer, then, the most deadly enemy of present civilisation? Can it be cured by Yoga?" What is your opinion?

Of course it can, but on condition of faith or openness or both. Even a mental suggestion can cure cancer — with luck, of course, as is shown by the case of the woman operated on unsuccessfully for cancer, but the doctors lied and told her it had succeeded. Result, cancer symptoms all ceased and she died many years afterwards of another illness altogether.

11 October 1935

*

I had a heated but pleasant discussion with X about the action of the healing force. He argued: "Now that the healing force has arrived here, it is likely to operate in other parts of the world and any Tom, Dick and Harry can wield it even if not spiritually developed."

It may operate but not through every T, D and H, at first at least.

I contended that the healing force will act only if a man is open to the Mother in some way, through devotion, faith or some kind of rapport. I also said that most probably the healing force can act only if the healer is directly in physical contact with her. Certain conditions are necessary for cure. What do you say?

At first it will be no doubt like that if it is to be the true Force, but when once it is settled in the earth-consciousness a more general use of supraphysical force for healing may become possible.

It is not always necessary either that the rapport you speak of should be conscious. Coué for instance was in rapport with the Mother without knowing it — she told me of his getting something of the force and of the beginning of his work long before he was known to anyone (of course she did not know his name but she described him and his work in such a way that the identification was evident).

3 February 1936

*

X writes that her hip-joint pain is gone and wants me to thank the Mother for removing it. She calculates that her first letter to me mentioning the pain must have reached me on Thursday and her hip pain almost vanished miraculously at eight in the

evening that day. But I did not write to the Mother about X's complaint until Friday. Could it be that when X's letter entered the Ashram atmosphere a response came?

Y spoke to the Mother about X's pain on the same day—so it is not necessary to suppose an automatic effect of the letter itself. But such an automatic effect does often take place either immediately after writing or when the letter enters the Mother's atmosphere.

17 April 1936

*

I generally rely in my practice on medicines impregnated with the Mother's force. X is now convinced that there is nothing of any medicine left after potentisation except Homeopathic philosophy (the Mother's force). What is *your* opinion?

I never have opinions — except for the purpose of writing or conversation. To the eye of the Yogan all opinions are true and all are false. It is only realities and results that matter. The Mother's force is a reality and the cure is a result — the medicine is perhaps a phenomenal link between the two.

2 June 1936

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It was precisely out of solicitude for you because the suffering of insomnia and the spasms had been excessive that I proposed to you to take the help of treatment. It is a fact of my experience that when the resistance in the body is too strong and persistent, it can help to take some aid of physical means as an instrumentation for the Force to work more directly on the body itself; for the body then feels itself supported against the resistance from both sides, by means both physical as well as supraphysical. The Mother's force can work through both together.

1 September 1936

*

In the last two weeks there has been no improvement in my nervous trouble. I had the belief that the Mother's look and grace at the Sunday Pranam would ease my situation, but it has not. Shall I undergo medical treatment or rely solely on

the Mother's grace and influence which I shall receive at the Sunday Pranam?

Sunday Pranams are not the only way of receiving Force, one can do it at any time by opening to receive in a quiet concentration. If you can do that, any illness can be cured either at once or, if it is chronic, in time. That should be done in any case. But where there is not the full openness, medical treatment can help as an auxiliary. If you like to consult X, he may be able to understand better your case than by second hand and you can see whether you would care to try any remedies he suggests.

28 March 1937

Receiving the Mother's Force at a Distance

I write from Comilla to present to you the sad story of a sad person's life. For over twenty-five years I have suffered from leucorrhoea. I have taken all kinds of treatments, but never succeeded in removing it. My body is becoming weaker day by day. I feel that no doctor can remedy this disease. You and the Mother have come on earth to remove people's sufferings. I pray that you will rid this poor thing of her sufferings for ever.

It is possible for her to be cured,⁶ but only if she has sufficient and complete faith and can receive the force of the Mother. If she can put herself into the true contact, she will cure.

*

As to what your other friend asks, it is quite possible for him to receive where he is without coming here if he has the adoration of the Mother in his heart and an intense call. 25 August 1935

*

You spoke of my friend X as receiving the Mother's Force.

⁶ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer.—Ed.

"*In contact with*" the Divine Force which is the force of the Mother — that was what I wrote, I believe.

But which Mother?

How many Mothers are there?

Ours or some universal Mother as people say?

Who is this some universal Mother? How many of these some universal Mothers are there?

I ask because I do not understand how, without invoking the Mother, he gets her Force.

Have you not put him by the photograph and his letter in connection with us? Has he not turned in this direction? Has he not met Y and been impressed by him — a third channel of contact? That is quite sufficient to help him to a contact if he has the faith and the Yogic stress in him.

2 February 1936

*

Has Mother really been sending force to my friend?

I don't know whether Mother is sending force in the accepted sense; I haven't asked her. In any case anyone can receive the force who has faith and sincerity, whose psychic being has begun to wake and who opens himself, — whether he knows or not that he is receiving. If X even imagines that he is receiving, that may open the way to a real reception, — if he *feels* it, why question his feeling? He is certainly trying hard to change and that is the first necessity; if one tries it can always be done, in more or less time.

28 June 1943

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It was 1 a.m. at night when my brother in excruciating pain called me and asked if Sri Aurobindo could heal him. I took out some Prasad flowers that were with me and touched the

affected part with them. And lo! the pain vanished and he began to recover. I want to know if you were aware of this and heard my prayer.

What happens in such cases is that when someone is accepted, the Mother sends out something of herself to him and this is with him wherever he goes and is always in connection with her being here. So when he does anything like what you did in this case with faith and bhakti, it reaches, through that emanation of herself which is with him, the Mother's consciousness inner or outer and the Force goes in return for the result.

Sadhana through Work for the Mother

Finding the Mother's Force in Work and Action

Yesterday I worked with great vigour and after I saw Mother in the evening I felt that there was no physical tiredness at all and that I could work for twelve hours more.

It is the Mother's energy that comes down into the vital and physical for those who are open. 12 February 1933

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I told you that I could work peacefully at the Granary, but alas, I am unable to do so. As I sit quietly doing my work, X comes and starts talking about many things and creates a disturbance in me. I pray that you will help me.

You must be able to find the Mother in work and action as well as in concentration and silence. It is quite possible even if there is the silence within you and no restless movement, to move and act and do all that is needful. It is in fact when all within is silent, free from desire and with no restless movement that the Mother's force can act best and do things in the right way. You should aspire to the Mother for the right force to act and do work and find her in the work and action. 31 May 1933

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When I do any work for myself or do any work as my own, I get tired. But my mind realises now that this tiredness comes because I have not offered the work to my Divine Parents.

If there is the full surrender in the work and you feel it is the Mother's and that the Mother's force is working in you, then fatigue does not come. July 1933

*

During the work, is it good to go on thinking: "It is the Mother who does the work through us"?

If it is *work*, you can always do that, provided you realise that it depends on the instrument whether the Mother's force works fully or not.

But if we think it is the Mother who is working through us, wrong movements may hide in the disguise of the Mother?

If you think all your actions come from the Mother, then of course it will have that effect — the actions come from Prakriti. Work is a different matter, for it is the Mother's work you are doing.

16 August 1933

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Today I felt as if someone other than myself was carrying out my actions. Of course I was there, but in the background. Was it not the Mother's Force trying to take me into itself integrally?

It is too much to say that. What you say amounts only to some glimpse of the cosmic Force behind all the actions.

2 June 1934

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Everybody is in the Mother, but one must become conscious of that, not of the work only.

1 April 1935

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The feeling that all one does is from the Divine, that all action is the Mother's is a necessary step in experience, but one cannot remain in it — one has to go farther. Those can remain in it who do not want to change the nature, but only to have the experience of the Truth behind it. Your action is according to universal Nature and in that again it is according to your individual nature, and all Nature is a force put out by the Divine Mother for the action of the universe. But as things are it is an action in the Ignorance and the ego; while what we want is an action of the divine Truth

unveiled and undeformed by the Ignorance and the ego.

So when you feel that your actions are all done by the force (শক্তি) of the Mother, that is a true experience. But the will of the Mother (মায়ের ইচ্ছা) is that all you do should be done not by her force in Nature as now, but her own direct force in the Truth of her nature, the higher divine Nature. So also it was correct, what you thought afterwards, that unless there is this change, the experience that all you do is done by her will cannot be altogether true. So it will not be permanent till then. For if it were permanent now, it might keep you in the lower action as it does many and prevent or retard the change. What you need as a permanent experience now is that of the Mother's Force working in you in all things to change this ignorant consciousness and nature into her divine consciousness and nature.

It is the same with the truth about the instrument. It is true that each being is an instrument of the cosmic Shakti, therefore of the Mother. But the aim of the sadhana is to become a conscious and perfect instrument instead of one that is unconscious and therefore imperfect. You can be a conscious and perfect instrument only when you are no longer acting in obedience to the ignorant push of the lower nature, but in surrender to the Mother and aware of her higher Force acting within you. So here too your intuition was perfectly true.

But all this cannot be done in a day. So you are once more right in not being anxious or uneasy. One must be vigilant, but not anxious and uneasy, অস্ত্র. The Mother's Force will act and bring the result in its own time — provided one offers all to her and aspires and is vigilant, calling and remembering her at all times, rejecting quietly all that stands in the way of the action of her transforming Force. Your second view of this was more from the right angle of vision than the first. To say that it is not I who have to act, so I need not mind, is to say too much — one has to act in so far as one has to aspire, offer oneself, assent to the Mother's working, reject all else, more and more surrender. All else will be done in time; there is no need for anxiety or depression or impatience.

13 July 1935

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What is meant by being an instrument or being used by the Mother's Force? When one acts on impulse, often it is a wrong movement—how can that be a case of being an instrument? When you wrote to X, "You are being used as an effective instrument", did you write it as a temporary encouragement?

So long as one is not conscious of the Force working through one, one is moved by the Prakriti. The Prakriti may be used sometimes by the Divine for some work to be done, but that is not what is meant in the Yoga by being an "instrument". I do not know to what you refer as regards X,—his poetry was inspired by us and he felt it and it certainly helped several people; to that extent he was an effective instrument for the work so long as he was in the right attitude. Naturally, it is for the work that one can be an instrument, not for things like sex which have nothing to do with the Yoga or the work. But the real instrumentality begins when the consciousness of the Force working begins within.

30 October 1935

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In a letter about work Sri Aurobindo says: "As for the dedication make the *saiikalpa* always of offering it, remember and pray when you can. . . . This is to fix a certain attitude. Afterwards, the Force can take advantage of this key to open the deeper dedication within." May I know in what terms this deeper dedication can be expressed?

One begins to feel a double consciousness, one an inner being within which is always dedicated, spontaneously and silently full of the devotion to the Mother or aware of her Force working or of her presence or all these together and another the outer through which the work is done.

1936

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During work, the consciousness, however high it was before, falls at once into inertia. Is this condition never to change?

It is not necessary to fall into inertia, but one always comes into a less intensity of consciousness during work unless one

has established in work the conscious contact with the Mother's Force and is aware of that during the work or unless one has developed a double consciousness, the inner concentrated, the outer doing the work.

12 April 1936

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You seem to have written to X that there is a special force for the work and, if it is brought down, its action need not remain a separate thing from meditation. What is this special force for work?

It is the Mother's force, naturally.

16 May 1936

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It is only when work and action are done in that way, without insistence on one's personal ideas and personal feelings but only for the Divine's sake without thought of self that work becomes fully a sadhana and the internal and the external nature can arrive at a harmony. It makes it more possible for the inner being to take up and enlighten the outer action and grow conscious of the Mother's force behind it guiding it in its works.

3 January 1937

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Should one try to put out the Mother's Force during work, if one is conscious of it?

It is the Mother's Force that has to work through the sadhak, not the sadhak who has to work through the Mother's Force.

If one is not yet conscious of her Force, should one put out one's inner energy in work? How is the inner energy related to the outer energy?

The first stage is when one works with the outer energy, but there is an inner consciousness supporting it which relies wholly on the Mother. The second is when there is an inner consciousness and force which uses the outer instruments — the outer energy

being quiescent or else a part only of the inner — while this inner consciousness knows that the force is the Mother's or feels the Mother's presence in it: there are different experiences in this respect. The third is when all is the Mother's Force working.

10 April 1937

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There are two ways of making an offering to the Mother: one is to offer an act at her feet as one might offer a flower; the other is to withdraw one's personality and feel as though she were doing all the actions. Which of these ways is better for the sadhana?

There is no need to ask which is the better as they are not mutually exclusive. It is the mind that regards them as opposites. The psychic being can offer the act while the nature is passive to the Force (the ego being expunged or having withdrawn) and feels the Mother's Force doing the act and her Presence in it.

5 November 1938

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Efface the stamp of ego from the heart and let the love of the Mother take its place. Cast from the mind all insistence on your personal ideas and judgments, then you will have the wisdom to understand her. Let there be no obsession of self-will, ego-drive in the action, love of personal authority, attachment to personal preference, then the Mother's force will be able to act clearly in you and you will get the inexhaustible energy for which you ask and your service will be perfect.

27 November 1940

Work for the Mother in the Integral Yoga

To go entirely inside in order to have experiences and to neglect the work, the external consciousness, is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the sadhana — for our Yoga is integral; so also to throw oneself outward and live in the external being alone is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the sadhana. One must have the same

consciousness in inner experience and outward action and make both full of the Mother.

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There should be not only a general attitude, but each work should be offered to the Mother so as to keep the attitude a living one all the time. There should be at the time of work no meditation, for that would withdraw the attention from the work, but there should be the constant memory of the One to whom you offer it. This is only a first process; for when you can have constantly the feeling of a calm being within concentrated in the sense of the Divine Presence while the surface mind does the work, or when you can begin to feel always that it is the Mother's force that is doing the work and you are only a channel or an instrument, then in place of memory there will have begun the automatic constant realisation of Yoga, divine union, in works.

April 1930

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Those who do work for the Mother in all sincerity, are prepared by the work itself for the right consciousness even if they do not sit down for meditation or follow any particular practice of Yoga. It is not necessary to tell you how to meditate; whatever is needful will come of itself if in your work and at all times you are sincere and keep yourself open to the Mother.

15 March 1932

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The Mother does not think that it is good to give up all work and only read and meditate. Work is part of the Yoga and it gives the best opportunity for calling down the Presence, the Light and the Power into the vital and its activities; it increases also the field and the opportunity of surrender.

It is not enough to remember that the work is the Mother's — and the results also. You must learn to feel the Mother's force behind you and to open to the inspiration and the guidance. Always to remember by an effort of the mind is too difficult;

but if you get into the consciousness in which you feel always the Mother's force in you or supporting you, that is the true thing.

18 August 1932

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The Mother refuses to relieve you of all work — work is a necessary part of this Yoga. If you do not do work and spend all the time in "meditation", you and your sadhana will lose all hold of realities; you will lose yourself in uncontrolled subjective imaginations such as those you are now allowing to control you and lead you into actions — like your absenting yourself from Pranam, becoming fanciful and irregular in your taking of food, coming to the Mother at a wrong time and place under the imagination that she has called you — actions dictated by error and false suggestion and not by Truth. It is by doing work for the Mother with surrender to her, with obedience to her expressed will, without fancies and vital self-will that you can remain in touch with the embodied Mother here and progress in the Yoga. Mere subjective experiences without control by us will not lead you to the Truth and may lead you far from it into sheer confusion and error.

If you do not want to do the B. D. [Building Department] account and letter work, you can take up the work of keeping the gate daily from 12 to 2; but it is better if you combine this gate work with the typing of letters whenever needed. If you do not want to do the gate work, then you must go on with the work you now have. If you take the gate work only, you must hand over the typewriter to the B. D. so that it may continue to be used for the work you were doing up till now.

I must warn you that by withdrawing into a one-sided subjective existence within and by pushing away from you all touch with physical realities, you are running into a wrong path and imperilling your sadhana. What happens to sadhaks who do this is that they make a mental Formation and put it in place of the true embodied Mother here, and then under its inspiration they begin to lose touch with her and disobey her and follow the false suggestions of their mental Formation. The first thing it does is

to instigate them not to write to her, not to come to Pranam, not to act as regards food, work etc. on the lines laid down by her, to disobey her — as you have disobeyed her with regard to coming to Pranam this morning. Another very bad sign of this false condition is when they feel not in touch with the Mother when they meet her in the body and guided only by some disembodied Mother in their own egoistic consciousness — that is a sure sign that a Falsehood is getting into their sadhana. As regards their way of life, they do not wish to do like the others, but to have a special way of life of their own, governed by some Imagination within them. All this you must stop. You must come to Pranam regularly, take your food regularly, sleep regularly, do the work given you conscientiously, following the lines laid down for this Asram by the Mother, and through a right consciousness in this life you must realise her Truth in the physical existence.

Your unwillingness to come to the Pranam because that would interrupt some subjective experience is altogether out of place. No experience in formal meditation, not a hundred experiences together can be worth the touch of the Mother in the Pranam. If you had the psychic being in front in the physical or even in the heart and the vital, you would feel that at once. Moreover, these experiences are not supramental as you seem to imagine. The supramental Truth could never stand behind such errors as you are making now. Moreover to get the supramental Light is not so easy as you fancy; I have warned again and again the sadhaks against the error of thinking they are already in possession of the supermind or in touch with it. One has to go through a long and patient development through many lower stages of consciousness before one can be even within measurable distance of the supermind.

All attachment and self-indulgence are dangerous — attachment and self-indulgence in subjective experiences and remote “meditations”, pushing aside the Truth in objective life is as dangerous as any other. Draw back from these errors and get back into the true balance of the sadhana. If you want the psychic in the physical, you cannot get it by merely sitting in meditation and having abstract experiences; you can get it only by seeking

it in physical life and action, by work for the Mother, obedience and surrender in work to the Mother who is present in her own body here.

15 September 1932

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When I am alone for some time, I feel aspiration in the heart, peace and Samata. I feel as if nothing can disturb me. But when I come out to work or move here and there and mix with others, I lose this feeling. Why does it happen like this?

It is the difficulty of being calm and surrendered in action and movement; when there is no action and one is simply sitting still, it is easy to be quiet.

How can this weakness be rejected from the nature so that I can live in peace and Samata in the midst of work and everywhere?

By rejecting ego and desire and living and working for the Divine alone.

Will those who live in peace and Samata but do not work for the Mother's sake or do little work be transformed fully?

No; they do not get transformed at all.

7 May 1933

*

If one works with an attitude of service and love, but does not meditate, will it not lead to stagnation from an inner standpoint? Many say, "We are doing Mother's work and that is sufficient."

If they do it in the right spirit, then it may be sufficient for them, as it will bring the rest — because of the spirit in which they do it. It is a matter of idiosyncrasy — there are some who cannot get anything by meditation, so that work or bhakti is their only resource.

24 May 1933

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People say, "As long as the lower nature is not fully purified, it is dangerous to do a lot of meditation. If one meditates too much before one has become purified by means of work, things might rise up from the lower nature and upset the sadhak. When the higher forces come down into a nature not sufficiently purified through work, it is difficult to bear the descent of the divine forces."

It is not the descent of the higher or divine forces that upsets a sadhak, it is his acceptance of forces of falsehood through ambition, vanity, desire to be a great Yogi or an attachment to his experiences without regard to their truth or their source.

It is not well to spend the whole time or the greater part of the time in meditation unless one is very strong in mind—for one gets into a habit of living in an inner world entirely and losing touch with external realities—this brings in a one-sided inharmonious movement and may lead to disturbance of balance. To do both meditation and work and dedicate both to the Mother is the best thing.

6 August 1933

*

My thoughts, emotions and sensations are all turned towards the Mother. But how can I make them serve her in practical life? I still make mistakes and do not always get the right inspiration.

That depends on the physical mind. It has to learn to stop listening to itself and following its own ideas and to call seriously and persistently for the inspiration of the Mother—your physical mind has to become a portion of hers, answering at once and accurately to whatever comes from her.

27 December 1933

*

X says that he cannot feel your presence during work as he can during meditation. He does not understand how work can help him.

He has to learn to consecrate his work and feel the Mother's

power working through it. A purely sedentary subjective realisation is only a half realisation.

23 January 1934

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I pray that I may feel the Mother's protection while working.
I feel happy to work. I am not able to meditate every day, but
as long as I am working I feel that the work itself is sadhana.

Work for the Mother done with the right concentration on her
is as much a sadhana as meditation and inner experiences.

14 March 1934

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During physical pursuits, I find that the Mother's Force takes
them up. But when I am not working, what should I aspire for?

For the Mother's power to work and bring down by the proper
stages the higher consciousness. Also for the system to be more
and more fit — quiet, egoless, surrendered.

5 June 1934

*

It is not our experience that by meditation alone it is possible to
change the nature, nor has retirement from outward activity and
work much profited those who have tried it; in many cases it
has been harmful. A certain amount of concentration, an inner
aspiration in the heart and an opening of the consciousness to
the Mother's presence there and to the descent from above are
needed. But without action, without work the nature does not
really change; it is there and by contact with men that there is
the test of the change in the nature. As for the work one does,
there is no higher or lower work; all work is the same provided
it is offered to the Mother and done for her and in her power.

You have probably taken too much work on yourself by
adding to the rest accounts, etc. That was not necessary. There
is no reason why you should not do a normal amount and have
time and energy for meditation as well. If you wish, however, to
change, Mother may consider it, though she does not just now
see how to arrange.

6 October 1934

*

This [*experience of the true attitude*] happens when the work is always associated with the Mother's thought, done as an offering to her, with the call to do it through you. All ideas of ego, all association of egoistic feelings with the work must disappear. One begins to feel the Mother's force doing the work; the psychic grows through a certain inner attitude behind the work and the adhar becomes open both to the psychic intuitions and influences from within and to the descent from above. Then the result of meditation can come through the work itself.

5 May 1936

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Just as you give yourself through work to the Mother doing all for her, so there is an inner giving or consecration. Ordinarily the mind and vital live for themselves, want this or that, seek after it and feel dissatisfied and unfulfilled if they do not get it. But when they give themselves, this ceases. Whatever the Mother does with them that they accept—ask for nothing, rely on her entirely, live for her will and not for their desires. Then they begin to be empty of their old selves and old movements, fill with the presence of the Mother, the will of the Mother, the workings of the Mother—that becomes all their life.

27 July 1936

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Once in an interview the Mother told me, "Why do you make any difference between me and work?" I am not sure if I have been able to reproduce the exact words, but they are almost like that. I pray to you to make the idea a little more explicit.

As it stands, it has no meaning. What Mother must have said is "Why do you make any separation between me and work?" It is she who is doing the work, she is there in it, so it is a mistake to make an opposition between concentration on her and the work. Her presence is there in both.

1936

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This state of mind, described in your letter, must be due to a tension created by an urge in the psychic to make a complete

surrender to the Mother and some obstruction in the vital mind and surface intellect. This mind supports the obstruction by an excessive self-depreciation (not well-founded as a sound and just self-examination would be) and a questioning of all you do so that you can see only defects and wrong motives. That creates unrest, doubt and strain and hampers your sadhana and prevents the psychic impulse from acting freely.

You should do your work simply in the confidence that it is accepted and appreciated by the Mother, as indeed it is,—for your work has been very good and helpful to her. Let the psychic movement express itself simply and spontaneously in action without allowing the outer mind to interfere; that would very likely release the tension and then your sadhana could proceed in a quiet cheerfulness, confident of its own truth and the Mother's loving acceptance.

6 December 1943

Work for the Mother as Karmayoga

He should carry on his work and do all things else in the right consciousness, offering all he does to the Mother and keeping in inner touch with her. All work done in that spirit and with that consciousness becomes Karmayoga and can be regarded as part of his sadhana.

10 March 1932

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What you received and kept in the work is indeed the true basic consciousness of Karmayoga—the calm consciousness from above supporting and the strength from above doing the work, with that the Bhakti which feels it to be the Mother's consciousness present and working. You know now by experience what is the secret of Karmayoga.

15 September 1936

Following the Mother's Will

The conditions for following the Mother's will are to turn to her for Light and Truth and Strength, to aspire that no other force shall influence or lead you, to make no demands or conditions

in the vital, to keep a quiet mind ready to receive the Truth but not insisting on its own ideas and formations,—finally, to keep the psychic awake and in front, so that you may be in constant contact and know truly what her will is; for the mind and vital can mistake other impulsions and suggestions for the Divine Will, but the psychic once awakened makes no mistake.

A perfect perfection in working is only possible after supramentalisation; but a relative good working is possible on the lower planes if one is in contact with the Divine and careful, vigilant and conscious in mind and vital and body. That is a condition, besides, which is preparatory and almost indispensable for the supramentalisation.

23 February 1932

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How can I become master of myself and keep self-discipline?

Observe yourself so that nothing passes without being conscious of it. Do not allow yourself to be moved by the forces of nature without the inner consent. Obey the Mother's will always; let your consent or refusal to the movement of forces be in consonance with her Truth.

10 June 1933

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How can the will be made one with the Mother's Will?

The will can be made one with the Mother's by establishing a constant contact of the consciousness with hers.

24 June 1933

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Does "constant contact of the consciousness" mean mental contact or psychic?

It means the whole — with the psychic as the base.

25 June 1933

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I have been thinking that to change one's nature first one

must restrain one's desire, then one must act according to the Mother's will and gradually there will be no will of one's own any more — all will happen by the Mother's will. Am I right?

At first one must put one's will in unison with the Mother's will knowing that it is an instrument only and that it is the Mother's will behind that alone can give the result. Afterwards, when one becomes conscious fully of the Mother's force working within, then the personal will is replaced by the divine. 15 July 1935

The Mother's Consciousness and the Divine Law

What I seek is the total transformation of myself, so that no movement can be outside the Divine Law.

Establish the Divine Consciousness (the Mother's consciousness) in you and the Divine Law will flow from that. 25 March 1932

Opening to the Mother in Work

Demands should not be made. What you receive freely from the Mother helps you; what you demand or try to impose on her is bound to be empty of her force.

The Mother deals with each person differently according to his true need (not what he himself fancies to be his need) and his progress in the sadhana and his nature.

For you the most effective way to get the strength you need would be to do the work conscientiously and scrupulously, allowing nothing to interfere with its exact discharge. If you did that, opening yourself at the same time to the Mother in your work, you would receive more constantly the grace and would come to feel her power doing the work through you; you would thus be able to live constantly with the sense of her presence. If on the contrary you allow your fancies or desires to interfere with your work or are careless and negligent, you interrupt the flow of her grace and give room for sorrow and uneasiness and other foreign forces to enter into you. Yoga through work is the

easiest and most effective way to enter into the stream of this sadhana.

8 March 1930

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Even the most purely physical and mechanical work cannot be properly done if one accepts incapacity, inertia and passivity. The remedy is not to confine yourself to mechanical work, but to reject and throw off incapacity, passivity and inertia and open yourself to the Mother's force. If vanity, ambition and self-conceit stand in your way, cast them from you. You will not get rid of these things by merely waiting for them to disappear. If you merely wait for things to happen, there is no reason why they should happen at all. If it is incapacity and weakness that oppose, still, as one opens oneself truly and more and more to the Mother's force, the strength and capacity necessary for the work will be given and will grow in the adhar. 11 March 1932

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It is owing to the good psychic condition in which you are that this lightness and power of work comes into you; for then you are open to the Mother's Force and it is that that works in you, so that there is no fatigue. You felt the fatigue formerly *after* the work was over because your vital was open and the vital energy was the instrument of the work, but the body consciousness was not quite open and had some strain. This time the physical seems to have opened also. 1932

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In the ordinary condition of the body if you oblige the body to do too much work, it can do with the support of vital force. But as soon as the work is done, the vital force withdraws and then the body feels fatigue. If this is done too much and for too long a time, there may be a breakdown of health and strength under the overstrain. Rest is then needed for recovery.

If however the mind and the vital get the habit of opening to the Mother's Force, they are then supported by the Force and may even be fully filled with it—the Force does the work

and the body feels no strain or fatigue before or after. But even then, unless the body itself is open and can absorb and keep the Force, sufficient rest in between the work is absolutely necessary. Otherwise although the body may go on for a very long time, yet in the end there can be a danger of a collapse.

The body can be sustained for a long time when there is the full influence and there is a single-minded faith and call in the mind and the vital; but if the mind or the vital is disturbed by other influences or opens itself to forces which are not the Mother's, then there will be a mixed condition and there will be sometimes strength, sometimes fatigue, exhaustion or illness or a mixture of the two at the same time.

Finally, if not only the mind and the vital, but the body also is open and can absorb the Force, it can do extraordinary things in the way of work without breaking down. Still, even then rest is necessary. That is why we insist on those who have the impulse of work keeping a proper balance between rest and labour.

A complete freedom from fatigue is possible, but that comes only when there is a complete transformation of the law of the body by the full descent of a supramental Force into the earth-nature.

Remembering the Mother in Work

It is only by an inner development that you can remember in the midst of work. Meanwhile offer all your work inwardly to the Mother.

21 May 1933

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How to remember the Mother during work? I have tried to follow a mental rule, without success. Perhaps it is the inner consciousness that remembers while the outer is busy?

One starts by a mental effort—afterwards it is an inner consciousness that is formed which need not be always *thinking* of the Mother because it is always conscious of her. 31 May 1933

*

During mental activities my outer being never remembers the Mother. Please show me the way to remain conscious of her in the midst of intellectual pursuits.

It can be done when you become the witness detached from the mental actions and not involved in them, not absorbed in them as the mental doer or thinker.

20 March 1934

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Since yesterday I have always been in touch with the Mother during work. Not only do I remember her but the connection with her remains during work. Her Force constantly flows into the Adhar and the work is done automatically, but swiftly, perfectly, unhesitatingly — without personal anxieties and responsibilities; instead, there is confidence, sureness, strength, calmness. I feel that if I can do work in this attitude, it will be perfect, flawless, the work of the Mother's child, not of an egoistic man. Kindly let me know if I am correct.

Yes, it is a very good progress and the first step towards the right use of the Power for action.

1 April 1935

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The little experience I have of sadhana through works makes me incline to the view that work as sadhana is the most difficult of all. I don't remember any experience got through it nor can I remember that I am doing the Mother's work; whereas in poetry, though I may be unlucky as regards experiences, when one writes a poem one does try to think of her, at least mentally. I can even say that it is only by thinking of her that I can compose the lines.

Many find it easy to think of the Mother when working; but when they read or write, their mind goes off to the thing read or written and they forget everything else. I think that is the case with most. Physical work on the other hand can be done with the most external part of the mind, leaving the rest free to remember or to experience.

10 January 1936

Offering Actions to the Mother

Whatever work you do, take it as the Mother's and offer it to the Mother.

14 November 1933

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After finishing any activity, even eating and drinking, I make an offering of it to the Mother, saying, "I offer this work done by me to Thee." But now a sense is growing in me that all works are done by the Mother's Power of Nature through the individual nature. Accordingly, can I substitute the wording in this way, "All the work that is done by the (or my) individual nature is wholeheartedly offered to Thee"? Or what to say?

All that is done in me by Nature, I offer wholeheartedly for transformation to Thee, O Mother.

5 March 1934

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I have read in many places that we should refer all our actions to the Mother. But I don't know how to refer them and get her answer as to whether the actions should be done or not.

There is no question of getting an answer. It is simply to offer the actions to the Mother and call her Force to guide or do what is necessary.

13 January 1936

Work for the Mother and the Worker's Ego

Is it always necessary for our work to be prompted or initiated by the Mother in an outward way? Could one not feel so intensely that a thing has to be done that it is almost an inner prompting?

It would be dangerous to take every "inner prompting" as if it were a prompting or initiation of action from the Mother. What seems an inner prompting may come from anywhere, any Force good or bad seeking to fulfil itself.

One may have ego about the work even if the work itself comes from the Mother. The ego of the instrument is one of the things against which there must be special care in the Yoga.

When one is doing the work, usually the urge of the force that works and the preoccupation of doing it and getting it done or the pleasure of doing it are sufficient and the mind does not think of anything else. Afterwards the sense of "I did it" comes up. With some however the ego is active during the work itself.

3 November 1935

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In order to separate the being from the constant interference of the ego, I propose to do only those actions that I feel are one with the Mother's will. I know that the ego will still present itself, but it will be easy to recognise its interference as something coming from outside.

Of course it is a way. But one has still to be careful about the ego. Even people who sincerely think they are doing only the Mother's will are yet actuated by ego without knowing it.

4 April 1936

The Mother's Lights

Lights and the Mother

Yesterday when the Mother came down in the evening to give Darshan, I saw her face shining with crimson light like the sun when it rises in the morning. What is the meaning of crimson light?

Crimson light indicates the manifestation of love in the material atmosphere.

5 July 1933

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When I write to the Mother I often see flashes of light which are tiny, round and of different colours — white, gold, green, blue and yellow. What are they?

When you write, you put yourself probably in contact with the Mother's forces — these lights of different colours are the play of her forces.

14 October 1933

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Looking at the Mother on the terrace in the evening, I saw a dark blue light around her like the colour of the flower named "Radha's consciousness". Is the light around her of different colours? For I have also seen white light around her many times, and sometimes a pretty pale blue light.

There are various lights around the Mother indicating the forces that come from her. White is her own characteristic light, the pale blue is mine, — the golden, dark blue and others correspond to various other forces.

26 October 1933

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We normally see your force working in us as a pale blue light and the Mother's force working as a white light. But today

I saw a red-coloured force working in me, red like a lotus flower. Was this your force too?

It must have been a special force working. The blue light is the characteristic force as the white is of the Mother, but we are not limited to that, the other forces and therefore the other lights are also ours.

24 November 1933

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Today I saw emerging from the Mother the whitish blue light of Sri Aurobindo. Why did I see it so? Is it because both are the same?

All the lights are put out by the Mother from herself.

6 March 1934

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Today at Pranam while feeling the Mother's Powers pouring into me, I saw the sacred word **ਮਾ** [Mā] inscribed in dark blue light in the corner of my breast below the right shoulder. Does it have any significance?

It means the impression of the Name with its power in some part of the being — (vital mental).

9 April 1934

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The lights are the Mother's Powers — many in number. The white light is her own characteristic power, that of the Divine Consciousness in its essence.

15 July 1934

The Mother's White Light

Last night I got contact with the Light and prayed for its descent. But it got lost as soon as my mind began to get into a white peaceful Mother's consciousness.

That was quite right. The contact with the Light must create peace.

I felt myself in a mind all white, but each time I tried it was impossible to get a rapid downward pull of the Light. After that I got into feelings and nice sensations in the body, but they took me down to a low state.

- (1) The Mother's consciousness (white) is not only peace, but Light and Power.
- (2) When one gets into contact with the Light above the mind, the first result should be peace in the mind.
- (3) Whatever Power of the Light descends should descend into the peace of the mind without disturbing it.
- (4) If you pull down the Light into an active mind, then the action of the Light may get deformed and may be used by the mind in a wrong way, with confusion and disturbance or for purposes and movements that are those of an inferior consciousness and not those of the Truth.
- (5) There cannot be any real incompatibility between the Mother's consciousness and contact with the Light above.

2 June 1932

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What is the colour of the light around the Mother?

The Mother's special colour is white, but all the other colours are hers also.

7 June 1933

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In the evening when the Mother came out, I saw a huge white light following behind her. At first I thought it was an illusion, but when I kept on looking at it I knew it was no illusion. I was full of joy.

The white light is the Mother's light and it is always around her.

22 August 1933

*

Today at Pranam I saw a pale blue light around the Mother. Is pale blue the colour of her light?

The pale blue light is my light — white light is the Mother's (sometimes gold also). People generally see either the white or both the white and the pale blue around her. 4 September 1933

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When the Mother comes on the terrace in the evening, I often see white light around her; it is clearly visible around her body and sometimes the top of the whole building seems to emit light. One day I thought that there may be a background of light behind all material things which can be seen physically. Is it true? Is there any systematic process to open oneself to that physical vision?

The white Light around the Mother is the Mother's own light — that of the Divine Consciousness. Many nowadays are able to see it around her when she is on the roof. One can also see all objects in this light — it means that the light has descended here and is floating around everything. 10 September 1933

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Last night after eight o'clock after returning from work, I sat for meditation. My mind and vital became quiet and opened to the Mother. My heart became vast and opened to her. Then in this quietness something very soothing descended from my chest down to my navel and below it. Then, below the navel, I saw a bright white light penetrating and it filled the whole area with light; then it rose up above the navel till even the head was filled with light. I am unable to express the peace and quietness I felt at that time. The peace was very pure. Now whenever I sit for meditation, I see a very white light coming around me.

The white Light is the Mother's light. Wherever it descends or enters, it brings peace, purity, silence and the openness to the higher forces. If it comes below the navel, that means that it is working in the lower vital. 31 July 1934

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The Mother's white light is the light of the Divine Consciousness; you are living more and more under it and it is that that is liberating you.

25 August 1934

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What you saw in vision was a supraphysical body of the Mother made probably of her white light which is the light of the Divine Consciousness and Force that stands behind the universe.

30 January 1935

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I am sending you a letter received from X. She has written her experiences and wants to know their meaning. She says that now she concentrates in the heart. Formerly she felt it was dark, but now, concentrating on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for a long time, she sees a white ray in which their bodies become more brilliant.

The important experience is that of the white ray in the heart — for that is a ray of the Mother's light, the white light, and the illumining of the heart by this light is a thing of great power for this sadhana. The intuitions she speaks of are a sign of the inner consciousness growing in her — the consciousness which is necessary for Yoga.

28 July 1937

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It [*the Mother's light*] is always there in the inner Purusha.

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That means the light of the divine consciousness (the Mother's Consciousness, white light) in the vital. Blue is the higher mind, gold the divine Truth. So it is the vital with the light of the higher mind and the divine Truth in it emanating the Mother's light.

The Mother's Diamond Light

(a) It [*the diamond light*] means the essential Force of the Mother.

- (b) The diamond light proceeds from the heart of the Divine Consciousness and it brings the opening of the Divine Consciousness wherever it goes.
- (c) The Mother's descent with the diamond light is the sanction of the Supreme Power to the movement in you.
- (d) The Mother's diamond light is a light of absolute purity and power.
- (e) The diamond light is the central consciousness and force of the Divine.

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The Mother's light is white—especially diamond white. The Mahakali form is usually golden, of a very bright and strong golden hue.

12 October 1935

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The diamond is the symbol of the intensest light of the Mother's consciousness, so your visions indicate that you saw her full of that light and radiating it. Other jewels must be symbols of other forces, the ruby indicating power in the physical.

23 February 1936

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The diamond is the symbol of the Mother's consciousness; the colour depends on the particular force which her consciousness puts forth upon you at the moment.

14 April 1936

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The diamond is the symbol of the Mother's light and energy—the diamond light is that of her consciousness at its most intense.

13 November 1936

The Golden Light of Mahakali

Today at Pranam I saw a light like a golden thread coming from the Mother to me, but it vanished in a short time. Once I saw this light very clearly when she was standing on the

terrace, just before coming down the staircase. Is this light from inside or outside? Since I saw it only for a while, I cannot believe my own eyes.

The golden Light is the light of the Divine Truth on the higher planes above the ordinary mind — a light supramental in origin. It is also the light of Mahakali above the mind. The golden light is also often seen emanating from the Mother like the white Light.

17 September 1933

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The line of golden light is a line of the light of the higher Divine Truth encircling the Akash of the heart and the diamond mass is the Mother's light pressing into that Akash. It is therefore a sign of these powers working on the psychic-emotional centre.

17 December 1936

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One night I found a vast light, yellowish white, cool and peaceful, coming down from above. Is this the light of the higher mind consciousness or of some spiritual consciousness?

It depends on the shade of the yellow. If it is golden white it comes from above the mind and the combination suggests the Maheshwari-Mahakali power. Higher Mind colour is pale blue.

21 March 1938

Seeing Light around the Mother

Sometimes I see an outline of white light around Mother. Is it that truly I can see Mother's Light?

Of course you can see it. Nowadays it is visible to many.

2 July 1933

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Last evening when the Mother was walking on the terrace I saw a light on her body. What was it?

Many see light around the Mother. The light is there always.

26 July 1933

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Today as soon as the Mother took her seat in the Pranam Hall
I saw that white light was playing both on her left and right
sides. Was there any particular reason why I saw like this?

No. One can always see white Light around the Mother, for it
is her light, always there.

8 August 1933

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This evening when the Mother came to give us darshan, I
saw Sri Aurobindo's light around her like a cloud. Was this a
formation of the mind or the vital? Was there a mistake in it?

If seeing the Mother's Light is a mistake or a mental or vital
formation, then the realisation of the Divine and all spiritual
experience can be questioned as a mental or vital formation or
mistake and all Yoga becomes impossible.

6 September 1933

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While watching the Mother walk on the terrace, I saw a light
like moonlight around her. How strong and bright it was.
Seeing it, my being became quiet and gradually settled into a
deep indrawn condition.

People see all kinds of lights around the Mother when she walks
on the roof. They are all the flowing out of different forces. If it
was like the moonlight in appearance it would be the spiritual
force.

1 November 1933

*

What people see around the Mother is first her aura, as it is
called nowadays, and secondly the forces of Light that pour out
from her when she concentrates, as she always does on the roof
for instance. (Everybody has an aura — but in most it is weak
and not very luminous, in the Mother's aura there is the full play

of lights and powers.) People do not see it usually because it is a subtle physical and not a gross material phenomenon. They can see only on two conditions, first if they develop sufficient subtle sight, secondly if the aura itself begins to become so strong that it affects the sheath of gross matter which conceals it. The Mother has certainly no idea of making people see it — it is of themselves that one after another, some 20 or 30 in the Asram, I believe, have come to see. None of them are big Yogis, some of them are mere beginners. It is certainly one of the signs that the higher Force (call it supramental or not) is beginning to influence Matter.

15 November 1933

*

Some people see light etc. around the Mother but I am not able to do so. What is the obstruction in me?

It is not an obstruction — it is simply a question of the growth of the inner senses. It has no indispensable connection with spiritual progress. There are some very far on the path who have very little of this kind of vision if any — on the other hand sometimes it develops enormously in mere beginners who have as yet had only very elementary spiritual experiences.

1 December 1933

*

X says that she sees white light streaming out from the Mother when she sees her walking on the terrace. And some days, when the Mother is meditating, she sees some figure behind her.

There is always light around the Mother which the eyes can see if the inner vision opens. There are also many beings that are around her.

4 September 1934

The Mother in Visions, Dreams and Experiences

Seeing the Mother in Visions and Dreams

Recently I notice that before the Mother comes down from the terrace in the evening she stands there for a long time. I feel that at that time she gives us something specially, so I concentrate to receive and feel what she gives. But this evening suddenly I saw (while looking at her) that her physical body disappeared — there was no sign of her body, as if she were not there! Then after a few seconds her figure reappeared. I felt at that moment that she mixed with the ether and became one with all things. Why did I see like this?

The Mother makes an invocation or aspiration and stands till the movement is over. Yesterday she passed for some time beyond the sense of the body and it is perhaps this that made you see in that way.

29 August 1932

*

The day before yesterday I saw in a dream: The Mother is standing in a high place; before her there is a pillar with the Tulsi plant on it. What does it signify?

That she has brought down and planted Bhakti, I suppose.

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall before the Mother came down, I saw: From a high place the Mother is coming down in us, wearing a rosy coloured sari and having a "Divine Love" flower in her hair. What does this signify?

It is a symbol of the descent of Divine Love.

5 June 1933

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I saw Mother's form in a dream last night. Was it real or merely an imagination?

What do you mean by real? It was the form of Mother in a dream experience. Imagination applies only to the waking mind.

3 July 1933

*

When I asked whether the form of the Mother in my dream was real or not, I meant: Was it the Mother herself or was it some false forces taking the form of the Mother?

If false forces take the form of the Mother, it will be with some bad object. If there is no attack or wrong suggestion, you need not suppose that it is false forces that have done it.

Of course it is always possible that something in your own consciousness has constructed a dream about the Mother or put her figure there when she herself was not there. That happens when it is only a dream, a number of ideas and memories etc. of the mind put together and not an experience on another plane.

5 July 1933

*

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall before the Mother came down, I saw in meditation: "The Mother is absorbed in deep concentration." Why did I see her like that?

The Mother is always in a concentrated consciousness in her inner being—so it is quite natural that you should see like that.

5 July 1933

*

About the dream of which I wrote yesterday, you have written, "It has a reality and a significance", but you have not written the significance. Will it be wrong if I ask it? The dream in short was that I saw the Mother standing on a high place, as if on a terrace. At first I could not see her because it was dark, but afterwards she held up a torch directing its rays to her face so I could see her smiling. Then the focus of the light was thrown by her on my face and what happened afterwards I did not remember.

The significance is plain—it refers to the difficulty in seeing

the Mother within you because of the darkness in Nature and the Mother herself holds the light first so that you can see her and then so that the light can fall on you—a symbol of self-knowledge. It is a sort of promise for the sadhana.

13 July 1933

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The day before yesterday, just before the Mother came down for her evening walk, I saw: The fire of aspiration is rising from my heart and its flame is slowly going upward as I constantly remember the Mother. Then I saw: The Mother, as we see her every day, is descending in the fire and filling my mind, vital and physical with peace and strength. In the second vision why did I see the Mother's image exactly as we see her every day?

It indicates an aspiration and an action for realisation in the external nature and not only in the inner being. When it is an inner action or action of another plane one can see the Mother in any of her forms, but for realisation in the physical her appropriate form is that which she wears here.

15 July 1933

*

Two days back I saw in a dream that I was lying in a bed in a room and the Mother entered with a big rosy coloured horse. Seeing the horse I told the Mother: "Mother, the horse is mad; he will bite me." The Mother told me: "No, the horse is not mad; he will not bite you." What is the meaning of this dream?

Rose is the colour of psychic love—the horse is dynamic power. So the rosy coloured horse means that the Mother was bringing with her the dynamic power of psychic love.

3 August 1933

*

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall I saw: The sky is filled with blue light. From the sky a long path is coming down on earth. The path is beautifully paved. On this path the Mother is slowly and joyfully coming towards the earth. Her whole body is white and full of golden light and this light

is spreading out on all sides. When the Mother has come to the end of the path, her body will get mixed with the soil of the earth. Then I suddenly woke up from meditation. Was this a vision? What plane was it from?

Yes, it is a vision from the plane of mind (not ordinary, but higher mind). It indicates the descent of the Mother with her light of purity and Truth (white and golden) into Matter.

5 August 1933

*

This afternoon in a dream I rose up very high and entered a beautiful temple shining with bright white light. In that temple I felt the pressure of the divine consciousness. The Mother and I and others were there. Then at the temple gate I saw red pieces of paper; on each piece was written the name "Mira". Then X called me and brought me down to Y's room to learn a new song. After that, I again went up to the temple by a staircase, but it was a difficult climb. Inside the temple there was the full power of the divine consciousness. What is the meaning of my dream?

The temple is the Mother's consciousness into which you enter by sadhana (as in your other experience described today you entered into the world of the Mother's consciousness and saw things from there) and you come out of it when you turn to something outward but can ascend again at will once you have been there.

16 September 1933

*

I have heard that the colour of Kali is black and she has four hands. But I saw her with only two hands and her colour was bright white. Why did I see her like this?

The black Kali form is a manifestation on the vital plane of Mahakali—but Mahakali herself in the Overmind is golden. What you saw was the Mother herself in her body of light with the Mahakali power in her, but not the actual form of Mahakali.

26 September 1933

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Last night I saw in a dream that Light from the Mother's body was coming down into my body and transforming it.

Good—it is the opening of the physical consciousness to the Mother.

30 September 1933

*

The bodies I wrote about this morning were like shadowy pictures, not distinct, and seemed to be like stones, not white in colour but black. Why was that?

It was probably the subconscious physical that you saw—that would explain the shadowy character; the stone indicates the material Nature.

30 September 1933

*

In the afternoon I went to sleep remembering the Mother. After a while I saw that my subtle mind, vital and body had risen up high into a beautiful world, profound and peaceful. Then I saw many saints, sages and Gods tirelessly calling the Mother in their meditations. The joy of that world was truly deep. What a beautiful world! Then I saw the Mother slowly descend into their midst; she had ten arms and a bright white complexion. Suddenly I woke up. But lying quietly on the bed, I realised that my outer mind, life and body were moving inside the Mother's circle. In this condition I looked at my body and saw that my gross body had a beautiful golden colour. All this time I kept calling the Mother quietly. Is all this true?

You seem to have ascended into a plane of the Higher Spiritualised Mind with a descent into it of Maheshwari bringing the power of the Divine Truth. The result in the physical consciousness was a perception of the One Consciousness and Life in all things and an illumination of the cells of the body with the golden light of the higher Truth.

October 1933

*

While looking at the Mother when she came on the terrace, I suddenly saw in her lap a baby whom I took to be Jesus Christ

as it resembled his figure. The vision lasted for about a minute and I saw it with open eyes.

It may be so — as Jesus was a child of the Divine Mother.

25 November 1933

*

I saw the Mother in the colour of the flower we call “Detachment”. Does it have any meaning?

It must mean that that was the force which she was offering to you or else which you needed from her. 10 January 1934

*

Could a vision of the Mother or seeing her in dream or in waking be called a realisation?

That would be an experience rather than a realisation. A realisation would be of the Mother’s presence within, her force doing the work — or of the Peace or Silence everywhere, of universal Love, universal Beauty or Ananda etc. etc. Visions come under the head of experiences, unless they fix themselves and are accompanied by a realisation of which they are as it were the support — e.g. the vision of the Mother always in the heart or above the head etc. 12 March 1934

*

Watching the Mother while she was meditating on the terrace, I saw a white light coming down from the sky and passing through the crown of her head. The light was not bright white, but a little blue, like the colour of the flower “Krishna’s Ananda”.

The lights represent forces — I suppose you saw some force of Ananda coming down. 2 April 1934

*

Today while offering flowers to the Mother, I concentrated with my eyes shut. I saw the Mother’s bright white form amidst a beautiful dazzling light whose colour I cannot describe.

It was the psychic light, I suppose, and the Mother in it.

6 April 1934

*

During my noon nap, I was in the Mother's lap. She put her transforming palm on my head. With her thumb she was pressing the Brahmic centre at the top of my head and opening it; I felt that something was being received from there. Then suddenly there was a shift of the consciousness into some world other than the terrestrial. A supraphysical light was experienced in the cells of the body, which was already flooded with the light. The physical itself was taken up. Can this experience be explained?

There is nothing to explain. It was what you describe. At once the raising of the consciousness to a higher plane and the descent of that into the physical.

5 September 1934

*

X told us today that on the Puja day the Mother was trying to bring down the personality of Durga.

There was no trying — it came down.

When I came for Pranam, the Mother's grandeur and magnificent appearance made me feel that she was Durga herself. I don't know whether such a feeling arose out of the association with the Puja on that day, or quite independently of it. But one cannot take such feelings seriously (perhaps you will rebuke me for saying that) . . .

All that is the silliness of the physical mind which thinks itself very clever in explaining away the inner feeling or perception.

because these feelings are so vague, abstract and momentary!

What else do you expect the first touches to be?

It is difficult to distinguish the borderline between imagination, intuition and feelings unless they are substantiated by

something like a concrete vision. To give you one instance: I heard as if the Goddess Bhagawati were telling me, "I am coming" and many other things which I don't remember now.

These things are at least a proof that the inner mind and vital are trying to open to supraphysical things. But if you belittle it at once the moment it starts how can it ever develop?

26 October 1934

*

I had a dream in which the Mother seemed to be ill. Once when she smiled, I imagined that I saw all the worlds in her mouth, as Yashoda saw them in Krishna's mouth. Immediately after this, I felt myself being lifted up above the world and looking at it as a witness. But the sense of the Mother being ill made me wonder if it was really her or someone else — some other influence.

I don't think it was another influence. It reads like a very genuine experience.

19 June 1935

*

The other day while I was having a nap in the afternoon, I had a vision of a very beautiful woman (pardon me, more than a woman) sitting under the sun. The rays of the sun were either surrounding her or were emanating from her body — I can't precisely say which. The appearance and dress seemed to be European.

It is not a woman. A woman does not radiate and is not surrounded by rays either. Probably a Sun Goddess or a Shakti of the inner Light, one of the Mother's Powers. 20 December 1935

*

Just yesterday you wrote to me, "The next step is to be conscious in the samadhi" and today it actually took place. A great Holy Woman had come. Several of us went for her darshan. When my turn came, without looking at her face, I threw myself on her lap. She put her hands on my head, caressed me slowly, and gave me two spiritual powers. After a while,

I raised my head and looked at the Holy Woman. Her face appeared like the Mother's. Then I said, "May I ask you a question?" She did not seem to like this, but as she had not refused, I repeated the question. She said, "No, I don't like questions." Then we entered into a trance together. After a long time we both came back to consciousness.

This whole thing is beyond my understanding. Please tell me: (1) Who was the Holy Woman? (2) Why did she grant me the gift of higher powers? (3) A trance within a trance?

Obviously the Holy Woman was the Mother herself in a supra-physical form. It was natural that she should not like questions — the Mother does not like mental questions very much at any time and least of all when she is giving meditation as she was doing in this experience. It is rather funny to ask "why" (your eternal why) higher powers should be given. People do not question the gifts of the Shakti or demand reasons for her giving them, they are only too glad to get them. Trance within trance of course, since your sadhana was going on in the trance, according to the ways of trance. It is also in this way that it can go on in conscious sleep.

10 June 1936

*

Some months ago in a vision, I offered the Mother three flowers of "Divine Love". Has this any meaning for my sadhana?

It is not quite clear what this number 3 means in this connection. Possibly it is the aspiration for the Divine's love in the three parts of the being.

12 July 1936

*

The lotus you saw above the Mother's head was the highest centre of the embodied consciousness (where it communicates with the higher Truth) fully open with the golden light of the divine Truth pouring upon it and filling it. It is that full opening which the Mother was bringing down and which has to happen eventually in the sadhak.

23 July 1936

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Once in a vision I saw the Mother in the physical dressed in a red sari. What does it mean?

Simply the presence of the Mother in the physical consciousness. Red is the colour of the physical. September 1936

*

I see a rough rock. Sunlight falls upon it and the rock changes: in the centre a hollow circle is made and rocks arrange themselves round the circle. In the centre of the circle appears a stone image of Shiva nearly two feet high. Afterwards, out of this image the Mother emerges. She is in meditation. The sunlight falls just behind the Mother's body. What does it signify?

Rocks = the physical (most material) being.

An opening in the material making room for the formation of the spiritual consciousness there.

Stone image of Shiva = the realisation of the silent Self or Brahman there (peace, silence, wideness of the Infinite, purity of the witness Purusha).

Out of this silence emerges the Divine Shakti concentrated for the transformation of the material.

Sunlight = Light of Truth.

12 October 1936

*

Whenever I have seen snakes in dream or anywhere else, I have had to go through many difficulties, so I have always believed that seeing snakes is not very auspicious. Is this true?

Serpents are energies — those of the vital are usually evil forces and it is these that are usually seen by people. But favourable or divine forces are also imaged in that form — e.g., the Kundalini Shakti is imaged in the form of a serpent. Serpents turning over or round the Mother's head would rather recall the Shivamurti and would mean numberless energies all finally gathered up into one infinite energy of which they are the aspects.

28 October 1936

*

Once I saw the Mother sitting on the peak of an icy mountain; a narrow path led there and I was gradually advancing towards that.

This is simply a symbol of the purity and silence of the higher consciousness which has to be reached by the path of sadhana. The narrowness symbolises the difficulty because one has not to slip to one side or the other, but go straight. 7 December 1936

*

I saw the Mother sitting on her seat. There was a cobra behind her with many hoods covering the Mother's head. The cobra was a shining golden colour with a shining red round spot in the centre of each hood. What did it signify?

The cobra is an emblem of Nature-Energy — golden = the higher Truth-Nature — many hoods = many powers. Red is probably a sign of Mahakali power. The cobra covering the head with its hoods is a symbol of sovereignty. 23 January 1937

*

Two years before I came here I had a vision one night: High above in the sky I saw two dark blue feet. So far as I remember they were adorned only with anklets. The soles were the colour of the red lotus. I concluded they were the Mother's lotus feet because that is how I felt and immediately saw a spotted cloth that is used in India in the Mother's worship descending from Her right side. Who could be this Mother?

There is here a general symbolism in the details of the figure, but it is clearly the same experience [*as in the next two visions*] at its first stage in the first contact.

The same night or the next, I had another vision. In front of me I saw a pure white staircase; it went up for countless steps until the top of it got lost in the sky. A white figure in a pure white gown (European style) rapidly descended the upper part of the stairs and, taking her stand on the staircase, opened her arms to me. Who was this Mother?

Here and in the next it is obviously the Mother here. The staircase is a very usual symbol seen by many and it meant the acceptance and call to the ascent.

A third experience I had when I came here for the first time. One night I heard something descending with a revolving motion above my head. No sooner did I hear the sound than I saw a smaller image of the above white Lady entering into me from above and stopping somewhere in the heart region. Who is this Power and Personality? How is she related to the second, the second to the first and all the three to you? How can I be true to her and to you?

By self-opening and an increasing self-giving to the Divine.
All these are visions of the Mother and it agrees with what
she felt when she first saw you. 22 March 1938

Yesterday night in a dream I was in a garden—it was night perhaps; there was not much light. I was there with some other sadhaks and we were there to meditate with the Mother. I could not see Mother but I knew she was there, high up, waiting to give us meditation. But some of the sadhaks were careless, some were yawning, some were lying down. I was trying to meditate and I felt Mother's hand come down and touch my forehead for about a minute. Then I felt something in me being drawn up through my whole body as she slowly drew her hand back, and I felt something being taken away. But when I woke up, I did not know if it was a good or bad thing Mother took away. What was it?

It was certainly a true dream of the lower vital or perhaps subtle physical plane, where the laziness, indifference, frivolity of the sadhaks is a fact and the chief obstacle to the supramental descent into Matter. Because in your inner physical you were sincere and aspiring, the Mother's blessing came upon you and removed something there that was in the way. There is no indication in the dream as to what it was, but something in the lower vital or physical connected with this general defect.

Developing the Ability to See the Mother

Mother said she would try to make you see her because it is not always easy for people to see her even when she is near them. It is also easier to see with eyes shut than with eyes open—though this too is possible—because it is a sight within you that has to open in order to see her. It is not necessary to call her for any fixed number of hours. It is enough if you love her always, remember her often, sit every day a little time before her photograph and call her.

You must never doubt that Mother loves you and you need never weep for that, for her feelings towards you cannot and will not change.

Of course you can take the photographs given to you by the Mother and keep them with you there. 7 May 1935

*

It is not that because the Mother loves you she can show herself to your physical eyes at a distance. The physical eyes of men are not made so as to see in that way. It becomes possible only after long sadhana. First one sees with the eyes closed, because that is easier. When one is accustomed to see with the eyes closed, then afterwards it becomes more possible to see with the eyes open. So you should not be too eager to see at once in the more difficult way. It will come in the end, if you want it, but it does not come at once. Don't mind if it takes time. You must grow first more and more able to feel the Mother near you; that you can do by thinking of her and calling her often. Then seeing will be more easy.

8 May 1935

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Do not mind about the time that it will take—one can't fix the time of these things beforehand. When you feel the Mother's presence more and more, when you begin to see her with the inner sight, then it can come.

It is better not to speak of the Mother to your friends—they do not know her, therefore they can take no interest in her.

The more you live close to the Mother in yourself, the less you will need to speak of her to others.

9 May 1935

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To see you must be more quiet within — then after a little the sight begins to come. An inner sight opens, one begins to see what the outward senses cannot see — and it is then possible to see the Mother there.

Experiences of the Mother and Her Powers

In the morning I was feeling that the mind is quite empty. In the afternoon I saw an intense compact golden light there in front, at some distance outside the mind.

The golden light is the promise of the higher knowledge. For the coming of that knowledge the silence of the frontal exterior mind is necessary.

Today I felt that a part of the mind is or can be always open to the higher light, but realisation has to depend on what comes from below and accordingly change in its character and intensity. Remaining for some time in this condition is like seeing the Divine, now apparent in so many things and movements. I understood how it is to be done, but a long time is necessary in order to be established in this consciousness which has no end. Rising higher also becomes a part of this movement. I feel that all will be done, only time is needed for fixing the new consciousness.

Very good.

All that you write on this page is entirely sound and accurate; it shows that you are getting the *true* knowledge. Most in fact of the day's experiences are signs of the true consciousness coming. The Mother's consciousness with the wideness of the light, the white light in the vital, the golden light in the silence of the outer mind, the change in the vital, the quiet and natural trust and confidence are all signs and circumstances of this opening to the true consciousness. As you say, there must be established

the fixing of this consciousness. The constant openness of part of the mind to the higher light will bring the silence of the whole mind and it is in the silent mind that the true knowledge will come—and indeed it has begun already to come. The change you note in the vital must also continue. 26 March 1930

1

I remember that formerly at night I became conscious of the mind rising upward and then I saw many points all around rising up with aspiration, as if each point was aspiring in a different light that was guided by the Mother. Nowadays I think that if there is one aspiration, there will be constant contact.

Yes—one aspiration to live in the Mother's light and force which bring the true knowledge and the true power. If that aspiration is fulfilled, then all else needed can be fulfilled—all the other lights can be contained in the Divine Light.

17 February 1931

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Today in meditation my entire body opened and spread out infinitely. I felt a slight uneasiness at first, but I could feel the Mother's force. It carried me deeper and deeper into dense darkness through immense worlds of disgust and depression. Though I felt no peace and joy on this long journey, I continued to walk steadily and swiftly. Someone seemed to say, "Do not be depressed. Walk on, proceed. You have to cross through still darker worlds of disgust and depression, but keep on going." Along with this experience, I felt a great force. My heart opened wide; peace and profound contentment descended into it and I saw white light playing everywhere. Crossing another dark world, I saw a vibrant golden light. How powerful and beautiful that golden light was! My body, mind and heart were satisfied. I felt a sense of fearlessness. A sadhak's life is like the life of a warrior. However long the struggle, whatever the obstacles, we will ascend to the Supreme Truth. Is this the right way to observe my problems and difficulties?

Yes, that is the attitude you have to keep. If it is kept, then

there will be no disturbance or only a superficial unease. The experience itself was that of the descent of the Mother's light of Divine Consciousness into domains of being which are ignorant or inconscient and obscure. The Mother herself has descended into these domains and moved through them to bring light there.

10 September 1933

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This morning during my meditation before the Mother, a very tender feeling rose from within me. She was sitting before us with an ocean of compassion and love which she wants to give away unconditionally and without reserve. But we cannot receive it; and instead of reproaching ourselves for our inability, we put the blame on the Mother, pouring our venom on her which she swallows and offers back to us as Amrita in return.

This experience brought me a mixed feeling of peaceful silence, self-reproach and a touch of sadness. It has remained with me all day, but now I apprehend a reaction; for usually my experiences recede, leaving me with depression or emptiness.

What you felt was an opening of the psychic being in your heart and the perceptions that came to you were perfectly true. The reaction you speak of does often come after an experience. But if the depression can be avoided, emptiness does not matter. Up to a certain stage the nature needs after an experience a quiescent period to assimilate experience. One has then not to be depressed but to remain quiet waiting and aspiring for more experience, more opening, a more continuous flow of the truth.

5 September 1934

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Yesterday the whole day I felt an opening far above the head and there the individual Mother became wide and active. I felt the play of various ideas and forces and I felt her assurance that she would manifest in me. But also the intensity led to nervous disturbances. The pressure in my head-nerves was almost unbearable, and even today some disturbance in the physical is there. Is it due to some mistake I have made?

The Mother “manifesting” in you is an ambiguous expression—it is the Mother’s consciousness, the higher consciousness with the light, strength that has to come down in each sadhak, with the Mother’s presence always there. Along with this experience there must have been an attempt at surrender or an initial answer in the lower vital, but as a reaction the nervous disturbance came back—the old lower vital nature not being ready to give up possession reasserted its disturbances which were about to abate.

6 November 1934

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Sometimes when I sit in meditation, I find that instead of myself, the Mother is sitting. Even my body seems to be that. Pray let me know what it means.

Probably you became aware of some part of your being which feels united with the Mother.

24 August 1935

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From the morning I was feeling an intense aspiration to get lost in the Mother’s consciousness. Then I felt my consciousness frequently rising and stationing itself above. Before Pranam I felt as if even the parts near the navel and below were being drawn upwards. After Pranam I experienced for some time a different kind of atmosphere almost concretely around me, so I imagined that the Mother may have put a strong spiritual influence on my subconscious and environmental consciousness.

It is very good. You are right about the subconscious and environmental,—for it is there that the influence must fall so that the consciousness may go upward and spread itself out widely in a free peace, light and joy connecting them down to the subconscious with the higher consciousness. It is then that the loss of the ego in the Mother’s consciousness becomes possible.

25 September 1935

*

Over my head I see a plane of infinite and eternal Peace. The Mother is the Queen of this plane. From there I feel a ceaseless

flow coming down towards me. It first touches the higher being and then the lower parts. When they are prepared, the Peace or silence descends like a current of water which passes through the Brahmic hole.

That is quite correct. In many however it descends in a mass through the whole head and not in a current through the Brahmic hole.

13 February 1936

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The experience of a concrete presence of the Mother in the photograph and the immediate effect on the health are things of the subtle physical acting on the physical mind and body — such things can happen only when the physical consciousness has begun to open — that is why I said it was a sign. Of course the full effects of the spiritual experiences can only come when the whole consciousness is entirely open and receives and responds to them. The presence of the Mother in all can be felt when one begins to have the widening of the consciousness in which it is not shut up in the personal self and the body but is extended everywhere. That comes usually with the descent of the higher consciousness from above. But one can also feel a beginning of it through the opening of the psychic. Then of course anger and jealousy do not remain — they fall away from the sense of spiritual oneness.

3 May 1936

*

X told me that she was in constant touch with the Divine Mother long before she came to Pondicherry. She saw her not only in meditation or vision but before her wide-awake eyes, in a concrete form. She often conversed with her; especially when some difficulty arose, the Mother would come and tell her what to do. If what she says is correct, she must be a very advanced sadhika. How much truth do you find in her experiences and visions?

She has not related them to us. But there is nothing improbable in it. It means simply that she externalised her inner vision and experience so as to see through the physical eyes also, but it was

the inner vision that saw and the inner hearing that heard, not the physical sight or hearing. That is common enough. It does not indicate an "advanced" sadhana, whatever that phrase may mean, but only a special faculty.

I have heard that there are people here who feel the Mother's presence or open directly to her inner knowledge. But this is not the same as seeing her with the physical eyes or having conversations with her.

These things are extremely common among those who practise Yoga everywhere. In the Asram the sadhaks are too intelligent, sceptical and matter of fact to have much of that kind of experience. Even those who might develop it are repressed by the outward-mindedness and physical-mindedness that dominates the atmosphere.

2 July 1936

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The experience you had in your sleep was that of going into the vital world and meeting there one of the hostile vital beings who wished to menace or attack you, but could not attack you because of your call on the Mother. There are two things that must be acquired in these passages through the vital world—first this immediate call on the Mother's protection and, second, the throwing away of all fear. To those who do not fear them, these beings or forces can do nothing—in any meeting or conflict with them the Mother's name is a sure protection even if some fear should come.

The other experience was due to your mind dwelling in the state of the Mother's constant presence and its results. What you say is true, about these results, but it is not easy for the mind or vital or physical consciousness to get or keep the Mother's conscious presence—it is only the psychic that keeps it easily. So the thought brought down a pressure from above and a concentration within in the heart with a healing there and a pain of the yearning within followed by its sweetness. This pain is that of the psychic sorrow or perhaps rather of the psycho-vital

sorrow and yearning — for the psychic sorrow itself is usually sweet and not painful.

2 August 1936

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Nowadays I get an inspiration to see all in the Mother and the Mother in all — to see the Vishwarupa in her as Yashoda saw it in Sri Krishna. Will I ever be able to have this vision?

To see all in the Mother and the Mother in all is a necessary experience in the Yoga. There is no reason why it should not happen.

29 April 1937

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Kindly let me know the significance of my frequently coming to the Mother on the vital plane. I suppose the meeting was sometimes on the supraphysical plane. Did my vital come to the Mother for refreshing its energy, for purification, etc.?

This kind of vital coming to the Mother all the sadhaks have in their sleep and dreams, if they are a little conscious there. Even those who are not sadhaks or others who do not know her come, but they are not aware of it. The vital plane is a supraphysical plane — the vital moves about in its own plane and is not limited by the physical mind or its consciousness or experience.

13 July 1937

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Kindly enlighten me as to what is the object and what the result of my coming to the Mother on the vital plane during sleep or dream.

It may be for any object or without any specific object — there is no rule in such matters.

14 July 1937

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This morning I saw within me a flash of golden light and felt the vivid presence of the Mother. I felt myself to be within her. I felt all to be within me and this "me" was something wider than I as a man.

To have that is very important — to get into something wider than the I as a man — into one's own cosmic Self and universal consciousness — in the Mother.

Hearing the Mother's Voice

In the morning at Pranam while putting my head in the Mother's lap, I heard some voice. I felt it to be the Mother's. Did she really speak or was it an illusion?

It may have been that the Mother conveyed something to you.
At this moment she does not remember. 27 April 1933

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When is one said to be ready to hear the Mother's voice from within?

When one has equality, discrimination and sufficient Yogic experience — otherwise any voice may be mistaken for the Mother's.

Can one rely solely upon the voice from within from the beginning?

If it is the Mother's voice; but you have to be sure of that.

7 July 1933

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Is it true that when one tries to do something which is contrary to the Divine's Will, the Mother tells him inwardly not to do it?

It is the discriminating mind or the psychic that tells.

Is it true that to hear the Mother's voice inwardly and to recognise it as hers is not difficult?

No, to hear and recognise the Mother's voice within is not so easy.

Is one who has gone far on the path able to hear her voice?

There is no rule.

8 July 1933

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In *Bases of Yoga* one reads: "It is with the Mother who is always with you and in you that you converse."¹ Could you tell me briefly how a sadhak converses with the Mother?

One hears the voice or the thought speaking inwardly and one answers inwardly. Only it is not always safe for the sadhak if there is any insincerity of ego, desire, vanity, ambition in him — for then he may construct a voice or thought in his mind and ascribe it to the Mother and it will say to him pleasing and flattering things which mislead him. Or he may mistake some other Voice for the Mother's.

2 July 1936

Visions, Voices and Progress in Sadhana

One who can have faith without visions and voices is much farther on the true inner path than one who needs them to have faith.

Visions and voices are not meant for creating faith; they are effective only if one has faith already.

Visions and voices are often indulged in unnecessarily by people. Sometimes they interpret them wrongly or give them too much value. Thus they nourish their egos. But this capacity is by no means a sign of progress.

What do you mean by progress? The Mother spent many years entering the occult worlds and learning all that was to be learnt there. All that time she was making no progress? She sees things always when she goes into trance. Her capacity is a thing of no value? Because a great number of people don't know how to

¹ See the letter of 7 December 1933 on pages 311–12. That letter was published, in a revised form, in *Bases of Yoga* in 1936.—Ed.

use these faculties or misuse them or give them excessive value or nourish their ego by them, does it follow that the faculties themselves have no Yogic use or value? 8 July 1936

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When I said, "But this capacity is by no means a sign of progress", I meant that the capacity *by itself* is not a sign of spiritual progress. I forgot to write "*by itself*" and this changed the whole meaning.

Even by itself, it is a progress in the development of the consciousness though it may not carry with it any spiritualisation of the nature. 9 July 1936

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At a certain stage of the sadhana, everybody receives some occult opening or other: visions, voices, subtle smells or touches. I was told that each occult opening helps one, but none of them has helped me in my practical sadhana.

I do not know what you mean by practical sadhana. If one develops the occult faculty and the occult experience and knowledge, these things can be of great use, therefore practical. In themselves they are a proof of opening of the inner consciousness and also help to open it farther — though they are not indispensable for that.

Those who have the faculty of vision may not use it properly or take full advantage of it. Take X. She claims that the Divine Mother comes to her and tells her how to solve her difficulties. But if the Mother ever tried to interfere with those defects and imperfections, I suppose X would not like it.

I don't suppose she would — the supposition is rather gratuitous and assumes that she is false and insincere. Every sadhak has a good amount of defects and imperfections and the majority of them seem as unable to get rid of them as X. 9 July 1936

The Mother's Help in Difficulties

Difficulties and the Mother's Help

Not to be disturbed, to remain quiet and confident is the right attitude, but it is necessary also to receive the help of the Mother and not to shrink back for any reason from her solicitude. One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account; for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged. Yoga is not an easy path and the total change of the nature cannot be done in a day.

27 May 1931

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Throw aside this weakness. The Mother's help is there—keep yourself quiet and calm and face the difficulties with the courage a sadhak must have when seeking the Divine.

22 November 1933

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Once one has entered the path of Yoga, there is only one thing to do, to fix oneself in the resolution to go to the end whatever happens, whatever difficulties arise. None really gets the fulfilment in Yoga by his own capacity—it is by the greater Force that stands over you that it will come—and it is the call, persistent through all vicissitudes, to that Force, by which the fulfilment will come. Even when you cannot aspire actively, keep yourself turned to the Mother for the help to come—that is the one thing to do always.

3 January 1934

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X says that while giving us flowers the Mother always says something to us silently about future difficulties, dangers or falls. Is it so?

Mother never thinks of future difficulties, falls or dangers. Her concentration is always on help and uplift, not on difficulty and downfall.

8 January 1934

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All the Mother's love and help will remain with you unchanged as before. The whole difficulty comes from a vital movement which wants to possess in the wrong way, by comparison with others, instead of living fully in the close relation of your heart and soul with the Mother. It is the same in your relation with X. But this is a defect common in human nature and many here have it. It is not a thing that cannot be removed from the nature. Indeed since your heart and soul want to be free from it, it cannot but go. Do not be discouraged therefore when it returns owing to old habit. With the Mother's love and help what your heart and soul desire will surely come and the wrong obscuring element disappear.

25 September 1935

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Is it true that the nearer the descent of the Supermind the greater will be the difficulties of those in whom it is to come down?

It is true, unless they are so surrendered to the Mother, so psychic, plastic, free from ego that the difficulties are spared to them.

4 October 1935

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You must not yield to impatience and let it bring thoughts of the old kind that cannot possibly help the working but must impede it. These thoughts that come are not true. Those who left, left because they mingled their own ego with the sadhana — ambition, vanity and other wrong movements — and wanted to use the force that sadhana gave them for these things, — or

they had to go because the pull of the old life, family, home, action in the world outside was too strong for them. Also the idea that Mother is leading all others happily along and they are becoming perfect and only you are left out, is the usual delusion that comes when one allows despondency to rise. Almost all have these difficulties to overcome and these difficulties rise again and again till the inner being is sufficiently developed to make them impossible. There is therefore no reason to suppose that others will be able and you will not be able.

The change of the old habitual movements of the nature cannot be done in a single stroke; the inner consciousness has to grow in such a way that finally it occupies the outer being also and renders these things impossible. What I have written to you about these things and the attitude to be taken is the knowledge that we have and the truth of the human nature and of sadhana confirmed by our and by all spiritual experience. It is your outer being that has these reactions and not your inner nature. You have only to trust in the Mother and follow what I say and these difficulties will be worked out of the outer being and return no more; but patience is necessary because it takes time, not in you alone, but in all. Do not allow such thoughts as the idea "what is the use of spiritual experiences, since my nature is not changed" etc., for these are thoughts of the mind's ignorance. Recover the attitude and the resolution that you had taken and were developing. Keep the will and the faith and in quietude and patience let the Mother work all out in you.

26 March 1936

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Be sure that the Mother will be always with you to carry you upon the path. Difficulties come and difficulties go, but, she being with you, the victory is sure.

18 July 1936

Difficulties and the Mother's Force

What is the means of dealing day by day with difficulties?

Equality, rejection, calling in of the Mother's force.

1 August 1933

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When difficulties arise, remain quiet within and call down the Mother's Force to remove them.

26 August 1933

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In my sadhana I have received only what I prayed for. I have yearned greatly for what has come to me. The Divine's reasonless Mercy is not so important to me as Tapasya, the capacity to open to Him and hold Him. This is my belief.

It was by your personal efforts without guidance that you got into difficulties and into a heated condition in which you could not meditate etc. I asked you to drop the effort and remain quiet and you did so. My intention was that by your remaining quiet, it would be possible for the Mother's Force to work in you and establish a better starting-point and a course of initial experiences. It was what was beginning to come; but if your mind again becomes active and tries to arrange the sadhana for itself, then disturbances are likely to come. The Divine Guidance works best when the psychic is open and in front (yours was beginning to open), but it can also work even when the sadhak is either not conscious of it or else knows it only by its results.

8 September 1933

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Is there no way for me to follow your path happily? I will not be able to do anything for the Mother in this life, so I simply try to stay away from the defects of previous lives. Why can't I understand anything? Why can't the Mother pull me towards her? What is it I feel hurt about and worry about? Can you explain it to me?

All this is of no utility — complainings, questionings etc. of this kind should be put aside. You have to go on quietly, without depression or trouble, receiving the Mother's forces, allowing them to work, rejecting all that stands in their way, but not

troubled by difficulty or defects in yourself or by any delay or slowness in the working.

25 October 1933

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This kind of grief and despondency are the worst obstacles one can raise up in the sadhana — they ought not to be indulged in. What one cannot do oneself one can get done by calling the Mother's force. To receive that and let it work in you is the true means of success in the sadhana.

1934

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Do not brood over your difficulties. Leave them to the Mother and let her Force work them out of you.

22 March 1935

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In such conditions try to remain as quiet as possible within and, if you cannot call the Mother, think of her and expect the help of the Force.

These attacks are always on the outer part of the consciousness covering up the inner being. One should always try to detach (separate) the inner being and look at the attack as a movement of the surface.

13 June 1935

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We will send you help, so that you may get rid of the obstruction.

Never allow this idea "I am not able" or "I am not doing enough" to come and vex you; it is a tamasic suggestion and brings depression and depression opens the way to the attacks of the wrong forces. Your position should be, "Let me do what I can; the Mother's Force is there, the Divine is there to see that in due time all will be done."

4 November 1935

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There has been no letter from you for three nights. Whatever difficulty has come across, keep your faith and reliance on the Mother and lay open whatever opposes from outside or within

to the working of the Mother's Force.

25 March 1936

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Many times I feel hatred towards my own self because I neither have the ability nor the skill in me to do anything. I start doing some work and then leave it undone. I have no perseverance. What is the reason for this?

These come from a certain restlessness in the vital. Most people put a control of the will on these things and try to get rid of them in that way. But they disappear fully only when the inner being is awakened and a new Force (the Mother's) begins fully to work on the nature.

9 April 1937

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Do not admit these suggestions of despair or impatience. Give time for the Mother's force to act.

12 June 1937

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Whatever difficulties still remain, be sure that they will be surmounted. There is no need for the outer being to be nervous—the Mother's Force and the devotion within you will be sufficient to overcome all that stands in the way.

Difficulties and the Mother's Grace

You must throw all that away. Such depression can only make you shut to what Mother is giving you. There is absolutely no good reason for such an attitude. The existence of difficulties is a known thing in the Yoga. That is no reason for questioning the final victory or the effectivity of the Divine Grace.

4 February 1933

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Can it be believed that the Mother's Grace is acting even when the difficulties do not disappear?

In that case everybody might say that all my difficulties must

disappear at once, I must attain to perfection immediately and without difficulties, otherwise it proves that the Mother's Grace is not with me.

20 July 1933

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You should not yield to sorrow or despair — there is no reason why you should. The Mother's grace has not been withdrawn from you for a moment. Do not allow the attacks of others to shake you like this — you know well the motives from which they act — and for the rest they are not going to pursue any farther the course which a fit of passion dictated to them. The protection will be with you and you need not fear or sorrow any longer. Put your trust in the Divine and shake off all this like a nightmare that has passed. Believe that our love and grace are with you.

Turning to the Mother for Help

It is the physical mind that feels too inert — but if some part of the being turns to the Mother, that is enough to bring the help.

25 January 1934

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I feel a sense of tiredness, depression, sadness, but all the same I stick to you. I am quiet sometimes, but still feel sad. What should I do?

Remain firm and turned in the one direction — towards the Mother.

The sense of sadness and depression does not want to go — it comes and goes as it likes. Tell me what to do.

When the habit of these moods (depression or revolt) has been formed, they cannot be got rid of at once. There are three ways of doing it — (1) to strengthen your own will, so that nothing can come or stay as *it* likes but only as *you* like; (2) to think of something else, plunge the mind in some healthy activity; (3) to turn to the Mother and call in her force. One can do any

of these or all, but even in doing them, it will take a little time
to get rid of the habit.

1934

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If meditation brings a headache, you should not meditate. It is a mistake to think that meditation is indispensable to the sadhana. There are so many who do not do it, but they are near to the Mother and progress as well as those who have long meditations.

The one thing necessary is to be turned to the Mother and that is all that is needed. Do not fear or be sad, but let the Mother do quietly her work in you and through you and all will be well.

16 March 1935

Personal Effort and the Mother's Help

The Mother's help is always there for those who are willing to receive it. But you must be conscious of your vital nature, and the vital nature must consent to change. It is no use merely observing that it is unwilling and that, when thwarted, it creates depression in you. Always the vital nature is not at first willing and always when it is thwarted or asked to change, it creates this depression by its revolt or refusal of consent. You have to insist till it recognises the truth and is willing to be transformed and to accept the Mother's help and grace. If the mind is sincere and the psychic aspiration complete and true, the vital can always be made to change.

15 July 1932

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As for the feeling of people that there must be something bad in you, it does not arise merely from your relations with X. The Mother and I do not speak of "good" and "bad" in this way; we look only at what helps or hinders the sadhana. There is nothing in you that is not in many other sadhaks. What makes people hesitate to help you is your subjection to vital moods — all this weeping, self-starvation, uncertain temper; your unsteadiness — for today you accept help, tomorrow you reject it; your want of

trust in others — which you have often expressed in your letters; your quickness to take offence, your readiness to suspect people's motives, especially in their behaviour towards you. Others have these faults, but they try to control them. You, when a mood like these comes upon you, seem to yield to it and let it have free course.

If you want to get on in your sadhana and if you want people to feel comfortable with you and ready to help you, you must get rid of these vital moods and defects — you must put a control on yourself and try to change. The Mother's Force is there to help you, but there must be your active consent and cooperation, your own steady will and endeavour.

1 November 1933

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I cannot do anything myself so long as the inertia in me is so strong. May I ask, what does the Mother mean to do with the inertia in me?

If Mother's "doing" with the inertia were sufficient, it would have been done long ago and also the supramental down in you. The question is not what the Mother is going to do with it but what you are going to do with it.

29 November 1936

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These ideas are wrong suggestions that you must throw away. There is no reason why you should be able to do nothing in this life or all should be postponed to another. It is in this life that you have been called and are to reach the Divine. The Mother has not left you to yourself. But I think it is advisable that you should spend some time daily in concentration to keep the conscious connection and also write more often; if not every day, yet every second or third day.

17 December 1936

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It is not that I want you to do all by your own strength; the Mother's force is there. I should like you however to persist in meditation and the endeavour to be quiet within; even if at

present there is no definite self-understanding or experience, this is the way to open the nature to them; we will try to do the rest for you.

20 December 1936

Opening to the Mother in Difficulty

There is nothing wrong in your experience or insincere in your expression of it; to write is helpful and it is our wish that you should go on doing it. An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical parts of nature. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true condition, and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause or the thing that needs to be set right.

4 March 1932

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The attack of darkness is over, but my body is still restless and my consciousness troubled. I have lost connection with your peace, the peace that used to make the feelings quiet and the body restful. But I can still aspire and I am hopeful to get back your touch again.

However strong the attack may be and even if it overcomes for the time being, still it will rapidly pass away if you have formed the habit of opening to the Mother. The peace will come back, if you remain quiet and keep yourself open to it and to the Force. Once something of the Truth has shown itself within you, it will always, even if for a time heavily clouded over with wrong movements, shine out again like the sun in heaven. Therefore persevere with confidence and never lose courage.

14 March 1932

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You should not allow yourself to get upset by these small things. If when the movements you complain of come, you remain quiet

and open to the Mother and call her, after a time you will find a change beginning to come in you. Meditation is not enough; think of the Mother and offer your work and action to her, that will help you better.

7 April 1932

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The play of the mental and vital defects in the human nature which belongs to the Ignorance is allowed—as also the attacks and suggestions of the Asuric forces—so long as there is anything in the nature which responds to these things. If they rise in you in the presence of the Mother, it is because then a strong pressure is put on them so that they have either to go out or to put up a fight for existence. The remedy is to open to the Mother only and to reject entirely and at all times all other forces, and to reject them most when they become most active. Faith, sincerity, perseverance will do the rest.

16 November 1932

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Yesterday I prayed, “O Divine Mother, how can I realise that I am always guided by Thee and that Thy presence is in all things and everywhere. I pray that I may love Thee and be Thy child and an instrument for Thy work.”

Yes. The more one is open to the Mother’s action, the more easily difficulties get solved and the right thing is done.

21 September 1934

The Mother’s Protection

The Mother puts her protection round all the sadhakas, but if by their own act or attitude they go out of the circle of the protection there may be undesirable consequences.

1 April 1933

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I think that one observes the rules here either because one feels it is for one’s spiritual good or because it is better, for love of the Mother, not to do otherwise and thus go out of her protection.

It is precisely that — one immediately goes out of the protection.

8 June 1933

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I was invited by friends to go to a restaurant and accepted.
Later I learned that you were opposed to the idea. What should
we — those of us who live outside the Asram — do?

The Mother has made an arrangement with a view to all the occult forces and the best possible conditions for the protection of the sadhaks from certain forces of death and disease etc. It cannot work perfectly because the sadhaks themselves have not the right attitude towards food and kindred vital-physical things. But still there is a protection. If however the sadhaks go outside her formation, it must be on their own responsibility — the Mother does not and cannot sanction it. But this arrangement is for the Asram and not for those who are outside.

14 July 1933

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When the Mother's protection is put around a person, how does he go out of it?

By desire, wrong thoughts, wrong actions, wrong feelings — by revolt, pride, ambition, lust or any other vital indulgence.

16 July 1933

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Last night I dreamt that in my native village I entered a house where a madman came to attack me. Being afraid of the madman, I ran away for I have always been afraid of madmen, especially violent ones. My movement was slow, but along the way I found a stick and got rid of the attacker.

It was a dream of the vital plane where all kinds of dangers occur until you get courage to face them. If there is no fear or if there is the protection of the Mother (which becomes manifest by remembering or calling her) then these dangers come to nothing. It is the fear of madmen that brought the thing in the vital; such

things as this fear have to be thrown out of the nature.

8 September 1933

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All would like the Mother's protection to remain with them; but perhaps certain conditions have to be fulfilled to allow her to encircle them fully?

There are very few who allow it. There is a general protection around all, but most go out of it by their attitude, thoughts or actions or open the way to other forces. 24 August 1934

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If a sadhak has the Mother's circle of protection around him, I don't think he will have gloom, depression, doubt or anything hostile to the Divine.

These things may try to come but they will not be able to enter or stay. 24 August 1934

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Yesterday I went with X and Y for an outing. We bought plantains from the market and ate them. After our return I began to feel out of sorts and by the time of meditation the body appeared to be weak and a little feverish. Was my going out and eating plantains inadvisable?

It is better to let the Mother know when you go far out like that so that it may be with her protection that you go. The eating of plantains from the bazaar was indeed a mistake—Mother has several times warned against it and X knows that. The body often becomes sensitive at a certain stage of the Yoga, but there should at the same time be the development of a higher Force which will protect and push back all attacks upon it. 1934

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These things that come to frighten you are merely impressions thrown on you by small vital forces which want to prevent you (by making you nervous) pushing on in sadhana. They can really

do nothing to you, only you must reject all fear. Keep always this thought when these things come: "The Mother's protection is with me, nothing bad can happen"; for when there is the psychic opening and one puts one's faith in the Mother, that is sufficient to ward these things off. Many sadhaks learn, when they have alarming dreams, to call the Mother's name in the dream itself and then the things that menace them become helpless or cease. You must therefore refuse to be intimidated and reject these impressions with contempt. If there is anything frightening, call down the Mother's protection.

The heat you felt was probably due to some difficulty in the force coming down below the centre between the eyes where it has been working up till now. When such sensations or the unease you once felt or similar things come, you must not be alarmed, but remain quiet and let the difficulty pass.

What you had before that, the moonlight in the forehead, was this working in the centre there between the eyebrows, the centre of the inner mind, will and vision. The moonlight you saw is the light of spirituality and it was this that was entering into your mind through the centre, with the effect of the widening in the heart like a sky filled with moonlight. Afterwards came some endeavour to prepare the lower part of the mind whose centre is in the throat and join it with the inner mind and make it open; but there was some difficulty, as is very usually the case, which caused the heat. It was probably the fire of tapas, Agni, trying to open the way to this centre.

The experience of being taken up into the sky is a very common one and it means an ascent of the consciousness into a higher world of light and peace.

The idea that you must go more and more within and turn wholly to the Mother is quite right. It is when there is no attachment to outward things for their own sake and all is only for the Mother and the life through the inner psychic being is centred in her that the best condition is created for the spiritual realisation.

11 November 1935

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Fear in these experiences is a thing one must get rid of; if there is any danger, a call to the Mother is sufficient, but in reality there is none — for the protection is there.

29 November 1935

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This morning around eight o'clock I heard a great crash. I ran out and found our X sitting on the footpath with blood coming out of the wound on his forehead. The wheels of his cycle were under the wheel of a car. Could the Mother not have foreseen the possibility of this accident and prevented it? Or could it not be prevented because X had in some manner gone out of the zone of her protection?

It was not possible to prevent the accident. When the danger comes, a call to the Mother is the first thing to be done, that makes the general protection at once effective. X was in too externalised a state to do that and he did the very opposite thing to what should have been done — trying to get away in front of the car instead of behind it. But the true cause was something more internal — one of those choices made by the inner being (not necessarily known to the conscious mind) which bring these things as a response.

27 January 1936

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The experience you had of the power of the Name and the protection is that of everyone who has used it with the same faith and reliance. To those who call from the heart for the protection, it cannot fail. Do not allow any outward circumstance to shake the faith in you; for nothing gives greater strength than this faith to go through and arrive at the goal. Knowledge and tapasya, whatever their force, have a less sustaining power — faith is the strongest staff for the journey.

The protection is there over you and the watchful love of the Mother. Rely upon it and let your being open more and more to it — then it will repel attacks and always uphold you.

8 October 1936

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It is not because the Mother has withdrawn her protection—she has not done that. It is more likely that it [*the difficulty*] came because you have been going too much out of your inner being and externalising yourself. It is better to draw back within again and recover the inner calm and peace.

Calling the Mother in Difficulty

Why this bad feeling? I am feeling all bad today.

When in difficulties always remain as quiet within as possible and call the Mother.

Surely the Mother's force is there to transform you and it will prevail.

You must progress to a point at which there is always something within which in spite of any surface disturbance is always quiet, unshaken, holding on to the Mother—then these things will no longer be able to cloud the inner consciousness as now.

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Plenty of people have this condition (it is human nature) and there is naturally a way of coming out of it—having full faith in the Mother to quiet the inner mind (even if the outer continues to be troublesome) and call in it the Mother's Peace and Force, which is always there above you, into the Adhar. Once that is there, consciously, to keep yourself open to it and let it go on working with a full adhesion, with a constant support of your consent, with a constant rejection of all that is not that, till all the inner being is tranquillised and filled with the Mother's Force, Peace, Joy, Presence—then the outer nature will be obliged to follow suit in its turn.

8 May 1933

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In a dream I saw a dull painting with an expanse of water in the background, and in the centre a temple with trees in front. As I was looking at it, I went on calling the Mother and the painting began changing—the waters actually began to move and white light was falling on them here and there until the

whole picture was sparkling like silver. Then I woke up. Does this mean that some light will come into the obscurity in me?

Yes, it is a symbol,— the expanse of water means the ordinary outward consciousness which is obscure and dull, the temple is the psychic centre behind it. By calling the Mother her white light comes upon the dark consciousness and begins to change the darkness into lustre.

27 May 1933

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For about a month I have the feeling that devotion, love and aspiration for the Divine have disappeared from me. I feel this way even during the morning pranam. Mother, I pray to Thee to shower Thy Grace and inspire me to have devotion, love and aspiration for Thee once again. What may be the reason for this?

You may have allowed your consciousness to go too much outward and get taken up by ordinary things. It is usually when the outer physical consciousness covers up the inner being that this happens. The aspiration is not gone, but it no longer rises to the surface. If you remain very quiet inwardly and call to the Mother, it should come back.

13 July 1933

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When I awoke this morning, I found the atmosphere surcharged with the Mother's presence. The air around me, the cot on which I lay, everything was filled with her presence. A burning aspiration was in my heart. The consciousness there was aspiring intensely, flapping its wings like a caged bird, trying to leave the body and unite with the Mother present everywhere. After some time it seemed to me that although I was in the body I was free, free of every limitation, but helpless, strengthless, drifting away and exposed to the hostile forces. Then I saw the red, rolling, frowning eyes of X, threatening me. Helpless in this limitless space, I called the Mother and the atmosphere was clear.

What happened in your experience was that the vital being got free from the body through its desire to unite with the Mother

(you met the Mother on the border between the vital and physical) and lived with its own life independent of the body. It entered into the vital world and, not being sheltered any longer in the body, felt helpless at first, till it called the Mother. The appearance of X there might possibly have been some part of the vital of X himself, but was more probably a vital being in his shape, perhaps the very vital being who has been troubling him. When you go into the vital world, you meet many such things, —the one sufficient protection is to call the Mother.

7 September 1933

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This morning after pranam I felt a sudden uprush of impatience, restlessness, uneasiness and a quick, strong beating of the pulse. Confusion was there too. I sat down and after a long time the dark forces began to grow less, bringing a normal state again. My pulse also became normal. Is it due to the Mother's action? Have I been able to make some place for her in the lower parts of my being?

It is the forces of the Ignorance that begin to lay siege and then make a mass attack. Every time such an attack can be defeated and cast out, there is a clearance in the Adhar, a new field gained for the Mother in the mind, vital or physical or the adjacent parts of the being. That the place in the vital occupied by the Mother is increasing is shown by the fact that you are now offering a strong resistance to these sieges that used formerly to overpower you altogether.

In the afternoon all my problems started coming to the front. I felt that they had become too big a burden for me to bear. Then I felt an opening in the heart, and I opened up a conversation with the Mother. I told her all my joys and sorrows and I got some consolation and strength.

That is good. To be able to call the Mother's presence or force at such times is the best way to meet the difficulty.

Was all this mere imagination of the heart and mind? Was I in touch with Mother? Did she hear the language of my heart?

It is with the Mother who is always with you and in you that you converse. The only thing is to hear aright, so that no other voice can come in between.

7 December 1933

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To call to the Mother always is the main thing and with that to aspire and assent to the Light when it comes, to reject and detach oneself from desire and any dark movement. But if one cannot do these other things successfully, then call and still call.

The Mother's force is there with you even when you do not feel it; remain quiet and persevere.

15 September 1934

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When X complained to me about her difficulty, I told her that it could be removed by calling the Mother's help. But she argued that there was no hope for the calls of a newcomer like herself to be heard by the Mother. There were so many calls coming from the older and advanced sadhaks that fresh calls from a beginner like herself would be but calls in the wilderness and go unheard in that clamour. I replied that if the Mother does not come in answer to our calls she must have her reasons; possibly she has more important work to do than to act according to our bidding. Why should we insist that she should leave that work and attend to us? The Mother has never been known to fail in answering when a real call is sent to her straight from the heart, for the very force in the call presupposes her presence. When I told this to X, I felt a strong pressure and vibrations from the centre of my forehead downwards between the eyebrows. What is the reason for this?

X's reasonings are not very sound; yours are better if not altogether flawless. The Mother is not limited by the physical mind, so even if she has "more important" work to do, that would not in the least stand in the way of her listening to a call from the wilderness or anywhere else. Also spiritual things do not go

by seniority; so why should the clamour of "older cases" keep her? She can be and is with all who need her. So your "Mother does not come? will not come?" is not quite to the point, but the rest of your answer is. Mother is there even now and working in you, it is only your inner vision and feeling that are not opened so that you cannot see or feel her.

What came down to the centre of the forehead was the answer, let us say the touch of the Mother's presence,—her consciousness, her force working in you to open the centre of the inner vision. For in the centre of the forehead between the eyebrows is the centre of the inner mind, inner will, the inner vision and when that opens one begins to see and know what is to the physical eye invisible and to the surface mind unknowable.

11 October 1935

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It is an obsession from the subconscious physical bringing back habitual thoughts, "I can't call rightly—I have no real aspiration" etc.; the depression, the memory etc. are from the same source. It is no use indulging in these ideas. If you cannot call the Mother in what you think the right way, call her in any way — if you can't call her, think of her with the will to be rid of these things. Don't worry yourself with the idea whether you have true aspiration or not—the psychic being wants and that is sufficient. The rest is the Divine Grace, on which one must steadfastly rely—one's own merit, virtue or capacity is not the thing that brings the realisation.

I shall put the force to rid you of this obsession in any case, but if you can abandon these habitual ideas, it will make the disappearance of the attack easier.

4 January 1937

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It is always best in these difficulties to tell the Mother and call for her help. It is probably something in the vital that needs somebody to protect and care for—but you must accustom yourself to the idea that it is not needed and the best thing is to give the person to the care of the Mother—offer the object of

your affection to her.

15 January 1937

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As to the experience, certainly X's call for help did reach the Mother, even though all the details she relates in her letter might not have been present to the Mother's physical mind. Always calls of this kind are coming to the Mother, sometimes a hundred close upon each other and always the answer is given. The occasions are of all kinds, but whatever the need that occasions the call, the Force is there to answer it. That is the principle of this action on the occult plane. It is not of the same kind as an ordinary human action and does not need a written or oral communication from the one who calls; an interchange of psychic communication is quite sufficient to set the Force at work. At the same time it is not an impersonal Force and the suggestion of a divine energy that is there ready to answer and satisfy anybody who calls it is not at all relevant here. It is something personal to the Mother and if she had not this power and this kind of action she would not be able to do her work; but this is quite different from the outside practical working on the material plane where the methods must necessarily be different, although the occult working and the material working can and do join and the occult power give to the material working its utmost efficacy. As for the one who is helped not feeling the force at work, his knowing might help very substantially the effective working, but it need not be indispensable; the effect can be there even if he does not know how the thing is done. For instance, in your work in Calcutta and elsewhere my help has been always with you and I do not think it can be said that it was ineffective; but it was of the same occult nature and could have had the same effect even if you had not been conscious in some way that my help was with you.

24 March 1949

Praying to the Mother

You say, "When one is a sadhak the prayer should be for the inner things belonging to the sadhana and for outer things

only so far as they are necessary for that and for the Divine work." This latter portion about prayer for outer things is not clear to me. Can you kindly explain?

All depends on whether the outer things are sought for one's own convenience, pleasure, profit etc., or as part of the spiritual life, necessary for the success of the work, the development and fitness of the instruments etc. It is a question mainly of inner attitude. If for instance you pray for money for buying nice food to please the palate, that is not a proper prayer for a sadhak; if you pray for money to give to the Mother and help her work, then it is legitimate.

I quote several types of prayers which I offer and shall be grateful to know which of them are outer or inner, right or wrong, helpful or hindrance, or what amendment to them can make them pure:

1. In the night-time when I sit to read and an untimely attack of sleep comes, I pray to the Mother to be freed from the attack.

If your reading is part of the sadhana, that is all right.

2. When I go to sleep, I pray to the Mother for her Force to take over my sadhana during the sleep, to make my sleep conscious and luminous, to protect me during the sleep, to keep me conscious of the Mother.

3. When I wake up any time in the sleep, I pray to the Mother to be with me and protect me.

These two are part of the sadhana.

4. While going out for a walk and during it, I pray to the Mother to give me force to take more exercise and to gain more strength and health and I thank the Mother for the help.

If strength and health are requested as being necessary for the sadhana and the development of the perfection of the instrument it is all right.

5. When I see any dog on the way while walking, I at once pray to the Mother to protect me from its attack and remove my fear.

A call for protection is always permissible. The removal of fear is part of the sadhana.

6. When I go for food, I pray for the Mother's Force to help me to offer every morsel to the Mother, to get everything easily digested, to make a growth of complete equality and detachment in my consciousness enabling me to take any food with equal Rasa of universal Ananda without any insistence or seeking or greed or desire.

This is again part of the sadhana.

7. When I go for work, I pray for the Mother's Force to take over my work, help me and make me do it well and carefully with love, devotion and pleasure, with the remembrance of the Mother and the feeling of being supported and helped by her without ego or desire.

This also.

8. During the work also when there is a pause, I pray for force, help and constant remembrance.

This also.

9. When any bad or impure thought, seeing or sensation comes into me, I pray for its removal and purity.

This also.

10. When I am reading, I try to pray when possible to understand all quickly, to grasp and absorb completely.

If it is as sadhana or for the development of the instrument, it is all right.

11. When I commit any mistake in the work, I pray to be more conscious, alert and unerring.

This also is part of the sadhana.

12. When I go to the post office to register a parcel of Prasad to my friend, I pray to have the parcel accepted immediately and avoid any delay.

That can be done, if avoidance of waste of time is considered as part of the right regulation of the life of sadhana.

13. When I sit down for meditation, I pray for Mother's Force to take over my meditation and make it deep, steady, concentrated and free from all attacks of troubling thoughts, vital restlessness, etc.

This is part of the sadhana.

14. In depression, difficulty, wrong suggestions, doubt, inertia, on any occasion or happening I pray to the Mother to have courage, keep faith, face them and overcome them.

This also.

15. At all other times as far as I can, I pray to the Mother to fill me with her peace, power, light etc., or offer any other kind of required prayer, and thank her for supporting, strengthening and sustaining me.

This also.

16 September 1938

The Mother's Help and the Hostile Forces

There are times when I think myself to be a simple vessel and imagine that things coming from the outside have no importance, for the adhar can be purified and what is not wanted can either be thrown out or allowed to end in a natural way. But at other times I feel that every outside contact may have harmful effects, and care and tapasya are needed to avoid confusion. I want to know which view is correct.

It is not possible to make a fixed rule covering all cases and circumstances; sometimes one has to remain quiet waiting for the Mother's light and force to act, sometimes it is necessary to use an active tapasya. But one thing is always necessary, to refuse to accept the adverse forces and suggestions that try to disorganise and disturb the system; for the basis of the Yoga must be peace, quiet, clarity, self-possession and nothing should be allowed to invade and upset the basis and substitute confusion and disorder.

13 September 1931

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It might be charitable to warn X not to listen to imbecile remarks [*about the Mother*] of this kind, from whomsoever they may come, and, if he hears them, to do nothing to propagate them. He had been progressing extremely well because he opened himself to the Mother; but if he allows stupidities like that to enter his mind, it may influence him, close him to the Mother and stop his progress.

As for Y, if he said and thought a thing like that, it explains why he has been suffering in health so much lately. If one makes oneself a mouthpiece of the hostile forces and lends oneself to their falsehoods, it is not surprising that something in him should get out of order.

7 January 1932

*

I see now the damage I have done by my disobedience in work. I must go about my work consciously, performing it as a service to the Mother. I must work with full concentration and feel a connection with the Mother.

The difficulty this time must have come from this very act of distrust and disobedience. For distrust and disobedience are like falsehood (they are themselves a falsity, based on false ideas and impulses), — they interfere in the action of the Power, prevent it from being felt or working fully and diminish the force of the Protection. It was the same thing that made you lose touch for a while — for the adverse vital Formation always makes use of

these wrong movements to cloud the consciousness. Not only in your inward concentration, but in your outward acts and movements you must take the right attitude. If you do that and put everything under the Mother's guidance, you will find that difficulties begin to diminish or are much more easily got over and things become steadily smoother.

Now that these things have happened you should learn from them and feel the necessity of being, as you say, conscious in your work. In your work and acts you must do the same as in your concentration. Open to the Mother, put them under her guidance, call in the peace, the supporting Power, the protection and, in order that they may work, reject all wrong influences that might come in their way by creating wrong, careless or unconscious movements.

Follow this principle and your whole being will become one, under one rule, in the peace and sheltering Power and Light.

17 March 1932

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At 4.30 in the afternoon, while serving vegetables in the Dining Room, I suddenly fell into a very unhappy condition. My consciousness entered into a world of obscurity and uneasiness and wild vital forces. Innumerable hostile suggestions pierced my helpless consciousness. Then the form of X appeared and he threatened me, saying that my fate would be the same as his—I would have to leave the Asram. Later, while in this condition I passed by Y's room and felt that the Mahakali forces of the Mother were around me; I also felt that her very name would create fear in the hostile forces. As I thought of her with feeling, suddenly all was clear.

It is the Force that attacks everyone in the Asram who can at all be attacked in this way—the X form is merely an appearance which it took for the sake of having a more concrete effect. It is a vital violence which suggests always a catastrophic breaking of the personal sadhana or of my work. Such a Force is naturally met by the power of Mahakali. You felt it while passing Y's room because it is always there with Y, and it is by that that he meets the suggestions of this Force when it comes. The Mother's name

called with faith is usually enough to meet it. It disappeared at once because it is a Falsehood which cannot stand once the light of the Truth touches it. It prevailed with X because he welcomed its suggestions of pride, revolt, hostility to the Mother, even clung to them — otherwise it would have had no chance.

2 October 1933

*

This hostile force is still trying to attack me and it also wants to harm you and the Mother. When I utter your name and Mother's name, it tries to finish me and make wrong impressions about Mother and turn me against her. Why is it still troubling me?

This Force is one that is there to break the Yoga if it can — it is not only you it attacks but all who do the sadhana. It hates the Mother and myself because we bring the Light into the consciousness of the physical world and it wants to keep the physical world in darkness. It knows that the only way it can succeed in preventing the success of the sadhak in his sadhana is, first, by turning him against the Mother, or, if it cannot do that, by persuading him that he is unfit and so disturbing him that he gets upset and loses faith and courage. What you have to do is always to remain calm and call in the Mother's force and to refuse steadily all the suggestions whether against yourself or against the Mother. Preserve your calm always, keep an entire faith in the Mother and in your own spiritual destiny. Reply always that whatever it may say, you are the Mother's child and cannot fail in the sadhana.

5 November 1933

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These suggestions are what we call hostile suggestions — they come from a Force which is wandering about in the atmosphere trying to do harm to the sadhana. Its suggestions are always the same, to whomever they come — the suggestion of going away, the suggestion of unfitness and failure, this suggestion of madness, and a certain fixed number of others with the same purpose. There is only one thing to do with them — never to

listen to them; one must reply as you have done and dismiss them summarily from the consciousness. If one takes this simple stand, "I have come for the Yoga — I will allow nothing to divert me from my aim; I have the demand of the soul within and the help and protection of the Mother", then these things can no longer approach or approach in vain.

I am glad you have the aspiration and the push awake; it is always bound to revive after every interval and to carry you farther. Keep it and progress.

17 March 1934

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A few sadhaks here are supposed to be using the occult process. But when it is done to harm a fellow sadhak, is this not an egoistic use of occult power, more like the use of black magic? I told X that when occult power is used, without asking Mother, to satisfy one's like or dislike, a clash may occur on the vital plane and some disembodied being there may give a dangerous hit. He said it is not really like this — rather it happens naturally as the result of a play of forces on the vital plane.

It is obviously a wholly Asuric thing to do when it is turned to egoistic purposes or against fellow sadhaks. It is certainly not a natural play of forces over which one has no control. Anybody doing that may get a serious back-blow, especially if it is done against people protected by the Mother — for, knocking against a wall of protection the force put out may automatically recoil on the sender.

10 September 1934

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It will not do to yield to these attacks which are without reason and obviously are only waves from outside. You should recognise them as such, things not your own but forced on you by a Force from outside and when they come remain still, reject and call the Mother's force to liberate you.

15 July 1936

**Natural Disasters, Adverse Forces
and the Mother's Help**

Is it true that earthquakes are inevitable phenomena in the process of the Divine Manifestation on the earth and the transformation of matter?

Not at all. The method of the Divine Manifestation is through calm and harmony, not through a catastrophic upheaval. The latter is the sign of a struggle, generally of conflicting vital forces, but at any rate a struggle on the inferior plane.

Have I been kept here, outside the Asram, so that I can, by constant surrender to the Mother, rise above the difficulties of this environment and control the adverse forces that now touch and move and affect my lower nature?

You think too much of adverse forces. That kind of preoccupation causes much unnecessary struggle. Fix your mind on the positive side — open to the Mother's power, concentrate on her protection, call for light, calm and peace and purity and growth into the divine consciousness and knowledge.

Am I right in thinking that every bad movement in my life is the result of my past karma and takes place with the sanction of the Mother because she is testing me at every moment?

This idea of tests also is not a healthy idea and ought not to be pushed too far. Tests are applied not by the Divine but by the forces of the lower planes — mental, vital, physical — and allowed by the Divine because that is part of the soul's training and helps it to know itself, its powers and the limitations it has to outgrow. The Mother is not testing you at every moment, but rather helping you at every moment to rise beyond the necessity of tests and difficulties which belong to the inferior consciousness. To be always conscious of that help will be your best safeguard against all attacks whether of adverse powers or of your own lower nature.

23 February 1931

Helping Others and the Mother's Help

The best way to help X is to assist her by your own example and atmosphere to get the right attitude. Instead of the sense that she is very ill, she should be encouraged to have a bright and confident feeling, open to receive strength and health from us, contributing by her own faith to a speedy recovery. These ideas that they do not see the Mother, are outside the atmosphere, at a distance, are just the wrong notions and most likely to come in the way of and block your sisters' receptivity; it is surprising that you should accept or echo them and not react against them at once. They are here in the Asram (a little nearer or farther makes no difference), in the Mother's presence and atmosphere; meeting her every day at the Pranam where everyone who is open can receive as much of her touch and her help as they can hold,—that is what they should feel and make the most of their opportunity and not waste it by a negative attitude.

For yourself what you must have with other sadhaks (including your sisters) is a harmonious relation free from any vital attachment (indifference is not asked from you) and free from any indulgence in wrong vital movements of the opposite kind (such as dislike, jealousy or ill-will). It is through the psychic consciousness that you have found it possible to be in a true constant relation with the Mother and your aim is to make that the basis of all your life, action and feelings; all in you, all you feel, say and do should be consistent with that basis. If all proceeds from that psychic union of your consciousness with the Mother's, dedicating everything to her, then you will develop the right relations with others.

10 February 1932

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To think one can help others is a defect in the sadhana. How can one help others who is himself full of imperfection, falsehood and darkness? Those who really assist others must turn themselves into channels through which the Mother can act. Otherwise it is just vital ego trying to show others that one can "help".

Quite right. One can be a channel for the Mother's help, but the idea of oneself helping others comes in the way and so long as it is there one cannot be a truly effective channel. 17 April 1935

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I believe that I cannot really help others or rightly influence them. Am I right in this?

One can help another truly only when it is the Mother that helps through him and he is aware of it and does not think that it is he who is helping. 6 May 1935

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I have observed that someone with a sensitive disposition becomes very prone to the easy admission of forces from the vital world or from persons who are full of lower vital desires, especially when the sensitive person has a highly sympathetic attitude which manifests in nursing others or trying to save others, in lavishing emotional pity, in philanthropy, etc.

That is very interesting — for it agrees with the Mother's constant insistence that to feel sympathy or any emotion of the weak philanthropic kind with those possessed by vital forces is most dangerous as it may bring an attack upon oneself which may take any form. One must do what is to be done but abstain from all such weakness. 11 October 1936

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Mother does not set much value on propaganda, but still work of that kind can be her work. Only it has to come from her impulsion, be done with quietude, with measure, in the way she wants it to be done. It is from the inner being that it should be done in union with the Mother's will, not from the vital mind's eager impulse. To concentrate most on one's own spiritual growth and experience is the first necessity of the sadhak — to be eager to help others draws away from the inner work. To grow in the spirit is the greatest help one can give to others, for then something flows out naturally to those around that helps them. 9 April 1937

The Mother's Help in Worldly Matters

The Mother does not usually give specific advice such as you ask for in regard to the Insurance company. You must learn to get the true inspiration in the mind's silence. 18 August 1932

*

X has written me a letter and asked something which I have marked for you to read. Kindly tell me what to answer her.

It is not possible for the Mother to promise to give help in worldly matters. She intervenes only in special cases. There are some of course who by their openness and their faith get her help in any worldly difficulty or trouble but that is a different thing. They simply remember or call the Mother and in due time some result comes. 9 October 1935

Section Four

The Mother in the Life of the Ashram

The Mother and the Sadhana in the Ashram

The Mother Does the Sadhana

In what way does the Mother do the sadhana for the sadhaks?

The sadhana is done by the Mother according to the truth and necessity of each nature and of each plane of Nature. It is not one fixed process.

13 September 1933

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I heard from someone: "The Mother has chosen only those who have got capacity to do this Yoga, but they will reach the goal only if the vital gets transformed. If not, they will realise in the next birth." Is it so?

The Mother has never spoken of anything to be done in the next birth.

Naturally the vital has to be transformed if one is to succeed.

15 January 1934

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Why do we feel that the Mother is experiencing this or that?
Has she still to go on experiencing?

Experiencing what? She has her own experiences in bringing down the things that have to be brought down—but what the sadhaks experience she had long ago. The Divine does the sadhana first for the world and then in others.

3 January 1935

*

Yesterday you wrote in regard to the Mother, "Experiencing what?" I meant experiencing what we feel. For sometimes we feel that our experiences are felt not only by us but by the Mother in us.

Naturally, the Mother does sadhana in each sadhak — only it is conditioned by their need and their receptivity.

Also I failed to understand your comment: "She has her own experiences in bringing down the things that have to be brought down."

I have said that the Divine does the sadhana first for the world and then gives what is brought down to others. There can be no sadhana without realisations and experiences. Both myself and the Mother have done sadhana. The *Prayers* are a record of Mother's experiences.

4 January 1935

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What you write is in itself unexceptionable — it is indeed what was offered to the sadhaks at the beginning — but the difficulty is precisely there, in the complete sincerity of the nature. Few have been able to rise to it and only a distant approximation (if the phrase can be accepted) has been attained by some. Apart from incomplete sincerity, there is the difficulty that the brain is clouded by egoism and desire and imagines it is doing the very thing when it is doing something else. That is why I spoke of the danger of the theory of all from the Mother. There are people who have taken it that all that comes from the ego or the vital, comes from the Mother, is her inspiration or what she has given them. There are others who have taken it as an excuse for going on in the old rut indefinitely, saying that when the Mother wants she will change things! There were even some who on this basis created a subjective Mother in themselves whose dictates, flattering to their ego and desire, they pitted against the contrary dictates of the Mother here and came to think that this external Mother was after all not so much the real thing as the inner one or that she was putting them through an ordeal by contradicting the inner dictates and seeing what they would do!! The truth remains the truth, but this power of twisting by the mind and other parts of the nature has to be kept in sight also.

17 October 1936

The Mother's Victory

I am confident that in the long run everything will be clear and there will be Mother's victory.

The Mother's victory is, essentially, the victory of each sadhak over himself. It can only be then that any external form of work can come to harmonious perfection. 12 November 1936

Being Taken Up by the Mother

When does the Divine take up the sadhaks fully?

When they give up the ego.

What is the meaning of "the Divine takes up" a sadhak?

When it is the Divine Force that works out all the Yoga and the actions by a direct action of which the sadhak is conscious.

When a person begins to do Yoga and comes to live under the shade of the Mother, is he not taken up fully by her?

Not until he is ready. He has first to accept her and then to give up more and more his ego. There are sadhaks who at every step revolt, oppose the Mother, contradict her will, criticise her decisions. How can she take them up fully in such conditions?

What is the sign that one is taken up by the Divine?

One can feel it.

21 June 1933

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My dear Mother, I have heard a good deal about your divine power and supernatural knowledge from X. As I myself am a humble servant of the Goddess, I would request you to instruct me in the development of supernatural force in order to attain the ultimate end — Darshan of the Goddess.

Reply¹ that the Mother is not able to write letters herself, and you are writing on her behalf. What is given by the Mother is not a development of supernatural force, but if someone is accepted to take up this path of Yoga he is led towards a deeper and higher consciousness in which he can attain union with the Divine Mother. This however is a path long and full of difficulties — Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not admit anyone to it unless they are sure of his call and his capacity to follow it and the person himself is sure of his will to follow it until the goal is reached.

6 March 1937

Broad Lines of the Sadhana

The basis of life here is wholly spiritual. An inner discipline is given, but it is on broad lines allowing each individual the necessary freedom for his nature and temperament to grow and change spontaneously. Broadly, the sadhana consists of a progressive surrender of oneself — inward and based upon it the outward also — to the Guru, to the Divine; meditation, concentration, work, service — all these are means for a self-gathering in all one's movements with the sole aim of delivering oneself into the hands of a Higher Power for being worked on and led towards the Goal. The Mother guides, helps each according to his nature and need, and, where necessary, herself intervenes with her Power enabling the sadhak to withstand the rigours and demands of the Path. She has placed herself — with all the Love, Peace, Knowledge and Consciousness that she is — at the disposal of every aspiring soul that looks for help.

*

All in me is proceeding towards the Mother's love, devotion and purity. Why then am I not going up in my consciousness and getting higher experience?

The power of experience is not gone — but what is most important now is to develop the psychic condition of surrender,

¹ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer. — Ed.

devotion, love and cheerful confidence in the Mother, an unshaken faith and a constant inner closeness, and also to bring down from above the peace, wideness, purity etc. of the higher Self which is that of the Mother's consciousness. It is these things that are the basis of the siddhi in this Yoga — other experiences are only a help, not the basis.

17 January 1934

The Mother and Other Paths of Yoga

The idea of your friend that it is necessary to receive a mantra from here and for that he must come is altogether wrong. There is no mantra given in this Yoga. It is the opening of the consciousness to the Mother from within that is the true initiation and that can only come by aspiration and rejection of restlessness in the mind and vital. To come here is not the way to get it. Many come and get nothing or get their difficulties raised or even fall away from the Yoga. It is no use coming before one is ready, and he does not seem to be ready. Strong desire is not a proof of readiness. When he is inwardly ready, then there will be no difficulty about his coming.

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Before coming here I was attracted to the path of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, and sometimes it attracts me still. Occasionally I wonder if I will be able to follow this yoga through all its vicissitudes. I would like the Mother to tell me what I should do.

The Mother cannot decide for you, she can only offer to you the Truth she has come here to bring to the world and, if you accept it, guide you towards it.

9 September 1933

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Someone told me that Ramana Maharshi lives on the overmental plane or that his realisation is on the same level as Shankara's. How is it then that he is not aware of the arrival of the Divine, while others, for instance X's Guru, had this awareness?

I can't say on what plane the Maharshi is, but his method is that of Advaita Knowledge and Moksha — so there is no necessity for him to recognise the arrival of the Divine. X's Guru was a bhakta of the Divine Mother and believed in the dynamic side of existence, so it was quite natural for him to have the revelation of the coming of the Mother.

23 January 1936

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After reading a chapter in *The Synthesis of Yoga* I wrote to you the other day about the strong mental realisation of cosmic oneness; now I find that that state has disappeared. Was there anything wrong in writing about it? Is it that the Mother does not like this sort of Yoga of Knowledge? Or is it that one should always write about the darker side and never mention the other side?

Why should Mother dislike Yoga of Knowledge? The realisation of self and of the cosmic being (without which the realisation of self is incomplete) are essential steps in our Yoga; it is the end of other Yogas, but it is, as it were, the beginning of ours, that is to say, the point where its own characteristic realisation can commence. The disappearance of a realisation when it is spoken of is an experience some people have, but it is not likely to be the case with you. To write only of the dark side would be to overemphasise it and not to give a chance to the other. It is probable that the realisation comes only as a first touch; it comes often like that and afterwards repeats itself until the consciousness is able to hold it as its normal state.

26 March 1936

Turning Entirely to the Mother

All things are the Divine because the Divine is there, but hidden not manifest; when the mind goes out to things, it is not with the sense of the Divine in them, but for the appearances only which conceal the Divine. It is necessary therefore for you as a sadhak to turn entirely to the Mother in whom the Divine is manifest and not run after the appearances, the desire of which or the

interest in which prevents you from meeting the Divine. Once the being is consecrated, then it can see the Divine everywhere — and then it can include all things in the one consciousness without a separate interest or desire.

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Is it easily possible for my nature to terminate the remaining journey only with love, joy and happiness? I mean to say, can the transformation of my lower nature go on at the same time that the sadhana proceeds with full love?

It is possible if you (1) can get free of vital demand, (2) regard the difficulties of the nature calmly and dispassionately as if some defects of a machine that has to be set right, the being that uses the machine remaining fully dedicated to the Mother.

17 October 1935

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No, Mother was not serious or displeased with you at all. But why attach so much importance to what X or Y do or say. They are still so full of darkness and ego.

The path you have now taken — to cleave to the Mother through all circumstances and let nothing shake you from that — will bring the true solution of difficulties for you. For it means that the psychic being has started its work in you.

24 December 1935

Acceptance of the Mother

There seems to be a lack of harmony or unity of will between you and the Mother. What you write the Mother seems to contradict almost intuitively by exerting her weight on the opposite side.

On what grounds do you come to this conclusion? I do not write anything that is not approved by the Mother.

My physical is convinced that the right will has not descended

in the Mother. That is why she finds so many reasons not to support me. I think it is better for the present that I remain in retreat till the Will and love have descended in her, which would make her turn fully towards me.

Is it the opinion of your physical that the test of the right will in the Mother is that she must always support *you*? Does your physical think then that the infallible right will is necessarily in you—that it has descended in you first before it descends in the Mother? Otherwise, what is the basis of such a strange idea, that to disagree with you or suggest something else shows that her will is in the wrong and in error?

8 November 1932

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I feel I have an inner relation with you, but I do not feel the same relation with the Mother. In all probability she has no place in my inner heart. Perhaps it is this consciousness in her that makes her act against the spirit of what she agrees to when you write things.

I again repeat that what I write is what the Mother approves or decides; we have not two separate wills. This idea of division or opposition between us is a suggestion of the Ignorance.

10 November 1932

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Even a good devotee and a brilliant student like X finds it difficult to accept Mother. I cannot understand why he cannot see the simple truth about her.

If he finds it difficult to accept Mother, how is he a good devotee? A devotee to whom? A brilliant student is another matter; one can be a brilliant student and yet quite incompetent in spiritual matters. If one is a devotee of Vishnu or some other godhead, then it is different—one may see only one's object of worship and so not be able to accept anything else.

14 November 1934

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Today is really a great day for me. What greater day can there

be than the one when the Mother is accepted even by the obscure, ignorant, revolting parts of my lower vital nature?

Yes, when that has been done, it is one of the biggest steps in the sadhana.

28 March 1935

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The Mother puts energy into all who can receive it; it depends on them whether they use it rightly or not—or waste it. Men are not machines, they have a will—and they can choose whether they accept the Divine or not—whether they do the Divine's will or not.

Confidence in the Mother

Have confidence in the Mother and be sure that the liberation from these things will surely come. What the soul feels is the sign of the spiritual destiny as of the spiritual need. What opposes is a remnant of the nature of the human ignorance. Our help will be there with you fully to overcome it.

27 February 1935

Recognising the Mother's Divinity

Up till now, I have not recognised the divinity of anyone except Sri Krishna. I have looked on the Mother as a Guru who can take me to him. But now something in me wants to hold the Mother fast as divinity. I can't keep her out of my mind, nor can I reject Sri Krishna. The more I think, the more I am perplexed. I pray for your help.

This struggle in you (between bhakti for Sri Krishna and the sense of the divinity of the Mother) is quite unnecessary; for the two things are one and go perfectly together. It is he who has brought you to the Mother and it is by adoration of her that you will realise him. He is here in the Asram and it is his work that is being done here.

2 March 1932

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This evening when I looked at the Mother, I found in her the utmost beauty. She was glimmering. I felt as if a great Goddess had come down from the heavens. Can I know what this was?

It was only that you felt the Divinity with her which is always there.

20 July 1933

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There are people who start at once, others take time.

X recognised the Mother as divine at first sight and has been happy ever afterwards; others who rank among Mother's devotees took years to discover or admit it, but they arrived all the same. There are people who had nothing but difficulties and revolts for the first five, six, seven or more years of the sadhana, yet the psychic ended by awaking. The time taken is a secondary matter: the one thing needful is — soon or late, easily or with difficulty — to get there.

circa 22 July 1935

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It seems X has climbed to the top rung of your spiritual ladder in a very short period. In your heavenly Parliament he must have been in charge of a very important portfolio! Otherwise I don't see how he could, at first sight, have had a vision of the Divine in the Mother, besides other things.

What top rung and what Parliament? There is no such thing as a heavenly parliament. X progressed smoothly and rapidly from the beginning in Yoga, first, because he was in dead earnest; secondly, because he had a clear and solid mind and a strong and tenacious will in complete control of the nerves; thirdly, because his vital being was calm, strong and solid; finally, and chiefly, because he had a complete faith and devotion to the Mother. As for seeing the Divine in the Mother at first sight, he is not the only one to do that. Plenty of people have done that who had no chance of any portfolios, e.g. Y's cousin, a Musulman girl, who as soon as she met her declared "This is not a woman, she is a goddess" and has been having significant dreams of her ever since and whenever she is in trouble, thinks of her and gets helped out of the trouble. It is not so damably

difficult to see the Divine in the Mother as you make it out to be.

23 July 1935

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As for the Divine in the Mother, I know what the Musulman lady exactly saw. From what you say it seems to be a flash of intuition.

Not at all, it was a direct sense of the Godhead in her—for I suppose you mean by intuition a sort of idea that comes suddenly? That is what people usually understand by intuition. It was not that in her case nor in X's.

By seeing the Divine in the Mother, I don't mean imagination or calm, calculated reasoning. But to see actually the fully flaming, resplendent, effulgent Divine Mother in any one of her Powers—why, that is damnably difficult at least for me who have not even seen the halo around her.

I don't believe X or anybody would have that at first view. That can only come if one has already developed the faculty of vision in the occult planes. What is of more importance is the clear perception or intimate inner feeling or direct sense "This is She." I think you are inclined to be too romantic and poetic and too little spiritually realistic in these things. 29 July 1935

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I suppose you do not expect me to answer in detail this list of old grievances or try to justify the Mother or explain what you consider to be her indefensible conduct. I do not intend to do these things. It is for each sadhak to discover for himself whether he can take the Mother as divine or accept her government and guidance, or regards her as one like himself or inferior to himself, whose conduct he can see rightly, weigh, condemn and judge. It is not for the Mother to explain or justify herself, nor indeed was it ever the rule for the Guru to stand at the bar for the judgment of the disciple. Each has to see for himself whether he can give that obedience and self-opening to one who has or lives in the Divine Consciousness or has realised the Divine Truth, by which

alone he can receive what is to be given.

19 December 1936

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I do not have an active faith on every occasion that the Mother is divine or that her dealings with us are divine. How to have a firm conviction of this?

It is only if you see the divinity of the Mother that there can be a settled conviction — that is a question of the inner consciousness and vision.

5 June 1937

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It seems to me that the part of my external nature which was not accepting the Mother as divine is now being convinced of her divinity. But why do I forget her divinity when I actually come before her?

It is the physical mind in its most external action that sees physical things as only physical.

15 August 1937

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How to convince the mind that the Mother is the Divine and that her workings are not human?

It is by opening up the psychic and letting it rule the mind and vital that it can be done — because the psychic knows and can see what the mind cannot.

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Is there some doubting part in me, always doubting that the Mother is divine, or does something in me simply form for the enjoyment of doubt?

If something forms for the enjoyment of doubt and if that something is in you, then that part must surely be a doubting part. Or if these formations (which are always busily going about in the atmosphere) present themselves to you and something in you responds, it means that there is a part in you which is still open to the suggestions of doubt.

There is, I suppose, something in your vital and exterior mind which is still prone to the idea that the Mother cannot be divine because she does not satisfy their desires or act according to their ideas.

Discontent with the Mother

In your letter to the Mother I note that you profess to be writing a confession, but the tone of it is rather a justification of your faultless self accompanied by an accusation against the Mother of favouritism, bad temper, and injustice. I observe also that your statement of facts is incorrect and as far as it concerns the Mother, grotesque. You lay stress too on a point in which you can justify yourself, and you ignore all the rest in which you were in fault. I will assume, however, that all this was unintentional and that, in writing such a letter, you were unconscious of the movements of your vital being which inspired its spirit and tone.

I would suggest that in your relations with others, — which seem always to have been full of disharmony, — when incidents occur, it would be much better for you not to take the standpoint that you are all in the right and they are all in the wrong. It would be wiser to be fair and just in reflection, seeing where you have gone astray, and even laying stress on your own fault and not on theirs. This would probably lead to more harmony in your relations with others; at any rate, it would be more conducive to your inner progress, which is more important than to be the top-dog in a quarrel. Neither is it well to cherish a spirit of self-justification and self-righteousness and a wish to conceal either from yourself or from the Mother your faults or your errors.

As for your doubts about the Mother, they are not likely to disappear so long as you think you can read the Mother's mind by the light of your own and pass your mental judgments on her and her action from those erroneous data. Nor can they easily disappear if your faith breaks down every time that she does something which your limited intelligence cannot understand or which is displeasing to the feelings and demands of your vital nature. If you do not believe that she has a consciousness

greater and wider than yours and not measurable by ordinary standards and judgments, at the very least a Yogic consciousness, I do not see on what ground you are practising Yoga here under her guidance. Those who constantly doubt and criticise and blame or attribute her actions to the most common and vulgar human feelings and motives and yet pretend to accept her or to accept myself and my Yoga, are guilty of a stupid and irrational inconsequence. As for understanding, that is another matter. I would suggest that you must grow out of the ordinary mind and become conscious with the true consciousness before you can hope to do it. And for that faith and surrender and fidelity and openness are conditions of some importance.

6 November 1929

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Are there sadhaks in the Asram who do not understand that “the Divinity acts according to the Consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and not according to men’s ideas about what it should or should not do”?

There are plenty who do not realise it — they expect the Mother to act according to their ideas and wishes, not according to a higher consciousness.

20 October 1934

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When the Mother pointed out my mistake, I became discontented. Misguided by the suggestions of the refractory parts of my being, I took it as an undeserved reproach. I feel very ashamed.

It was simply a statement of fact, not a reproach, and it was not you but your ego that got discontented because it felt scratched by the facts.

I had promised you that I would never be discontented with the Mother. I failed to keep that promise. I pray to you again to pull me out of this state and I promise again that I shall never be discontented with the Mother.

Very well, I take the promise. But the rising of discontent is surely a sufficient indication that the consciousness is going wrong. As soon as you feel it you should immediately draw back and say, "O ego, you are up again against the Mother! Stop that or I will take you by the scruff of the neck and throw you out of the window." I hope indeed to see that "thrown out" actually happen one day.

21 October 1935

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I have no intention of entering into an explanation, defence or apology for the Mother's action. I have long ago decided that I would not allow the Mother's rightful position here to be lowered by the sadhaks putting her as an accused before the tribunal of their ignorant mind or vital ego and demanding that she or I for her should plead her case. The Mother acts from her own knowledge and consciousness which is not that of the sadhaks; their ideas of what she ought to do or ought not to do have no place. Rather they are here to discard such ideas and accept her guidance by which they can themselves enter into a higher consciousness where these mental and vital errors have no right of existence.

I have already pointed out to you that your action was entirely mistaken. You had no right to ask for a letter placed there for the Mother's perusal. You had no right to demand that the Mother should give you the letter. You had no special claim to mend the envelope for X. It is not a question of bad or good desire. The pretension of doing good can contain as much ego and desire as any other personal claim, and that it was egoistic is proved by the violent reaction against the Mother that her not satisfying it raised in you. If it had been pure of ego, you would have had no reaction but quietly accepted the Mother's action as right because it was the Mother's.

If you want to get rid of the painful inner and physical reactions, you must get rid of their cause in you, the ego of self-esteem, demand and desire. It is only by a complete surrender of yourself, your mind, vital and everything else to the Divine that this ego can go. Your reaction and accusation of injustice against

the Mother shows that you are still clinging to it in some part of you and you should welcome rather than resent anything that gives you a chance of rejecting it still more from your nature.

7 March 1937

The Mother as Guru and Guide

The Mother's Way of Dealing with Sadhaks

The difficulty about meeting your demand that the Mother should plan out and fix a routine for you in everything which you must follow is that this is quite contrary to the Mother's way of working in most matters. In the most physical things you have to fix a programme in order to deal with time, otherwise all becomes a sea of confusion and haphazard. Fixed rules have also to be made for the management of material things so long as people are not sufficiently developed to deal with them in the right way without rules. But these things of which you write are different; they are concerned with your inner development, your sadhana. In fact, even in outward things the Mother does not plan with her mind and make a mental map and rule of what is to be done; she sees what is to be done in each case and organises and develops it according to the nature of each case. In matters of the inner development and the sadhana, it is still more impossible to map out a plan fixed in every detail and say, "Every time you shall step here, there, in this way, on that line and no other." Things would become so tied up and rigid that nothing could be done; there could be no true and effective movement.

If the Mother asked you to tell her everything, it was not in order that she might give you directions in every detail which you must obey. It was in order, first, that there might grow up the complete intimacy in which you would be entirely open to her, so that she might pour more and more and continuously and at every point the Divine Force into you which would increase the Light in you, perfect your action, deliver and develop your nature. It is this that was important; all else is secondary, important only so far as it helps this or hinders. In addition it would help her to give wherever needed the necessary touch, the necessary

direction, the necessary help or warning, not always by words, more often by a silent intervention and pressure. This is her way of dealing with those who are open to her; it is not necessary to give express orders at every moment and in every detail. Especially if the psychic consciousness is open and one lives fully in that, it gets the intimation at once and sees things clearly and receives the help, the intervention, the necessary direction or warning. That was what was happening to a great extent when your psychic consciousness was very active, but there was a vital part in which you were not open and which was coming up repeatedly, and it is this that has created the confusion and the trouble.

Everything depends on the inner condition and the outward action is only useful as a means and a help for expressing or confirming the inner condition and making it dynamic and effective. If you do or say a thing with the psychic uppermost or with the right inner touch, it will be effective; if you do or say the same thing out of the mind or the vital or with a wrong or mixed atmosphere, it may be quite ineffective. To do the right thing, in the right way in each case and at each moment one must be in the right consciousness—it can't be done by following a fixed mental rule which under some circumstances might fit in and under others might not fit in at all. A general principle can be laid down if it is in consonance with the Truth, but its application must be determined by the inner consciousness seeing at each step what is to be done or not done. If the psychic is uppermost, if the being is entirely turned towards the Mother and follows the psychic, this can be increasingly done.

All depends therefore not on a mental rule to follow in practice, but on getting the psychic consciousness back and putting its light into this vital part, and making that part turn wholly to the Mother. It is not that the question of your going too much to your sisters is of no importance,—it is of considerable importance—but to limit the contact is effective only as a means of helping your vital part to withdraw from this servitude to old movements. It is the same everywhere.

The kind of outward obedience you lay stress on, asking

for a direction in every detail, is not the essence of surrender, although obedience is the natural fruit and outward body of surrender. Surrender is from within, opening and giving mind, vital, physical, all to the Mother for her to take them as her own and recreate them in their true being which is a portion of the Divine; all the rest follows as a consequence. It would not then be necessary to ask her word and order outwardly in every detail; the being would feel and act according to her will; her sanction would be sought but as the seal of that inner unity, receptiveness of her will and obedience.

11 June 1932

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Your letter of the morning came entirely from the disturbed and wounded vital; that was why I was in no hurry to answer. I do not know why you are so ready to believe that myself or the Mother act from ordinary movements of anger, vexation or displeasure; there was nothing of the kind in what I wrote. You had been repeatedly falling from your attained level of a higher consciousness and, in spite of our suggestions to you to see what was pulling you down, your only reply was that you could see nothing. We knew perfectly well that it was part of the vital which did not want to change and, not wanting to change, was hiding itself from the mind and the mind itself did not seem very willing to see,—so we thought it necessary when you gave us a chance by what you wrote to indicate plainly and strongly the nature of the obstacle—on one side your old sentiment persisting in the *viparīta* form of anger, resentment and wounded feeling, on the other the vital's habit of self-esteem, censorious judgment of others, a sense of superiority in sadhana or in other respects, a wish to appear well before others and before yourself also. This especially has a blinding influence and prevents the clear examination of oneself and the perception of the obstacles that are interfering with the spiritual progress. Even if the mind aspires to know and change, a habit of that kind acting concealed in the vital is quite enough to stand in the way and prevent both the knowledge and the change. I was therefore careful to speak plainly of vanity and self-righteousness — so that this part of the

vital might not try not to see. The Mother speaks or writes much more pointedly and sharply to those whom she wishes to push rapidly on the way because they are capable of it and they do not resent or suffer but are glad of the pressure and the plainness, because they know by experience that it helps them to see their obstacles and change. If you wish to progress rapidly, you must get rid of this vital reaction of *abhimāna*, suffering, wounded feeling, seeking for arguments of self-justification, outcry against the touch that is intended to liberate,— for so long as you have these, it is difficult for us to deal openly and firmly with the obstacles created by the vital nature.

In regard to the difference between you and X, the Mother's warning to you against the undesirability of too much talk, loose chat and gossip, social self-dispersion was entirely meant and stands; when you indulge in these things, you throw yourself out into a very small and ignorant consciousness in which your vital defects get free play and this is likely to bring you out of what you have developed in your inner consciousness. That was why we said that if you felt a reaction against these things when you went to X's, it was a sign of (psychic) sensitiveness coming into you — into your vital and nervous being — and we meant that it was all for the good. But in dealing with others, in withdrawing from these things you should not allow any sense of superiority to creep in or force on them by your manner or spirit a sense of disapproval or condemnation or pressure on them to change. It is for your personal inward need that you draw back from these things, that is all. As for them what they do in these matters, right or wrong, is their affair — and ours; we will deal with them according to what we see as necessary and possible for them at the moment and for that purpose we can not only deal quite differently with different people, allowing for one what we forbid for another, but we may deal differently with the same person at different times, allowing or even encouraging today what we shall forbid tomorrow. X's case is quite different from yours, for there is no resemblance in your natures. I told you that or something like it long ago and I emphasised in my letter to X that what might be the rule for myself or Y was not to

be applied or going to be applied to his case. To deal otherwise would be to create difficulties in his sadhana and not to make it easier for him or swifter. I have also told him quite clearly in my letter that the attempt at meeting and mixing with others — which in the ordinary human life is attempted by sociableness and other contacts — has to be realised in Yoga on another plane of consciousness and without the lower mixture — for a higher unity with all on a spiritual and psychic basis. But the way, the time, the order of movements by which this is done, need not be the same for everybody. If he attempted to force himself it would lead to gloom, despondency and an artificial movement which would not be the true way to success. A human soul and nature cannot be dealt with by a set of mental rules applicable to everybody in the same way; if it were so, there would be no need of a Guru, each could set his chart of Yogic rules before him like the rules of Sandow's exercise and follow them till he became the perfect siddha!

I have said so much in order to let you understand why we do not deal in the same way with X as with you or another. The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time. I may say generally that to bring down the supermind is my aim in the yoga or that to do that one has first to rise out of mind into overmind, but if on the strength of that, anybody and everybody began trying to pull down the supermind or force his way immediately out of mind into overmind, the result would be disaster.

Therefore concern yourself with your own progress and follow there the lead the Mother gives you. Leave X or others to do the same; the Mother is there to guide and help them according to their need and their nature. It does not in the least matter if the way she follows with him seems different or the opposite of that which she takes with you. That is the right one for him as this is the right one for you.

You have now begun to see the difficulties that are still there in your vital; keep to that clear perception, let it grow clearer and more precise. Concentrate on what you have to do and do not let yourself be distracted this way and that by irrelevant preoccupations or any other influence. 25 October 1932

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X would like to see the Mother and place his difficulties before her. His chief difficulty is how to reconcile the Bliss, Harmony and Unity (Sachchidananda) with the discord, strength and rapaciousness that one finds in the actual world.

You can tell him Mother does not discuss these mental problems even with the disciples. It is quite useless trying to reconcile these things with the intellect. For there are two things, the Ignorance from which the struggle and discord come and the secret Light, Unity, Bliss and Harmony. The intellect belongs to the Ignorance. It is only by getting into another consciousness that one can live in the Light and Bliss and Unity and not be touched by the outward discord and struggle. That change of consciousness therefore is the only thing that matters; to reconcile with the intellect would make no difference.

If he likes, you can lend him the *Conversations* — as he wants to converse with the Mother. 11 November 1932

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Does the Divine turn away its eyes from people like X, who disobeys the Mother, and allow them to do whatever they like?

That is the Mother's business. She alone can say what is the right way to deal with people. If she were to deal with people only according to their defects, there would be hardly half a dozen people left in the Asram. 26 March 1933

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I am sure there are reasons for everything the Mother does and that what she does is suited to the needs of each one, but the vital does not believe it, and it is not yet well established

in the mind. How can I make my vital being understand that the Mother is never partial?

One way is to have entire faith in the Mother — the other is to believe that she is wiser than yourself and must have reasons for everything she does which are better than your mind's judgments.

And how can this understanding be firmly established in my mind, so that it does not yield to any temptation?

It should be established — that is all. So long as the vital or mental think themselves wiser than the Mother and able to judge her how do you expect these stupidities to disappear?

22 March 1934

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The Mother's injunction to work in peace and harmony with the others concerned those whom you meet for work, not a personal relation such as you had with X.

The Mother is the sole judge of what is necessary for each and she is not bound to apply the same rule to everybody. The Guru deals with each disciple in a different way and does not keep one law for all. You were allowed to mix with X for a long time like Y with Z and A with B — in all cases it has been bad for those who do not give up the special relation, preventing them from being successful in the Yoga for which they came. The Mother does not interfere decisively for a time but only lets each know that it is better for them not to mix in a specially intimate way and she waits for them to realise it. When one or other of the two or both realises or begins to realise that it is better to break the special connection, then Mother intervenes. If you went back to X, all possibility of Yoga for you would cease. Even your going to the Dispensary has disturbed the progress you were making and brought back the old habits of thought and reactions.

Your one hope of doing anything in sadhana is really and truly and definitely to turn to the Mother alone and follow her

will. There is no going back to the old things — the Mother will not sanction it. If you are sincere in what you have written (in English), then you must also forget the past and live for the Divine and the sadhana.

10 April 1934

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Since the day my sadhana began to come down to the lower levels, some parts of my being have felt that the Mother has restricted the former physical manifestation of her love. But I am sure that this change was meant for the good of my sadhana.

Whatever is done by the Mother is for the good of the sadhak and the sadhana.

9 December 1935

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X wonders why people like Y are allowed here when it is obvious that they have no spiritual possibility in them. But unless X has some understanding of the higher manifestation, such comments are just expressions of his own ignorance.

Obviously. Neither Nature nor Destiny nor the Divine work in the mental way or by the law of the mind or according to its standards — that is why even to the scientist and the philosopher Nature, Destiny, the way of the Divine all seem a mystery. The Mother does not act by the mind, so to judge her action with the mind is futile. But why should X or anyone assume that Y will have no profit for her spiritual future from her stay here?

5 May 1936

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Can the physical mind have a correct understanding of the Mother's dealings?

Not until it is enlightened by the true consciousness and knowledge from above.

4 July 1936

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Why should the Mother be obliged to treat everybody in the same way? It would be a most imbecile thing for her to do that.

The Mahakali Method

All these things depend on the person, the condition, the circumstances. The Mother uses the method you speak of, the Mahakali method, (1) with those in whom there is a great eagerness to progress and a fundamental sincerity somewhere even in the vital, (2) with those whom she meets intimately and who, she knows, will not resent or misunderstand her severity or take it for a withdrawal of kindness or grace but will regard it as a true grace and a help to their sadhana. There are others who cannot bear this method—if it was continued they would run a thousand miles away in misunderstanding, revolt and despair. What the Mother wants is for people to have their full chance for their souls, be the method short and swift or long and tortuous. Each she must treat according to his nature.

9 May 1933

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All these years I have been hesitant to write all the details of my life for fear that the Mother will scold me. Now I have become a bit stronger and along with her scoldings I can feel her force working inside me. By her infinite compassion, I am out of the fear.

If you are afraid of the Mother's scoldings, how will you progress? Those who want to progress quickly, welcome even the blows of Mahakali because that pushes them more rapidly on the way.

28 September 1933

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Is it true that when I realise the Divine Consciousness there will be no difference between the Mother's will and mine? I would like her to tell me whatever her will is, even if it is unpalatable to me—not to say "If you like" or "As you like", but to say "Do this" or "Do not do this."

Certainly, when the Divine Consciousness is fully realised, there will be no difference between the Mother's will and the sadhaka's.

For a relation to exist in which Mother can do as you say, the

sadhak must not be afraid of the Mahakali aspect and ask only for sweetness. He must be able to take the blows of Mahakali as a blessing. He must also believe in her vision and judgment and word, otherwise when she says or does something unpleasant to his ego that ego will go sulking, justifying itself, calling her names etc. as is the habit with so many in the Asram when she does not do what they like. There are very few here who can take this attitude even imperfectly, but it is with them that the Mother has this relation. With others, who have a different nature, she cannot but behave differently — for she has to act with each according to his nature.

Understanding the Mother's Actions

During my talk with X, he spoke about Mother's preferences, about her taking more care of some and paying more attention to them. But it seems absurd and foolish to think that anybody knows more about people than Mother.

It is a favourite form of criticism and quite natural to the human mind which knows nothing about the play of forces through which the Divine Movement has to make its way under the conditions laid down by the play of the Ignorance.

7 May 1933

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I am often guilty of a feeling of ingratitude towards the Mother. I cannot find the way to remove the misunderstanding about her smile or her seeing some persons often or treating European sadhaks specially and other such things which indicate partiality. With reasoning it is easy to understand, but the feeling persists.

But why indulge a feeling which has not truth or good sense or reason at its back? This accusation of partiality rests first on feelings of egoistic vital demand, jealousy etc. which are no doubt fairly universal in human nature as it is, but not the more respectworthy for that. It supports itself on a crude idea of "equality" of treatment which in practice comes to this

that everyone should be treated in just the same way, which is about as impossible a thing as could be demanded in this world and would make all action and all direction of either work or sadhana impossible. The Mother extends the divine love and protection to all, but the form she gives to her action must vary with the different nature and need of each, the demands of the work, the necessities of their sadhana. The idea about Europeans is quite wrong — since with the exception of X and Y all those who see most of the Mother or are given special positions of confidence are Indians. If one starts comparisons each has something which another has not. And to have that something does not prevent complaints of being worse treated than others. These feelings therefore are merely the product of the restless discontent of the vital and there is nothing to be done with them except to send them away whenever they come as useless disturbers of happiness and progress.

27 December 1933

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Many sadhaks try to judge the Mother from her outer actions without some inner or higher basis.

Yes, that is the mistake all the sadhaks make. How can they understand the Mother's actions unless they are united in consciousness with the Mother, have in fact the same consciousness as hers?

6 April 1935

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I am uneasy about the treatment accorded to me by the Mother. Several times I have noted that she has acted against me. When I proposed something for Bushy the cat's treatment, she found some tricky replies and then asked X to treat her. When Y wanted to join our class, Mother told me she would try to find someone to replace him at work so he could attend, but then she wrote to him about the class, "It is not necessary." I have other examples also, and each one adds to the wounds she has dealt me. After all, what has she done for me since I came here? I have done my best, I have put the best of my

energy into the work, but not once can I remember that she has cared for me as she cares for others.

I do not know what right you have to invent false imputations against the Mother without even knowing all the facts out of your ignorant egoistic mind and insulting her with these falsehoods calling her a liar and a trickster. X treated Bushy without asking the Mother; she was not even informed and she only knew of it when she heard the poor beast screaming and asked what was the matter. That is how the sadhaks treat the Mother and afterwards they insult and kick her. As for Y, he had already asked and the Mother said no because he works in the night and she thought a class in addition would be too much strain for him. Afterwards when you wrote that he was enthusiastic about it she tried to find someone who would relieve him but she has found no one. That is all. Even when she tries to meet your requests, you seize on it as an occasion for insulting her and putting the most base, vile and sinister motives on her simplest actions. There is no reason for throwing the blame for your condition off your own shoulders and attacking the Mother.

11 January 1936

Misunderstanding the Mother's Words

Why does the Mother not speak directly to me and tell me what she wants? Does she not know that I truly want to do nothing but her will?

What the Mother said was perfectly just and reasonable. It is because your mind was confused and excited and hostile that it put its own imagined words and interpretations and tried to support and justify its hostility by its own inventions and inferences. This trick of putting into the Mother's mouth words that she had not spoken — often the very reverse of what she had said, — or of twisting her words and acts to mean something that she had never intended, is a constant habit of the forces of falsehood when they want to turn the sadhaks from the right way or use them against the Truth and against the Mother. If

you thus make yourself the instrument of a falsehood, how can you expect not to fall away from peace and light and the true psychic condition? You were constantly doing that before and it was the cause of all your troubles, putting yourself on the side of the obscure and false and hostile forces. If you want to get free, you must cease listening to them, justifying them, throwing them against the Mother.

We are perfectly ready to correct you and have no intention of leaving you to your ignorance,—that is another absurd imagination,—but you must also correct yourself as soon as your mind starts this kind of thing; for otherwise you will not be truly ready to receive the correction and will start again believing the Mother to be false and deceptive and the rest of it, as soon as the hostile forces can create or invent an excuse. 1 May 1932

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I find it rather surprising that you should regard what the Mother said to you or what I wrote as a recommendation to relax aspiration or postpone the idea of any kind of siddhi till the Greek Kalends! It was not so intended in the least—nor do I think either of us said or wrote anything which could justly bear such an interpretation. I said expressly that in the way of meditating of which we spoke, aspiration, prayer, concentration, intensity were a natural part of it; this way was put before you because our experience has been that those who take it go quicker and develop their sadhana, once they get fixed in it, much more easily as well as smoothly than by a distressed, doubtful and anxious straining with revulsions of despondency and turning away from hope and endeavour. We spoke of a steady opening to the Divine with a flow of the force doing its work in the adhar, a poised opening with a quiet mind and heart full of trust and the sunlight of confidence; where do you find that we said a helpless waiting must be your programme?

As for light-heartedness and insouciance, the Mother never spoke of insouciance—a light don't-care attitude is the last thing she would recommend to anybody. She spoke of cheerfulness,

and if she used the word light-hearted it was not in the sense of anything lightly or frivolously gay and careless — although a deeper and finer gaiety can have its place as one element of the Yogic character. What she meant was a glad equanimity even in the face of difficulties and there is nothing in that contrary to Yogic teaching or to her own practice. The vital nature on the surface (the depths of the true vital are different) is attached on the one side to a superficial mirth and enjoyment, on the other to sorrow and despair and gloom and tragedy, — for these are for it the cherished lights and shades of life; but a bright or wide and free peace or an *ānandamaya* intensity or, best, a fusing of both in one is the true poise of both the soul and the mind — and of the true vital also — in Yoga. It is perfectly possible for a quite human sadhak to get to such a poise, it is not necessary to be divine before one can attain it.

8 May 1932

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There is no doubt that at times the idea enters the thinking elements among the members of the Asram that the Mother has lost her grip on the physical, and thus she says things that are contradictory or not factual.

It is rather surprising that the Asram does not break down altogether, if the Mother has no grasp of the physical world — those who are in that lamentable condition are not usually able to run anything on the physical plane; but perhaps it is the great grip of the thinking elements here on the physical world that keeps the Asram going in spite of the imbecility of myself and the Mother. What I notice however is that when the Mother says something, the thinking elements very often understand the exact opposite.

You write of being responsive to the Mother. You seem to be saying: Don't concern yourself with whether something is true, whether it is a fact, whether it hurts you — always respond as the Mother leads.

It is not quite like that. Those who respond find on the contrary that the Mother has a greater grasp of truth than they have and

do not judge her by their fallible intellects but try to see that truth and follow it.

February 1933

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It is not X alone, but many or most who turn things [*spoken by the Mother*] in that way — the tendency is almost universal in human nature. It is not from dishonesty that he or others do it — it is because when they listen, their minds are not silent but active and the thought of their minds mixes with what they have heard and gives it another turn or shape or colour. Often also the vital interferes and exaggerates or reshapes according to the desire or the convenience. This is much more often unconsciously than consciously done.

In the present instance, the Mother spoke quite generally, not about Y or what had happened in Z's case, and she meant that what ought to be remembered is not remembered because of some strong immediate desire which pushes the memory behind until the desire is fulfilled and then only, if at all, the recollection comes. X evidently added his own ideas, applied it specially to Y's action and thought that the Mother had said it was consciously done — that Y remembered and yet went against her conscious sense of right in order to fulfil her desire. That was not what the Mother said or meant by her general statement.

30 March 1933

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Is it not the Mother who often tells us things indirectly, through the discriminating mind or the psychic?

It is only when the Mother speaks directly that you can say "The Mother has said".

9 July 1933

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It is good if you have freed yourself from this bondage [*a rigid insistence that one must always do what one has said one will do*]. Love of Truth is divine, but this kind of truth is a very mixed product accompanied as it is by hardness or a fierce anger. Truth does not insist on a blind adherence to the spoken word — as

for instance, if a man says that he will kill another under the impression that that other has done him a grievous wrong and afterwards carries out his word even when he has found out that the other was innocent and no wrong done. That is what literal adhesion to the spoken word would come to, if scrupulously held as a principle. Truth on the contrary demands that a man shall cleave to the principle of Truth in things only, and in the case above the principle of Truth would demand that he should break his vow and not keep it. If a man pledges himself to something that is against the principle of Truth, e.g. against the principle of Love and Compassion or against that of obedience and surrender to the Divine, it is not Truth to keep that pledge — for it would be a pledge to follow falsehood and how can truth be rooted in allegiance to falsehood? That would be an Asuric, not a divine Truthfulness.

As for the Mother, you will not find in her this blind adherence to an arrangement once made. If, for instance, she told someone, next time you yield to sex-passion in any way, you will have to leave the Asram and if the man did it and repented, she too might relent and not insist in following out her menace. These matters of interviews are not promises, contracts or engagements, — they are arrangements only and can be altered. If she has arranged for half an hour she can make it in fact $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour — or diminish it to twenty minutes. There is a plasticity needed in the movement of time and the Shakti of life cannot afford to be rigid in its movements; otherwise Life would either be turned into a mere mechanism or break to pieces. But in this case there was no intention; it was a pure accident; by some oversight your name had not been written in the morning list and Mother came to the door when those on the list were finished. She could not go back because it was extremely late and it had been a long and exhausting morning spent in a continual struggle with adverse forces and she had to come in, do what still she had to do and come to me to report what had happened.

But even if she had intended it for some reason not known to you, your reaction was not the right one. For the basis you have taken for your Yoga is to obey the Will whatever it may

be. These things, seemingly accidental, happen when they are predestined and they come in as an ordeal for something in the vital which has by this painful process to accept change.

28 September 1933

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The Mother told me in an interview one year ago that the psychic is quite strong in me. Did she say this to bring pride in me? It gave me a sense of superiority to persons like X and Y and many others. But now it would seem I am full of vital difficulties. Did the Mother ever look at the vital difficulties of others as severely as she seems to be looking at mine?

Mother told you about your psychic because she saw it—but she never told you that you were superior in that respect to X and Y. It was not said to bring pride in you, but to encourage you to rely on your psychic and bring it out so that it might get full control on the vital. I may add that the psychic being strong does not necessarily mean that it is in full control of the vital or cannot be clouded over. The condition some of those you mentioned have attained now is that the psychic is in control of the vital so that doubts and revolts are not possible or are rapidly rejected—and that was the condition to which you were coming before this (it seems to me quite causeless and accidental) lapse. So I wrote that there was no reason why you should not speedily have the same psychic consciousness which would prevent all doubt or any radical disturbance.

7 May 1934

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X has often quoted things that the Mother told him, not only about me but about others. He says that she tells him these private things because she trusts him so much. But so many things are said in the Mother's name! Often I have thought about how serious it is when someone says: "Mother said these things."

People have put thousands of things in the Mother's mouth that she never said. I have known them to say this and that to Mother and then go about putting it in Mother's mouth, saying "Mother

said to me." Also things that they have not said to her and she never said. You should put no reliance on these statements.

15 January 1935

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A lie is a lie whoever speaks it. If you give credit to what someone or another thinks or says as Mother's motive in an action, take her statement of her motive as untrue and somebody else's who cannot know as sound and true and on that challenge Mother for want of frankness, is the resulting upset our fault? It is a question of greater confidence in the Mother than in the statements or interpretations of sadhaks or the hasty assumptions or inferences of your mind or the feelings of your vital made without having the needed information. If you could get rid of that movement, things would be easier.

15 May 1936

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How can the maxim "a lie is a lie" apply to all? If a higher motive demands concealing or misrepresenting something by words, I would hardly call it a lie — the motive is superhuman and cannot fall in the same category as an ordinary lie. I think Krishna did not always speak the exact truth and his half-lies always provoke an understanding smile in all who listen to his stories.

If the Mother did a thing for one reason and said that she did it for quite another she did not have, I fail to see how it can be anything but a falsehood. No superhuman motive can make a falsehood not a falsehood. Moreover, if you really believe that the Divine can speak what is not true without being untrue and that that is a part of divinity, why do you resent it when you think the Mother has done it and grow sorrowful and indignant over her supposed unfair and uncandid treatment of you and say she ought to have been frank etc.? You ought rather to think she is acting from superhuman motives and accept gladly whatever she does. At least that seems to be the logic of such a position.

You base yourself evidently on the position that the Divine Consciousness is above good and evil. But that does not mean

that it does evil and good impartially. It can only mean that it acts from a light that is beyond that level of human consciousness which makes the human standard of these things. It acts for and from a greater good than the apparent good men follow after. It acts also according to a greater Truth than men conceive. It is for this reason that the human mind cannot understand the divine action and its motives—he must first rise into a higher consciousness and be in spiritual contact or union with the Divine. But if anyone recognises that, he can no longer judge the divine action with his human mind and from a human point of view. The two things would be quite incompatible.

But this does not fall under any such explanation. To allege a false motive cannot be a movement of a greater Truth and consciousness. To keep silence and not reveal one's motives is one thing—to say I did not act from that motive when I actually did so, is not silence, it is falsehood. It is a matter not of moral, but spiritual importance. The Mother cares for the Truth and she has always said that lying and falsehood create a serious obstacle to realisation. How then can she herself do that?

I do not remember any lies or half-lies told by Krishna, so I can say nothing on that point. But if he did according to the Mahabharat or the Bhagwat, we are not bound either by that record or by that example. I think Rama and Buddha told none.

17 May 1936

Asking Questions to the Mother

When I think about myself I begin to doubt whether I will ever get any realisation. I go on wishing the Mother would speak to me on this subject so that I may understand. But when I get the knowledge, I also feel that my wish was a way of not accepting the light.

Quite so.

Last night at the meditation, I got the same desire for knowledge. Then I saw the Mother closing her eyes and it was as though her mind was pressing my mind on all sides. Then my

mind became still and I felt the contact of the Mother's mind even in the cells. After that I felt that all my questions were answered and it was no use asking anything at all.

That is the right way. Union with the Mother's consciousness is the true way for knowledge to come.

But always I get this desire for knowledge and feel that it would be a great help if I could know some things.

You should throw away this feeling. It is not by asking questions to the Mother that you can get the knowledge, but by keeping your mind open to her.

25 June 1930

Writing to the Mother

On reading my letter of this morning, I felt as if the Mother was not pleased with me for writing about the bad thoughts I had about X and Y.

Your writing these things does not give any displeasure to Mother. It is better to write if you have them, than to be silent about it.

9 June 1933

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Today a thought came to me: "Why are you forcing yourself so much with regard to the control of the vital being? Better not bother about opening your thoughts and desires to the Mother; rather leave her to work on you."

If you want the Mother to work through you, you must lay before her your thoughts and desires and reject them.

3 September 1933

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You have asked why I stopped writing to the Mother. When I write I ask about the small things that bother me, but often she does not answer. This confuses me, because if she does not explain these things to me, who will?

When the sadhaks write to the Mother, it is not to get answers from her about the small things of daily life — sometimes they do it when necessary, and Mother sometimes answers, sometimes not. The main object of writing is to put themselves before the Mother, their experiences, their progress, their lives, so as to create a constant connection and invite her presence, force, help, guidance in everything that calls for her intervention. But it is not necessary that the Mother's response should take the form of a written answer. It would not even be physically possible in the course of 24 hours to answer all the correspondence that is addressed to us.

13 October 1933

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When the consciousness is open, to put things (difficulties, needs) before the Mother in a clear form written or otherwise (even if it is not submitted bodily to her), brings very often an immediate relief or response.

27 December 1933

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The experience of being with the Mother and speaking to her is one that one can easily have when one is writing to her and is true because some part of the being does actually meet with her and open itself to her when one writes one's experiences.

23 December 1935

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I find that when I start to write I feel a greater pressure and a deeper concentration on the higher Force.

I suppose it is because in the act of writing or rather beginning to write you enter into contact with the Mother and the Force.

5 May 1936

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You did well to speak to X and also to write to Mother. Of course Mother had observed X's difficulties, — it is correct that the difficulty is the lack of a certain free opening — otherwise all that could be removed quickly and the necessary change of

nature (mind, ego etc.) carried on by smooth gradations. To write as you do is helpful for opening oneself and for receiving the precise touch. X's logic about the Mother knowing and therefore there being no need to write is applicable if there is a free or at least a sufficient flow of giving and reception between the Mother and the sadhak, but when a serious difficulty comes, this logic is not so applicable. Naturally, we shall do our best to help him in his struggle.

14 May 1936

Leaving the Mother and the Ashram

If you were seeking for a way of making it impossible for me to refuse you the money for going away, you have certainly found it this time. After the letter you have written and the accusations it contains, I am bound to give you the Rs. 50 you ask for.

As to your other reproaches and accusations, I do not think it is necessary for me to reply. I send you the money you ask for and so fulfil the promise which you so imperatively demand that I should fulfil. I do not send you away or give my sanction for your going; it is for you to decide in all freedom whether you will go or stay. But if you stay, there must be no more reproaches of this kind, since you will be staying entirely by your own free will and under no pressure from us. Nor can I allow the claim you seem to have made that the Mother must do what you want and she must not say to you or do anything that does not please you. That is a relation which is not allowed to others and it cannot be allowed to you either. The Mother has shown you every possible favour and kindness; more she cannot do.

12 June 1930

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It is not possible for the Mother to tell you to remain, if you are yourself in your mind and vital eager to go. It is from within yourself that there must come the clear will on one side or the other.

24 February 1932

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My family would like me to go back with them to Bombay

and stay there for some time. I don't find myself bound by any sense of obligation, but there is a dull yet persistent desire in me to go. But as I am not a frigid mental machine, I would much prefer if the Mother spoke to me in a personal interview instead of replying in writing.

But you have already had a personal interview with the Mother in which the question was spoken of for an hour or thereabouts and she told you very positively that she considered it would be harmful, dangerous to you for your sadhana. She cannot say more or otherwise than she did that time. As for these dull persistent desires, it is not by indulging them that they disappear — on the contrary: the only way is to grow out of them or let them die.

7 February 1933

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Can sadhaks who leave the Mother totally forget her Grace after receiving it for so many years while living at her feet?

Some of them seem to forget.

Is there any possibility for them to return again to live at the Mother's feet?

It depends on the person.

How is it possible for someone who feels aspiration and the Divine call in his heart to come to live at the Mother's feet and then afterwards to leave them? Is it through vital depression or something else?

Through the suggestions of the hostile forces, because of pride, egoism, ambition, sexual desire, vanity, greed or any other vital impulse used by the hostile Powers.

Is it because the vital forces are so strong that even if a person has a clear aspiration and a Divine call they can lead him away from the Mother and the Asram?

Every man is free at every moment to consent to the Divine call

or not consent — to follow the lower nature or to follow his soul.

When a person leaves the path, does it not prove that he was unable to judge whether his call for the Divine was true or not?

All this about judging is nonsense — you feel the call or you do not and, if you feel the call, you follow it without calculating or counting risks or asking whether you are fit or not.

When people feel the urge to leave the Mother's feet and go away from her, what is the best way for them to cling to the Mother with faith and not go away?

By understanding that it is the Devil who tempts them and not listening to the Devil.

6 May 1933

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X had almost decided to go away this morning. He thinks the Mother is angry at him and putting pressure on him — and even the general pressure in the atmosphere he cannot bear.

The Mother is not at all angry with him and has not been at any time — that is a sheer imagination. As for the pressure, the only pressure now is to bring down the supramental, but that is a pressure on Nature and not on the sadhaks. For the sadhaks, the only thing given is help, not a pressure.

3 October 1934

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If you insist on going, the Mother cannot say no, as it is only with your own will that we can keep you here. Your difficulty only comes because you cannot recognise that whatever the Mother arranges for you is out of desire for your good and in love for you. This is because you have your own ideas and preferences and if she does something contrary to that you think she does not love you. The Mother's love is always there, but it is through confidence and surrender that you can feel it. You need to recover your health and strength and we wanted you to do

the necessary things for that for a sufficiently long time — food, rest, treatment with the Mother's force behind all that to make it successful. But a full confidence in the Mother and acceptance of her decisions and her guidance is necessary; if you have and keep that, then you can recover your strength and capacity for work and progress in Yoga.

3 December 1934

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The Mother cannot tell you to go because there is no true cause why you should go and it would be very bad for you to do so as well as bad for the work and everything else. The reasons for your not giving up the work are just the same as before and not in the least changed by anything that has happened. Jealousy is no doubt a great defect of the nature, but many here have it; almost everyone has some serious defect in his nature which stands in his way and gives trouble. But it is not a remedy for this to give up work and sadhana and abandon the Mother. You have to go on working and doing the sadhana with the Mother's aid behind you until this and all other obstacles are got rid of. We have told you already that these things cannot be got rid of in a day, but if you persevere and rely on the Mother they will yet disappear. Do not allow an adverse Force to mislead you; reject all depression and go straight forward till you reach the goal.

17 July 1935

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Mother has no wish to abandon you and it has never been her will that you should go away from her. You must put yourself in harmony with her will and then all will go right. Her love will guide you and her protection will be effective.

Rest until you are well. Do not be in a hurry to go to work before you have recovered your strength.

19 July 1935

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What you have seen is quite correct. When the psychic being has been once fully awake as it was all these days in you, then it is not possible for the sadhak to revolt and go away; for if

he does, he leaves his soul behind him with the Mother and it is only the outer being that lives for a while elsewhere. But that is too painful a condition; one has either to come back or life becomes hardly worth living. But there is no danger of that for you, now you have understood and have the true feeling.

Moreover these attacks that now come are not like those that came before when the psychic was still not fully awake. Then each time they came, they increased their force of attack; now they are only spending what force is left to them and losing it. Besides once the psychic being is awake, it is bound to recover control and confirm the mind in the truth so that the true consciousness in the being becomes each time stronger.

All is well. The Mother's child will always grow more in you and the Mother's little star burn brighter and brighter.

20 November 1935

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It is a question between the continuity of your concentrated spiritual life and the call of old demands belonging to the consciousness that you have left behind you. The Mother, as you well know, does not favour even a brief return to the old atmosphere once one is in the spiritual life. For one who has not yet really begun or is living as yet only a tepid half-formed surface sadhana, it might be different. The old life always pulls to have the sadhak back, to renew its ties, to get a fresh lease of control over his vital. If one yields it will redouble its importunities, bring new occasions for calling again; the sadhana here gets broken and has to be picked up again with effort. All the same if people insist on going or have a strong desire to go, they are allowed sometimes to do so at their own risk, but the Mother never sends anybody — unless there is her work to do. That is the position.

15 January 1937

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As for going out, the Asram has seen X go out twice and return with full permission, it has recently seen Y and Z go with the Mother's permission, both with the full intention of returning

— to say nothing of others. As for A you yourself were entirely against her going. A herself always took the position that she ought not to go and asked for help against the other tendency in her. If she had decided to go and told us so, nobody would have stood in her way, although we would not have been lost in admiration at the spiritual wisdom of her choice. Our view is that once the full separate spiritual life is chosen, to cling and turn back to the ordinary one is an error. But if there are circumstances that make the (temporary) departure either harmless or psychologically or otherwise inevitable then we give permission. If the sadhak goes in a spirit of revolt and defiance or goes back to the ordinary life out of egoistic ambition as B and others did then of course Mother does not wish them to come back (so long as that remains) and refuses to allow it. Also if there is treachery, as in C's case — a fact which you yourself asserted and I don't see that it can be denied — unless he atoned or changed, there was no reason why he should return, especially as he said his sadhana was going on admirably there. Mother knew his return with an uncorrected spirit would not be good for him and events showed that she was perfectly right. But I have always noticed that whatever untoward thing happens to a sadhak, many consider that it is we whose bad qualities are to blame for it. And yet they go on accepting us as Gurus and addressing us as Divine! That is truly baffling to the reason. Perhaps it shows that there is something really supramental here!!

In your case I have given the reasons why we accept your going out. There is no ground therefore why we should not support you in your music and other undertakings there. In these respects at least you allow that you have been supported and the support has been effective — there is no reason why that shall not continue — the more so if you keep us informed as others at a distance do when they want some help in any endeavour.

9 March 1937

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You have been able to make progress because you had a certain freedom from demand and repining, an equability and

confidence in turning towards the Mother. This is your main strength and you must not allow it to be disturbed or taken away from you. The attitude described in the birthday poem is the right one for you. It is because you have opened and are on the way that the opposite forces are trying to put in suggestions of dissatisfaction or the impulse to go away. They want to create the same "habit of depression and trouble" that there has been in X and many others so as to use it as a lever against you; but there is no reason why you should allow it. The idea that we are driving away and will drive many by the pressure of our Yoga force is a silly notion among the many silly notions current in the Asram invented by the too idly active brains of the sadhaks. We do not press on anybody to go away—our action has been the opposite. It is a contrary undivine Force which presses on sadhaks to go away from here so that they may lose their chances of sadhana. If their vital is very unquiet, they accept the suggestions of this Force and begin to long to go away; if they long too much, we may have to let them go, for it is not possible to force the Divine on those who do not want him or are not willing to follow the path to the end or decide that sex, fame, pleasure or other things of the kind are preferable.

31 March 1937

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The Mother certainly would not give you money for going away, for she could not approve of or sanction such a step which has no real ground and for which the only reasons you allege are a quite unreasonable despondency and a pique (*abhimāna*) which is also without true cause. The Mother has not in the least changed towards you—she has neither withdrawn her affection nor felt nor expressed any disappointment about your sadhana; her support has not been withdrawn either from your singing. The only thing we can make out in this connection is that the impression was created in your vital by her having discouraged a movement of ego in you, pressed on the removal of some defects which you yourself had admitted and wished to overcome, put aside some suggestions with regard to one

occasion for your music which did not seem to her suitable. But these things she has done before and you used to be very much pleased at her pointing out or letting you understand where you had to change. You yourself wanted to get rid of ego and change the resistant part and had taken steps towards it; it would not have been helpful for your purpose that the Mother should support or indulge any movements coming from there. I can only gather from your recent letters that the resisting part has revolted against the pressure you yourself had put on it and thrown up the impression that it could not change, that the demand on it was more than it could face and it would rather go and that in your depression you have identified yourself with its feeling and misinterpreted the Mother's motives and her attitude—a thing that in your clearer consciousness you would either not have done or else soon corrected the mistake. I hope that this clearer part of you which is the larger part will quickly reassert itself and give you back your former right vision and attitude. I shall do and do always what I can to help towards that and towards the psychic victory in you and your spiritual progress. Your departure and renunciation of the sadhana is a thing which nothing in us accepts for a moment.

The Mother and the Discipline in the Ashram

The Mother in Sole Charge of the Ashram

What your vital being seems to have kept all along is the “bargain” or the “mess” attitude in these matters. One gives some kind of commodity which he calls devotion or surrender and in return the Mother is under obligation to supply satisfaction for all demands and desires spiritual, mental, vital and physical, and, if she falls short in her task, she has broken her contract. The Asram is a sort of communal hotel or mess, the Mother is the hotel-keeper or mess-manager. One gives what one can or chooses to give, or it may be nothing at all except the aforesaid commodity; in return the palate, the stomach and all the physical demands have to be satisfied to the full; if not, one has every right to keep one’s money and to abuse the defaulting hotel-keeper or mess-manager. This attitude has nothing whatever to do with sadhana or Yoga and I absolutely repudiate the right of anyone to impose it as a basis for my work or for the life of the Asram.

There are only two possible foundations for the material life here. One is that one is a member of an Asram founded on the principle of self-giving and surrender. One belongs to the Divine and all one has belongs to the Divine; in giving one gives not what is one’s own but what already belongs to the Divine. There is no question of payment or return, no bargain, no room for demand and desire. The Mother is in sole charge and arranges things as best they can be arranged within the means at her disposal and the capacities of her instruments. She is under no obligation to act according to the mental standards or vital desires and claims of the sadhaks; she is not obliged to use a democratic equality in her dealings with them. She is free to deal with each according to what she sees to be his true need or what is best for him in his spiritual progress. No one can be her judge or impose on her his own rule and standard; she

alone can make rules, and she can depart from them too if she thinks fit, but no one can demand that she shall do so. Personal demands and desires cannot be imposed on her. If anyone has what he finds to be a real need or a suggestion to make which is within the province assigned to him, he can do so; but if she gives no sanction, he must remain satisfied and drop the matter. This is the spiritual discipline of which the one who represents or embodies the Divine Truth is the centre. Either she is that and all this is the plain common sense of the matter; or she is not and then no one need stay here. Each can go his own way and there is no Asram and no Yoga.

If on the other hand one is not ready to be a member of the Asram or bear the discipline and is still admitted to some place in the Yoga, he remains apart and meets his own expenses. There is no discipline for him on the material plane, except the rules necessary for the safety of the work; there is no material responsibility for the Mother.

11 April 1930

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The Mother is not bound to give reasons for any change she makes unless she herself thinks fit to do so. In such cases the sadhak is supposed to accept the change without question in the confidence that the Mother has her reasons and if she does not tell them to me it is because I do not need to know.

15 June 1936

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If anyone questions the right of the Mother to control the Asram or to control his own conduct, his place is outside; there he can exercise his full civic or other rights and do what he pleases. Whoever is dissatisfied, has the right to leave the Asram just as the Mother has the right not to maintain in it anyone whose conduct or attitude she finds unsatisfactory. There is no right civic or legal or republican or constitutional or any other entitling anyone to do whatever he likes in the house of another or debars that other from objecting or enforcing his objection. There is a discipline of obedience and of abstention from forbidden acts in

this Asram and whoever refuses to recognise it has no "right" to remain here.

There are certain phrases in your recent letters that might be taken as an intention of refusing control and doing what you had been told you must not do so long as you are here and a suggestion that you do not mind leaving the Asram on that account. The phrases you used were indeed vague and general, but if anything of that kind was intended it will be better if you make it clear and precise.

4 May 1937

Demands on the Mother's Time

The Mother has no time at all. Can't some arrangement be made so that she may have time for rest? If we rest, why not her also?

I wish it could be so arranged; but it seems difficult. 1933

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It is not because your French is full of mistakes that Mother does not correct it, but because I will not allow her to take more work on herself so far as I can help it. Already she has no time to rest sufficiently at night and most of the night is working at the books and reports and letters that pour on her in masses. Even so she cannot finish in time in the morning. If she has to correct all the letters of the people who have just begun writing in French as well as the others, it means another hour or two of work — she will be able to finish only at 9 in the morning and come down at 10.30. I am therefore trying to stop it. 1933

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Mother prefers that when she walks on the terrace people should not be looking at her because it is the only time when she can concentrate a little on herself — apart from the necessity of taking some fresh air and movement for the health of the body. If she has to attend to the pull of so many people, that cannot be done. The interview she gives you is a different matter; she has so arranged it herself and it is part of her work, so there is no

need to change. What was said was only for the walk on the terrace.

1935

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Mother never avoids opening letters or any other work because of absence of time: she deals with all the work that comes to her even if she is ill or if she has no time for rest. 15 February 1936

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I am always committing mistakes, and Mother is always merciful and forgives me. But then why has she not written to me about my problem?

You know that I have had to stop correspondence. Mother cannot take it up or write regular letters as she is already engaged in one activity or another from morning to night, 18 hours out of the 24.

1 February 1938

The Mother and Material Things

The Mother had arranged for the good order of the distribution of dishes and their return. X was to arrange for all necessary facilities demanded by Y, Y was to be responsible for the good order of the work, and for that he was to have full control; for if he has not full control, he cannot be held responsible and good order becomes impossible. All who are concerned with this work ought to report everything that is necessary to report to Y and help him to control this work; but it seems that no one is willing to do according to the Mother's arrangement and orders and each wants to be a law to himself. In that case there is no use in making complaints about insufficient dishes or anything else of the kind to the Mother. We refuse to issue more dishes under the present conditions. Already in a single year more than 250 items belonging to the dining-room have been broken, lost, stolen, taken away without authorisation by the sadhaks for their private use or have otherwise vanished. Indiscipline, carelessness, regard for one's own convenience only, disobedience to rules, utter disregard for economy or proper use or safeguarding

of the property of the Asram are responsible for this result. It is no use any farther protecting the sadhaks against the results of their own wilful disorders or providing them with means of life which they show no will or fitness to use rightly. They must go on as best they can with what is there, sufficient or insufficient, so long as it lasts.

I do not know what you mean by these phrases about jumping into disorder or all being the Mother's children. The Mother gives no sanction to disorder, and it is idle for the sadhaks to sentimentalise about being children of the Mother and at the same time constantly to disregard and disobey her.

3 February 1932

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X of the Washing Department has resolved not to speak while working there and to handle the dishes and bowls very carefully so they do not dash against each other. If they are carelessly tossed about, he says, they may feel bad due to the lack of care, grow restless and be more likely to slip and break.

It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress in consciousness. It is so always that the Mother has felt and dealt with physical things and they remain with her much longer and in a better condition than with others and give their full use.

15 April 1936

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I did not consider it necessary to say anything about the question of waste beyond assuring you that the undertaking of useless and unnecessary work only in order to keep the men employed was no part of the Mother's principle of action. The Mother did not know to what pipe you referred and had no time or inclination to make enquiries about it. It is quite true that, so long at least as the sadhaks are not siddha Yogis, self-control is the law; they have to learn to refrain from indulgence of excess in any direction — the provision made for them being ample for

a sadhak and much more than is allowed elsewhere — and from negligence, greed or the pursuit of individual fancy. When they do these things, the Mother does not intervene at every moment to check them; a standard has been set, they have been warned against waste, a framework has been created, for the rest they are expected to learn and grow out of their weaknesses by their own consciousness and will with the Mother's inner force to aid them. In the organisation of work there was formerly a formidable waste due to the workers and sadhaks following their own fancy almost entirely without respect for the Mother's will; that was largely checked by reorganisation. But waste to a certain extent continues and is almost inevitable so long as the sadhaks and workers are imperfect in their will and consciousness, do not follow in spirit or detail the Mother's recommendations or think themselves wiser than herself and make undue room for their "independent" ideas. Here too the Mother does not always insist, she watches and observes, intervenes outwardly more than in the individual lives of the sadhaks, but still leaves room for them to grow by consciousness and experience and the lesson of their own mistakes and often employs an inner preference to an outer pressure. In these matters she must exercise her own judgment and vision and there is no use in anybody offering his approval or censure — for she works from a different centre of vision than theirs and they have not a superior light by which they can judge or guide her.

As regards waste, I must point out that in our view free expenditure is not always waste, to have a higher standard than is current in this very tamasic and backward place is not necessarily waste. In matters of building and maintenance of buildings as in others of the same order the Mother has from the beginning set up a standard which is not that current here — the usual system being to use the cheapest possible materials, the cheapest labour and to disregard appearance, allowing things to go shabby or making only patchwork to keep them up. I suppose "thrifty" minds would consider the local principle to be sound and a higher standard to be waste. If the higher standard has been kept, it is not for the glory of anyone, the Asram or the

Mother — the principle of glory being foreign to Yoga, but from another point of view which is not mental and can only be fully appreciated when the consciousness is capable of understanding the vision of things with which the Mother started her work. I do not consider it useful to write about that now, — the general misunderstanding in these subjects can only disappear when the sadhaks have got rid of the ordinary mind and vital and are able to look at things from the same vision level as that from which the conception of the Yoga and the work took its rise.

As to doubts and argumentative answer to them I have long given up the practice as I found it perfectly useless. Yoga is not a field for intellectual argument or dissertation. It is not by the exercise of the logical or the debating mind that one can arrive at a true understanding of Yoga or follow it. A doubting spirit, "honest doubt" and the claim that the intellect shall be satisfied and be made the judge on every point is all very well in the field of mental action outside. But Yoga is not a mental field, the consciousness which has to be established is not a mental, logical or debating consciousness — it is even laid down by Yoga that unless and until the mind is stilled including the intellectual or logical mind and opens itself in quietude or silence to a higher and deeper consciousness, vision and knowledge, sadhana cannot reach its goal. For the same reason an unquestioning openness to the Guru is demanded in the Indian spiritual tradition; as for blame, criticism and attack on the Guru, it was considered reprehensible and the surest possible obstacle to sadhana.

If the spirit of doubt could be overcome by meeting it with arguments, there might be something in the demand for its removal by satisfaction through logic. But the spirit of doubt doubts for its own sake, for the sake of doubt; it simply uses the mind as its instrument for its particular dharma and this not the least when that mind thinks it is seeking sincerely for a solution of its honest and irrepressible doubts. Mental positions always differ, moreover, and it is well known that people can argue for ever without one convincing the other. To go on perpetually answering persistent and always recurring doubts such as for long have filled this Asram and obstructed the sadhana, is merely to

frustrate the aim of the Yoga and go against its central principle with no spiritual or other gain whatever. If anybody gets over his fundamental doubts, it is by the growth of the psychic in him or by an enlargement of his consciousness, not otherwise. Questions which arise from the spirit of enquiry, not aggressive or self-assertive, but as a part of a hunger for knowledge can be answered, but the "spirit of doubt" is insatiable and unappeasable.

For the same reason I refuse to answer criticisms, attacks and questionings directed against the Mother. Whether in work or in Yoga, the Mother acts not from the mind or from the level of consciousness from which these criticisms arise but from quite another vision and consciousness. It is perfectly useless therefore and it is inconsistent with the position she ought to occupy to accept the ordinary mind and consciousness as judge and tribunal and allow her to appear before it and defend her. Such a procedure is itself illogical and inconsequent and can lead nowhere; it can only create or prolong a false atmosphere wholly inimical to success in the sadhana. For that reason if these doubts are raised, I no longer answer them or answer in such a way as to discourage a repetition of any such challenge. If people want to understand why the Mother does things, let them get into the same inner consciousness from which she sees and acts. As to what she is, that also can only be seen either with the eye of faith or of a deeper vision. That too is the reason why we keep here people who have not yet acquired the necessary faith or vision; we leave them to acquire it from within as they will do if their will of sadhana is sincere.

I have written at length on this question once for all; I do not propose to repeat it. People no longer expect it from me; even those who did expect it formerly have ceased to do so. On other questions, so far as they are not connected or mixed up with these things, I may answer hereafter as I find time.

26 December 1936

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The Mother does not provide the sadhaks with comforts because she thinks that their desires, fancies, likings, preferences should

be satisfied — in Yoga people have to overcome these things. In any other Asram they would not get one tenth of what they get here, they would have to put up with all possible discomforts, privations, hard and rigorous austerities, and if they complained, they would be told they were not fit for Yoga. If there is a different rule here, it is not because the desires have to be indulged, but because they have to be overcome in the presence of the objects of desire and not in their absence. The first rule of Yoga is that the sadhak must be content with what comes to him, much or little; if things are there, he must be able to use them without attachment or desire; if they are not he must be indifferent to their absence.

7 January 1937

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I pray to the Mother to enable me to offer myself body, soul and mind to her. I do not want to have anything which I may call my own. I would therefore like to give all my material belongings to her and use only what comes from her. She may give me the same things for my use but please let her accept them at least once as an offering. To whom should I hand over all these things?

Once you have made the offering in your mind and regard all you have as belonging to the Mother and given to you by her, this outward act is not necessary. If you feel that you must do it, you can give them to Nolini and Mother will give them back to you for your use.

2 September 1938

The Mother and the Vital Difficulties of the Sadhaks

It is now one month since you wrote your letter announcing the new favourable turn in your sadhana. You will have had time to see whether the turn was decisive and how far it has moved towards completeness. The test will be whether it gets rid fundamentally of the Asuric turn in your external being. All ambition, pride and vanity must disappear from the thoughts and the feelings. There must be no seeking now or in the future for place, position or prestige, no stipulation for a high seat

among the elect, no demand for a special closeness to the Mother, no claim or assertion of right, no attempt to thrust yourself between her and others, no endeavour to intercept what she is giving to them or to share in it, no imposing of yourself on her or on other sadhaks. All falsehood must be rejected from the speech, thought and action and all ostentation, arrogance and insolence. A simple, quiet and unpretending aspiration to the Truth and reception of it for its own sake and not for any profit it may bring you, a straightforward acceptance of the Mother's will whatever it may be, a complete casting away of all pretensions and pretences, a readiness to obey completely and without reserve and to accept any position and any discipline given are the only conditions on which a divine change can be effected in you. It is for this that you must strive.

On our side we await a certain conquest on the material plane which is not yet accomplished, before we can tell you to return. As you yourself saw once, till this is done your stay here would not be helpful to you. When you are ready in your inner condition and things are ready here, then the Mother will call you.

4 October 1927

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In meditation with the Mother today, I felt devotion for Sri Aurobindo, not in the mind but in the heart. The mind and body are at peace, but there is still difficulty in the vital and below. Take this difficulty away from me.

If the mind and the heart have a settled devotion and are full of the Mother's presence or in constant contact with her Light and Force, then the difficulties of the vital and physical consciousness in you can be met and conquered. It is that you must get first. To try to deal with the difficulties of the vital without this contact or presence, is premature and cannot succeed. 20 June 1930

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Instead of opening myself to the Mother, I opened to the adverse forces. Then like a friend the Mother showed me my mistakes. But why does my outer nature make me wander

here and there? Why doesn't the Mother protect me with her Force at the time of difficulty? Why does she show me only afterwards what the problem was?

The vital will always find excuses for leaving the straight path and indulging its own propensities—and it is for you, since you have a consciousness and a will, not to listen to what you know to be a lower movement. When you want to be guided externally, you have to put your difficulty clearly and precisely without concealing anything before the Mother. But we cannot at every moment replace your own choice and will—we give you the necessary consciousness and light, it is for you to walk by that.

11 January 1933

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I am glad to see that the right consciousness is returning and the attack is over. As it is past, I need not say anything about what you wrote in the interval since you can with the sight of the true consciousness see for yourself what is the right answer.

Only one thing I must note that no wrong idea may linger in your understanding. You seem to say in one passage of a letter that the Mother had said to you that jealousy is inevitable in true love (in ordinary life) and if it is not there when one sees the other loving elsewhere, then they don't love each other! You must have strangely misheard and misunderstood the Mother. It is just the opposite of what the Mother has always said and thought and the very contrary of all her knowledge and experience. It is the idea of the ordinary mind about jealousy and love, not hers. She remembers very well having told you just the opposite that, even in ordinary life, one is *not* jealous if one has the true love. Jealousy is the common movement of the human egoistic lower vital with its grasping possessive instinct and it cannot be anything else. I thought it better to make this clear so that there might be no misleading impression that such movements of the lower vital nature have any sanction or support in the truth of the soul; they belong to the vital Ignorance, they are fruits of the vital ego.

1 February 1933

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Sometimes I throw away the vegetables or the milk because I don't like to eat them. Why does Mother give us the same food every day in the dining room and not something new — some sweets?

That is the desire of the palate which the sadhak has to conquer.

Sometimes I want to wear nice clothes — my dissatisfaction persists unabated.

Another vital desire. These things are good for people in the ordinary life, but such desires must be overcome in Yoga.

There is a growing disgust with life and a preference for death. I pray to Yamaraja to take me quickly since I don't think I can do anything for Mother in this body — why then live on?

This is the reaction of disappointed desire in the vital. It is a movement that should be rejected completely whenever it comes.

Why do these things arise?

They are brought by the ordinary human nature as obstacles to the sadhana.

Who has put them in me and why? How can I get rid of these disappointing things?

You must reject them when they come and try to replace them by a complete faith and surrender to the will of the Mother and a quiet and very patient aspiration for opening and inner union with her.

I still have a fear of the Mother. Why?

It is the same part of you, the vital, that is afraid of her.

It seems like someone has taken away my life-energy and I am without any strength.

It is the physical consciousness which has no longer the mind's sanction to the old push of vital activity and vital desire and so feels the absence of the rajasic vital strength in which men live. In Yoga that strength must be replaced by the Divine Force that comes from the Mother.

15 May 1935

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We are very glad to hear that you are better and that X has helped you out of the crisis. Surely this jealousy must go and no trace of it remain. Do not doubt that the Mother's love is and will be always with you. Trust in her grace and all this will go out of you and leave you the true child of the Mother which in your mind and heart you always are.

18 July 1935

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This jealousy (which is a very common affliction of the vital) will go like the rest. If you have the aspiration to get rid of it, it can only come by force of habit, and with the psychic growing in you and the Mother's force acting the power of the habit is sure to diminish and fade away. Do not be discouraged by its occasional return, but reject it so that it may be unable to stay long and will be obliged to retire. Very soon then it will cease to come at all.

17 October 1935

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You allowed yourself to be surprised by the old movement of unreasoning jealousy and it brought back the old unreasoned thoughts and feelings — for you are no more than others here as a mere worker, you are here as the Mother's child and the work is there only because it is a part of the sadhana. Also this feeling of jealousy and other doubts and difficulties are not peculiar to you alone, they are common to human nature and most here have them or have had them and found it difficult to be free. So there is no reason to suppose because of their presence that you are unfit or will not be able to do the sadhana. The only danger is in these violent fits of despondency and the movement to go away that comes with them; but that also others have

had who have now got over them and some still have them. There is no reason why you should not get over them as many others have done. The Mother's love and the Mother's grace are with you. The only other thing needed is the growth of the psychic consciousness and the psychic movement within you. That had begun and was fast increasing; it has only to reach a certain point, to occupy the mind and vital consciousness more strongly, then these things will no longer be able to return. What difficulties remain will then be minor things; there will be nothing that will try to take you away from the Mother. Be patient therefore and persevere; recover your confidence in the Mother and let your soul grow in you. Beyond these storms there is a haven of joy and love and happiness that are your true goal. Persevere till you reach it.

25 October 1935

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All faults and errors are redeemed by repentance. Confidence in the Mother, self-giving to the Mother, these if you increase them will bring the change in the nature.

12 November 1935

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If you have difficulties, you should recognise that they come from your own vital and deal straightforwardly with your vital; it is only so that real fitness in the nature (apart from the original psychic urge which can only realise itself through a change of the nature) can come. To have feelings against the Mother because of difficulties created by your own vital is simply one way out of many the vital has of rejecting its responsibility and so resisting the pressure to change.

6 February 1936

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The human vital everywhere, in the Asram also, is full of unruly and violent forces — anger, pride, jealousy, desire to dominate, selfishness, insistence on one's own will, ideas, preferences, indiscipline — and it is these things that are the cause of the disorder and difficulty in the D. R. [Dining Room] and elsewhere also in the Asram work. The rule established in order to control

or combat these tendencies is that the Mother's will and the rule and discipline established by her shall be followed and not each worker be led by his own ego. But there are many who insist on their own ego and resent discipline. They are ready to follow the Mother's will and rule and discipline only in name and so far as it agrees with their own ideas and preferences. There is no cure for this except by an inner change. In outside life discipline is enforced because refusal of discipline is visited by severe penalties or else results in so much discomfort of various kinds that the indisciplined man has either to submit or to go. But here in the Asram it is not possible to enforce the rule in this way. An inner obedience has to be given as the source of the outer obedience. The only remedy is the descent into the consciousness of that golden lotus which you saw in your vision. Everyone in whom it is established or even who feels its influence will become a centre of the true consciousness and true action which will change life in the Asram.

14 February 1936

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Small movements of depression caused by unhappiness, dullness, etc. do not usually touch me. But there are also strong movements of depression and despair that come from vital dissatisfaction and revolt. When I get depressed, I would like it to be on account of these big movements, not petty ones such as dullness.

They can hardly be called big movements. The real distinction is that they are rajasic movements, not tamasic. 1 March 1936

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Movements of depression or despair that stem from vital dissatisfaction or revolt — are these not big movements?

They are not big — they are small movements of the vital ego — I mean the movements of vital dissatisfaction which cause people here to be depressed and revolt and despair. If the resultant depression or despair is strong, that simply means that the minds of the people here are seeing things out of all right measure and proportion, magnifying trifles into tremendous things, swelling

little hurts to vanity, petty pride, small ambition, *amour propre* etc. They make a tempest in a tea-cup, a tragedy out of a trifle. Because people are living here under the Mother's shelter and saved from the great sufferings and tragedies of human life, they must needs spin despairs and tragedies out of nothing. The vital wants to indulge its sorrow sense and shout and groan and weep and if it can't have a good or big reason for doing it, it will use a bad or small one.

1 March 1936

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When these things [*anger, depression, etc.*] come you should always try to get back at once to the position you have taken of leaving all to the Mother,— your own difficulties, but also the stumbles of others,— X's rages (he behaves with everybody like that), Y's moods and all.

It would not matter so much about occasional anger coming — these recurrences happen with everybody so long as the peace is not settled permanently in the consciousness. What matters is the suggestions that come, about death and going away and the rest of it. These you must throw away at once. They have no reason for existence when the inner working has begun and the Mother's Force is sure to carry you through. Remain firm within and recover your quietude.

6 July 1936

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I do not know why you suppose that the Mother was displeased with you for your letter. I think my answer was quite kind and without any touch of displeasure in it. I was silent about most of what you had written, because when there are letters of this kind I take it as an unburdening of the mind and always either remain silent in so far as it concerns others or else I say that we must rely on the growth of inner consciousness to get rid of the faults and deficiencies and mistakes of the sadhaks. Silence does not imply that these defects and mistakes do not exist. But all have defects in various forms and make mistakes and the best sadhaks are not exempt. The human way is to get angry and rebuke and condemn and, if the Mother does not do the same

or is not severe, to think she is unjust or partial or unseeing or wilfully blind to the defects of her favourites. But the Mother is not blind; she knows very well the nature of all the sadhaks, their faults as well as their merits; she knows too what human nature is and how these things come and that the human way of dealing with them is not the true way and changes nothing. It is why she has patience and love and charity for all, not for some alone, who are sincere in their work or their sadhana.

It is strange also that you should conclude that she puts no value on you. From the first the Mother has had a special kindness for you; she has appreciated and supported you so steadily that people have accused her of blind partiality towards you just as they accuse her with regard to X. When you were in trouble and difficulty with suggestions and revolts, she was love and patience itself and helped and supported you through all. Afterwards since your sadhana opened, we have been watching solicitously over it,—I have been spending time daily writing answers, giving you knowledge of what you should know, trying to lead you forward with love and care. Why should all this have been done, if we put no value on you?

You know these things but your physical mind has become too active and clouded your perception for a time. You must get back from it into your inner self.

30 August 1936

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I cannot keep quiet and clear due to the hurt feelings within me. I try to forget this thing by thinking of the Mother's goodness, but these feelings still come.

It is the usual thing — you allowed a desire to get hold of you and because it was crossed by X's action and the Mother didn't subscribe to it, you got upset first in the vital and then by reflex action in the body. All this questioning on the basis of an unsatisfied desire is out of place. You must get rid of this idea that you can turn a desire into a demand and then expect as a right its satisfaction and consider it a wrong done to you if it is not satisfied. That is precisely the kind of attitude of the vital which prevents the inner progress and drags back the consciousness

from the psychic to the lower vital level. Full trust with humility and devotion, that is the psychic poise and for nothing should it be lost. No satisfaction of vital desire can replace it.

6 January 1937

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X's letter is all right and I accept it as the apology I demanded from her. But things cannot be quite as before; she must make reparation for her fault not only in words but in her conduct; that must change and change altogether. That she can change it if she wishes to do so, was shown when she began taking my darshan and her behaviour for some weeks was quite satisfactory. Afterwards she called back into her the bad forces which I had thrown out of her and the recent outbreak was the result. That must not happen once more. It is not possible any more that the Mother should show the same indulgence and leniency under great provocation as she did before or that I should remain silent and let such things pass. Our attitude towards her and treatment of her must depend on her attitude towards the Mother and her behaviour.

In the recent outbreak she practically took the position that she refused to change anything wrong in her nature — rather she regarded what is bad and wrong in her as something noble, great and admirable. If that remains her position, she cannot expect that we should accept it, nor would there be any reason for my giving her darshan. People are here to change what is wrong in their nature so that they may do an effective sadhana. If they refuse to do that or even to try, they are not real sadhaks or disciples and can expect nothing from myself or from the Mother.

What was worse, she seemed prepared to be the instrument of an alien Force, acting against the Mother, claiming victories against her, trying to lower her in the eyes of the sadhaks, asserting itself and its ways, traducing the Asram and impairing the respect due to the Mother and spoiling my work as much as possible. It cannot really succeed in this, but it can give trouble, and I do not see why I should tolerate it. If she was not conscious

of what she was doing or the evil Force that used her, the sooner she becomes conscious the better.

Arrogance, violence and self-assertion have always been the bane of X's character. But in her relations with the Mother these things must go. She must learn not to force her will on the Mother but to accept the Mother's will in everything without opposition or murmur. That is the main point. If she does not take this resolve, she will always go on as she has done and relapse into revolts and that will bring no good to her. In short, however difficult it may be to her nature, she must learn self-surrender to the Divine. A "bhakti" which claims everything from the Divine and does not give itself is not real bhakti.

I point out some details—

There should be no more clamouring and shouting and violent insistence when something happens which she does not like. There should be no disrespect, aggressiveness or constant contradiction when she speaks to the Mother. If she has anything to represent she can do it quietly and without violence. And she must accept the Mother's decision in all matters.

She should respect the Mother's time and the heavy work she has to do. She has been allowed to see the Mother very often in the day but she must not abuse the privilege by wasting unnecessarily the Mother's time. There is a heavy strain on the Mother allowing her no time to rest and she must not increase the strain.

In her upstairs work she should try to be in harmony with others and not a cause of disturbance or inconvenience. She should not push herself everywhere and take up a position not authorised by the Mother. I am referring especially to her interference above the stairs when the Mother is giving pranam to the sadhaks. To intervene, speak to people and give them instructions is not in her province and only disturbs the Mother's work.

In her talk with sadhaks and visitors, she should refrain from gossip of a bad kind or drawing a black picture of the Asram which makes a bad impression on those who have joined recently and have had no personal experience of how things are, and on people from outside. There should be no attacks on the

Mother or accusations against her. All that is harmful to my work and I want it to change.

That is enough for the present; but it is a wholesale change in her attitude and conduct that I demand of her. If she is prepared to make a firm resolution to get rid of these habits and keeps the resolution, all will be well. If she is not prepared, then why is she here and what is the meaning of her professed bhakti for myself or for the Mother?

P. S. Explain all this carefully to X. It may be best to make a translation of this letter and give it to her to keep with her.

23 May 1944

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I feel very restless today. I want the Mother beside me at every moment; without her presence I cannot bear this body. What is the use if she is not in it? I wish to give up eating from today — I will eat again only when the Mother comes to me.

You cannot progress or reach the Mother if you indulge in such fancies as not eating. Obedience to the rules of life laid down by the Mother is the first necessity.

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To be turned to the Mother is all right and call to her — but more is needed; for that is only the first thing needed. There must also be a complete self-giving and surrender. For instance to follow your own fancies is not the right thing — e.g. this idea that to stop eating is the proper way to get rid of desires — it is absurd for one may fast and yet be full of desires. You know that the Mother and I disapprove of this kind of self-starvation and yet at the least excuse you bring it up and want to follow it. These and other insistences are your own fancies you must learn to give up. As for the desires, the proper way is to have a sincere aspiration and call on the Mother's force to work in you. When the Mother's light and force are working in you they will show you all that has to be changed in you and will change it provided you give your sincere and full consent.

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How can I live to make the Mother happy? Would living in sorrow and despair please her? I don't think she would like me to be dejected. May she throw these things out of me. I want to live happily beside her.

It is not at all the Mother's wish or will that you or anyone should remain in grief and despair; what she likes is that you should confide in her and be happy and cheerful.

That is what the Mother wants, that you should remain near her always in an inner gladness of heart and outer happiness of the life.

*

It is rather surprising that you should so entirely mistake the intention of my letter. I did not regard what you wrote as a complaint against X and there is nothing written from that point of view in my answer. You wrote that what had happened to X had entirely upset you, raised your doubts, been a constant source of harassment to your mind, that it was one of the chief sources of your difficulties and a contributing reason to your wish to go away. I gave what was the only true answer, that this was all wrong from the spiritual point of view — that you should not allow another's difficulties to add themselves to your own and upset you and drive you out of the straight spiritual path — and I gave the reason because each sadhak has his own way and his struggles and difficulties and they concern only himself and the Mother. That is a principle we have always insisted upon and we have written it to many. I do not see why my writing it to you should make you feel abhiman and turn away from the Mother.

If it is the family sense that is your chief stumbling block, all the more reason why you should push it resolutely away from you — not either cling to it or allow it to cling to you. When I said there was no reason for being troubled by X's difficulties, I meant no spiritual reason — vital emotional reasons, attachments have no value in the Yoga. Attachments may be difficult to get rid of, but it must be done; otherwise they will harass you and not allow you to progress.

If it had been possible Mother would have removed you

from the house. But all the same, physical distance, not being in the same place or the same house, is not sufficient to destroy an attachment. It is an inward tie and it is only inward means that can get rid of it. If you do not want the others in the house to make claims on you from the family point of view, it should not be impossible to make them understand it. It is what others in similar circumstances have done.

I wrote to you what I did in order to point out to you what attitude a sadhak must take in the difficulty about which you wrote to me. It does not mean that our help and support are not with you in your difficulties. Everybody's difficulties, yours quite as much as anyone else's, are the concern of the Mother and it is an error to suppose that she is unconcerned and indifferent about them. Her help is there for you and you must not turn away from her in misunderstanding and abhiman or reject it. If your struggle is hard for you, all the more reason why you should cling to our hands for help to get out of them and not for any reason let go.

The Mother's Attitude towards Quarrels between the Sadhaks

Whenever I do something wrong, such as my recent quarrel with X, I am met at Pranam with the same dry reaction from the Mother. Then later she says that there was no difference from her usual expression and attitude. How can it be so? Under these circumstances what clarity can come from the thinking mind or the psychic?

The psychic clarity would have told you that Mother was not likely to tell a lie and that if she says she did not tell you to go and that there was nothing in her mind except to give you help and strength since she saw you were disturbed, she must be telling you the truth and that it was your own observation or the inference you made from it that was mistaken—since the mind and the coloration given to things by the senses, are not infallible—especially when there is a disturbance in the vital. I do not know what you mean by Mother's reaction in the quarrel with

X since I can testify that when she heard of the affair (before you wrote anything at all about it) she blamed X and had no feeling at all of severity or displeasure against you. 7 May 1934

*

I must say what I have often written to people, that it is impossible for us to take sides in a clash between sadhaks or assume the role of judge and arbiter or of defender of one party against another. Formerly the Mother used to try to intervene or to reconcile, but we found that this only kept discord alive and fed the ego of the sadhaks. In most cases we pass over all quarrels and clashes in silence and almost all sadhaks have ceased to write about their conflicts because they get no answer. I have written to X once or twice, avoiding any discussion of the merits of a dispute, only to influence him to regard things from a general and impersonal standpoint so as to prepare him to give up that of the person and ego. I passed no personal opinion or judgment for or against this or that person. You must not expect me to take any other attitude. This is a place meant for Yoga and sadhana; personal relations of the vital kind with their attractions and repulsions, quarrels and explanations and reconciliations belong to the ordinary life and nature.

All these clashes which arise whenever you mix with X come from his weakness and yours. I have not imposed on you any rule of not meeting with him; but I have advised you not to give any field for the weakness which you yourself have admitted and which is evidently there in you. Both you and X are to me disciples and I have to deal with each in the way best for him or her. I have not pressed on your weaknesses and defects, I have given you time to find them out yourself and overcome them, for that is the best way. I have pointed out his to X when he was ready to recognise them. It is a pity that you should clash whenever you meet together a little, but you know yourself why it is so. So long as any vital weakness remains it cannot be otherwise. Certainly it cannot be remedied by "submitting to his demands and his ego". 16 November 1935

*

I am rather surprised at your description of the people who show contempt towards you. Leaving aside X who is not in question, there is nobody working with you who is far advanced in sadhana or is regarded by the Mother as more specially her own than are others. You are certainly as much her own as anybody else in the kitchen; she has always owned you as her child and little star and what can anybody be more than that? I see no reason therefore why you should care so much if anybody is not behaving well with you. I have told you already that people in the Asram — it is true even of those who have inner experiences and some opening — are not yet free in their outer selves from ego and wrong ideas and wrong movements. It is no use getting distressed or depressed by that. What you must do is to be turned only to the Mother and relying on her go forward quietly with your work and sadhana until the time when the sadhaks are sufficiently awakened and changed to feel the need of greater harmony and union with each other. Let only your spiritual change and progress matter for you and for that trust wholly in the Mother's force and her grace which is with you — do not let things or people disturb you, — for compared with the truth within and the journey to the full Light of the Mother's Consciousness these things have no importance.

6 December 1935

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It is not possible for Mother to intervene personally in these matters. Formerly she used to try to intervene and arrange matters, but the only result was that she got reproaches and abuse from both sides and accusations of partiality and injustice and the quarrels increased tenfold. For a long time that has been given up. If we began again intervening in clashes between housemates or coworkers, all the time would have to be passed in that and the Asram would become a seething cauldron of feuds and collisions. These things can only disappear if the sadhaks become fully sadhaks in their consciousness and temperament, learn how to keep equality in all circumstances and consider each other. Only a long silent spiritual pressure can help towards that

— nothing else is of any use.

4 September 1937

*

You must remember what I wrote to you before that the Mother wants you to remain quiet and do your work as well as you can under the circumstances without allowing yourself to be upset by these things. Any improvement in the conditions of life or work in the Asram depends on each one trying to progress and open within to the true consciousness, growing spiritually within and not minding about the faults or conduct of others. No change can come by outer means; for this reason the Mother has long ceased to intervene outwardly in the clashes and disagreements between sadhaks. Let each progress inwardly and then only the outer difficulties will disappear or become negligible.

21 April 1938

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Each one has his own way of doing sadhana and his own approach to the Divine and need not trouble himself about how the others do it; their success or unsuccess, their difficulties, their delusions, their egoism and vanity are in her care; she has an infinite patience, but that does not mean that she approves of their defects or supports them in all they say or do. The Mother takes no sides in any quarrel or antagonism or dispute, but her silence does not mean that she approves what they may say or do when it is improper. The Asram or the spiritual life is not a stage in which some are to be prominent or take a leading part or a field of competition in which one has a claim or can rightly consider himself superior to others. These things are the inventions of the ordinary human attitude to the world and the tendency is to carry it over into the life of sadhana, but that is not the spiritual truth of things. The Mother tolerates all; she does not forbid any criticism of the sadhaks by each other nor does she give these criticisms any value. It is only when the sadhaks see the futility of all these things from the spiritual level that there can be any hope that they will cease.

In all these things there is nothing that ought to drive a man

from the spiritual life or make him go away from his Guru. It seems to me that it is only the Guru who can decide whether one is fit or not; to accept the adverse opinion of someone else on that point seems to me absurd and to act on it an offence against one's own soul; to judge oneself unfit and act on that is most perilous, for this judgment may be merely a fit of depression or a vital disturbance raising the self-depreciation of the tamasic ego. If I did not see that you could progress in the sadhana or had not seen any progress, I would not have persistently asked you to continue nor would I be now writing to you letter after letter (I write to no one else) to meet your difficulties.

The Mother and the Satisfaction of Desires

X said in class that one should not have a desire to possess anything, but if something comes one can accept it. For example, if somebody offers you a sweetmeat, you can eat it.

How can such a rule stand? Supposing someone comes and offers you meat or wine, can you accept it? Obviously not. A hundred other instances could be given where the rule would not stand. What the Mother gives or allows you, you can take.

My belief is that one should not accept anything except what the Mother gives or permits. When one is attacked by an impulse and sees it rise up, one should let it spread as far as it wants, and then tell the Mother to transmute it.

If you do that, the impulse may spread so far as to take hold of you and master you. If a wrong impulse comes, you must reject it as soon as you become aware of it. 24 March 1933

•

If our desires are to be rejected, why does Mother sometimes satisfy them?

It is you who have to get rid of them. If the Mother does not satisfy them and the sadhak keeps them, they will only get stronger

by suppression from outside. Each one has to deal with them from within.

4 September 1933

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Sometimes things that I want come to me in a surprising way. But why don't I get what I want from the Mother? Someone told me that the universal Divine gives according to a universal law. But with the Mother, it is her Will which gives or refuses depending on what is good for us.

But what you want from the Mother does not come through a pull in the vital — it can come only by the faith and surrender — the psychic purifying the mind and the vital of all wrong desire.

July 1934

*

I sometimes have a desire to eat nice things, and now I feel this desire as I have never felt it before. What to do for it?

The only thing to do for it is to throw the desire away. It is absurd to allow small animal greeds like this to come up and obscure the whole consciousness. You have not come here to eat nice things and Mother is under no obligation to give them. In fact, if you have such desires as that, it is a very good reason for not giving them to you, as it would only feed the desire. Get rid of these movements once for all. Let the true consciousness grow and reject these things.

22 September 1934

The Mother and the Control of Sexual Desire

If a person is here from childhood, is it true that he has no sexual difficulties?

It is not automatically true — it is only possible — but on condition he gets fully into the influence of the Mother, is not too open to the atmosphere of other sadhaks who have it, does not get upset at the critical age and also does not upset himself by reading erotic literature etc. There is no one who has been able to do all that yet.

8 November 1933

*

After taking the position of witness, one feels strengthened to change it to that of governor in matters of sex.

That is good. The Mother is pressing for the sex trouble to go out of the sadhaks — as it is a great obstacle. So it must go.

29 October 1934

*

How does it matter if I do not have perfect Brahmacharya?

It matters a good deal to the Mother, even if it does not matter to you. It is part of what she asks from all so that her work may be done.

If I become wholly pure I might merge in the Mother, but then there would be no excitement left.

There would be many things left better than excitement.

It is for excitement then that you want to live, not for the Mother?

2 December 1936

*

I find that after several years the sex hunger has reawakened in me and clamours for satisfaction. What is the use of my undergoing a slow torture? As nothing else succeeds, I suggest the exhaustion of this complex which somehow has got formed.

The Mother has already told you the truth about this idea. The idea that by fully indulging the sex hunger it will be finished and disappear for ever is a deceptive pretence held out by the vital to the mind in order to get a sanction for its desire — it has no other *raison d'être* or truth or justification. If an occasional indulgence keeps the sex desire simmering, a full indulgence would only sink you in its mire. This hunger like other hungers does not cease by temporary satiation; it renews itself after a temporary abeyance and wants again indulgence. Neither sops nor gorgings are the right treatment for it. It can only go by a radical psychic rejection or a full spiritual opening with the

increasing descent of a consciousness that does not want it and has a truer Ananda.

23 April 1937

*

You say physical sex action must be avoided by all means.
Why so strict on it while tolerating vital-physical lapses?

Because the physical action breaks a law without which the Asram cannot stand and the work cannot be done. It is not a personal matter, but a blow aimed at the very soul of the Mother's work.

Outside sadhaks indulge and get a child, e.g. X and others. Mother disapproves and the man who does it has no longer the same grace as before, but he is not in the Asram and his lapse hurts only himself and his wife.

2 August 1937

Uneasiness in Mixing with Others

When I mix with X, I experience some uneasiness but I also get some pleasure. And when I mix with too many people, then also I feel some inner uneasiness. What should I do?

Observe carefully the people with whom you have an uneasy feeling and tell the Mother. The uneasiness and the pleasure can go together, because they are two different movements in different parts of you. Mother is not asking you for mental judgment about people, but simply with whom you *feel* this uneasiness.

29 November 1932

The Mother's Advice on Some Practical Matters

It is not without reason that the Mother gives directions such as that — about not going home after nine without a sadhak to accompany you. It is because there are many people of bad character who are about at that time, and if any women go about unprotected by men at that time, they are supposed to be women of bad character, so anything may happen. Even before nine, after nightfall it is much safer not to go about alone.

There would be less difficulties if the sadhaks learned to act according to the Mother's directions and not according to their own ideas or sense of convenience.

June 1933

*

Mother was giving you eight rupees, three rupees for pocket money and five rupees for any expenses you might have for the cooking or in connection with it or for washing, since you were not giving to the Dhobi. As you said you did not want pocket money, she suppressed the three rupees and gave you the Rs. 5 which was not pocket money, but standing allowance for other purposes. I do not see why this should upset you so much. If you did not understand or did not wish this distinction to be kept up, you could have told Mother so and sent back the five rupees or else asked her why she wanted you to have the Rs. 5 with you. These violent fits of despair or revolt because of trivial difficulties like this are not the right way of meeting them. Mother had not the slightest intention of hurting you or keeping you aloof from her. Why can you not have more confidence and credit her with a reasonable mind and kind intentions even if for the moment you fail to see her purpose in an action? This was a perfectly reasonable arrangement — if you did not want it, you had only to tell her so. Recover yourself and get back into the true attitude in which you can see things simply and naturally; do not allow yourself to be flung off the track by suggestions of the old kind. The only sure basis on which you can go is a quiet mind and confidence in yourself and the Mother.

1 October 1933

*

I am not doing any drawing or painting based on inspiration from Nature because I am not inclined to it nowadays. Instead I feel a movement in my inner being in which I aspire for the divine Truth to manifest through my art; when this movement is going on, I see hazy forms in a variety of colours coming down, but it is disturbed by some mental movement. I am waiting for the inspiration from within and not doing any work till then. Is it necessary for me to do some practice work to keep in touch with drawing?

Of course you can do one little study work every day.

Mother is constantly putting you in relation with a world of true harmony and it is that that you feel trying to come down — but you must keep your mind very quiet to receive it.

3 December 1933

*

I went to the market with X since he wanted to buy a wrist watch. He bought one on credit and promised to send the amount to me within four days, after reaching Madras. As he did not send the money, I borrowed the necessary amount from Y and paid the shop owner. I have sent a reminder to X but in future I shall not have such money transactions with him.

Yes. Mother not only disapproves of sadhaks running into debt, but she does not like either their being responsible for or having to pay for the debts of others.

6 January 1934

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Mother does not disapprove of your writing the book — what she does not like is your being so lost in it that you can do nothing else. You must be master of what you do and not possessed by it. She quite agrees to your finishing and offering the book on your birthday if that can be done. But you must not be carried away — you must keep your full contact with higher things.

3 May 1934

*

In asking for an easy chair I did not mean that I plan to do an easy chair sadhana. I asked because at present the pressures of sadhana are so strong and fiery that I am made to sit for hours continuously and my head becomes so heavy. Please tell me what to do.

What the Mother meant was that this meditating on an easy chair which is so common in the Asram is a new thing to her and she finds it a rather tamasic habit. There can be no objection to a long sitting or resting when you need it. 20 September 1934

*

Very often there is such a push of sadhana that I cannot lie down on my bed. Then I sit up for hours. Do you think it proper to give me an easy chair so that I can both respond to the push of sadhana and fulfil the need for rest?

Mother does not believe much in an easy chair sadhana.

In fact there is, I think, no easy chair. But all the same you can ask X. But he has some things that can be put on a bed so that you can sit there instead of lying. 1 October 1935

*

I wish to get rid of my continuous pain and sleeplessness. Are asanas likely to help me? A book I have speaks highly of the headstand, shirhasan, but I am afraid to do it due to weak eyes. What do you think?

Mother thinks that the shirhasan is not safe for your eyes. While some of these asanas are simple and safe, others are not so; they require a training of the body or practice under the eye of an expert. It might not be prudent for you to take them up in an amateur fashion. 5 June 1938

Imitation of “Great Sadhaks”

Observing X's recent conduct, I have lost half my respect for him. And when I observe other things done by him, it is all the more so. People will not follow a hard-working sadhak like Y or Z; they see what the well-known great sadhaks do. When they see X speaking to the C.I.D. man as if he were his oldest friend or keeping his own kitchen where he invites his relatives and friends; when they see A freely reading newspapers, going to hotels and talking to anybody, they naturally feel justified in following their example. And when, in spite of their conduct, these men get inwardly and outwardly much more than others, I do not think people can be blamed for doing as they do.

Who gets? How does A get more than others inwardly? X does not get more, he receives more—if others had an equal receptivity, they would get as much as he, and some do get plentifully.

Or again, if *B* or *C* prefer not to come to the Dining Room, why should others not follow their example? After all, the Gita's line does apply: *yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tad tad evetaro janah*.¹ If the well-known great sadhaks go about loosely, the ordinary sadhaks have few good examples to go by.

The Mother has never set up *A*, *C* or *X* as great sadhaks and examples for others to follow—if people do it, it is their own error and their own responsibility. Even *B* cannot be imitated in everything though he is certainly a very good sadhak. But his not going outside the central compound has been sanctioned by the Mother from early times because it was his spiritual need. *X*'s one merit as a sadhak is that he is entirely passive to the Mother and receives without question all she gives him. As for his separate kitchen that is Mother's arrangement for him, not his own. The friends whom he receives there are people who have great devotion for the Mother or are seeking for light, the others do not come here though some still would. *D* always expresses adoration for the Mother and myself—she has always known us since the Mother first came to India. Even so this time also *X* refused to have her in his house, so she was put in *E*'s. It is not a bad progress for a man who has been here only a little over a year and had when he came a thousand ties with the world. It is also something that a man already marked out by some of the greatest English writers of the day as an equal of Keats and Shelley should renounce all publication and all fame and write only for myself and the Mother and the sadhaks. I know how impossible such a renunciation would be to most poets and writers and it seems to me it should be put to his credit as against any weaknesses he may still be unable to get over. For the matter of that who here has been able to become perfect in a year or two of sadhana? Not even the biggest saints or Yogis.

The whole idea of great sadhaks and imitation of them is in fact a mistake. Not to imitate others but to keep in mind the Mother's will and try to follow it is what is asked from the

¹ *Whatsoever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice.* Gita 3.21

sadhaks. Certainly if any sadhak had to be imitated in outward action, it would be Z and Y, not A or C!! But why do they want to imitate? Obedience to the Mother is the rule of the sadhana, not imitation of A or C. As for the line in the Gita, it is a statement of what happens in the world, not a rule for Yoga and the *śreṣṭha* here is not the Yогин, but those who are socially first, eminent and leaders.

17 August 1934

Work for the Mother in the Ashram

All Ashram Work Is the Mother's Work

If anybody in the Asram tries to establish a supremacy or dominating influence over others, he is in the wrong. For it is bound to be a wrong vital influence and come in the way of the Mother's work. If you feel anything of the kind in anybody, you are quite right to resist it and throw off the influence; to accept it would be bad both for him and you.

But there should be no quarrel or ill-feeling or keeping up of resentment or anger; for that too is not good for either . . .

You must remember that just as the Mother uses your capacities and gives them their field, she must be able to do the same with the capacities of others. If she gives charge of a department of work to one, that must not stand in the way of her consulting or using others. Thus X and Y are in charge of the building work, but the Mother consults Z too because of his scientific knowledge as an engineer and he has the right to make suggestions or criticisms or indicate any possible improvements, although he is not in charge. So too the Doctor is not in charge of the dispensary, but he is associated with the medical work and the Mother makes use of his expert knowledge and experience, whenever necessary, or puts in his hands the treatment of a case of illness. It must be the same between you and Z.

It will be best if you fix in your mind and keep to the true rules of the work; then you will have no difficulty or trouble.

All the work should be done under the Mother's sole authority. All must be arranged according to her free decision. She must be free to use the capacities of each separately or together according to what is best for the work and best for the worker.

None should regard or treat another member of the Asram as his subordinate. If he is in charge, he should regard the others as his associates and helpers in the work, and he should not

try to dominate or impose on them his own ideas and personal fancies, but only see to the execution of the will of the Mother. None should regard himself as a subordinate, even if he has to carry out instructions given through another or to execute under supervision the work he has to do.

All should try to work in harmony, thinking only of how best to make the work a success; personal feelings should not be allowed to interfere, for this is a most frequent cause of disturbance in the work, failure or disorder.

If you keep this truth of the work in mind and always abide by it, difficulties are likely to disappear; for others will be influenced by the rightness of your attitude and work smoothly with you. Or, if through any weakness or perversity in them, they create difficulties, the effects will fall back on them and you will feel no disturbance or trouble.

12 October 1929

*

Whose work is it if it is not the Mother's work? All that you do, you have to do as the Mother's work. All the work done in the Asram is the Mother's.

All those works, meditation, reading *Conversations*, studying English etc. are good. You can do any of them dedicating them to the Mother.

Meditation means opening yourself to the Mother, concentrating on aspiration and calling in her force to work and transform you.

18 September 1932

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All work in the Asram is the Mother's.

12 February 1933

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You can take as much rest as you need from the work. The pains are evidently of the nervous system and are probably due to some resistance or obscurity there to the working of the Forces.

What you write in the beginning of your letter seems to indicate an excessive attachment to a particular work, that of the D. R. [Dining Room]. All work is the Mother's and there should

be no attachment to this or that to which you are accustomed or to the things or circumstances or people related to it; for that would indicate a sense of possession or clinging in the vital. The vital should be perfectly free and ready to work or not to work, to remain in one field or to go to another, to do in one way or to do in another according to the will of the Mother.

I trust that you will indeed take the opportunity of this rest to make a definite turn in your sadhana. A complete surrender of the mind and the vital both in work and in sadhana is the turn that is needed. Not to be attached to one's ideas, feelings or formations, not to substitute them for those which the Divine Truth finds necessary for its workings, not to indulge one's sentiments, not to have personal preferences or, having them, to be ready to waive them at any moment and submit to the Mother's Will which embodies the Divine Force, not to follow one's own way but hers; this is the psychic submission that is most needed. So long as it is not there, a full opening of the sadhana on the vital and the physical plane is hardly possible. To carry on the sadhana in one's way and according to the counsels of the individual mind and emotional being carries you only a little distance — it does not bring to the goal. 15 September 1933

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I must remind you that all the work in the Asram is the Mother's work and no part of it is the personal property of any sadhak. The Mother can do with it whatever she thinks right. This is too easily forgotten by yourself and others. 7 March 1934

*

My mind says that the whole world belongs to the Mother; all works belong to her and whatever is done with her sanction is done directly for her. But in practice there seems to be a great difference between work we all do for her and work done for her personally. When I work directly for the Mother and she says, "Go and bring this for me", my heart is filled with an immense joy. Yet I rarely find an opportunity to place myself at her direct service.

All the work here is for the Mother and there is no difference between her personal work and the rest of the work for the Asram and all can be done with an equal joy. It is the mind that makes the distinction. This does not mean that all work done in the world is the Mother's work — only that which is consciously done for her.

17 March 1936

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There is no reason for your seeing the Mother nor is this the time for it. Nor is there any room for discussion in this matter.

There are two things that must be clearly understood. The work here is the Mother's and she has the right to give her orders in whatever way she pleases and they must be obeyed. No one can be allowed to flout her orders, however conveyed, or insist on his own ideas, will or fancies. If you are prepared to respect and obey her orders without making conditions, you can be allowed to continue the work, otherwise you must discontinue.

Secondly, all violence must stop. If you want to remain in the Asram, this kind of conduct must cease.

18 July 1938

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You have promised that you would obey the orders of the Mother in the work. Mother has sent you herself the typed instructions for the work with her signature and statement that it was in accordance with her orders. You have returned them to X after cutting off the Mother's statement and signature with a note saying that you do not want this literature. This is a direct act of defiance and disobedience to the Mother. You have either to respect or obey the orders of the Mother or you cannot be allowed to continue the work.

18 July 1938

*

(1) It is absurd to keep the certifying signature and reject with contumely the order it signs and certifies. You said you had never received detailed instructions and you said you would obey orders and instructions signed by the Mother. This one was drafted under her instructions and typed after careful examination by her and certified and signed by her. When drafted under her

directions and signed by her, the whole order is hers and must be so regarded and respected as well as obeyed. Even a proposal drawn up by someone else becomes her order as soon as it is accepted, approved and signed by her and must be so regarded. As a matter of fact even if not signed by her, departmental orders should be regarded as hers and obeyed, because they pass through her scrutiny and approval or are made under her general sanction.

(2) You have done good work which has been appreciated by the Mother, but that does not authorise you to claim an independent action in your work free from control. There is and must be a departmental control over all sections of the work and that control, through whomever exercised, is the Mother's. No one in immediate charge of a section of the work has the right to choose which order he shall or shall not obey, or to say that he will not obey orders at all unless they come direct from the Mother.

(3) All arrangements for the work made by the Mother must be accepted by the workers. The Mother has informed you that the arrangement for Golconde in Raymond's absence, agreed on between him and the Mother, is that X shall carry on control and supervision and direction of all the work for the Mother under her sanction or orders. Nobody has a right to question this arrangement or act so as to make its execution difficult or impossible.

As for the pressure you complain of, it is you yourself who have made it necessary by recent refusals to obey orders and the increasing violence of your reactions. The Mother has the responsibility and supreme and total control of all the work and she cannot allow it to be made impossible or ineffective on the plea that her orders are not hers because they are not given directly by her.

19 July 1938

*

What is good work and what is bad or less good work? All is the Mother's work and equal in the Mother's eyes.

Doing Work for the Mother

Is there any use in the Mother's spending money and taking trouble for useless undivine me? I am giving her trouble by my very existence and I am no good at all.

You have allowed yourself to accept the old wrong suggestions — for a mere trifle — and so got into the wrong condition once more. You were doing the work for the Mother I suppose, not for yourself — to satisfy her, not to satisfy yourself? Then if the Mother was satisfied, why should you be dissatisfied? You should also have understood by this time that the Mother's ideas of what is good or not, what will do or not do, are more correct than the ideas of your mind about it, — for your mind is always worrying and tormenting itself for nothing.

Drive all this away. You know by experience that it is a false road and leads to no progress but only to confusion and trouble. Open yourself again to the Force and Peace and Light — it is that alone that can make you understand and change you.

15 July 1933

*

I can only repeat what I have already written whenever these circumstances and feelings come to you. To leave your work is not a solution — it is through work that one can detect and progressively get rid of the feelings and movements that are contrary to the Yogic ideal, — those of the ego.

Work should be done for the Mother and not for oneself, — that is how one encourages the growth of the psychic being and overcomes the ego. The test is to do the work given by the Mother without abhimana or insistence on personal choice or prestige, — not getting hurt by anything that touches the pride, amour-propre or personal preference.

It is a high and great ideal that is put before the sadhak through work and it is not possible to realise it suddenly, but to grow steadily into it is possible, if one keeps the aim always before one — to be a selfless and perfectly tempered instrument for the work of the Divine Mother.

27 September 1935

*

It is very satisfying to have closed so well the work you undertook for the Mother, overcoming all difficulties and ending in such a satisfactory result. But your work for the Mother is always sure to be the same, thorough, conscientious and skilful and inspired by a firm faith and openness to her force; where these things are, success is always sure.

24 May 1937

*

If you leave it to the Mother entirely, then what the Mother would want you to do is to go on with the work as best you can without allowing yourself to be disturbed or troubled by these things which you enumerate in your letters, without insisting on your own ideas or vital feelings. That is indeed the rule that all ought to follow, to do their work here as the Mother's work, not their own; the worker must not insist on the work being done according to his own ideas; for that is to treat it as his own work not the Mother's. If there are inconveniences, troubles, things done not as he would like them to be, still he should go on doing his work as best he can under the circumstances. That is a rule of the sadhana, to remain unconcerned by outward circumstances and quietly do what one has to do, what one can do, leaving the rest to the Mother. It is not possible to have everything perfect at present, even supposing that what one thinks to be right is the best. There is much in the Asram and the work that is not as perfect as the Mother would like it to be, but she knows that the perfection she would like is not yet possible because of circumstances and the imperfection of her instruments; she arranges all for the best according to what is now possible. The worker should do his work in this spirit according to the Mother's arrangements and he should use his work as a means for growing spiritually in devotion, obedience, self-offering to the Mother, not insisting on himself, his ideas, his feelings and preferences. To be able to do that makes the consciousness ready for inner experience and progress in sadhana.

I have tried to explain what the Mother wants and why she wants it. She wants you to do her work quietly, taking all inconveniences, defects or difficulties quietly, and doing your

best; what X does or arranges should not disturb you—if he makes mistakes he is responsible for it to the Mother and it is for the Mother to see what is to be done. That is what she wants from you—if you can do it, then things will go more smoothly and she will be able more easily to lead things in the direction she wants. It is also, as I have tried to explain to you, the best thing for your own sadhana.

5 July 1937

*

Is it beneath your dignity to do work for the sadhaks? It is an entirely egoistic attitude and improper for a sadhak. All the people in the D. R., in the Building Service, in the Stores, in the carpentry department, in the Atelier and Smithy, are all the time doing work for the sadhaks, the Mother herself is doing work for the sadhaks all day; in writing this answer I am spending my time doing work for a sadhak. Would you think it proper for the D. R. and Kitchen workers to say, "We are not going to cook for sadhaks or serve them; it is beneath our dignity. We will consent only to cook food for the Mother alone." Do you want me to stop writing answers to your letters on the ground that I am doing work for a sadhak and I will write only letters to the Mother and nobody else?

What was X doing in the kitchen so many years if not preparing the food of the sadhaks? And what was Y doing in the granary if not work for the sadhaks? All these ideas are perfectly idiotic. All work given by the Mother is work for the Mother.

November 1938

*

If you say "I will not eat" or "I will eat only once until you do what I say," that is not *prārthanā* or *bhikṣā*, that is putting compulsion on the Mother to do what you want.

I do not know what you mean by giving you your service. If it is the old work, that is not possible any longer. Other work will have to be found. But you should remember that the true service and the true Yoga is to do what the Mother wants and not what you want. It is by making one's will one with hers and

submitted to hers that one can advance and feel unity with her and her constant presence.

*

What you write is no doubt correct. There are very wrong ideas in the minds of the workers and not at all the right attitude. But we have not to do the work for the satisfaction of the sadhaks, but rather because it is the Mother's work, the divine work and it has to be done well and in the right way. If the workers or others are not satisfied, it has still to be done well and in the right way. When their nature changes and they see their mistake, then they will recognise the truth and change their attitude. Some have good will and have only to learn to see more clearly and get free from their mental misjudgments. Others are more obscure and egoistic and will take more time to get the right poise. Till that happens, we must go on with a quiet firmness and resolution and a great patience.

Work for the Mother and *Kartavyam Karma*

X asked me if for us in the Asram whatever is sanctioned by the Mother can be accepted unhesitatingly as our *kartavyam karma*. I replied, "Yes, if the sanction is asked for in the right spirit." He said, "What do we know of the right or wrong spirit? If the Mother's sanction is there, is it not enough?" I replied in the affirmative, but not with full conviction. Something was lurking in my mind suggesting that the Mother sometimes does sanction an act which may not be according to her will but for which a sadhak may have a strong desire.

If the sadhak has a strong insistence or a strong desire, the Mother may say "Yes" or "Do as you wish" or give her sanction to the thing requested or demanded. That does not make it a *kartavyam karma*, but simply a thing which the sadhak can do. Again if a thing is indifferent or unobjectionable and the Mother is asked by somebody if he can do it, that does not exalt it into a *kartavyam karma*.

31 July 1937

*

So far I had the belief that all work sanctioned by the Mother was her work and work done for her is our *kartavyam karma*. Is this not so? If a person gives up all duties to his family, country and society and sincerely does work only for the Divine, as an offering to the Mother, is he not doing the Mother's work and is it not his *kartavyam karma*? Outside it may be difficult to decide this, but here, under the living Presence of the Mother, is this not an assured fact? If not, then what is really meant by *kartavyam karma*?

I was asked [*in the preceding letter*] whether everything done that had the Mother's permission was not a *kartavyam karma*. People ask for permission to a host of things dictated by various reasons — it does not follow that the Mother's permission to all these things are her dictates. What work is given by the Mother is her work — also whatever work is done with sincerity as an offering to the Mother is her work also — that goes without saying. But Karma covers all kinds of actions and not work only.

31 July 1937

Work, Sadhana and the Mother

You need not be so much concerned as to what others in the Asram may think about you or say to you. It is only what the Mother says to you or thinks about you that has any importance.

All you need to be concerned with is your own work and sadhana, whether you do it well and sincerely and with the right spirit. As to that the Mother alone can judge; you should not be troubled or moved by the praise or blame of others.

19 February 1931

*

I aspire to be divinised rapidly by the Mother so that she can take me up for her work. It seems to me it will be spiritual work, like she is doing.

How can you do like the Mother or do the work she alone can do? That is the ambition and vanity coming in.

5 November 1932

*

My condition today is that my inner eyes wish to turn towards the Mother and call her by closing my outer eyes. In fact, my eyes tend to close while doing any work. Is this all right?

If you are working you have to see your work, so it is no use closing the eyes; but one can always do the work in a concentration in which the inner being is turned towards the Mother while the outer does the Mother's work. 12 February 1933

*

The adverse forces have been active the last two days, but each time they came I sent them away. The report about X was false, but the information confused me and brought wrong suggestions of all kinds.

When things become confused outside, you must put on your mind at once the rule of not judging by appearances — refer all to the Mother's Light within with the confidence that all will be clear. 16 September 1933

*

In my ambition to serve the Mother, I asked for work, but now I find that I am losing the joy and cheerfulness I was enjoying before. If you think my withdrawal from the work will bring me relief, kindly grant it.

It is a pity if you have to give up the work as your work had been of great help and was very much appreciated, especially by X — but if it comes in the way of the joy and cheerfulness which is necessary for the smooth inner progress, Mother cannot ask you to continue. The necessity of the sadhana is the first thing to consider. 6 September 1934

*

The spirit and attitude you express in your letter are the right spirit and attitude, but you must keep to it always. Work done for the Mother without claim or desire alone has a spiritual value — you must not bring your ego into it.

If work is given that you think ought not to be given or have any other grievance, you have to say it or write to X and

ask him to remedy it or take the orders of the Mother. But to complain to others and create the idea that you are ill-used so that it spreads through the Ashram is to create disturbance and a current of forces against the Mother and her work which may have a serious consequence.

I do not wish to insist on this any more. Everybody makes mistakes and one has only to learn from them and avoid them in future. I am sure you will try to live up to the ideal you have expressed in your letter.

15 September 1934

*

Yes, that is the most important thing — to get over ego, anger, personal dislikes, self-regarding sensitiveness, etc. Work is not only for work's sake, but as a field of sadhana, for getting rid of the lower personality and its reactions and acquiring a full surrender to the Divine. As for the work itself, it must be done according to the organisation arranged or sanctioned by the Mother. You must always remember that it is her work and not personally yours.

23 March 1935

*

You told me that if I get a miscellany of thoughts when I do not read during work, it is better to read, and since I have the Mother's "express permission" for it the idea of its being improper should not come in. But does her express permission prevent one from feeling uneasy? Suppose she gives someone a sanction to read novels and newspapers — does it mean that one will not feel a lowering of consciousness while reading them? One might just read and read and not attend to the work at hand.

The Mother's express sanction should remove any feeling of uneasiness due to the idea that it ought not to be done. As for lowering of consciousness, that is quite another thing — the sanction will not remove that. Also naturally one would have to read with one eye ready to be on the work at need, which might not be agreeable.

8 June 1935

*

I am glad of your resolution. The greater the difficulties that rise in the work the more one can profit by them in deepening the equality, if one takes it in the right spirit. You must also keep yourself open to receive the help towards that, for the help will always be coming from the Mother for the change of the nature.

29 September 1935

*

What you say is perfectly correct. There is a stupid spirit of competition and claim, as if by being here and working one were doing a favour to the Mother, as if her permission to be here were not a grace and her giving work also were not a grace. If the sadhaks could get rid of this wrong attitude, they would go much faster in their spiritual progress and the atmosphere of the Asram would be clearer and purer.

5 January 1936

Vital Energy and the Mother's Work

This [*renewal of energy for work*] is the thing that used to happen daily to the physical workers in the Asram. Working with immense energy and enthusiasm, with a passion for the work they might after a time feel tired — then they would call the Mother and a sense of rest came into them and with or after it a flood of energy so that twice the amount of work could be done without the least fatigue or reaction. In many there was a spontaneous call of the vital for the Force, so that they felt the flood of energy as soon as they began the work and it continued so long as the work had to be done.

26 March 1936

*

Don't be afraid of vital energy in work. Vital energy is an invaluable gift of God without which nothing can be done, — as the Mother has always insisted from the beginning; it is given that His work may be done.

I am very glad it has come back and cheerfulness and optimism with it. That is as it should be.

26 October 1936

The Mother and the Organisation of Work

There are certain things that X must fix in his mind and feel and act in their spirit, if he is to get rid of his depression and unrest and feel happy and at home. You will explain clearly to him what I write here.

(1) He is not here as Y's nephew, but as a child of the Mother.

(2) He is not here under the care, guardianship and control of Y, but under the Mother's control and care and he owes allegiance to her alone.

(3) The work given to him in the stores is the Mother's work and not Y's; he must do it with that idea, as the Mother's work, and no other.

(4) Y is at the head of the stores, garden, granary and receives his directions from the Mother or reports his arrangements to her for approval — just as Z in the B. D. [*Building Department*] or A in the Dining Room or B or C in their departments. Others in these departments are supposed to receive their directions from the head and act in accordance. But this is because it is necessary for the discipline and good order of the work; it does not mean that the work is Y's or the building work is Z's or the dining room work is A's — all is the Mother's work and must be done by each, by the head as by the others, for her. It would not be possible to get the work done if each and every worker insisted on being independent and directly responsible to her or on doing things in his own way; there is too much of this spirit and it is the cause of much confusion and disorder. The Mother cannot see to the whole work herself physically and give orders direct to each worker; therefore the arrangement made is indispensable. On the other hand, the head of a department is also supposed to act according to the Mother's directions — or in their spirit where he is left free — and not otherwise; if he does according to his mere fancy or obeys his own personal likes and dislikes or misuses his trust for his personal satisfaction or convenience, he is answerable for any failure in the work that may result or wrong spirit or clash or confusion or false atmosphere.

(5) Any work done personally for Y or another (not for the

Asram) is not part of the Mother's work and the Mother has nothing to do with that; if such work is asked, X may do it if he likes or not do it if he thinks it is improper.

(6) X has been given one work at least by the Mother direct — that is the cleaning of the kitchen vessels. Let him do it according to the Mother's directions and with scrupulousness and perfection; it will be an opportunity for him to show what he can do and the rest can be seen to hereafter.

(7) He is not bound to accept food from D and Y or presents etc.; if he does not like it, why does he receive these things? He is perfectly free to refuse. His staying here and everything else does not depend on Y, but on the Mother alone — so he has no reason to fear.

(8) Finally, he should clear his vital of restlessness and desires — for that in him as in everybody is the root cause of depression, and, if he were elsewhere and under other circumstances, the depression would still come because the root cause would still be there. Here if he turns entirely to the Mother, opens to her and works and lives turning towards her, he will get release and happiness and grow into light and peace and become in all his being a child of the Divine.

19 March 1932

*

I saw X's notebook and found that there were big signatures of Mother. I thought: in what way is my work inferior to his so that Mother signs in my book with small signatures, as if she did not appreciate my work?

A small signature does not mean lack of interest — usually it means more concentration than a large one.

4 April 1933

*

I do not get copies of messages from the Mother. Would it be possible for her to arrange for copies to be sent to me regularly?

It is quite impossible for the Mother to see to every detail of the organisation of the Asram in person. Even as it is she has no

time free at all. It is understood that you can have the copies sent to you, but it is with those who have charge that you must insist on the execution of any arrangement. 20 July 1933

*

Yes, that is correct. Mother does not care for the food for itself; but she allows X to do it as an offering. So with the work—although the work has its own importance. Y and Z are not given physical or practical external work because their energy cannot run in that direction and they cannot do it—not because training in physical and practical work is not good for all. In ideal circumstances a many-sided activity of the being would be the best—but as yet it is not always practicable.

26 September 1933

*

X told me that Mother requires one person to do exactly as she wants him to, but it is difficult to find anyone. I do not see how the complete obedience of one person would be sufficient for your work or affect the general atmosphere. I can understand that if there were complete obedience and peace and light in many people, it would hasten the progress of the work. Perhaps even one person would be a good example for many to follow, but I wonder how many would do so. Anyway, there is some mystery in this “one man required”.

Such ideas are rather a mental way of emphasising the desirability of something—here, of such persons existing, or of such a consummation being reached even in one person—than true in the form in which it is put. What can be said as true behind the statement is that each person arriving to a certain perfection of the Yogic state becomes a force for the expansion of the same Yogic force, a *point d'appui* for it to work. How far that working through him can go depends on the person and on the receptivity of those with whom he comes into inner contact. Men like X, Y or Z for instance who have the push and communicating faculty do have an effect on others, even as it is, though it cannot be said that they have reached anything near perfect perfection in

obedience and peace and light, only an approach towards it.
Naturally, the persons they affect are those who are capable of
the contact.

22 June 1934

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It is impossible for the Mother to arrange the work according
to personal considerations as then all work would become im-
possible.

25 July 1934

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X told me that the Mother disapproved of preparing a small
platform near the window since it would look awkward. I
conveyed the news to Y, but she took it much amiss. She
thought that X must have told Mother that it was not possible.

I don't know why people always assume that it is X or some-
one else who has influenced Mother and otherwise she would
concede everything they ask. Especially in an aesthetic consider-
ation! On an engineering question, it might be different.

15 November 1934

*

X has written a very fine letter—it shows that he is very open
to the Mother for he proposes at all points what she herself
suggested to me today.

The Mother accepts X's willingness to remove his shoes if he
has to go to the Dispensary, but there is this to consider. It is not
only a clash between two sadhaks, but Y has throughout been
seized, as he himself admits, by a Power or Impulse that puts
false ideas into his head and impelled him to offer an obstinate
resistance to the Mother's orders and to use every device—even
the most childish and, to say the least, strange—to defeat her
intentions. He does not reject or dismiss this action but justifies
it and proposes to continue it unless the Mother yields to him
altogether in this matter. The Power that got hold of him will
consider itself as victorious and almost inevitably find other
ideas or excuses to push him again to a similar action. Where
that will lead, the example of the others has already shown

any number of times. If that happens, then the Mother will have to come back again to the steps she had contemplated and commenced this time. It is quite impossible that an important department of the Asram should remain in the hands of one who goes on making it a sacred duty to disobey in favour of his own ideas the clear orders of the Mother.

28 December 1934

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Is it the atmosphere of the Dispensary that raises these things? Your letter marks the beginning of the same attitude towards X as Y's was before it became acute, the idea that you alone are medically great and competent (which was his), a big "I" sprawling egoistically all over the pages, the sense of being in charge = a masterful possession of the Dispensary, the disposition to arrange and command everything imperiously and imperially in that kingdom. Please stop all that before it grows. The work is the Mother's and has to be carried out in harmony and the big "I" has to draw in its horns and become small, even if it cannot disappear altogether.

The Mother has given charge of the Dispensary not to you, but to you and X together (she does not want to renew a one man rule there, after what has happened). She accepted the arrangement suggested by both of you, because you were working in harmony and it seemed the one possible arrangement. She expects you to continue working in harmony — otherwise the running of the Dispensary will become impossible.

5 January 1935

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The Mother has her own reasons for her decisions; she has to look at the work as a whole without regard to one department or branch alone and with a view to the necessities of the work and the management. Whatever work is done here, one has always to learn to subordinate or put aside one's own ideas and preferences about things concerning it and work for the best under the conditions and decisions laid down by her. This is one of the main difficulties throughout the Asram, as each

worker wants to do according to his own ideas, on his own lines according to what he thinks to be the right or convenient thing and expects that to be sanctioned. It is one of the principal reasons of difficulty, clash or disorder in the work, creating conflict between the workers themselves, conflict between the workers and the heads of departments, conflict between the idea of the sadhaks and the will of the Mother. Harmony can only exist if all accept the will of the Mother without grudge and personal reaction.

Independent work does not exist in the Asram. All is organised and interrelated, neither the heads of departments nor the workers are independent. To learn subordination and co-operation is necessary for all collective work; without it there will be chaos.

10 March 1936

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The Mother has taken away my small terrace work. She has not reconsidered my case and given me my work back. This disturbed me very much.

You are disturbed because of your vital ego. It is evident that your faith and attitude cannot be perfect, if because Mother makes other arrangements for her work, you at once regard her as unjust, false and tricky. Every sadhak ought to realise that the work given him is not his property — it is not his work but hers; she must be perfectly free to make an arrangement and to change it whenever she thinks right to do so. To challenge her action and demand an explanation from her or claim the work as personal property is an entirely mistaken and egoistic attitude.

15 June 1936

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What I meant in my letter was that the Mother does not usually think about these things herself, take the initiative and direct each one in each instance what they shall do or how, unless there is some special occasion for doing so. This she does not do, in fact, in any department of work. She keeps her eye generally on

the work, sanctions or corrects or refuses sanction, intervenes when she thinks necessary. It is only a few matters in which she takes the initiative, plans and designs, gives special and detailed orders. In the line of embroidery, X refers to her anything necessary or any of the workers undertakes something and informs the Mother that she would like to do something for her, handkerchief, apron, cover or sari. The Mother approves or disapproves what is suggested or suggests something herself or changes what is proposed. Work done in this way is as much work done according to the Mother's will as anything initiated, thought of and planned in whole and detail by her alone. I do not quite understand why you should consider that this way of work implies an absence of unity with the Mother's will or of surrender on your part. It is the offering within you that is important and brings in time the full completeness of surrender. 17 September 1936

*

I do not quite understand on what you want the *anumati*. If it is about embroidery, I have said that to follow the existing arrangement, viz., when you have the will or the inspiration to do some work of embroidery, then to put it before the Mother and take her sanction or ask for her decision, is quite a right way to work according to the Mother's will; it is not at all inconsistent with surrender. But if you prefer to leave everything to the Mother and not suggest or propose anything yourself, you can do that.

Mother only asked me to write to you about the way things are usually done, because as she is not in the habit of thinking herself about these things, it is not as easy for her to remember and think out something as to decide upon suggestions put before her. 18 September 1936

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The Mother can give indications and open out possibilities [*about how to do the work*], but if the mind interferes and if they are not followed up, what can be done?

The Mother's Use of Department Heads

Now that the Granary has moved to a building which belongs to the Mother and has been repaired at much expense, it is necessary that there should be someone among its inmates charged with seeing to the place and to the proper order and maintenance of things there — a manager. The Mother wishes you to take up the charge of manager. You will see to the observance of the general rules that have to be followed if the house is to be maintained in good condition and also to all matters pertaining to the management. Whenever you are in doubt, you can refer or report to the Mother. I trust you will find that all the inmates when they know of the Mother's wishes will sincerely cooperate with you in seeing that all goes well and in an orderly way in the Ganapati House.

25 September 1933

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My complaint about X is his attitude towards the Dining Room workers — he is simply too harsh with most of them. With all his experience it should be possible for him to be a little more generous in speech and expression. Why should he make a wry face when someone asks for an extra piece of bread? It does not remove the person's greed; rather it gives rise to eating bazaar food. When Y breaks down weeping, could X not bend a little to indulge her? With a more pleasant mood and face, he could satisfy so many people and avoid the clashes which have been continuous under his regime.

I do not agree. It is impossible to maintain order if one is indulgent to everybody and strictness is indispensable. That is what Mother found when she was herself looking after the work; indulgence only brought absolute disorder, people became entirely selfish, undisciplined, taking every advantage they could. I do not see either how a system of indulgence to the moods of the women is likely to help their sadhana, — it is likely rather to nourish what is wayward and exacting in them. If they do not learn discipline and self-control, on what basis can they build their sadhana and character?

21 November 1934

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Why should the conditions of work be such that one is compelled to act and be guided by the will of X? It amounts to the surrender of one's intellect, energies and capacities to him instead of to the Mother. How does working under such a person help one's sadhana?

It is not physically possible for the Mother to give the work direct to each worker and exercise a direct control, so that physically as well as inwardly he may offer it to her. For every department there must be a head who consults her in all important matters and reports everything to her, but in minor matters he need not always come for a previous decision — that is not possible. X is there in the B. D. as the head because he is a qualified engineer. That is a necessity of outward organisation which is unavoidable here as elsewhere and has to be accepted if the work is to be done. But it does not mean that X or any other head is to be considered as a superior person or that one has to surrender to his ego. One has to get rid of his own ego as far as possible and regard the work done under whatever conditions as an offering to the Mother.

20 August 1936

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X is not wrong in giving importance to persons. It is quite true that the work would go on if the persons now in charge were not there and others were in their place, but in most cases it would go on badly or at least worse than now and there would be no certainty that those others would be adequate instruments of the Mother's will. For the work of the charge of departments for instance done by men like X, Y, Z, there is needed a combination of qualities, a special capacity, a personality and the power of control called organisation and above all fidelity and obedience to the Mother's will, the faith in her perceptions and the desire to carry them out. It is not many in the Asram who have that combination. Before the Mother took up directly through X the work, now concentrated in Aroum  and the granaries, all was confusion, disorder, waste, self-indulgence, disregard of the Mother's will. Now though things are far from perfect, because the workers are not at all perfect, still all that is changed. In

that change your presence in the kitchen and A's in the granary has counted for much; without you there it would have been far more difficult to realise the organisation of things the Mother wanted and in these two parts of the work it might even have been impossible. The Divine Will is there but it works through persons and there is a great difference between one instrument and another — that is why the person can be of so much importance.

December 1936

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In fact, if X and a few others had not made themselves the instruments of the Mother and helped her to reorganise the whole material side of the Asram, the Asram would have collapsed long ago under the weight of a frightful mismanagement, waste, self-indulgence, disorder, chaotic self-will and disobedience. He and they faced unpopularity and hatred in order to help her to save it. It was the Mother who selected the heads for her purpose in order to organise the whole; all the lines of the work, all the details were arranged by her and the heads trained to observe her methods and it was only afterwards that she stepped back and let the whole thing go on on her lines but with a watchful eye always. The heads are carrying out her policy and instructions and report everything to her and she often modifies what they do when she thinks fit. Their action is not perfect, because they themselves are not yet perfect and they are also hampered by the ego of the workers and the sadhaks. But nothing can be perfect so long as the sadhaks and the workers do not come to the realisation that they are not here for their ego and self-indulgence of their vital and physical demands but for a high and exacting Yoga of which the first aim is the destruction of desire and the substitution for it of the Divine Truth and the Divine Will.

9 January 1937

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From the letters you write about X there can be only one conclusion that his behaviour is the cause of all the trouble, a constant cause of friction and disturbance. If that is so, the only way is to withdraw him from the kitchen so that there may be

peace and things may go on there more smoothly. If you are so upset by his conduct and ways of action and all he does is wrong and disturbing, so much so that Y also gets upset and you want to be relieved of the work or go home, there is no other course possible. We have no other reason for withdrawing him than this — for personally the Mother has had no reason to complain of his management of the work. But there must be some solution for this constant friction and trouble. If on the other hand the trouble lies in yourself, then it is that that must be put right and there is no use in these letters full of complaints against his behaviour; for then you should bear whatever trouble comes as quietly as possible and concentrate on receiving the Mother's force to cure you. It must be one course or the other. My proposal made by the Mother to X was that he should now withdraw from the work he is doing in the kitchen so as to diminish the causes of friction and even as head of the Aroumē interfere with your work as little as possible, leaving you to do things in your own way. If that is not done, something at least must be arrived at which would be a clear understanding and a practicable arrangement. It seems to me that as you have been doing the work so long, there ought not to be so many occasions for X telling you what to do. But I am writing to him telling him what you say about his telling you plainly what to do; he and you must talk it over and arrange it and X must let us know clearly what is proposed to be done.

3 June 1937

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X spoke to the Mother this evening about the proposal of more work in the kitchen for you. But before that we had received your letter and what you write makes it necessary to make certain things precise and clear.

I gather that what you want is to be independent in your work, taking from X what you need, and after a time improve the cooking according to your own ideas. But this is not the understanding with which you were given the work and it is not possible. The understanding is that you do the work with the materials given you and nothing more, as you are doing

now. Also you seem to say that you will find it difficult to work under the control of X and will resent it if in a clash with him Mother upholds him against you. In that case it is better not to go farther with the proposal of extending your work. For there has been too much clash and disharmony already in the D. R. and kitchen and the Mother wants no more, especially as a more harmonious working has been established after long difficulty.

The arrangements of the work are not X's but the Mother's. Several years ago she put him at the head of the food departments and organised them through him according to her own will not only in general but in detail. All changes since then have been made in the same way. He is there so that she may exercise through him her single control over all the work. It is the same system in all the departments and it cannot be changed. There has been much resistance owing to the wish of the workers to be independent, to impose each his own ideas and arrangements, and to resentment against the control of the head of the department. But all that could only lead to friction and clash of ideas and clash of egos and constant disturbance. The Mother has succeeded finally in getting rid of that and imposing some amount of harmony and discipline. It is not therefore a question of X's independent control but of the Mother's control of the work through the person chosen by her.

I may remind you of what I wrote about the spirit in which work should be done to be helpful for sadhana. It has to be done as an offering, without vital egoism or assertion of self-will, as the Mother's work and not one's own, to carry out her ideas and will and not one's own. It is work done in that spirit that opens the vital to her and allows her Force to work in the being and the nature.

10 June 1938

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We did not say that you must do *everything* X tells you; but if you work under anyone who is the head of the department (X or another), the work must be done according to his instructions, as he is responsible.

The work itself is the Mother's and it is the Mother who gives you the work.

The suggestion to go, like the desires which support it, come from adverse forces. If you take the right attitude of self-giving, all that will disappear.

The Mother and Clashes between Workers

You need not mind X's quick temper. Remind yourself always it is Mother's work you are doing and if you do it as well as you can, remembering her, the Mother's Grace will be with you. That is the right spirit for the worker, and if you do it in that spirit, a calm consecration will come.

1 March 1933

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You have written, "Harmony cannot be brought about by external organisation only . . . ; inner harmony there must be or else there will always be clash and disorder." What is that inner harmony?

Union in the Mother.

21 April 1933

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Everybody says his report or account is true and all the others are liars. Our experience is that each pulls his own way and arranges the facts in his own mind so as to be most convenient for his own case. But that is not the point. The point is that the rules laid down by the Mother must be kept in the spirit as well as the letter.

22 August 1933

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Do not allow yourself to be grieved or discouraged. Human beings have unfortunately the habit of being unkind to each other. But if you do your work in all sincerity, the Mother will be satisfied and all the rest will come afterwards.

15 October 1933

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It is quite impossible to take you away from the kitchen and leave the others to work in your place. Such a solution would be very bad for you, for it would mean your losing a work in which the Mother's force has been long with you and sitting in your room with your thoughts which will not be helpful or according to your active nature. It would be very bad too for the kitchen; your place cannot be filled by anyone else there, however well they may work in their own limits — none of them could be trusted with the responsibility the Mother has given to you.

The difficulties you have are the difficulties which are met in each department and office of the Asram. It is due to the imperfections of the sadhaks, to their vital nature. You are mistaken in thinking that it is due to your presence there and that if you withdrew all would go smoothly. The same state of things would go on among themselves, disagreements, quarrels, jealousies, hard words, harsh criticisms of each other. X's or any other's complaints against you are because you are firm and careful in your management; there are the same or similar complaints against Y and others who discharge their trust given to them by the Mother scrupulously and well. There are against them the same murmurs and jealousies as are directed against you in the kitchen because of their position and their exercise of it. It would be no solution for Y or others trusted by the Mother to withdraw and leave the place to those who would discharge the duty less scrupulously and less well. It is the same with you and the kitchen work; it is not the way out. The way out can only come by a change in the character of the sadhaks brought about by the process of the sadhana. Till then you should understand and be patient and not allow yourself to be disturbed by the wrong behaviour of the others, but remain quietly doing your best, anchoring yourself on the trust and support given you by Y and the Mother. It is the Mother's work and the Mother is there to support you in doing it; put your reliance on that and do not allow the rest to affect you.

14 July 1935

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All that has happened between you and X, as described by you, are trifles and a little good sense and good will on both sides should be enough to deprive them of importance and to get over any slight disturbance they may create. Quarrels take place and endure because both sides think the other is in the wrong and has behaved ill; but neither side can be in the right in a vital quarrel. The very fact of quarrelling like that puts both in the wrong. Moreover, it is not right to be so sensitive about being dominated or controlled. In the work especially one must accept the control of anyone whom the Mother puts in charge, so far as the work goes. In other matters, one can keep one's due independence without breaking off relations or any kind of quarrel.

There would be no use in changing your work or your residence, even if it were possible under the circumstances. It is the inner attitude that has to be kept right, the will to harmony must be fully established. A change of work is not the remedy. The idea of a good atmosphere or bad atmosphere in the house is also a thing not to be indulged. One must create one's own atmosphere not penetrable by other influences and one can always do that by union and closeness to the Mother.

2 October 1935

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But why allow the behaviour of others to affect you so much? To go on with your work as if nothing had happened is all right and a progress in the right direction, but inwardly also nothing should be affected.

You must never think or imagine that the Mother is not looking towards you with love and blessing or that she can for a moment turn her face away from you. You are her child and her love is steadfast towards you.

23 January 1936

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I wrote that your letter showed an attack of the old consciousness because of its tone: "I will not bear these things—it is better for me to go away from here etc." These are the old suggestions, not the attitude of your inner being which was to

give yourself and leave all to the Mother. The attitude of your inner being must also extend to your attitude to these outer things — knowing that whatever imperfections there are have to be worked out from within by each one, just as your own imperfections have to be worked out from within yourself by the Mother's aid and working in you.

That is with regard to your former letter. As to the present — to say what you see is all right but there is also in what you write a judgment passed upon what you see. These judgments you have expressed in a statement of what you think to be X's wrong motives, actions and mistakes. You put these statements and judgments before the Mother — for what? That she may take some action? But for that she must form her own judgment, and this she cannot do without facts, precise facts — she cannot act on a general statement by anyone. It is only if the person whom X blindly trusts is named that she can judge whether X is making a mistake in trusting him. If he listens to certain people and not to others, she must know who these people are and what are the circumstances in which he does that; then only can she judge whether he is right or wrong in doing so. So with everything. Many general statements have been made against X by others, but whenever it has come to particulars in dispute, Mother has seen that it is only sometimes in details that she had to change what he decided, his general management was in accordance with what she had laid down for him as the lines to follow. Ways of speech, defects of character, errors of judgment in particulars, these are a different matter. Each one has them and, as I have often said, they must be changed from within; but I am speaking of outer things, particular actions, particular ways of doing things. There she must be told with precise facts what is complained of in his action.

If it is not a general complaint you make about the D. R. and Aroum  work but in regard to yourself and your work particularly, there too you must give the precise facts of what he has done or failed to do before Mother can judge or say or do anything. What is it that he has not reported to her or has stated wrongly to her about your work or you? What are the

conveniences that he has not conceded to you?

I write all that because you seem to expect Mother to do something. But she must know what it is, what it is based on and whether she can do it or not with benefit to the work. Quarrels and clashes of ego there have been plenty in the D. R. and Aroumé, but that she cannot accept as a base of her action; she does not side with one or against another in these things. What is proper or necessary for the work is the thing she has to consider.

3 October 1936

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Your whole upset is founded on imaginations. X has not made any "lying" report to the Mother; the Mother did not show any displeasure to you for two days or any days. Your vital thought she must be like yourself and make a huge fuss about the perfectly insignificant trifle out of which you have made something gigantic, desperate and catastrophic. There was never any rule that Y's permission must be taken for anything to be done in the kitchen; it is X who is head of the kitchen and whose permission has to be taken.

All the rest is pure self-inflation of an imaginary trouble because you choose to think of the Mother as a capricious tyrant acting according to the ideas of false reports of her favourites, an idea which has no better foundation than the fact that she does not flatter or pamper your ego by agreeing with you and taking your side or giving value to your mental reasons, each one of course thinking that his own "reasons" are the only right way and to disagree with them is high treason against Truth and Justice.

What is amazing is that you should have got into such a state about anything so trivial as this boiling of milk and Z going to Y for an explanation. No man in his senses ought to quarrel over such matters or magnify into a stupendous tragedy. It shows that egoistic sensitiveness not only in your case but in that of many others in the Asram has reached enormous and fantastic proportions. It is time that the sadhaks of this Asram realised what they have come here for; — it is not to nourish the ego and

to insist on its being considered and fondled, but to abnegate the ego and seek only after the Divine. 10 November 1936

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It is very good that you have spoken and cleared up things. Certainly, it is quite true that the inner being should be turned to the Mother and her alone.

As for the work, the inner development, psychic and spiritual, is surely of the first importance and work merely as work is something quite minor. But work done as an offering to the Mother becomes itself a part of the sadhana and a means and part of the inner development. That you will see more as the psychic grows within you. Apart from that the work is important because necessary to the maintenance of the Asram, which is the frame of the Mother's action here. December 1936

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I do not know why there should be so much difficulty about the instructions; you have been doing this work for many years and must surely know the lines on which it has been conducted by X and what to do in most cases. In the others where there is no guide in past experience, you have to do your best and in case X's instructions are incomplete and you have to act on your own judgment, you can point it out to him if he finds fault with what is done.

For the rest your judgment about his method of work does not agree with the Mother's observation of him and his work. She has found him one of the ablest organisers in the Asram and one of the most energetic workers who did not spare himself until she compelled him to do so, one who understood and entered completely into her views and carried them out not only with great fidelity but with success and capacity. She has known more instances than one in which he has organised so completely and thoroughly that the labour has been reduced to a minimum and the efficiency raised to a maximum. I may say however that the saving of labour is not the main consideration in work; there are others equally important and more so. As for the principle

that everyone should be allowed to do according to his nature, that can apply only where people do independent work by themselves; where many have to work together, it cannot always be done — regularity and discipline are there the first rule.

I do not understand your remark about the Mother. The whole work of Aroum  , of the Granary, of the Building Department, etc. was arranged by the Mother not only in general plan and object but in detail. It was only after she had seen everything in working order that she drew back and allowed things to go on according to her plan, but still with an eye on the whole. It is therefore according to the Mother's arrangement that people here are working. When it was not so, when Mother allowed the sadhaks to do according to their own ideas or nature, indicating her will but not enforcing it in detail, the whole Asram was a scene of anarchy, confusion, waste, disorderly self-indulgence, clash and quarrel, self-will, disobedience, and if it had gone on, the Asram would have ceased to exist long ago. It was to prevent that that the Mother chose X and a few others on whom she could rely and reorganised all the departments, supervising every detail and asking the heads to enforce proper methods and discipline. Whatever remains still of the old defects is due to the indiscipline of many workers and their refusal to get rid of their old nature. Even now if the Mother withdrew her control, the whole thing would collapse.

You are mistaken in thinking that X conceals things from the Mother or does as he pleases without telling her. She knows all and is not in a state of ignorance. What you write in your second letter is nothing new to her. There were hundreds of protests and complaints against X (as against other heads of departments), against his methods, his detailed acts and arrangements, his rigid economy, his severe discipline and many things else. The Mother saw things and where there was justification for change, she has made it, but she has consistently supported X, because the things complained of, economy, discipline, refusal to bend to the claims and fancies and wishes of the sadhaks, were just what she had herself insisted on — without them he could not have done the work as she wanted it done. If he had been loose, indulgent,

not severe, he might have become popular, but he would not have been her instrument for the work. Whatever defects there might be in his nature, were the Mother's concern; if there was too much rigidity anywhere, it was for her to change it. But she refused to yield to complaints and clamour born of desire and ego; her yielding would only have brought the old state of things back and put an end to the Asram.

7 January 1937

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Certainly, I cannot say that the ideas you put forward in this letter are true. They are errors of the physical mind which seldom gets hold of the real truth of things. It is not a fact that the Mother got displeased and frowned on you every time you wrote about X. That is the kind of thing the sadhaks are always thinking and saying about the Mother, that she is frowning on them in displeasure for this reason or smiling on them for that, and the reasons they assign are those suggested by their own physical minds, but have nothing to do with anything in the consciousness of the Mother which is not in a constant bubbling of human pleasure and displeasure. I have tried to explain that to the sadhaks again and again but they prefer to believe that their own minds are infallible and that what I say is untrue. So I will only say that your idea is mistaken.

It is also not a fact that you cannot do sadhana, for you were doing it for a time and doing it very well. But your physical mind came across and took you outside and is trying to keep you outside instead of allowing you to go and remain within. That is why I have been trying to persuade you to go within and not live in these outside ideas and reactions of the physical being which prevent sadhana and only give trouble.

It is not a fact that the Mother wants you to be a puppet of X. Of the two questions that have arisen, in one, as to the vital relation which entered into your personal friendship with him, she has fully supported your view that this vital element must not be there and from what X has written I believe he is himself now convinced that he made a mistake and that it must stop. If he still has any desire for it, you need not in any way yield to

him, but on the contrary must be firm about it. But there is the work. As regards the work it is not at all clear that all you think is right and all X does is wrong. You speak of your personality and what you seem to say is that X is in the work trying to impose his personality and that you want to affirm yours against it and Mother ought to have supported you, but she does not regard your personality at all but insists on your subordinating it to X's. But the Mother does not at all look at it from that standpoint or regard anybody's personality. In her view people's personalities which means their ego ought to have no place in the work. It is not your work or X's work, but the Divine work, the Mother's work and it is not to be governed by your ideas or feelings or X's ideas or feelings or Y's or Z's or A's or anybody else's, but by the vision, perception and will of the Mother which does not express any human personality (if it did there would be no justification for the existence of this Asram), but proceeds from a deeper consciousness. It has been the great obstacle to the full success and harmony of the work that everybody almost has had this idea of his own personality, ideas, feelings etc. and more or less tried to insist on them — this has been the cause of most of the difficulties and of all the disharmony and quarrel. We want all this to stop; for when it stops altogether then there will be some possibility of the differences and turmoil ceasing and the work will better serve the purpose for which the Mother created it. That is why I have been trying to explain to you about the necessity of subordinating the personality and doing the work for the Divine, not insisting on one's own personality, ego, ideas, feelings as the important thing.

P.S. When I say that you are mistaken or do not agree with you, you seem to think my letters show displeasure and that my disagreeing with you means that I am vexed with you for writing your views; but that is not so. If I answer what you write, it must be to tell you what seems to myself and to the Mother the true way of seeing things and acting. That does not imply any displeasure.

4 July 1937

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I do not think I said anywhere you had done anything contrary to X's instructions in your work. I was speaking of what you had written in criticism of his way of doing things, and especially I wanted to remove your idea that the necessity of acting under his instructions meant a disregard of your personality or a desire on Mother's part to make you a puppet of X. Where there is a big work with several people working together for a purpose which is common to all and not personal to any, it cannot be done unless there is a fixed arrangement involving subordination and discipline in each worker. That is so everywhere, not here alone. X has to act under the Mother, carry out her instructions, work according to the ideas she has given him. She has laid down the lines on which he must work, and whatever he does must be on those lines. He is not free to change them or do anything contrary to the ideas given him. Where he makes decisions in details of the work, they must be in consonance with these lines and ideas. He has to report to the Mother, to take her sanction and accept her decisions on all matters. If the Mother's decisions are contrary to his proposals or contradict his own ideas of what should be done, he has still to accept them and carry them out. The idea that the D. R. work is done according to his ideas and not the Mother's is an error. But all that is simply the necessity of the work, it is not a disregard of X's personality. In the same way you have to carry out X's instructions because he is charged by the Mother with the work and given authority by her. All the D. R. workers are in the same position and are supposed to carry out his instructions and keep him informed, because he is directly responsible to the Mother for everything and unless he has this authority he cannot carry out his responsibility. In the same way Y has been asked to carry out your instructions in the kitchen because you are at the head of the kitchen. All that is not a disregard of your personality or of Y's personality or an assertion of X's—it is the necessity of the work which cannot be smoothly done if there is not this arrangement. That is what I wanted you to understand so that you might see why the Mother wanted you to do like that, not for any other reason, but for the necessity of the work and so that it may be smoothly done.

On the other hand as you are at the head of the work and the practical working is in your hands, you have every right to put any difficulties before X and ask for a solution. He on his side will often need information from you and may need also to know what you think should be done. But if even after knowing, he thinks it right to follow his own idea of what should be done and not yours, you should not mind that. He has the responsibility and must act according to his lights subject to the sanction of the Mother. Your responsibility finishes when you have informed him and told him your idea. If his decision is wrong, it is for the Mother to change it.

I hope I have made the conditions clear. There is no necessity for you to agree with X's ideas nor outside the work are you under any obligation to do what he wants you to do. There you are quite free. It is only in the work that there is this necessity in action — for the sake of the work.

I have written so much because you wanted to know what the Mother expected you to do. It is not meant as a pressure upon you, but only to explain things and show you the way and the reason for which they have to be done. 5 July 1937

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It seems that there is friction between you and X. He says that you are keeping him at a distance from his work and asks to be given work elsewhere. The Mother does not approve of this and she wants all friction to be removed and work harmoniously done. Personal feelings ought not to be allowed to come into the work or disturb it in any way. It is you and X who know the Bakery work thoroughly and are the best workers; for some time you two carried it on between you. Mother has relied on this collaboration for the Bakery work to go on well. If personal misunderstandings are allowed to break up the collaboration, it will be bad for the Mother's work and also for the sadhana of both. If misunderstandings arise, they ought not to be cherished in silence on either side, but cleared up by a frank and friendly explanation. I am writing to X to the same effect. Mother expects you both to remove all misunderstanding between you and work

together in a friendly spirit.

30 June 1938

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The fact that people do work for the Mother does not mean that she must do all that they ask for with regard to that work and that if she does not do so it means lack of support or disapproval. That is the attitude of most workers in the Asram including X, that is an entirely mistaken attitude.

If sadhaks get upset when the Mother does not do what they ask from her or begin to get suggestions of this kind, that means that they are bringing their vital ego into the work,—they are thinking, "My work is not supported, the Mother is upholding someone else and not *me*" and other "I"s and "my"s of the same kind. It is only they who are feeling the work to be theirs, it is not the Mother who is so regarding it.

The Mother knows perfectly well X's character which is not alterable—it was for that very reason that she asked not only you but Y and everybody else in the Garden Department to avoid quarrelling with him even in case of extreme disagreement. Quarrels and clashes are a proof of absence of the Yogic poise and those who seriously wish to do yoga must learn to grow out of these things. It is easy enough not to clash when there is no cause for strife or dispute or quarrel; it is when there is cause and the other side is impossible and unreasonable that one gets the opportunity of rising above one's vital nature.

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You say that Mother showed her severity or displeasure towards you and she always does so when you write about X; but this is not a fact. It is your mind that creates the severity and displeasure out of its own feeling or imagination. At the time you came to the Mother I had not spoken a word to her about your letter and she did not even know that you had written about X. I wanted to read the letter over again and see that I understood everything in it before speaking to her (that was why I wrote it would take me a day or two) and I told her only in the evening after your letter of today reached me. As

a matter of fact the Mother's feeling to you was just the same as it is always — there was no severity or displeasure. This has happened before; it is not the first time. It ought to show you that the mind is not infallible and in following its observations and inferences it is quite possible to fall into entire error.

I do not think it is any use going into the detail of the things you write of — most of them are trifles which could easily be set right if there were not a settled misunderstanding between you and X which makes both nervous about everything the other does so that you magnify small things and give them an undue importance. It is the natural result of personal feelings getting into the work and there is no remedy except doing the work without personal feelings. I had hoped from what you said in your letter a few days ago that you had determined to get rid of it altogether on your side and do the work looking to the Mother alone and not mind what X did or did not do. If you could do that, Mother would have been better able to put a persistent pressure on him and make him gradually change and become less self-occupied, tactless and sensitive.

We shall have to consider the whole problem of the work and see on what new basis it can be put. Some temporary arrangement may be possible meanwhile, but not at the present moment. I hope till then you will try to carry on in spite of the friction with X. At the moment things are difficult for the Mother and you must give her some time to find out what is to be done and how to make it possible to do it.

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The remedy for these things is to think more and more of the Mother and less and less of the relations of others with yourself apart from the Mother. As X is trying, so you should try to meet others in the Mother, in your consciousness of unity with the Mother and not in a separate personal relation. Then these difficulties disappear and harmony can be established — for then it is not necessary to try and please others — but both or all meet in their love for the Mother and their work for her.

The Mother and Mistakes in Work

Mistakes come from people bringing their ego, their personal feelings (likes and dislikes), their sense of prestige or their convenience, pride, sense of possession, etc. into the work. The right way is to feel that the work is the Mother's—not only yours, but the work of others—and to carry it out in such a spirit that there shall be general harmony. Harmony cannot be brought about by external organisation only, though a more and more perfect external organisation is necessary; inner harmony there must be or else there will always be clash and disorder.

26 February 1932

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Do not allow yourself to be so much disturbed by so small a matter. It is not at all necessary to apologise to X. When one has a wrong movement, all one has to do is to recognise it and reject and be more careful to avoid it in the future. As you have told the Mother, let the thing disappear from your mind and recover your movement.

16 March 1932

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Something in my consciousness stops me before going the wrong way or doing a bad action, but sometimes it does not. I want there not to be a single wrong action which Mother does not like.

If you want strongly and if you always try to be careful, then that too will come.

8 February 1933

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Since the material world is only one of the several worlds, only a small portion of the total manifestation, should we not attach very little importance to material things, material work and its details? Also, from what Mother said yesterday it seems that one should attach little importance to errors in work—one should not mind them if others commit them, one should not care to correct them in others.

What Mother said was that she was perfectly aware of errors done in the work, but as she had to work out a certain Force in these things looking at them from an inner viewpoint, not with the external intellect, she found it often necessary to pass over imperfections and errors. This does not at all mean that the sadhak worker has not to care whether there are errors in his own work where he is responsible. If other sadhaks commit errors that is their responsibility, one can observe and avoid similar mistakes in oneself, but one sadhak cannot correct the errors of others unless that comes within his responsibility — each has to correct himself and his own defects and mistakes.

We are here in this material world and not in the others except by an inner connection. Also our life and action lie here, so it will not do to neglect the material world and things, though we should not be attached and bound to them by *āsakti* and desire. We have to acquire a knowledge of the nature and powers of other worlds (planes) so far as they are connected with this one and we can use them to help and uplift the action here. But still the field of action is here and not elsewhere. 21 August 1936

Relation between the Mother and Her Children

True Relation with the Mother

What is our true relation with the Mother—the relation of the Mother and her child?

The relation of the child to the Mother is that of an entire, sincere and simple trust, love and dependence.

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The relation of the disciple to the Guru in the Guruvada is supposed always to be that of worship, respect, complete happy confidence, unquestioning acceptance of the guidance. It is only in this Asram that another theory has sometimes been advanced and reached its height as a result of the *misapplication* or wrong extension of the relation with the human Mother (which in itself, rightly understood, was not to be discouraged as a phase) and also of certain other misunderstood notions—not only *abhimāna*, but egoistic unspiritual demand, hostile criticism, revolt, anger and other still more undesirable vital reactions (usually supposed to be foreign to the spiritual consciousness) have been put forward by some, admitted by many in practice, as a part of the Yoga! I do not see how such a method can lead to any good results in the spiritual life.

12 January 1932

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The connection between myself and the Mother is always there, but my vital is interfering, colouring it and making it impure.

Yes, the connection is always there, in the self and in the psychic; but if there are obstacles in the mind, vital and physical, then the connection cannot be manifest or, if it is at all manifest, it is

mixed with elements which make it imperfect and unstable. The true connection is the psychic and spiritual relation; the relation in the other parts must be built up on this psychic and spiritual connection and then it can be permanent. 24 April 1932

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One rule for you I can lay down, "Do not do, say or think anything which you would want to conceal from the Mother." And that answers the objections that rose within you—from your vital, is it not?—against bringing "these petty things" to the Mother's notice. Why should you think that the Mother would be bothered by these things or regard them as petty? If *all* the life is to be Yoga, what is there that can be called petty or of no importance? Even if the Mother does not answer, to have brought any matter of your action and self-development before her in the right spirit means to have put it under her protection, in the light of the Truth, under the rays of the Power that is working for the transformation—for immediately those rays begin to play and to act on the thing brought to her notice. Anything within that advises you not to do it when the spirit in you moves you to do it, may very well be a device of the vital to avoid the ray of the Light and the working of the Force. It may also be observed that if you open yourself to the Mother by putting the movements of any part of you under her observation, that of itself creates a relation, a personal closeness with her other than that which her general, silent or not directly invited action maintains with all the sadhaks.

All this, of course, if you feel ready for this openness, if the spirit moves you to lay what is in you bare before her. For it is then that it is fruitful—when it comes from within and is spontaneous and true. 18 May 1932

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It was certainly true that you saw the Mother and she was teaching secrets to your inner being—for your inner being is in close relation with her. It is only by your opening yourself that this inner being can come out and change the relations of

your external self with her, remove from it its sense of not being connected, its misunderstandings, wrong attitudes, confused movements. That is why I am always pressing on you to open and keep in touch with the Force—for it is your inner being that feels naturally in touch with it,—it is only the external and physical mind and vital that feel it is as if it were not real, not truly connected etc. etc. This you have experienced yourself more than once when the inner being came into the front.

3 November 1932

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It is perfectly true that in your inner being there is nothing that stands between you and nearness to the Mother; but in your outer there are many reactions that make it difficult—and the chief cause of these reactions is the readiness with which your outer mind listens to the suggestions and accepts the reasonings and obeys the movements of the obscure ignorant physical Nature. That is why I want you to get rid of this habit of the outer mind and to recognise that it is the inner being which is the real truth of yourself and not this outer consciousness with its confusions which is a present fact but not your true permanent being.

9 December 1932

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This morning I sent a letter to the Mother through X, but I have received no reply. Have I done something wrong? Waiting for a word from her I am suffering greatly.

The Mother replied to you through X that you could take the rest you wanted—at any rate she told him to tell you that; I hope he did so.

Feelings of this kind ought to be rejected always and there is nothing else to be done with them. The relation with the Divine, the relation with the Mother must be one of love, faith, trust, confidence, surrender—any other relation of the vital ordinary kind brings reactions contrary to the sadhana,—desire, egoistic *abhimāna*, demand, revolt and all the disturbance of ignorant

rajasic human nature from which it is the object of the sadhana to escape.

26 April 1933

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I am afraid you have allowed some old movement of the vital to come up and obstruct the work that was being done.

You know perfectly well that your inner being is near to the Mother, can feel her peace and force, can receive her thought, can respond and that that is the one thing that helps you. When you speak of the Mother seeming aloof to your senses, you are referring evidently to the physical nearness. You know very well what was the reason why it could not be for the time. But even there there was a great improvement recently and it was becoming possible and natural for you to approach the Mother physically without the old vital reactions, and the Mother was welcoming the change. This is not a time to allow the old reactions to come up and impede or throw back the progress made. Cast off this invasion, let your consciousness recover the quietness it was more and more gaining, let your soul go on growing as it was growing—throw out this reaction that impedes it. Let the Divine work in you and establish in time the true outward and inward relation which is the only one that can satisfy and endure.

7 September 1933

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Why do I get angry and make myself miserable when Mother proposes something I do not like, such as putting X with me in my house? If Mother herself wants it, why should I object and feel sorry about it?

It is desire and jealousy that are the cause of these movements. It prevents you from seeing that each is dealt with according to the needs and possibilities of his case. Your vital wishes on the contrary to impose a rule by which you shall get what the vital wants and if it does not, and if another gets it, you consider it a personal wrong and an injustice. So if something disagreeable to your vital, e.g. putting X, is suggested, you consider that because the Mother's proposal was disagreeable to you,

therefore it was wrong. The whole thing is that—that you are putting a personal standard—the standard of your desires and feelings—as the measure of truth and right. Most men do that—almost all practically; but to do Yoga you must free yourself from that altogether. You are concerned only with yourself and the Divine; in your relations with the Divine you are concerned not with the Divine's satisfaction of your personal desires, but with being pulled out of these things and raised to your highest spiritual possibilities, so that you may become united with the Mother within and as a result in the outer being also. That cannot be done by satisfying your vital desires—to do so would only increase them and give you into the hands of the ignorance and restless confusion of the ordinary Nature. It can be done only by your inner trust and surrender and by the pressure of the Mother's peace and Force working from within and changing your vital nature. It is when you forget this that you go wrong and suffer; when you remember it you progress and the difficulties become less and less insistent. 13 September 1933

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I have heard that the Mother gives flowers to those waiting for her on the stairs at noon. I feel I should try to be present there, to break my habit of shyness and to recognise her not only as the spiritual Mother but as the loving and compassionate human Mother as well.

The Mother is not giving every day, only from time to time. But why do you want to meet her as a "human" mother—if you can see the divine Mother in a human body, that should be enough and a more fruitful attitude. Those who approach her as a human Mother often get into trouble by their conception making all sorts of mistakes in their approach to her. 2 May 1934

*

You are the Mother's child and the Mother's love to her children is without limit and she bears patiently with the defects of their nature. Try to be the true child of the Mother: it is there within

you, but your outward mind is occupied by little futile things and too often in a violent fuss over them. You must not only see the Mother in dream but learn to see and feel her with you and within you at all times. Then you would find it easier to control yourself and change,—for she being there would be able to do it for you.

30 May 1934

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The sadhak feels alone and suffers when he does not have the Mother's presence. Does the Mother likewise feel alone in the absence of her child? Is she more miserable than a human mother would be?

If that were the case the Mother would have to be in a profound state of million-fold misery all the time—for why should she be miserable only for the sadhak—why not for each soul that is wandering in the Ignorance? The child need not be miserable, but simply come back when the Mother calls.

24 September 1934

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If one looks into his own heart, he cannot fail to find the Mother's smile there. Why go out of one's heart, then, and seek for her smile outside? Why are so many here burdened with difficulties, falls, attacks, gloom and despair? Is it not because they seek the external part of the Mother, her physical nearness, touch, etc., instead of going inside?

Quite right. To live inside is the first principle of spiritual life and from inside to reshape the physical existence. But so many insist on remaining in the external and their relation with the Mother is governed by the ordinary reactions of the external unspiritualised nature.

21 April 1935

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You have written to some people about "an inner close relation" with the Mother. I want to know what is the truest and most real relation with her. Isn't the soul relation with her the only true one? What is the soul relation? How am I to recognise it?

An inner (soul) relation means that one feels the Mother's presence, is turned to her at all times, is aware of her force moving, guiding, helping, is full of love for her and always feels a great nearness whether one is physically near her or not — this relation takes up the mind, vital and inner physical till one feels one's mind close to the Mother's mind, one's vital in harmony with hers, one's very physical consciousness full of her. These are all the elements of the inner union, not only in the spirit and self but in the nature.

I do not recollect what I had written, but this is the inner close relation as opposed to an outer relation which consists only in how one meets her on the external physical plane. It is quite possible — and actual — to have this inner close relation even if physically one sees her only at pranam and meditation and once a year perhaps on the birthday. 29 June 1935

*

I don't feel any personal relation with the Mother. There lies the whole difficulty of the sadhana.

One has to become conscious by the awakening of the inner mind and vital — or best of all by the awakening of the psychic. It is quite possible for two persons to have a relation of which one is conscious and the other is not — his mental blindness or vital misunderstandings coming in the way. That is frequent even in ordinary life. Very often one becomes conscious of it only when he loses it (by the death of the other person or otherwise) and is then full of repinings for his blindness. 20 July 1935

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This thought of yours that Mother cares for all as her children and does not care for you is evidently a quite groundless idea and does not rest on any solid basis. She is as affectionate in her love and care for you and in her way towards you as to any others and more than to most. There is nothing solid or specific that we can see on which the idea can rest. Certainly, it corresponds to no reality in the Mother's feelings.

But I have noted that this kind of idea *always* comes up in the minds of sadhaks and sadhikas (especially the latter) when they become despondent or listen to the suggestions from outside them. Always they say the same thing as you, "You love and care for all; only for me you do not love and care. I am evidently unfit for the Yoga or you would not keep me far from you like that. I shall never arrive at anything. What is the use of my remaining here only to trouble you? What have I to live for?" But when the psychic being is well awake, then these thoughts, this despondency, these wrong notions are bound to go away. What you feel therefore is just this despondency and the wrong suggestions it brings; it does not correspond to any reality in the Mother's feelings or behaviour towards you. It will go with the rest as the inner being, the soul in you comes more and more forward — for the soul in you knows that it loves the Mother and the Mother loves you; it cannot be blinded by the suggestions that deceive the mind and the vital nature.

Do not therefore remain in these thoughts that have no foundation but are only a mood of despondency or a suggestion from outside. Let the psychic being in you grow and the Mother's force work. The relation of the child and the Mother is there in your soul; it will make itself felt in your mind and vital and physical consciousness till it becomes the foundation of the whole consciousness on which all the sadhana can be firm and secure.

26 July 1935

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The connection between you and the Mother is there and has always existed. Inside it is very evident and, when you are in the psychic condition, that which is inside begins to work. It is only the physical mind that suggests the idea to the contrary because outward circumstances are still inharmonious and unfavourable. Do not allow these suggestions to sway you. Seek the connection within you in your psychic being; then even through the outward circumstances it will shine out and change all into oneness.

5 June 1936

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My condition is changing so often; it is as if I were walking on hilly ground with plenty of ditches on the way. I am hardly out of one ditch and able to get a breath of fresh air than I find myself in another ditch. I often feel that I am hopelessly bad. I know that I would not feel this way if I knew myself to be the Mother's. I pray, make me feel that. Open my eyes to see, or rather give me the eyes to see, for I seem to have lost them.

You know now what this depression and the feelings that come with it are — they are the recurrences of the old unconsciousness attempting to prevent the rapid or full flowering of the inner consciousness which was growing in you. You should therefore not accept the suggestions of the depression or the idea of not being the Mother's. The eye within is growing — it is sure to be full and open after a time. It is why the old consciousness is trying hard to return and keep hold. You must get more and more to say no to its suggestions and efforts — so that the development may go more quickly.

July 1936

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If a man feels, "I am the happiest child of the Mother", is it due to ego-feeling?

It depends on the source of the feeling. If it is true happiness, then it is not ego. If it is due to a feeling of superiority, then it is ego.

Inner Contact with the Mother

Let the inner contact with the Mother increase — unless that is there, the outer contacts if too much multiplied easily degenerate into a routine.

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Today while going to the Mother, I felt concentrated in the mind, with a will to get contact with the Mother. Then I found that my mind was opening to the Light. I saw flashes of golden light two or three times. In the morning I remained peaceful and quiet and later I saw the Light many times.

It was the contact with the Mother that originally brought the opening to the Light, the descent of the golden light, the wideness and the knowledge. The two things naturally go together or follow one on the other; it is a mistake to think that there is any incompatibility or opposition between them.

11 September 1931

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On waking up this morning, I felt myself in contact with the Mother's consciousness; it gave me a good feeling and even Ananda. While meditating this morning, my mind opened up above and the contact deepened and I felt aspiration and peace. I have been able to progress and get experiences by keeping contact with the Mother's consciousness; but I have the idea that this contact is not enough to give me all the experiences I aspire for.

That is your mistake to think the contact is not enough. The contact with the Mother's consciousness will lead to *all* necessary realisations and the fulfilment of all true aspirations.

14 January 1932

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In my waking consciousness I feel that I flow always in the stream of sadhana, but in my sleep I am quite a different person. I want to be changed in my sleep also. During sleep I want to keep in constant contact with the Mother. Is there any process or should I simply call her help before I retire to bed?

Aspire and want it always — that is the first thing. As for methods, perhaps it is best not to go to sleep straight in the ordinary way, but to meditate and through meditation pass into sleep.

At least before going to bed have a meditation.

13 September 1932

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I was feeling very happy alone in my room, with an inner feeling of the Mother's consciousness. When I went to see X, I felt ill at ease and I lost the inner contact with the Mother. Mixing with people destroys the inner feeling, but I cannot

always remain secluded. What is the best thing to do?

You have to learn to live in yourself with the Mother, in contact with her consciousness, and meet others only with your exterior surface.

9 April 1933

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Today while engaged in work I felt a peaceful energy and something like ice touching my head. Then the knowledge came to me: "The Mother is always near us, though physically we do not see her, and she is removing all kinds of weakness with the touch of her affectionate hand. In every way she stands behind us secretly." This thing was like a feeling and a vision, almost like a realisation. Was it the psychic feeling of the Mother's presence in us?

It is a realisation attended with vision and feeling. It is the psychic and the mental together that produced it.

9 June 1933

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The one thing that is most needed for this sadhana is peace, calm, especially in the vital—a peace which depends not on circumstances or surroundings but on the inner relation with a higher consciousness which is the consciousness of the Divine, of the Mother. Those who have not that or do not aspire to get it can come here and live in the Asram for ten or twenty years and yet be as restless and full of struggle as ever,—those who open their mind and vital to the Mother's strength and peace can get it even in the hardest and most unpleasant work and the worst circumstances.

October 1933

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I would like the Mother to fix my timings as to what should be done at what time for the whole day. I will abide by whatever she determines for my progress.

To fix times is not possible or desirable—you must yourself organise your day in such a manner as to make the best use of it and let the Mother know how you do it.

I am ready to give up all my relations with everyone and be merged in the Mother alone. Please tell me what rules I should follow to overcome all obstacles. May Mother help me both inwardly and outwardly.

The most important thing is to be turned inwardly towards the Mother and to her alone. To avoid too many outward contacts is necessary only in order to help in this — but it is not necessary nor desirable to avoid all contacts with people. What is necessary is to meet these contacts with the right inner consciousness, not throwing yourself out — treating them as things of the surface — not getting attached to them or absorbed by them in any way.

28 October 1933

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I wanted to ask you whether what I have said about my inner contact with the Mother is true or not. It may be that my vital mind is deluding me about this.

At any rate if you want the Mother's contact always, you must get rid of depression and the mental imaginations that bring it. Nothing comes more in the way than that.

3 January 1934

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No one need be jealous of anything or anybody, since each has his own point of contact which nobody else has — apart from what all have.

4 January 1934

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You wrote to me that making Pranam to the Mother would bear fruit "if one keeps the right contact with her inwardly all day".¹ What exactly did you mean?

I meant the inner contact in which one either feels one with her or in contact with her or aware of her presence or, at the very least, turned towards her always.

18 March 1934

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¹ See letter of 16 March 1935 on page 532–33.—Ed.

For a long time I was thinking of meeting the Mother but was hesitating to ask for an interview. Last night in dream I met her and had a talk with her. Was it the real Mother I met or some constructed figure of my dream-mind?

Of course, it was the Mother you met and the meeting must have been due to your thought about meeting her. 9 June 1935

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If it is like that, it is probably because you are living outside, allowing yourself to be disturbed by outward contacts. One cannot find happiness of a lasting character unless one lives within. Work, action must be offered to the Mother, done for her sake only, without any thought for yourself, your own ideas, preferences, feelings, likes and dislikes. If one's eyes are fixed on these latter things, then at every step one gets some friction either in the mind or vital or, if these are comparatively quiet, in the body and nerves. Peace and joy can only become stable if one lives within with the Mother. 2 January 1937

The Right Way of Loving the Mother

The contact between mother and child means not only that the mother should love the child but that the child should love the mother and obey her. You want to be the true child of the Mother, but the first thing for that is to put yourself into her hands and let her guide you and to follow her will—and not disregard it or revolt against her. You know all this perfectly well—why do you ignore it?

It is part of the true Mother's love not to do whatever the vital of the child demands, for she knows that it would be extremely bad for him. Do not obey the impulse of the vital, but follow rather your true perception and make yourself a channel for the will of the Mother—because her will is always that you should grow into your true being.

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The love which is turned towards the Divine ought not to be the usual vital feeling which men call by that name; for that is not love, but only a vital desire, an instinct of appropriation, the impulse to possess and monopolise. Not only is this not the divine Love, but it ought not to be allowed to mix in the least degree in the Yoga. The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger — for these things are not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely — and this represents itself in an inner giving — her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. It is this that you must aspire to feel and possess in all your parts down to the very material, and here there is no limitation either of time or of completeness. If one truly aspires and gets it, there ought to be no room for any other claim or for any disappointed desire. And if one truly aspires, one does unfailingly get it, more and more as the purification proceeds and the nature undergoes its needed change.

Keep your love pure of all selfish claim and desire; you will find that you are getting all the love that you can bear and absorb in answer.

Realise also that the Realisation must come first, the work to be done, not the satisfaction of claim and desire. It is only when the Divine Consciousness in its supramental Light and Power has descended and transformed the physical that other things can be given a prominent place — and then too it will not be the satisfaction of desire, but the fulfilment of the Divine Truth in each and all and in the new life that is to express it. In the divine life all is for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of the ego.

I should perhaps add one or two things to avoid misapprehensions. First, the love for the Divine of which I speak is not a psychic love only; it is the love of all the being, the vital and vital-physical included, — all are capable of the same

self-giving. It is a mistake to believe that if the vital loves, it must be a love that demands and imposes the satisfaction of its desire; it is a mistake to think that it must be either that or else the vital, in order to escape from its "attachment", must draw away altogether from the object of its love. The vital can be as absolute in its unquestioning self-giving as any other part of the nature; nothing can be more generous than its movement when it forgets self for the Beloved. The vital and physical should both give themselves in the true way—the way of true love, not of ego desire.

1 August 1931

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What I want of you is not to love the Mother from a distance, but to become accustomed to feel her presence, her help, the working of her forces even when she is not physically present and this not only in your sleep or inward-drawn condition (which seems to be sufficiently easy for you) but in your waking consciousness whether in meditation or in ordinary hours. And this I want because it would give a great push to your Yoga. It would besides give a deeper meaning and power to your physical contact with her. I am sure that all this will come fully in time.

22 November 1931

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I have been here for one and a half years but I know nothing of the sadhana. I meditate, but nothing happens in the meditation. I feel there is no love in me towards the Mother. What shall I do to feel this love?

Become truthful, pure, sincere, straightforward. 1 July 1935

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Parts of my being are insisting on a physical expression of the Mother's love. Although at present there is no attack or depression, there is only dryness and dullness. Even if the sadhana returns and I get very high or deep experiences, they will be worth little so long as my love for the Mother does not return.

It is a mistake to think like that. The experiences prepare the different parts of the being for loving in the right way, so that it is not the soul alone that loves. So long as they are open to ignorance and ego they cannot receive and hold the love rightly.

23 October 1935

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Both the love for the Mother which you feel so strongly and the other tendency of harmony and affection with those with whom you live or work come from the psychic being. When the psychic intensifies its influence, this love for the Mother becomes strong and is the main mover of the nature. But there is also a feeling of good will, harmony, kindness or affection towards others which also comes up and is not so much personal as the result of the soul's inmost relation to all souls who are children of the Mother. There is no harm in this psychic feeling, on the contrary it creates happiness and harmony—it is only the vital love between persons that has to be rejected because it draws away from full consecration to the Divine. But this helps the growth of the soul into the Mother's consciousness and helps the work and helps also the inner life to grow.

10 February 1936

Receiving What the Mother Gives

The Mother gives whatever is necessary for each one; she does not withhold what one requires and is capable of receiving. It is we who are not ready to receive what she gives.

Yes, Mother is always willing to give and nothing pleases her better than to see her children receiving what she has to give.

Telling the Whole Truth

The unwillingness to tell the whole truth, the wish to conceal or justify things is another general trait of human nature which is common in the Asram. It is perfectly true that to do that is to stand in the way of one's own progress, but the lower nature is

strong and overcomes the *buddhi*. People also think that Mother will not know if they do not tell or at least she won't know the physical facts even if she can read the inner movements and they prefer to conceal or else to write in such a way that they may stand well in her eyes. This weakness like others can only go by the growth of the psychic and its taking hold of the mind and vital so that they will not be able to hide from themselves their own wrong movements or try to hide them from the Mother.

30 January 1936

Psychic Relation with the Mother

Your dream was certainly not a mere dream or an imagination, but a true experience. It expressed the relation between your psychic being and the Mother.

That relation is always there; it is prevented from filling up the whole vital and physical consciousness by the old habitual movements that return upon the lower vital and physical and by the assent some part of the mind, when it is obscured, gives to these movements. Do not allow your mind to give this assent, and do not allow any demand to rise in your vital, for it is usually some vital demand or disappointment of demand that is the occasion for these returns.

The whole mental, vital and physical consciousness will then begin to be filled with the permanent relation which is natural to the psychic part of you. There would then be no serious difficulty or disturbing struggle.

26 April 1932

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Throughout the day my vital has wept. It feels that the Mother is unsympathetic to it and laments that it is deprived of her affection. It stumbles at her silence; it shrinks at her neglect.

All that is simply the unregenerated vital which is full of ego and desire and demand and therefore of dissatisfaction, complaint, false ideas and self-made sorrow.

But there is another movement in me which wants to avoid all

such sorrows and joys and just depend on the Mother. It does not want anything from her, but wants to give itself to her, and prays to her to come down and uplift it. This movement is in the heart. Its principal feature is surrender.

What you write here is an exact description of the psychic being and its relation to the Mother. That is the true relation. If you want to succeed in this Yoga, you must take your stand on the psychic relation and reject the egoistic vital movement. The psychic being coming to the front and staying there is the decisive movement in the Yoga. It is that which happened when you saw the Mother last — the psychic being came in front. But you must keep it in front. You will not be able to do that if you listen to the vital ego and its outcries. It is by faith and surrender and the joy of pure self-giving — the psychic attitude — that one grows into the Truth and becomes united with the Divine.

26 February 1933

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You wrote that when I saw Mother last time my psychic being was in the front.

No. I said it came out as the result of your last coming to Mother — I meant by that what Mother put there. It was evident to me afterwards by your condition.

Now I remember my inner state at the time, but I do not recall anything special in it. When I met Mother I was simply quiet and a little dependent on her.

That was enough to allow Mother to work. It is when the vital demands, complains, becomes sorrowful and tragic that difficulty is created.

27 February 1933

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How can I know the Mother's will? If I feel that it is inconvenient to do something, does it mean that it is against her will?

How can your convenience or inconvenience be the indication of the Mother's will? You have to develop the psychic feeling which distinguishes the truth from the falsehood, the divine from the undivine.

11 April 1933

*

Do love and faith have the same meaning? I feel that where there is faith in the Mother, love is also there. Without the faith, there is no love; without the love, there is no faith. Am I right?

Not always. There are plenty of people who have some faith without love, though they may have a certain kind of mental bhakti, and plenty who have some love but no faith. But if it is the true psychic love, then faith goes with it, and if there is the entire faith, then the psychic love becomes soon awake.

Speaking with X, I said: "Where there is faith in the Mother, there is love as well."

You are right—if it is the soul's faith, the soul's love—but in some there is only a vital feeling and that brings, when it is disappointed, revolt and anger and they go away. 8 May 1933

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What kind of feeling is it that gets satisfaction and Ananda only in seeing the Mother?

It is psychic.

What kind of feeling is it that gets satisfaction and Ananda only in remembering the Mother?

Psychic.

What kind of feeling is it that gives a wound in the heart on hearing anything against the Mother?

Psychic.

What kind of feeling is it that makes one feel the Mother's presence in the heart, even though one is physically far from her?

Psychic.

How shall I be able to judge that I am in the full state of psychic love?

By the absence of ego, by pure devotion, by submission and surrender to the Divine.

9 May 1933

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When all is calm and quiet I feel a depth in my heart; a sweet feeling wells out constantly, equally for all. It goes up to the Mother continuously. There is a sense of sweet relation with the Divine. It softens all the being—it is calm, quiet, full of sweet peace and satisfaction.

That is the psychic love.

26 October 1933

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From the morning there has been a feeling of nearness to the Mother, almost as if there were no difference between us. But how can that be possible, as there is such a great gulf between her and me? I am on the mental plane and she is on the highest Supramental.

But the Mother is there not only on the Supramental but on all the planes. And especially she is close to everyone in the psychic part (the inner heart), so when that opens, the feeling of nearness naturally comes.

11 December 1933

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Why do I not feel love and Ananda every time I see the Mother?

As for the love and Ananda, it depends on the psychic coming up.

29 July 1934

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For two days there was an intense love for the Mother and for you; the whole being was possessed with this love. Then there was only a partial effect of it — a high and deep reverence for the Master and the Mother and a happiness that no worldly pleasure can give.

That was obviously psychic.

I often mark that when an inner love springs out for the divinity, tears follow.

These are psychic tears of devotion etc.

25 August 1934

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A visitor was leaving the Asram today. When the Mother finished the Pranam ceremony and began to go up the stairs, this lady began to weep. Was it due to her psychic coming in front for a while?

It is not a question of the psychic coming in front. She has a psychic being which is awake and has long been in connection with the Mother on the inner plane.

28 August 1934

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During my turn at darshan, the consciousness was simply held in a spell and thrilled. It was quite wonderful and brought my psychic in front. What is this thrill that passes through my whole body and makes the adhar still for a time?

Of course it is the thrill of the Mother's touch coming from above and felt by the psychic and vital together.

28 August 1934

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Can there be a conscious contact with the Mother through the psychic being in the heart before the psychic comes forward fully?

Yes. The psychic is always there.

21 September 1934

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That which calls is your own psychic being whose place is deep inside behind the heart-centre. Many people feel at times the call for the Mother going on from there. It comes more easily in sleep or in a half-waking condition because then the surface mind is not active so that what is going on within in the inner being can manifest itself.

29 October 1934

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When I spoke of "loneliness", I meant that some part of the being feels that although the Mother loves me very much, I am unable to love her — as if there were no element of love in my nature.

It can't be the psychic in that case. The psychic never feels that it cannot love the Divine.

4 December 1934

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If the present intensity prolongs itself, I hope that within a few days you will see my whole nature engrossed only in feeling, thinking, acting round the word "Mother".

That would of itself be the psychic state.

5 December 1934

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I pray: "Dear Mother, either give me psychic love or give me death. Let no third thing come to me. This is my final resolution."

This is altogether the wrong attitude. It is once more the vital coming in — it is not a psychic attitude. If in asking for the psychic love, you take an attitude that is vital not psychic, how do you expect the psychic to come?

2 March 1935

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My consciousness is concentrated only on the Mother's heart, as if it were there in her and one with her. It thinks only of oneness with her; it says, "I am there in her and I must be there. I need nothing else — that is enough." It does not allow any other thought, not even higher or spiritual thoughts. How do you look upon this attitude?

The attitude is good for the awakening of the psychic and the inner being generally. But if higher experience comes, it should not be stopped.

12 March 1935

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Am I right that for the last four years my psychic is always active and in front? Can the Mother now deal with me without any consideration of upsetting my nature parts?

If your psychic is in front and active, i.e. busy changing and controlling the mind, vital and physical, how is it that there is an upsetting of your nature by the Mother's dealings with you? If the psychic is in front and active, it would immediately tell any part of the nature that wanted to get upset, "Whatever the Mother does or decides must be accepted with surrender and gladness. The mind must not believe that it knows better than the Mother what ought to be done, the vital must not want the Mother to act according to its wants and preferences. For such ideas and desires belong to the old nature and have no place in the psychic and spiritual. They are the errors of the ego." And if it had the control of the nature, the upsetting would at once cease or fade away. Indeed if it had full control, such upsettings would be impossible. It must be assumed therefore that the psychic may have been exerting some influence on the being, but that its control is far from complete or that the vital has risen up and covered the psychic and suspended its influence. But if the psychic is fully in front, not veiled or not merely emerging, then it would be impossible to cover it up altogether — there could only be at most an upsetting on the surface while within all remained quiet, conscious and devoted.

2 July 1936

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When I called down the Purity from above, the whole being was filled with Peace and Purity and I felt the Mother's Presence in the heart. An intense aspiration rose from the heart, from below, in fact, from all parts of the being. The heart was filled with adoration for the Mother; there was devotion and genuine surrender.

That is one of the most important things for the psychic opening and the inner relation to the Mother.

I pray for Purity and Peace above all. With these I am sure of union with the Mother. Am I not correct?

Yes.

I pray for your observations regarding this psychic experience.
Was it not psychic?

Yes, certainly, it was a psychic opening and at the point emphasised, which is very important — the opening to the higher Purity.

14 July 1937

The Vital Element of Love

As for the *eagerness* to see the Mother, it depends on the nature of the feeling. If there is no demand or claim in it, no dissatisfaction when it is not fulfilled, but only the feeling of the will to see her whenever possible and the joy of seeing her, then it is all right. Of course no trace of anger or jealousy must be there. The vital has also to participate in the sadhana, so the mere fact that there is a vital element does not make the thing wrong, provided it is a vital element of the right kind.

6 December 1931

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Yesterday I found a picture of a pretty peacock, which I cut out and put on the envelope with my letter to the Mother. But in answer Mother sent me an envelope with a picture that seemed meaningless to me. Then I got confused in my thoughts and feelings. I thought, why did the Mother not understand what I wanted to say? Like this I lost connection with the true attitude and felt all wrong and in confusion.

It is again your own misunderstanding that you have erected between yourself and the Mother. The picture-flower which she sent to you in return for your peacock is the pomegranate-flower, the flower of Divine Love and I do not know what better answer you could have expected. Yet merely because you could

not recognise it in its reduced picture form, you jumped to the conclusion that the Mother had not understood you or else that she refused to make any response to you. This with still worse feelings was what you used to do when she was giving flowers and it was because of this violent and ignorant wrong reaction that she had to stop giving flowers to you. How can you expect any answer to your expression when you meet the answer in this way? It is quite true that there is still behind your reaction or associated with it a measure of vital demand and expectation of return and the old want of confidence. The movement may have come from the psychic but around it there was this vital mixture. You must first learn, therefore, to give yourself without demanding a return and you must learn to accept the Mother's action, whatever it may be, without judging it, since it is repeatedly proved that in judging you put an ignorant misconstruction upon it. The inmost being, the psychic, accepts without question, because it has faith in the Divine; by that psychic acceptance the soul opens, the mind clarifies, the vital is purified and enlightened and a spiritual change becomes possible.

3 May 1932

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What you have felt is a revival or return on you of the lower vital with its demands and desires. Its suggestion is, "I am doing the Yoga, but for a price. I have abandoned the life of vital desire and satisfaction, but in order to get intimacy with the Mother — instead of satisfying myself with X and the world, to satisfy myself and get my desires fulfilled by the Divine. If I do not get the intimacy of the Mother and immediately and as I want it, why should I give up the old things?" And as a natural result the old things start again — "X and Y and Y and X and the wrongs of Z." You must see this machinery of the lower vital and dismiss it. It is only by the full psychic relation of self-giving that unity and closeness with the Divine can be maintained — the other is part of the vital ego movement and can only bring a fall of the consciousness and disturbance.

20 June 1933

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It will not do to indulge this restless vital movement. It is not by that that you can have the union with the Mother. You should aspire calmly—eat, sleep, do your work. Peace is the one thing you have to ask for now—it is only on the basis of peace and calm that the true progress and realisation can come. There must be no vital excitement in your seeking or your aspiration towards the Mother.

20 October 1933

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Though I know the Mother is giving me divine things from deep within, my lower nature wants her love and affection to be expressed outwardly. Help me to get rid of this vital demand for some outer expression by the Mother.

That is what you must get rid of—the demand of the vital in the relation with the Mother. It has been the cause of much disturbance and several frictions, for behind it is a claim of the ego. The psychic relation is the true relation, the psychic gives itself without any demand asking only for love and surrender and union with the Divine, and even in that the asking is not a vital demand but an aspiration.

28 November 1933

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Why does one feel so happy after seeing the Mother? The whole day is filled only with her. Is it because the nature of vital love is to feel happy and satisfied when it gets something?

There is no harm in the vital love provided it is purified from all insincerity (e.g. the self-importance etc.) and from all demand. To feel joy in seeing the Mother is all right, but to demand it as a right, to be upset or in revolt or abhiman when it is not given, to be jealous of others who get it—all that is demand and creates an impurity which spoils both the joy and the love.

13 September 1934

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Up to now my effort towards the Self has progressed rapidly, but inside I am dry as an empty coconut shell. When love, emotion, bhakti come, my vital consumes them and leaves my

heart like a desert. Even when there are no vital demands, I hardly feel the Mother's love, though my heart is yearning for it. If the Mother approves, let my psychic be in full activity.

How do you expect the psychic to be in full activity with these things there and not thoroughly rejected? Moreover if the love comes forward in full, what is to prevent the selfish vital taking hold of it and making demand on demand on the Mother which she will certainly refuse to satisfy — as so many have done and afterwards revolted because "the Mother does not love them" — otherwise she would do whatever they want? 2 March 1935

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When a physical manifestation of the Mother's love is absent,
I cannot remain unmoved.

This demand for a physical manifestation of love must go. It is a dangerous stumbling-block in the way of sadhana. A progress made by indulgence of this demand is an insecure progress which may any moment be thrown down by the same force that produced it. 8 October 1935

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I have heard that some ladies have so much love for the Mother that they are even ready to die for her! But they can love her only when she makes a manifestation of her love. This is not, then, a self-existent love — for when the physical love is absent, a few go so far as to revolt, to weep or to fast.

It is self-love that makes them do it. It is just the same kind of vital love that people have outside (loving someone for one's own sake, not for the sake of the beloved). What is the use of that in sadhana here? It can only be an obstacle.

15 October 1935

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It is not possible for my sadhana to go on without devotion and love. I am ready to give up desires and demands if that will put me on the side of love and devotion.

Love and devotion depend on the opening of the psychic and for that the desires must go. The vital love offered by many to the Mother instead of the psychic love brings more disturbance than anything else because it is coupled with desire.

8 September 1936

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If you have no abhimana against the Mother, that also is surely very desirable. Abhimana, disturbance, etc. may be signs of life but of a vital, not of the inner life. They must quiet down and give room for the inner life. At first the result may be a neutral quiet, but one has often to pass through that to arrive at a more positive new consciousness.

2 January 1937

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Why am I suffering? Why am I so far from the Mother? How can I get over this?

Reject the suffering. Reject every vital movement that would take you away from the Mother.

Cling close to her always with your inner being — without demand or question, in perfect faith.

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There are always in a sadhak two sides of the nature, one that wants the Divine, the other that wants only its own way and will and expects the Divine to satisfy it. When you were in the first, the Mother was always close to you and you were happy; when you indulged the second, then all went wrong. Your mistake recently has been to indulge this second part too much. But you can always recover the constant closeness of the Mother in your inner being and happiness and progress in the sadhana. But to do so you must make it a point to give your love without asking for anything at all except the inner nearness — for unless you do that very strongly, it will be difficult for you to get rid of the other tendency and change the demanding vital part in you.

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We find that by meeting the Mother or being in her presence we come out of depression and experience the ecstasy of joy. Does this take place by a psychic meeting or a meeting on the inner vital level?

It depends on whether it comes by drawing vital force from her or simply by the joy of seeing her or by receiving something from her. In the two latter cases it is usually psychic or psychic-vital, in the former it is vital.

Devotion or Bhakti for the Mother

When the Mother looked at me this evening from the terrace, I felt a deep upsurge of devotion towards her. It is this I have hungered for, and so long as I feel this bhakti I feel as though I have little else to desire. Grant that I may have the *ahaitukī bhakti*. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the desire for bhakti is not a desire at all. So I trust I am not making any bargain by desiring it — as bhakti is of the essence of the Divine, to ask for it must be legitimate, no?

The desire for the Divine or of bhakti for the Divine is the one desire which can free one from all the others — at the core it is not a desire, but an aspiration, a soul need, the breath of existence of the inmost being and as such it cannot be counted among desires.

28 December 1932

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How can I have pure bhakti for the Mother?

Pure worship, adoration, love for the Divine without claim or demand is what is called *śuddha bhakti*.

From which part does it manifest?

From the psychic.

How can I unravel the confusion I feel between self, mind, vital and physical, and how to distinguish them?

One has to separate oneself in thought from mind and vital and body and look at these as not oneself but only outer instruments or movements of nature. In the end one begins to be aware of something behind them which is the real self, the true being.

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Is psychic bhakti perfect devotion?

It is the basis of perfect devotion.

How can I develop psychic bhakti?

By sincere aspiration.

What is the character of psychic bhakti, mental bhakti and vital bhakti for the Mother? How to recognise them?

The psychic is made up of love and self-giving without demand, the vital of the will to be possessed by the Mother and serve her, the mental of faith and unquestioning acceptance of all that the Mother is, says and does. These however are outside signs — it is in inner character quite recognisable but not to be put into words that they differ.

Is there no place for mental and vital devotion in this Yoga?

Who says there is not? So long as it is real devotion, all bhakti has a place.

28 April 1933

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It is always a mistake to attach importance to what others say — it is enough to have true devotion and the right attitude towards the Mother. You need have no apprehension of this kind at all.

28 April 1933

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How to get pure and complete devotion?

Get quiet first — then from the quietude aspire and open yourself quietly and sincerely to the Mother. 15 November 1933

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Mother, in spite of my thousand and three imperfections, this one sense remains in me — that you are my mother, that I am born from your heart. It is the only truth I seem to have realised in all these six years, but I thank you very much that I have been enabled to feel this much at least.

It is an excellent foundation for the other truths that are to come — for they all result from it. 17 September 1934

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My meetings with the Mother, instead of being occasions for giving and receiving love, joy and happiness, bring fear! There must be something wrong in my nature.

It is the old vital with its ego which comes up again and again. It refuses to follow the higher being and be as the true bhaktas are who ask nothing and are content with all that the Mother does or does not do, because whatever she does must be good, since she is the Mother. You must impose the truth on this vital part. 6 May 1935

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Do not allow mental anxiety to harass you. Wait on the working of the Mother's force which will open the lotus of the heart. In the light from above devotion will blossom in you.

25 October 1936

Consecration to the Mother

Sometimes when I sit in meditation, I say "Ma — Ma — Ma." Then everything becomes quiet and I feel great peace inside and outside me. Even in the atmosphere around me, I hear "Ma — Ma — Ma." Is this real or is it only echoes?

The atmosphere you carry around you is part of your consciousness as much as the rest that you feel inside you. When you

repeat the name of the Mother, it begins to echo in all your consciousness, outside as well as inside you. What you experience therefore is quite true and it is a good experience.

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When I asked what attitude I should hold during the silence of the mind, you replied, "Consecration." Please explain this to me in a wider sense.

It means the devoting of all that comes to you, all your experiences and progress to the Mother.

What should I do to keep the silence alert and constant while reading, talking and working.

The same thing — do all with a quiet mind, not throwing yourself out in what you do, but seeing quietly what is done and what happens.

16 January 1934

The Mother's Love

There is no need to ask for pardon, for the Mother has not in the least been angry or displeased with you. You may be sure of her love always.

29 September 1933

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No more shall I seek signs of the Mother's love in an outward way. What difference does it make if she touches me a little or more or does not touch me at all? If the love is received properly within, that alone is the true thing. If it is not received or if it is diffused or dispersed or misdirected after receiving it, that is like throwing pearls before swine.

Yes, that is the truth and it is the attitude every sadhak should take.

8 May 1934

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We all want Mother's love, but I wonder how many of us truly love the Mother. Where indeed do we see one-pointed,

ever-sacrificing, never-failing love? Who has love only for the Divine?

It does not mean that there is no love, but that the love is mixed up and covered with egoism, demand and vital movements. At least that is the case with many. There are some of course who have no love at all, or "love" — if it can be called so — only for what they get, one or two who love truly — but in a great many there is a psychic spark hidden in much smoke. The smoke has to be got rid of so that the spark may have a chance of growing into a blaze.

9 November 1934

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Do not think whether people agree with you or do not agree with you or whether you are good or bad, but think only that "the Mother loves me and I am the Mother's." If you base your life on that thought, everything will soon become easy.

30 April 1935

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It is because of the thoughts about others and your "badness" that you feel far from the Mother. All the time she is very near to you and you to her. If you take the position I told you and make it the basis of your life, "the Mother loves me and I am hers", the curtain would soon disappear, for it is made of these thoughts and nothing else.

1 May 1935

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The Mother loves because she is Love and cannot but love.
Still, we feel that she cannot love as we do, and on our part
we cannot bear the constancy and wideness of her Love.

Obviously, if people expect the ordinary kind of love from the Mother they must be disappointed — the love based on the vital and its moods. But that is just the kind of love that has to be overpassed in Yoga or transformed into something else.

14 March 1936

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Certainly, it is not necessary for you to become “good” in order that the Mother may give you her love. Her love is always there and the imperfections of human nature do not count against that love. The only thing is that you must become aware of it always there. For that it is necessary for the psychic to come in front—for the psychic knows, while the mind, vital and physical look only at surface appearances and misinterpret them. It is that for which the Mother’s force is working, and whenever the psychic comes near the surface, you have felt love and nearness coming up. But it needs time to prepare the other parts so that they also may know and feel. Therefore the patience is necessary and the confidence that through all the delays and difficulties of the sadhana the Mother is leading you and will surely lead you home to her.

24 June 1936

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X is probably making two mistakes—first, expecting outward expressions of love from the Mother; second, looking for progress instead of concentrating on openness and surrender without demand of a return. These are two mistakes which sadhaks are constantly making. If one opens, if one surrenders, then as soon as the nature is ready, progress will come of itself; but the personal concentration for progress brings difficulties and resistance and disappointment because the mind is not looking at things from the right angle. The Mother has a special kindness for X and every day at Pranam she is trying to put a sustaining force upon him. He must learn to be very quiet in mind and vital and consecrate himself so that he may become conscious as well as receive. The Divine Love, unlike the human, is deep and vast and silent; one must become quiet and wide to be aware of it and reply to it. He must make it his whole object to be surrendered so that he may become a vessel and instrument—leaving it to the Divine Wisdom and Love to fill him with what is needed. Let him also fix this in the mind not to insist that in a given time he must progress, develop, get realisations and experiences—whatever time it takes, he must be prepared to wait and persevere and make his whole life an

aspiration and an opening for the one thing only, the Divine. To give oneself is the secret of sadhana, not to demand and acquire a thing. The more one gives oneself, the more the power to receive will grow. But for that all impatience and revolt must go; all suggestions of not getting, not being helped, not being loved, of going away, of abandoning life or the spiritual endeavour must be rejected.

1 September 1936

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As for the feelings about the Mother and that her love is only given for a return in work or to those who can do sadhana well, that is the usual senseless idea of the vital-physical mind and has no value.

17 January 1937

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It is not Mother who makes you cry. It is forces from the vital Nature that make you sorrowful and think of dying and of the past. What comes from Mother is love and light and peace and joy and the spiritual life of the future.

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Never mind about the purity of the body. The love of the Mother purifies both heart and body—if the soul's aspiration is there, the body also is pure. What happened in the past does not in the least matter.

Inner Union and Outer Relation with the Mother

Some part or parts of my being seem to be trying to live in the Mother all the time, and to leave the other parts completely in the hands of the Mother's Force.

That did not succeed in the past.

I mean “live” not in an impersonal sense, but live into her very manifested physical form. In such a case, is it still necessary to aspire for bringing down her Force?

I do not know how you are going to *live into* the manifested physical form. To live in the Mother's consciousness even to the physical with the manifested form as the centre of this unity is possible. Perhaps you mean that? But how are you going to do that if the other parts are left to remain as they are? They will go on pulling you out of the true consciousness as they do now. And how are they to be changed if the Mother's Force is not there in them to change them?

14 January 1936

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It is true that the Mother is one in many forms, but the distinction between the outer and the inner Mother must not be made too trenchant; for she is not only one, but the physical Mother contains all the others in herself and in her is established the communication between the inner and the outer existence. But to know the outer Mother truly one must know what is within her and not look at the outer appearances only. That is only possible if one meets her with the inner being and grows into her consciousness — those who seek an outer relation only cannot do that.

10 August 1936

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The spiritual union must begin from within and spread out from there; it cannot be based on anything exterior — for, if so based, the union cannot be spiritual or real. That is the great mistake which so many make here: they put the whole emphasis on the external vital or physical relation with the Mother, insist on a vital interchange or else physical contact and when they do not get it to their satisfaction, enter into all kinds of disturbances, revolt, doubt, depression. This is a wrong viewpoint altogether and has caused much obstruction and trouble. The mind, vital, physical can participate and are intended to participate in the union, but for that they must be submitted to the psychic, themselves psychised; the union must be an essentially psychic and spiritual union spreading out to the mind, vital and physical. Even the physical must be able to feel invisibly the Mother's closeness, her concrete presence — then alone can the union be truly based

and completed and then alone can any physical closeness or contact find its true value and fulfil its spiritual purpose. Till then any physical contact is of value only so far as it helps the inner sadhana, but how much can be given and what will help or hinder, the Mother only can judge, the sadhak cannot be the judge — he will be led away by the desires and lower vital ego, as so many have been in fact. Such means of help by physical contact as the Mother had established have been largely spoiled by the sadhaks' misuse of them, the wrong attitude of which I have spoken. When the vital demand is there with its claims and revolts and takes the desire for the exterior contact or closeness as a cause or occasion for these things, then it becomes a serious hindrance to the development of the inner union, it does not help at all. The sadhaks always imagine in their ignorance that when the Mother sees more of one person than of another, it is because of personal preference and that she is giving more love and help to that person. That is altogether a mistake. Physical closeness and contact can be a severe ordeal for the sadhak; it may raise the vital demands, claims, jealousies etc. to a high pitch; it may on the other hand leave him satisfied with an outer relation without making any serious effort for the inner union; or it becomes for him something mechanical, because ordinary and familiar, and for any inner purpose quite ineffective — these things are not only possible but have happened in many cases. The Mother knows that and her arrangements in this matter are therefore dictated by quite other reasons than those which are attributed to her.

The only safe thing is to concentrate on the inner union foremost and altogether, to make that the one thing to be achieved and to leave aside all claims and demands for anything external, remaining satisfied with what the Mother gives and relying wholly on her wisdom and solicitude. It ought to be quite evident that a desire which raises revolt, doubt, depression, desperate struggles cannot be a true part of the spiritual movement. If your mind tells you that it is the right thing, then surely you must distrust the mind's suggestions. Concentrate entirely on the one thing needful and put away, if they come, all ideas and

forces that want to disturb it or make you deviate. The vital assent to these things has to be overcome, but for that the first thing is to refuse all mental assent, for the mental support gives them a greater force than they would otherwise have. Fix the right attitude in the mind and the deeper emotional being—cling to that when contrary forces arise and by your firmness in that psychic attitude repel them.

14 March 1937

Relation with the Mother and with Others

I feel hurt when somebody tells me I am doing something wrong in my sadhana. I get restless and depressed. But today by the Mother's compassion, I can see that I have been childish and stupid. Is my experience true?

You ought to train yourself not to mind what people say—for what they say is also childish and stupid. Your sadhana—and your life also—lies between you and the Mother; other people do not matter.

23 March 1933

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I have a deep regard for X and an inner affection for him. Now when I begin to meditate by thinking of the Mother, I sometimes see him meditating with us. This brings a happy feeling, yet I worry lest it should bring any harm in my sadhana. I hope it will not bring trouble.

If you bring somebody in between you and the Mother, it is bound to give trouble.

5 April 1933

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It was your mistake to listen to what people say about you and X and Y and attach any value to their foolish chatter. X did not grow serious with you because of that. He was puzzled by your change of manner, the stiffness of your attitude towards him and your apparently diminished interest in the work. It is what the Mother says that is true and matters and not what people say; if you listen to what people say, you will lose touch with the Mother's consciousness. It is because of that that these thoughts

have come back on you about your badness and the rest of it. The Mother had told you to work freely with X; she told you that his influence was good for you, and for many days you had peace and joy and freedom from the restless mind and you had the psychic opening. Now you must go back to that and do as you were doing before. Turn to the Mother only and let her consciousness and her will work in you. Then you will recover what you had got, silence the mind and be free. 29 April 1933

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X would like to have a "pure" relation with me, a relation of quiet friendliness. But when I look within, I find always the same answer in the heart—no more relation of any kind with anyone, except the one, sole relation with the Mother, an undivided devotion of all of myself solely to the Mother. The vital clamours for relation, but let it. The one who speaks within has only an unmixed aspiration for union with the Mother. I shall follow whatever guidance you give me.

To be turned wholly to the Mother and have nothing but friendly relations with the sadhaks, the same for all, is a counsel of perfection; but not many can carry it out—hardly one here and there. Yet to have that in tendency is to have the real turn towards the one-pointedness of sadhana; but people take time to arrive at it. 12 July 1935

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Yes, it is the thing to be attained—not to receive any other influences than the Divine, as human nature ordinarily does. Then under the sole influence of the Mother's Light and Force, all that has to be changed in the nature can be quietly and smoothly changed, all that has to be developed can be developed without disturbance or trouble. 3 June 1936

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The direct relation with the Mother is always open to you and it is there whenever you can feel it; for it is a thing of the inner being. Whenever you go deep within yourself you find it; it has

to come out and govern the outer nature and life. That is why I want you to give time for going inside and for inner progress in the sadhana. The relation with X which the Mother thought of establishing was of two friends and fellow workers in her work, it was never intended that she should be between you and the Mother. In Y's case there was a help to be given to you so that you might not be carried away by the attacks from which you suffered and might have time and support till you could reach a point at which you could seek the Mother's presence within you and with you. That you can do now and there is no reason why anyone should be asked to intervene in any way — our work is directly in you and upon you and not through anyone.

22 December 1936

False Suggestions of the Mother's Displeasure

It is not surprising that you could not find out what you had done to make the Mother change her attitude towards you, and this for two good reasons, — first, that you had done nothing, and, second, that the Mother's feeling for you and her attitude had not changed at all — *not in any smallest respect, not in the least shadow of a degree*. She has the same care and love as she always had and during the last few days of which you speak, they were not clouded for a moment.

Then you ask, if so, why do I feel like this or like that? I can only answer that, in their origin, these were not your own feelings at all, but rather ideas, impressions, impulses pushed into your lower vital from outside; your mistake has been to admit them and identify them as your own — from want of knowledge and experience in these matters. There are certain vital forces of this lower vital plane that are constantly wandering about the Asram and trying to push their movements now on one, now on another, now on several at a time. The processus is always the same. First, suggestions: the Mother has done this or not done that, she has said this or not said that, she has had this or that thought about me or feeling towards me, she is displeased with me, unfair to me, partial to others etc. etc.;

next, discouragement, wounded feelings, jealousy, despondency, revolt or any other kindred vital downfall or upheaval; result, the impulse to withdraw from the Mother, not to give her flowers or take flowers, to go away from soup or Pranam, not to come there, to shut oneself away from her altogether, to give up the Yoga, to go away — or worse. I give you the whole round in its ground plan, omitting many variations, so that you may be on your guard the next time these suggestions try to come. If you don't want to be misled by them and to go through much quite groundless and unnecessary disturbance and trouble, you must recognise them immediately they come, cast them out by the neck or break their backs as you would a snake's.

For they are in their nature not only irrational, but strongly mechanical. Irrational, because they have no true ground in reality. They are ready enough to seize on some (usually trifling) outward appearances and twist them this way or that in order to convince the easily deceived physical mind; they will even create circumstances and make them appear to have that colour. But if they cannot find or create, they will go on just as merrily with no other ground than imaginations or impressions which they persuade their victims to take for realities. And they are mechanical because, once they can make the mind their field, they always recur with the same inevitable round of suggestions, the same ideas, the same feelings, the same impulses, the same actions in consequence. It is like a recurrent illness with always the same series of symptoms and the same "course". And the object is always the same, to create a distance between the sadhak and the Mother and so to break the sadhana. It is a great mistake to think, as some do, that the Mother in such cases pushes the sadhaka away from her; on the contrary, it is he who pushes her away from him under the influence of these forces and believes all the time — for they have a great power of blinding the mind and clouding the judgment — that she is to blame.

To show how these suggestions mislead once one starts listening to them, I may instance the matter of your sister's letters. The Mother and I have always accepted without reservation your sister's coming and neither today nor at any other time had

she the least idea in her mind against it. On the contrary, when you came in the midst of a hard and trying morning, she gave you full time, heard all you had to say, made her own suggestions and gave her full acquiescence. What more could she have done? And yet you have this suggestion made to you that she does not really want, that she is not frank, that she is cold to you about the matter. Why? Precisely because there was this predisposing influence at work on the lookout for any pretext to mislead you, — any, even less than a shadow's shadow.

I must ask you therefore to dismiss this kind of suggestion, these feelings and all the cycle in future the moment they try to come. Never mind what circumstances or justifications they may allege. Nothing is more dangerous than the inferences of the physical mind trying to build up conclusions upon outward appearances — they have nine chances out of ten of being false. One must learn to distrust hasty conclusions from surface appearances — is not that the first condition of true knowledge? — and learn to see and know things from within.

You ask how to stem these movements? To begin with, observe three rules:

(1) Keep always confidence in the Mother's care and love — trust in them and distrust every suggestion, every appearance that seems to contradict.

(2) Reject immediately every feeling, every impulse that makes you draw back from the Mother — such as that about the Pranam — from your true relation with her, from inner nearness, from a simple and straightforward confidence in her.

(3) Do not lay too much stress on outward signs — your observation of them may easily mislead you. Keep yourself open to her and feel with your heart — the inner heart, not the surface vital desire, but the heart of true emotion, — then you are more likely to find her and be always near her in your self and receive what constantly she is working to give you.

27 June 1931

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When I see the Mother in the evening, I notice that some being in me is trying to bring catastrophes, such as the idea, "Mother

does not look at you", even though she may be looking at me. This has become very common. I always try my best to reject it, but still it comes constantly and forcibly and makes my consciousness disordered. I pray that the Mother may remove it. What is this being — is it vital?

Yes, it is a being of falsehood from the vital world which tries to make one take its false suggestions for the truth and disturb the consciousness, and get it to leave the straight path and either get depressed or turned against the Mother. If you reject and refuse to listen or believe always, it will disappear. 30 March 1933

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All these [*suggestions of ill treatment, severity, lack of support*] are the mere ravings of the vital Force that attacks the mind with its lying suggestions until it succeeds in getting the sadhak to turn away from the Mother and against her. There is a part of the vital that accepts it, luxuriates in an exaggerated misery and suggestions of personal tragedy and catastrophe, the blame for which it wants to lay on the Divine. If you want to get rid of these attacks, it is this part of your vital being that you must change, its acceptance of these false suggestions, its want of fortitude in facing the difficulties of the sadhana. If you refused to indulge this vital tamasic tendency and the voices of darkness that come with it, there would be no such violent ups and downs in the sadhana.

24 January 1934

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It is of course the resistance of the old vital in the past that is being redeemed which creates this irritation and these imaginations about the Mother's displeasure. For as a matter of fact there was no dissatisfaction against you in the Mother's mind and this idea is usually a suggestion to the sadhak's mind from the Force that wants to create the wish to go or any other kind of discontent or depression. It is a curious form of delusion that has taken root, as it were, in the Asram atmosphere and is cherished not so much by the individual vital as by the forces that work upon it to break, if possible, the sadhana. You must not allow any

harborage to that or else it will create any amount of trouble. The absence of proper sleep naturally brings a state of fatigue in the nerves which helps these things to come — for it is through the physical consciousness that they attack and if it can make that consciousness tamasic in any way, their entry is more easy.

15 September 1936

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The Mother has in no way changed towards you nor is she disappointed with you — that is the suggestion drawn from your own state of mind and putting its wrong sense of disappointment and unfitness on to the Mother. She has no reason to change or be disappointed, as she has always been aware of the vital obstacles in you and still expected and expects you to overcome them. The call to change certain things that seem to be in the grain of character is proving difficult even for the best sadhaks, but the difficulty is no proof of incompetence. It is precisely this impulse to go that you must refuse to admit — for so long as these forces think they can bring it about, they will press as much as they can on this point. You must also open yourself more to the Mother's Force in that part and for that it is necessary to get rid of this suggestion about the Mother's disappointment or lack of love, for it is this which creates the reaction at the time of Pranam. Our help, support, love are there always as before — keep yourself open to them and with their aid drive out these suggestions.

26 January 1937

Nearness to the Mother and Progress in Sadhana

“Early” or “late” has nothing to do with what you call nearness. Some who were “early” — and also some who are “near” to her see the Mother only at “pranam” time — physically; some who are late, have the occasion to see her every day because their work compels it. But they see her because of the work; the work was not given to them in order that they might be near! You have taken the thing by the wrong end — not for the first time.

You are mistaken in thinking that you are the only one to

ask with such persistence — there are others. Each one calls it a need, but when their “need” is freely given to them, they cease to value it — as happened with the soup and the pranam. And this shows that it is not a need, but a desire. The principle of all sadhana is to fix the will not on desires — even if presented to the mind as needs — but on the realisation only.

Our object is the supramental realisation and we have to do whatever is necessary for that or towards that under the conditions of each stage. At present the necessity is to prepare the physical consciousness; for that a complete equality and peace and a complete dedication free from personal demand or desire in the physical and the lower vital parts is the thing to be established. Other things can come in their proper time. What is the real need now is not insistence on physical nearness, which is one of those other things, but the psychic opening in the physical consciousness and the constant presence and guidance there.

I do not know what you mean by our wanting to use you for all practical purposes. We did not insist on your doing any work for us; it was you who asked for work, and we gave you what could be found for you. But we could not very well invent work with the express purpose of creating an occasion for physically meeting the Mother. That has not been done for anybody.

16 February 1932

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As usual, all you have written in the letter under the wrong influence is based either on false inferences or a wrong attitude.

It is quite false that the Mother gives your letters or X's or those of others to Y to read. The letters and books are read and kept not by the Mother, but by me; it is I who read them to the Mother, put by those that are done with in my files and return the books and the answers which are sent immediately I have finished with them through Nolini. Other things like Y seeing your envelopes on a table etc. are mere trifles with no harm in them; if you twist and exaggerate and put a dark meaning on every harmless trifle and erect it into a grievance and a torture, how do you expect to have any quiet or peace or progress in the sadhana?

As for the advantages given to Y by her working here and seeing and speaking with the Mother being an injustice to you and a sacrifice of you to her development, she might equally complain, and most of the people in the Asram might complain that they are not allowed to send a book to Sri Aurobindo every second day and get an answer from him and a constant outward help, but are left out in the cold and an unjust partiality is being shown by him and they are being sacrificed to the development of Z [*the correspondent*]. These jealous recriminations are foolish and stupid in the extreme. I therefore hope that this is the last time you entertain them and that consequently, as you say, it may be the last time you write them. If you can clear this out of you, there will be some chance of the liberation of your physical consciousness and a straight progress in the sadhana.

4 September 1932

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People say that the sadhaks whom the Mother calls for interview now and then, and the sadhaks to whom she sends things personally, are those who are very close to her and they progress rapidly in every way. What is the truth in this?

It is all nonsense. Some of the best sadhaks are among those whom the Mother seldom or never calls and she sends them nothing. Nor do they expect it—they feel the Mother always with them and are satisfied and ask for nothing else.

27 July 1933

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Is there any special effect of physical nearness to the Mother?

It is indispensable for the fullness of the sadhana on the physical plane. Transformation of the physical and external being is not possible otherwise.

Is it not likely that with more outer nearness and familiarity with the Mother, there may be less inner growth of consciousness and perhaps less aspiration?

It depends on the person. Some profit, some do not. No general statement can be made.

Is it possible to receive the Mother's help at a great distance — say Bombay or Calcutta — almost in the same way as here in the Asram?

One can receive everywhere, and if there is a strong spiritual consciousness one can make great progress. But experience does not support the idea that it makes no difference or is almost the same.

18 August 1933

*

I want to be close to the Mother. If I was close to her, the hostile forces would not attack me.

You are quite mistaken. Among those who are physically near the Mother there are some who have much worse attacks than you have ever had. It is the inner nearness that saves, not the physical nearness.

17 November 1933

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It is the inner nearness that matters. The idea of the mind — quite natural, of course — that the outer closeness is the sign of the relation or a special favour or the means of rapid progress is not borne out by experience. There are some who see the Mother daily and are very little advanced from what they were years ago — there were others who got worse because it fostered the vital demand in them — on the other hand there are some quite close to the Mother and forward on the path and cherished by her who come to her only very occasionally — and I could instance one case in which there is an interview only once a year, yet there is no one who has made more rapid progress or in whom the love relation has grown to a greater intensity and fervour. In all these things it is best to have an entire confidence in the Mother and the light that guides her.

10 December 1933

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One who is called to see the Mother often is fortunate because then one gets a chance to talk with her and to receive more Light in her presence. Is it not so?

No. It depends entirely on the condition of the person and his attitude. Especially, if they insist on seeing her or on remaining when she wants them to go or are in a bad mood and throw it on her, it is very harmful for them to see her. Each should be content with what the Mother gives them, for she alone feels what they can or cannot receive. Mental constructions of this kind and vital demands are always false.

3 April 1934

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If one has the close inner relation, one feels the Mother always near and within and round and there is no insistence on the closer physical relation for its own sake. Those who have not this, should aspire for it and not hanker after the other. If they get the outer closeness, they will find that it means nothing without the inner oneness and closeness. One may be physically near the Mother and yet as far from her as the Sahara desert.

11 June 1934

*

My dissatisfaction and inner struggle are constant. My eyes are constantly on the outer nearness of the Mother, of which I have none at the moment, and I am left out completely.

And if you had the physical nearness, you would be no happier or calmer so long as the inner being is unchanged. Those who do physically approach her have just the same difficulties and struggles as yourself and some have not even the experiences of peace etc. that you have.

Since all this is in me, it has been expressed. Now let it burn into ashes, never to rise again.

It would be most foolish to call back this meaningless delusion —for nothing can be farther from the actual and practical truth than to suppose that those who have a physical nearness to the

Mother or have frequent physical approach are happier or more satisfied than others; it is not in the least true — or to allow it to prevent the progress of the inner peace. If you could only get rid of this delusion, nothing would be able to prevent the growth of the Peace and that inner nearness which alone makes people in this Asram divinely happy. Happiness comes from the soul's satisfaction, not from the vital's or the body's. The vital is never satisfied; the body soon ceases to be moved at all by what it easily or always has. Only the psychic being brings the real joy and felicity.

8 September 1934

*

I have completely recovered from the bad effect caused by the suggestion that the Mother was not seeing me enough. Now I am in peace.

As you have recovered, I do not write anything about that, for discourse on such matters does not help. The one thing important is to keep the inner attitude and establish the inner connection with the Mother independent of all outward circumstances; it is that that brings all that is needed. Those who are most deep in the Yoga are not those who physically see most of the Mother. There are some who are in constant nearness or union with her who apart from the Pranam and the evening meditation come to her only once a year.

13 November 1934

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Those are the Mother's children and closest to her who are open to her, close to her in their inner being, one with her will — not those who come bodily nearest to her. Did coming inside help X or Y? It is impossible for Mother to satisfy the demands of everybody, the external demands — it only wears out her body but helps no one.

25 December 1934

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While at the staircase I got an intense desire to see the Mother's rooms. X suggested that when one is in difficulty, one should ask to go near to the Mother.

But the coming near to the Mother should be in the inner rooms, not the outer. For in the inner rooms one can always enter and even arrange to stay there permanently. 28 January 1935

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X showed me a copy of your letter to Y in which you say: "Those are the Mother's children and closest to her who are open to her, close to her in their inner being, one with her will—not those who come bodily nearest to her." But have not those who are bodily nearest come nearest because they were already "open to her", "one with her will" and "close to her in their inner being"? And are there not certain special advantages of this bodily nearness?

It is not so easy to be "one with the will" of the Mother or to be entirely open. To be bodily close imposes a constant pressure for progress, for perfection, which no one yet has been able to meet. People have romantic ideas in this matter which are not true. 7 March 1935

*

If one does not take care of one's ego from the beginning, it may develop into a strong spiritual ego which says, "I am progressing wonderfully; the Grace is with me. I am the Mother's instrument more than others." It may demand that the Mother show some special Grace to it. This ego wants to show others that "Mother loves me more than all of you", and it wants a physical manifestation of her love.

You are quite right. It is the ego that wants the satisfaction of being the first or specially singled out. It is this egoistic vital demand with all its consequent revolts and disturbances that made it necessary for Mother to limit the physical manifestation of nearness to a minimum. 17 April 1935

*

Whatever you may say to suppress our desire for the Mother's nearness . . .

If one has the desire or the claim, one brings in all sorts of

demands, anger, jealousies, despairs, revolts etc., which spoil the sadhana and do not help it. To others the nearness becomes a mixture.

I find that people are greatly fortunate who can approach the Mother often.

If they know how to approach her which hardly any do.

If you say that there is always an interchange going on between people . . .

A vital interchange. But there is a difference between the interchange of "people" and interchange with Mother.

surely one who often comes to Mother, will automatically take something precious from her.

And what if their condition is such that it merely passes or is spilt or is spoilt by their reactions?

And this is the easiest way of receiving.

If they know how to receive.

The Mother was giving freely of her physical contact in former years. If the sadhaks had had the right reactions, do you think she would have drawn back and reduced it to a minimum? Of course if people know in what spirit to receive from her, the physical touch is a great thing—but for that the constant physical nearness is not necessary. That rather creates a pressure of the highest force which how many can meet and satisfy?

22 April 1935

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Why should X complain when he knows full well that he can have Mother's contact for an hour and be near her for two hours more? He has no need of writing or receiving letters from her. Or maybe he understands Mother better on account of his long contact with her.

I am afraid all these are mental constructions. You are constructing in your mind what X ought to feel. But as a matter of fact neither X's nor anybody's difficulties are removed by their coming to Mother or by their sitting one hour or two hours or even three hours with her. Plenty of people have done that and gone away as glum, desperate and revolted as they came. Among the people who see the Mother are some who have crises as bad as yours and as frequent. It is also not true that those who have talked much with Mother (about houses, repairs, servants etc.) understand her better. In former days some people used to see much of Mother in another way, i.e. to talk with her on all sorts of subjects—but even those did not really understand her. I repeat that all that is mental building and constructed inference and does not square with the facts. It is only when one is inwardly open to her that one profits by the “contact” with her, not the physical but the spiritual or inner contact, and then the mere thought of her or a mere thought from her can set right anything wrong; then the physical contact also can help, but it is not indispensable. And as for understanding her, it is only by entering into the spiritual consciousness that one can understand her, or if not understand in the mind, at least feel and respond to what she is through an increasing oneness.

4 August 1935

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To come physically to the Mother for getting rid of a disturbance is unnecessary and useless; it is inwardly that you must take refuge in her and throw away the wrong movement, as you have seen on this occasion. To come physically would only create a habit of getting wrong and coming to her to get right and it would also lead to the wrong movement of throwing the difficulty on her instead of inwardly giving it up, making its surrender. But it is the general surrender that is needed which would prevent these useless disturbances over trifling matters, egoisms, insistences on one's own point of view, anger because one does not have one's own way or a due recognition of one's independence or importance. It is these feelings disguised by reasonings and self-justification that are at the bottom of more

than half of the difficulty in the work of the Asram.

18 May 1936

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Is it true that the Mother is taking away her physical nearness from us because our inner closeness to her is increasing, so there is no need of outer closeness?

The Mother has for a long time past been limiting the outer contact with the sadhaks as much as possible. The reason you speak of is one of the reasons, but there are others which it is not necessary to speak of.

27 July 1936

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How is it that X so easily finds defects in Y's work and Y seems to be glad when I criticise X? If those who have an opportunity to be with the Mother for half an hour daily have not been able to have a fine, affectionate harmony, what to say of others?

X has not the opportunity you speak of; he sees [*the Mother*] only for a minute or two in the morning when taking back his daily report. But in fact it is a mistake to think that those who meet the Mother physically are any nearer the goal of perfection than those who do not meet her except at Pranam and meditation. All depends on the inner being and how it can meet her from within and receive her force and profit by it. Of course, if people meet her with their psychic prominent, and not with the outer consciousness only, it should be different, but—

29 July 1936

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You have said that those who are doing sadhana outside the Asram cannot do it fully—the daily touch and nearness of the Mother, gained by living in the Asram, alone can bring a possibility of transformation. Carrying this idea a little further, it naturally follows that those who live nearer to the Mother and meet her more often are of the inner circle, and even outwardly are more intimate, that is, nearer transformation.
Q.E.D.?

Living in the Asram is one thing, living with the Mother in close proximity is another. Your Q.E.D., like most mental logic, is contradicted by the facts of life. One could argue on that basis that *A* who lives in the same house as the Mother is nearer perfection than *B* and much nearer than *C* or *D* who live outside. *D* never meets the Mother except at Pranam and on her birthday, so she must be an utterly backward person and *E* who meets the Mother daily for 5, 10, 15 or 20 minutes must be far ahead of her, well on towards perfection. But these things are not so. So the argument breaks down at every point. Progress in sadhana or superior capacity is not dependent on one's being near the Mother or meeting her more often. Q.E.D.

30 July 1936

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There is a confusion here. The Mother's grace is one thing, the call to change another, the pressure of nearness to her is yet another. Those who are physically near to her are not so by any special grace or favour, but by the necessity of their work,—that is what everybody here refuses to understand or believe, but it is the fact: that nearness acts automatically as a pressure, if for nothing else, to adapt their consciousness to hers which means change, but it is difficult for them because the difference between the two consciousnesses is enormous especially on the physical level and it is on the physical level that they are meeting her in the work.

27 April 1944

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I have a great desire to see the Mother. Why is she not allowing me to do so? Please tell me, what is the value of my desire?

There is more profit to be had by being open to the Mother than by coming physically to her at the present stage. Some even who make a point of her calling them go backward rather than forward—because they make a point of it, introducing thus a basis of vital demand which makes a very shaky foundation for relations with the Mother.

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Although the Mother is looking after me well, I feel that she is keeping me away from her. I feel as if covered in egoism and darkness. I ask her forgiveness for past mistakes.

You are mistaken in thinking that the Mother keeps you at a distance; you have only to open yourself to her sincerely and entirely. What has been done in the past does not matter if there is a sincere aspiration and resolution to change. Neither to lament nor to complain or be angry will help; a confident and happy opening of oneself to the Mother without insistence on personal demands and desires is the only thing to do.

Closeness to the Mother and Speaking French

Is it right to say that those who know French will be able to serve the Mother better in the years to come?

It is mostly that it brings a certain closeness to one side of the Mother.

3 May 1945

Special Relation with the Mother

I did not agree to your going for the same reasons as the last time. First, there was no good reason why you should go; a fit of quite causeless jealousy and pique could not be considered a sufficient ground for your wanting to leave us. You started your "revolt", as you call it, because the Mother took X to a private sale to buy things for her: you continued it because the next day (it being the first of the month) and the day after she was too busy with accounts and other affairs to occupy herself with you as you wanted. There could not be more absurd grounds for wanting to go away.

What you seem to claim from the Mother is impossible. No one can be given the right to control or question her actions and decisions or to dictate whom she must or must not take with her or what time she shall give to one or another. The Mother can do her work only if she is free always to do what she sees to be right and her decisions are accepted by all concerned. This is

now generally understood in the Asram and no one makes this kind of demand; it is not possible that you alone out of eighty people should have the right to do it.

In fact, you have been given privileges of close daily personal contact with the Mother which very few in the Asram have and which all would be only too glad to have. It is not because you have a greater claim than theirs. If it were a matter of ordinary claim, there are many who would precede you. Some have been here since the beginning; some are more advanced than most in the spiritual life; some occupy a responsible position in the work of the Asram; yet many of them cannot come to the Mother separately every morning or meet her again in the afternoon as you have been allowed to do. This privilege was given you because she felt that you had a special need of her care and of help and support from her. For she does not act for her personal satisfaction or decide out of personal preference, but according to the necessities of the work and the true need of each one in the Asram. And she gave you as much as she could consistently with the call of her work and the time at her disposal. But instead of being satisfied and happy, you create in your mind flimsy grounds for revolt and "quarrel". You did this once and it was excused as a mistake which you recognised and would try not to repeat. It is discouraging to see you start the same folly all over again as if you had understood and learned nothing.

You have not been asked to do any Yoga; you were too young and unripe for that. You have therefore no reason to complain of being asked to do something beyond your power. But, without doing any Yoga, it was quite possible for you, merely by your work and by daily contact with the Mother and her silent influence, to grow quietly and easily and happily in consciousness and character and capacity until you were ready. But if you refuse to learn self-control and discipline, (these are not matters of Yoga, but what everyone has to learn unless he wants to waste his life and bring his capacities to nothing), and if you cannot be content and happy with the much that is given you, you yourself will make your own life here impossible.

My second reason for not agreeing to your departure was that I did not believe that you really wanted to go or that what spoke of going was the true Y. But if your desire to go is serious and deliberate, if you cannot be happy here with us, then it would not be right for me to keep you against your will. That is a thing which I never do with anyone.

My third reason was that I could only sanction your going if I saw that you were too young or otherwise unfit to bear the pressure of the Asram atmosphere. I know that there is in you the capacity if you choose to exercise it. But a certain attitude towards this life and towards the Mother is needed which you seem unwilling to keep. If you cannot be satisfied, if you are constantly revolting and discontented and unhappy, if you again and again violently insist on going away, if you are constantly driven by something in you into these outbreaks which might have been excusable when you were a young child but are no longer proper to your age, it will be difficult for me to avoid coming to the conclusion that, as yet at least, you are not ready, not only for the Yoga, but even for living here.

One thing I wish to make clear. Neither myself nor the Mother wishes you to leave us. I do not approve or sanction your going, still less do I decide that you must go. But if your desire to go is real, insistent and imperative, if you cannot be happy here and feel that you would be happier elsewhere, then I shall be obliged to withdraw my refusal.

This is the situation. Try to get back to yourself, your real self, the real Y and see if he wants to go, if it is true that he cannot be satisfied by what the Mother gives him. It is upon that that the decision will rest.

3 September 1929

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At times I feel that Mother is not pleased with me. This feeling makes me very uncomfortable and I get the idea of going away from here. If she is not pleased, what is the use of my staying?

Mother is not displeased with your work or with you — there was no such thing in her mind. But the progress of no one here is complete — there is, as you know yourself, still much to change

and from time to time the Mother puts a pressure that it may be done. You must not take that pressure for displeasure. As for going away, you must yourself realise that the suggestion can only come from a hostile source and you should not allow it to dwell in you for a moment. Mother is quite ready to tell you in what points more progress is necessary, though I think you must for the most part know it yourself. Especially she wants you to be more guarded in your speech. You are in a special position and one of great trust and whatever you say is taken up and commented on, so you must be careful that nothing should go out from you which ought not to be said or known. To talk less and not be too unguarded in your speech should be part of your discipline of sadhana.

Keep yourself open to the Mother and in perfect union with her. Make yourself entirely plastic to her touch and let her mould you swiftly towards perfection.

9 March 1934

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It is certainly true that the Divine has no preferences or dislikes and is equal to all but that does not prevent there being a special relationship with each. This relation however does not depend on the more or less identification or union. The purer soul has an easier access to the Divine. The more developed nature has more lines on which to meet Him. The identification creates a spiritual oneness. But there are other personal relations which are created by other causes. It is too complex for all relations to be determined by one cause.

Yes, Yogis whose progress does not depend on the personal intervention of the Mother, need have no personal relation with her—only the spiritual contact in distance. Some may have a special relation, but that is due to special aspects of their sadhana. On the other hand one may have a personal relation with the Mother even though no progress has been made in the sadhana. There are all kinds of possibilities in this matter.

There is such a relation with all of those who have come here with a psychic sufficiently developed to admit of the relation. In other cases it is more a possibility than a thing realised.

There are roughly speaking three parts of the being in manifestation which come into play here — 1. the psychic being in evolution which brings with it its past experience of past lives and something of the old personalities, so much as it can make helpful for the present life; 2. the present formation due to this birth and made up of many complex factors; 3. the future being, which in our case means the great lines of higher consciousness above the present manifestation by joining which the transformation becomes more possible and the work attempted can be done.

It is the psychic being which brings in the contact through past lives or personalities, i.e. through something essential and still operative in them which it has kept.

But, in addition, some psychic beings have come here who are ready to join with great lines of consciousness above, represented often by beings of the higher planes, and are therefore specially fitted to join with the Mother intimately in the great work that has to be done. These have all a special relation with the Mother which adds to the past one.

As for the present formation, it may obviously have elements which, not being joined or met with the Mother, may feel themselves strange to her. It is such an element which many feel standing in the way; but it is an exterior formation and does not belong to the past or to the future evolution, at any rate in its present figure. It must either disappear or change.

10 June 1935

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Yesterday we discussed the Divine Love in relation to the sadhaks. My points were these:

1. It is said that the psychic being of each sadhak has a special relation to the Divine; this must mean that the psychic gets from the Divine the response that is proper to it. But does it mean that one sadhak gets more love and another sadhak gets less?

2. If the Divine loves one person more and another person less, this implies partiality on the Divine's part — but the Divine cannot be partial.

3. People say that the Mother loves those who are physically near her more than those who are not. I think this judgment is apt to be wrong.

I hope you will correct me where I am wrong in my understanding.

To launch into too many mental subtleties in this connection is not very helpful; for it is a subject which is beyond mental analysis and the constructions of the mind about it are apt to be either very partially true or else erroneous.

There is a universal Divine Love which is equal for all. There is also a psychic connection which is individual; it is the same essentially for all, but it admits of a special relation with each which is not the same for all but different in each case. This special relation stands apart in each case and has its own nature, it is, as is said, *sui generis*, of its own kind and cannot be compared, balanced or measured with other relations, for each of these again is *sui generis*. The question of less or more is therefore perfectly irrelevant here.

It is quite wrong to say that the Mother loves most those who are nearest to her in the physical. I have often said this but people do not wish to believe it, because they imagine that the Mother is a slave of the vital feelings like ordinary people and governed by vital likes and dislikes. "Those she likes she keeps near her, those she likes less she keeps less near, those she dislikes or does not care for she keeps at a distance", that is their childish reasoning. Many of those who feel the Mother's presence and love always with them hardly see her except once in six months or once in a year — apart from the Pranam and meditation. On the other hand one near her physically or seeing her often may not feel such a thing at all; he may complain of the absence of the Mother's help and love altogether or as compared to what she gives to others. If the childishly simple rule of three given above were true, such contrasts would not be possible.

Whether one feels the Mother's love or not depends on whether one is open to it or not, it does not depend on physical nearness. Openness means the removal of all that makes one

unconscious of the inner relation — nothing can make one more unconscious than the idea that it must be measured only by some outward manifestation instead of being felt within the being; it makes one blind or insensitive to the outward manifestations that are there. Whether one is physically far or near makes no difference; one can feel it, being physically far or seeing her little; one can fail to feel it when it is there, even if one is physically near or often in her physical presence.

11 June 1935

*

Sadhaks whom the Mother has accepted have some personal physical relation with her. I want to know if there is any personal relation with me.

There is a personal relation with most, but what is a personal physical relation?

Suppose a child wants to remain faithful to the Mother and tries to remain faithful, but he sees he is not getting any response. Is it not an illusion for him to try to remain faithful when the Mother never shows him her sweet side? Finally the sadhak will become unfaithful.

If the sadhak becomes unfaithful to the Mother, it means he did not want the sadhana or the Mother, but the satisfaction of his desires and his ego. That is not Yoga.

There are so many ways the Mother expresses herself physically to some, but it is to some only. Some she never gets tired of meeting for hours; with others she finishes in a few minutes. For example, she has spent a lot of time with X.

The Mother meets nobody for "hours" — if anybody stayed for hours she would get very tired.

Mother did not meet X more than others because she loved him more than others, but because she was trying to get something done through him for the work which, if done, would have been a great victory for all. But precisely because he took it in the wrong way, grasping at it as a "personal physical" relation

and satisfaction of his egoistic desire, he failed and had to go away.

25 June 1935

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You wrote once: "Those are the Mother's children and closest to her who are open to her, close to her in their inner being, one with her will—not those who come bodily nearest to her."² I do not deny the truth of this. But why then has the Mother taken a body and why are we in Pondicherry? One can have an inner relation anywhere; there is no need of coming here.

Mother has taken the body because a work of a physical nature (i.e. including a change in the physical world) had to be done. She has not come to establish a "physical relation" with people. Some have come with her to share in the work, others she has called, others have come seeking for the light. With each she has a personal relation or the possibility of a personal relation; but each is of its own kind and none can say that she must do equally the same thing with each person. No one can claim as a right that she must be physically near to him because she is physically near to others. Some have a close personal relation with her, yet she sees little of them—some have a less close personal relation, yet for one reason or another may see her much oftener or longer. To apply the silly mathematical rules of the physical mind here is absurd—your physical mind cannot understand what the Mother does; its values and standards and ideas are not hers. It is still worse to make your personal vital demand or desire the measure of what she ought to do. That way spiritual ruin lies. She acts in each case for different reasons suitable to that case.

² See letter of 25 December 1934 on page 496.—Ed.

Meeting the Mother

Right Attitude during Interviews with the Mother

The right attitude in approaching the Mother when she sees one, is to keep the being perfectly quiet and open to receive, without any activity of the mind or desire in the vital, with only the surrender and the psychic readiness to accept whatever is given.

Tomorrow, 24th, the Mother sees you — for meditation, so that she may see and do whatever is needed. 23 February 1932

*

It is a strange thing, but it seems to be absolutely clear that the Mother wants me to go to her. Everything in me says, "Yes, yes, it is true — there is no doubt about it." And I would surely go to her in spite of this fear that holds me so tight, if only I knew how and where to meet her.

This fear is an absurd and irrational feeling in the subconscious physical — there is no reason for its existence — unless it is the fear of the egoistic physical clinging to its own individuality and unwilling to be "swallowed up" in the Mother. Otherwise it can only be a sort of tamasic counterpart to the rajasic revolt and pride — for these two things often go together or alternate. Mother was and is quite ready to see you. But you must get rid of the fear, distrust and unwillingness, for there should be a trust and openness in you, when you come. If you wish she can fix a time — next Thursday at 9.30. In the meantime we can try to get this obstacle out of you. 21 April 1933

*

Is it true that having seen Mother, there may be a struggle for a few days? Should I be on guard against attack?

It is better to be on guard for the struggle is possible, though not inevitable. Something is put in you to develop — usually the

hostile forces try to interfere to prevent the inner evolution. A little more vigilance is therefore advisable. 9 May 1933

*

Four months ago I begged the Mother for an interview, but up to this time she has not accepted my prayer. I have decided to cut off all my vital connections with Bengal, but if two of my friends there meet with spiritual death, I will never recover. At this critical juncture of my life, will Mother give me an interview?

When one comes to the Mother, one must not come with these things in the mind—but in quietude and light solely to receive from her what one can assimilate. 10 April 1934

*

Mother, give me an immutable and constant peace.

The Mother is always ready to give you peace. It was for that Mother called you last time, but you were very restless. Sometimes you can receive very well. Try to be like that always,—always with the door of your being open to receive the Mother in you and her peace but shut against any other influence or pressure. Then you will have the immutable peace and feel the Mother always in you and yourself in her. 21 July 1934

*

I feel very dissatisfied with myself. I wish to see the Mother and arrive at something real.

You would arrive at nothing real by seeing the Mother when she herself does not think it the right thing. It is not by seeing the Mother that one gets realisation but by doing her will and allowing her true inner working within you.

Though I do not want the Mother to act under compulsion, I feel sure that if I give an ultimatum that I am going away, she will do all I ask.

You are mistaken. Mother will do what she considers to be the right thing for each. If it is right for you to go away or for anyone to go away she would not ask to stay. She does not think it right for you to go — so she would say No. But on the same ground she would say No to your vital desire. 28 September 1935

*

The Mother does not usually speak with those who come for an interview before starting. If she had to speak, she would not give an interview at all to most, for she would have no time. Moreover it is not by speech or instruction or answering questions that Mother works on the consciousness of the sadhaks, it is by a silent influence to which they have to learn to open themselves. As for his readiness for the Asram life, it should be evident to himself from his reactions, especially about his family, that he is not ready — he would have been pulled away by these feelings and it would have been a serious fall for him. To be told the truth about themselves and get the guidance unasked — that is a grace which sadhaks should accept with gladness — to weep and feel hurt is a reaction of the vital which he must get over. Psychic weeping, a weeping from the soul deep within, tears of the soul's yearning, of sorrow for the resistance of Nature, of joy or love or bhakti does not cause a fall, it can help and open up the inner soul from its veils; but this weeping has no strain or suffering in it, it is something very deep and quiet and brings a sense of purification and release. That is not so with the weeping which comes from the vital and is born of hurt or abhiman or disappointment or shakes or disturbs the nature.

16 March 1937

*

What attitude should I take during my meditation with the Mother? Last time I could not properly receive the Mother's Force or become conscious of her working.

To be conscious of the Force or working in a meditation with the Mother, the consciousness must be still and passive to her. If one is accustomed to be active and make one's own formations,

that stands in the way and must be suspended during the meditation.

I could not quite follow what the Mother said [*in the last interview*] about things in the exterior consciousness coming in disguise.

Mother only remembers to have said that there were many things in the exterior consciousness that obscured and veiled the inner being — this was in connection with what you said about the heart not opening. Perhaps she may have said that these things do not always show themselves in their own forms, so that one is not conscious of the obstacle.

17 July 1937

*

I intend to sweep out the lower forces before meeting the Mother tomorrow. Failing that, I do not wish to show my face to her.

That is the suggestion of the lower forces. They want to create an excuse for your remaining aloof like that.

*

The whole being feels a disturbance, a disgust, as if the sleeping lower nature has been woken up. My mind is full of bad thoughts and I feel burdened. I have become like a thing on the waves.

But why does this always happen after the Mother calls you? You must get rid of this reaction, otherwise the Mother will not feel free to call you. You must learn to use your will and not be passive to these reactions.

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If Mother's seeing you for a minute cured your vital, she would see you, but will it? does it really help you? Generally such desires in the vital are not stopped by satisfying them. All the same at the end of the morning when the others have gone, if you are there, Mother will see you for a minute.

Impossibility of Giving Interviews to Everyone

It is not possible for the Mother to give you the five minutes a day you ask for; her time is already too much taken. There are many others who have asked the same thing; the Mother has had to refuse them all. You are mistaken if you think that any such arrangement is necessary for your sadhana. A daily meditation of the kind would help you perhaps if you kept always the right attitude; but if you keep the right attitude, you will not need any such routine of outward means, the help the Mother is always giving you would be more than sufficient.

I think it needful at this stage of your sadhana to repeat my previous warning about not allowing any vital mixture. It is the crudity of the unregenerated vital that prevents the psychic from remaining always at the front. You have now seen clearly the two different consciousnesses,—according to what you have written in one of your letters,—the psychic and the vital. To get rid of the old vital nature is now one of the most pressing needs of your sadhana. You are trying to get rid of the vital attachments and to turn entirely to the Mother. At this juncture you must be careful not to allow the movements of the old vital nature to enter into your relations with the Mother. Take this matter of your wish for more physical nearness to her or contact with her. Take care not to allow this to gain on you or become a desire; for if you do, the vital will begin to play, to create demands and desires, to awake in you jealousy and envy of others and other undesirable movements, and that would push your psychic being into the background and spoil the whole truth of your sadhana. There are some who have suffered much trouble and difficulty in their Yoga by making this mistake, and I think it therefore better to put you on your guard.

13 July 1931

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I am so miserable and can't find my way, and what is most discouraging is that I see others receiving so much help from the Mother and being cared for by her, while I am left to myself with my wretched life to pull on somehow. For me the Mother's doors are closed. For others the freedom, enjoyment,

pleasure of her company, her constant love and help.

If you cherish this attitude and these feelings, how can you progress? they are the very opposite of the needed faith and surrender.

Who are these who have constant outward help from the Mother — you speak as if all but you had it? The Mother sees a small number of people every day because they come here for work in the rooms (X, Y, Z) or to report work to her (A, B, C, D, E). The Mother does not talk with these about Yoga, nor do they have meditations with her; they come for their work, speak about it and some general matters and go. There are some like F and G who get a meditation perhaps once a week, others come for a few minutes perhaps once a fortnight — there is no fixed period for any — or at long intervals, some see the Mother (apart from Pranam) once a year. For the constant outward help, the only way all these get it is by writing to the Mother or myself, just as you do.

If the Mother is not calling you, she has told you why; it is because each time you get upset; why should she call you only for you to be upset? She called you at your request a few days ago and now you are in this condition — worse than you have been for a long time — it has simply revived the old desire, repining, revolt. How is it that this happens if there is not desire, demand, wrong feeling mixed up with your physical approach to the Mother? or why else should there be this feeling about others?

I have been trying to make you develop the psychic attitude, bring out the psychic being, look towards the Mother not with the old vital demand, but with the soul's need, the psychic openness, confidence, so that when you approach her physically it may be with the true openness that receives the light, the strength, the joy she tries to give to everybody. That is what is demanded now of those who approach her; the old vital way is now discouraged not only for you, but for all. Develop the psychic attitude and there will be no difficulty for your approaching her or for her calling you when it is needful. You were beginning

to develop a capacity for feeling the influence. Instead of falling back to the old mood and the old way, continue to develop that. It is the only way and there is no other.

P. S. Do not allow any influences from people you mix with to upset you — I am speaking of any recent influence — e.g. from people who are dissatisfied and complaining that the Mother does not help them. It may be something of this kind has upset you without your noticing it.

31 August 1932

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May I come to see the Mother on days when there is no pranam? I feel such peace when I pray at her feet and I long to see her on non-pranam days.

Do you think the other 120 people here have not the same wish — and what is the use of a non-pranam day if Mother has to see everyone who would like to come to her that day?

30 May 1933

*

Mother has a very limited time for seeing people — she has so much to do. So it is only when there is a strong necessity that she sees except for those who have work to do with her. 1933

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What you propose about seeing the Mother at will is not physically practicable and wherever in a few cases it has been allowed in the past, the results have not been helpful. What you should do is to write every two days or so a few lines until the difficulty is over. You must especially let me know about the sleep and the nervous condition. In fact you ought to have let me know at once. Although correspondence was stopped and still is till farther notice, I had said that important or necessary communications could be sent.

3 March 1935

*

I feel a constant longing to ask the Mother to grant an interview to me. At times I feel utterly dissatisfied and uncertain of

what I am doing and a little meeting with Mother could put right the whole thing.

It is not because Mother does not care for you that she is not calling you — when she is sure that things are ready she will do it. But it is not possible immediately or soon. First, she does not want to bring up old difficulties — secondly, nowadays there are many difficulties and she is tired and does not feel like talking with people. You must wait till things are clear on all sides — they are not now.

20 March 1935

*

X gets 144 interviews with the Mother a year, Y and Co. get 48 or more, Z gets about 24, A and others get 365 or more! Most of the rest get 1 or 2 a year. Why not add one more interview for them? At present the Mother gives about 1200 interviews a year. If she gave 3 to each sadhak in a year, it would mean 450 a year, still leaving a grand surplus for the Xs, Ys and Zs. One more interview would keep the sadhaks in good spirits and they would feel happy for months. Now it is like the high pay of the higher officials in India. The Viceroy gets a huge amount, the clerks get hardly anything. How long will these inequalities in government remain?

It is not a government and an interview is not pay. If it comes to a question of demand and supply or of interviews as a right and privilege, no sadhak would be satisfied with 3 or with 300. There would be complaints, laments and revolts just as there are now. People would soon find some other ground for accusing the Mother of partiality and injustice (the people who get the most interviews are generally those who revolt the most, though there are exceptions). It is precisely this treating of the spiritual life as if it were a "government" or a court or a school (with places and marks and rewards and punishments) or a hostel or a mixture of all these and some other human institutions that has been the bane of this Asram. If it is to be a Government with Mother as President dealing out privileges, handshakes, pay, and what not on a principle of democratic equality or any other principle, then her only course would be to abdicate.

The number of interviews has nothing to do, by the way, with smallness or bigness of people, however the size may be reckoned. There are spiritually big people who get no interviews and spiritually small ones who get them. The same would turn out to be the fact on any principle of smallness or bigness.

The only place where a satisfactory equality of treatment is possible — satisfactory to the human mind and vital — would be I think Nirvana or the Nihil of Sunyavadins. 10 April 1935

*

I feel a vacancy in my life. If the Mother starts seeing me again for a short time, I will try to carry out some big scheme for her, such as calling a lot of people and doing something with them.

All that is quite premature. Big scale work can come only when there has been a great inner change in people and things also change.

Or if these big things are for the future, I can do some sadhana, and if the Mother begins seeing me, I can do it more consciously.

The sadhana must not depend on physically seeing the Mother. It is bound to go wrong if there is any such dependence. It is not without a reason that Mother has drawn back from seeing people. 14 June 1935

*

Yesterday I got into a condition of excitement and again I wished to ask the Mother to begin seeing me. There is a separation which makes me feel a sort of humiliation and a disappointment. It is not worth continuing this sort of life. Perhaps I should go away from here if it is not possible to see the Mother.

It is obviously a wrong movement. When you get excited like that and under the sway of a persistent desire, it is already

evident that it is a wrong movement—when it leads to a suggestion to go away if the desire is not conceded, then there can be no further doubt about it.

You ought to realise that the Mother knows better than you what is best for you and your sadhana. You must leave it to her to call you or not to call you. To let a desire like this seize you and insist on its satisfaction is not at all a right attitude. Especially this strong insistence of a desire to insist on the Mother physically seeing them is a dangerous thing for any sadhak and has done harm to many. It means that some vital demand has got hold of them which wants to satisfy itself and, if indulged, would remain dissatisfied and ask for more and more and revolt and make things impossible. The very fact that you talk of going home if Mother does not yield to your demand shows that it is such a demand that has awoken in you and is returning again and again—it is not a psychic aspiration, for the psychic aspiration always respects the judgment and will of the Mother. It is after long years of experience of the disastrous result of yielding to these vital demands that Mother has drawn back from them and now no longer sees many people whom she saw before. You must not expect her to go back upon her resolution so long as the vital of the sadhaks is not changed and clear of these demands and insistences. You should throw this demand away and go on quietly with your sadhana.

The first thing a Yogi should have is a constant inner peace and quiet and no excitement, no clamour of desires which he cannot control. You must arrive at that first. Moreover as I have told you, it is the inner reality of the Mother's presence and not only of her presence but of her control that must be now the aim of the sadhana. Any insistence on the outer thing is a departure from the true line and can only lead astray. In all these matters it is the Divine Will that must rule and the will of the Guru.

Respect always the will and decision of the Mother.

16 June 1935

*

If there is a possibility of the Mother calling me "when the time comes", my going away would be wrong and I can wait and see.

What I said was that you should leave it entirely to the Mother to call you or not to call you.

The Mother's will and decision I have always respected, but I saw no reasoning in the things concerning me.

I simply meant that her decision should be accepted whatever it is. Since it is her decision not to have a private interview, that will should be accepted and you should not go on insisting on her calling you.

17 June 1935

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But why does the Mother not see me? Do I lack the effort and persistence necessary? Am I not sufficiently sincere and constant? I will be glad if Sri Aurobindo answers me.

I have already answered often enough that you must not persist in these ideas — you must leave everything to the Mother.

These days I have an aspiration to be on the right path and do what is right and advance.

The right path is the path on which the Mother's will wants you to go, no other.

9 July 1935

*

Today too I am feeling that life is not worth living if the Mother will not see me. I used to be able to go to the rooms upstairs whenever I liked. Now I think that going away is the only thing to do.

No one is allowed freely inside the upstairs rooms except the few who work there; they can naturally come in within their working hours; but they do not take Mother's time — they do their work and go away. No one else can enter the upstairs rooms except the meditation room and the small one where she receives

people. There too those only can come who are called there and only for the time assigned to them, nor can they go about freely upstairs or do what they like. Everything is according to a strict obedience and discipline.

Mother did not stop seeing you merely because she had no time — though it is true that she has no time and is outworn and overstrained by excessive work, no rest and the sadhaks' undue pressure and claims upon her. She stopped seeing you because your vital became entirely uncontrolled. She saw besides that the push to see her was associated with vital desires, impulses, suggestions, confusions and wrong movements and she decided that so long as it was so, so long as you had not freedom and complete control over your vital she could not call you. Not only with you but with others she saw that her freedom in giving interviews was having disastrous effects — for they were feeding their wrong vital movements on it and throwing these occultly upon her in such a way as to give themselves and her infinite trouble and wear her out altogether. So she had to retire more and more and limit the interviews to a minimum, ceasing to see those who had this result from the interviews and admitting only those whom she could not stop altogether, but even they were reduced to a much smaller number of visits. This is the present state of things and it will continue till there is a true freedom and vital calm and purity in the Asram atmosphere.

You must be aware yourself that the vital confusions and disturbances continue in you though in a reduced form and that you have not yet freedom and a settled control over your vital. I had hoped that you would go on increasing the inner contact until you could get the constant inner nearness or presence, for when one has that then the vital becomes quiet and there is no longer the vital pressure and clamour for seeing the Mother; the psychic being rules and is content to leave all to the Mother, claiming nothing but what she permits, asking nothing that is not freely given by her will. Unfortunately the vital claim has risen again in you and this insistent demand. That it is wrong is shown by the very fact that you put before her this alternative, either that she shall see you or you will not stay here any longer.

There are others who have said that and Mother has always refused them. For she knows by experience that to yield to their demand solves nothing,—for their demands increase and grow more exacting and vehement, as it did with X, until finally they lose their balance and the end is the same,—departure.

If you did not yield to these vital suggestions and if you were content with increasing the inner contact and increasing self-control and peace, then in time you would have the fullness of the sadhana and would find life here well worth living. The push to go comes from an adverse Force that is trying to make people depart from the Asram — but none who have gone as yet have found peace or satisfaction outside.

24 July 1935

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X gets to talk with the Mother for two hours a day — more time than we get in months! Yet when I ask for an interview with her for a few minutes, you write that Mother has taken down my name. And now she seems to have forgotten about it.

As usual when this Force seizes you, your statements against the Mother are unfounded. As regards your interview it was understood that you wanted to see her once before the 15th. Mother had fixed one day, but as you had a cold I suggested to her that you would not enjoy very much coming under such circumstances. After that her days were full, but she had not forgotten, for your name is there in her book put down for the 6th August. As regards X — X like Y is called by the Mother alone and for sadhana only once a year for a short time. They both come daily to her, not for sadhana, not for personal talk, but for work (sometimes also the explanation of a French sentence) and along with two or three others — not for 2 hours, but for one at the maximum, and that hour, even when it is an hour, is not taken up by him alone but by all those present in turn, each in turn giving his report and receiving his instructions. X might much more justly complain that he gets a word or a letter for his sadhana hardly once a year and a single word or a letter would be of much more value to him than a hundred talks about business — and that we were giving one thousand times

more help to Z [*the correspondent*] and others than is given to him. Luckily for us he does not complain nor the others either. But each is inclined to despise what he gets and demand what he thinks is denied to him and given to another. 2 August 1935

*

I wish at times to ask the Mother for some instructions for my sadhana.

Mental instructions are not of much use. The condition has to grow in peace and light and clarity till the higher consciousness can act continuously and perfectly. 12 September 1935

*

Could I have an interview with the Mother? Two or three difficulties have been troubling me since the beginning of my sadhana. I want to get a solution from the Mother's lips.

This method of asking questions and getting solutions in an interview is one of which the Mother does not approve. She finds it useless and it forces her to come down to meet a superficial mental consciousness which she has long left. 2 October 1935

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The Mother did not say Yes [*to giving a personal interview*]. Nothing could be worse for you than your making your condition depend on your physically seeing the Mother whenever you wanted it. It would create altogether a wrong relation. It must depend on an inner nearness to the Mother, on your always being able to receive her force so as to throw away both desire and illness. That is the true basis of the union with the Mother. Otherwise, all the help you can receive you get at Pranam and the evening meditation. For the rest, for the Mother calling you for a personal interview, you must leave that to her. Her time is already filled up and she is overburdened with work day and night,—if she has to make farther time for everybody who wants to see her whenever they want it, things would become quite impossible.

Interviews with Outsiders

The Mother cannot see him; she is not seeing anyone from outside now. He can be told that he must first try to know something about Yoga before anything can be given him; he must know and be in a position to decide with knowledge whether Yoga is really the thing he wants. He can read the books and come back for darshan in February.

13 December 1931

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About these people outside, you must make it a rule not to give them hopes of Yoga or seeing the Mother—it will only raise expectations that have to be disappointed. Even if the Mother were seeing people from outside, what would be the earthly use of her seeing these old ladies on the way to heaven or these young girls on the way to marriage? All that is not serious. But even apart from that, Mother does not see people and she has no intention of changing her rule. So you must never say anything without previously asking—and in most cases it is useless even to ask. As for Pranam, Mother has stopped giving permissions—there are too many people already. As owing to these cases you will be meeting many people, you must resist all temptation and remain deaf to requests for interviews, Pranam or Yoga.

2 January 1936

Significance of Birthday Interviews

What is the meaning of the Mother seeing us on our birthdays?

About the birthdays. There is a rhythm (one among many) in the play of the world-forces which is connected with the sun and planets. That makes the birthday a day of possible renewal when the physical being is likely more plastic. It is for this reason that Mother sees people on their birthdays.

18 May 1934

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I don't see why people in general exalt their birthdays. Of

course, you wrote once that on birthdays the physical is more open and receptive to the Mother than on other days.

It is not a question of a physical birthday or of the body—it is taken as an occasion for opening a new year of life with a growing new birth within. That is the meaning in which the Mother takes the birthday.

7 October 1936

Right Use of Birthday Interviews

Why should you decide beforehand that your birthday is spoiled? You have only to throw off all these undesirable ideas and feelings which proceed from a still imperfectly purified part of the external being and take the right attitude which you should always have when you come to the Mother. There should be no idea of what others have or have not—your relation is between the Mother and yourself and has nothing to do with others. Nothing should exist for you but yourself and the Divine—yourself receiving, her forces flowing into you.

To secure that better, do not spend the time at your disposal in speech—especially if anything of the depression remains with you, it will waste the time in discussing things which cannot help the true consciousness to predominate. Concentrate, open yourself and let the Mother bring you back to the psychic condition by what she will pour into you in meditation and silence.

16 May 1933

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Mother, you asked me to write what I would like to ask for my birthday. Really I do not know. You know best. I would only pray that I may become utterly devoted to you and Sri Aurobindo in every part of my being, completely open to you, and that my faith may become perfect.

That is all right then. Mother will give what you want.

22 January 1934

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Since I saw Mother on my birthday I feel I am living a new

life in which there is a new intimacy with her. Is it true?

If you feel so — but it can be no more than the seed of a new birth, for it has to be realised by a greater inner opening.

10 February 1934

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It seems I have learnt a lot about myself yesterday, my birthday, when Mother gave me an interview. It was not a theoretical knowledge, but a kind of realisation or experienced knowledge and maybe a Force that she gave. I no more feel so weak or helpless or a slave to my defects and imperfections. Rather there is a growing surety that I shall be able to get rid of my whole lower nature.

It is what we call growing conscious — a perception of which the base is the psychic though it may take place in the mind or vital or physical. No doubt the Force that woke it up came from the Mother.

9 September 1937

Group Meditation with the Mother

May I ask the significance of what I very often feel in my meditation with the Mother in the morning? So long as Mother is meditating I have quite a good meditation, but as soon as Mother comes out of her meditation my own meditation becomes lighter and I can feel that she is no longer in meditation. I would like to know if it is a good sign for sadhana.

It shows at least that your contact with the Mother's consciousness is perfectly spontaneous and genuine. The Mother puts out her Force on all in the meditation and the intensity of your meditation shows that you receive it — as soon as she ceases, the dynamic pressure lightens and your meditation lightens with it. It is certainly a good sign, a good seed of the responsiveness that is necessary.

18 April 1933

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When useless thoughts interfere with my concentration, how am I to remember the Mother and lay them before her?

Aspire at the time—they will of themselves be open to the Mother.

26 June 1933

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When I become late to see the Mother in the evening, how am I to receive her Light which I would have received in her presence?

You can receive the Light at all times—even if less concretely than in the physical presence.

5 November 1933

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Since the evening the working of the Force has begun. Seeing the Mother in the evening, my consciousness opened itself before her more widely than ever.

Very good. The Force usually works in that way with interruptions and returns growing each time stronger and fuller.

4 August 1934

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During the twilight meditation with the Mother, my consciousness rose upwards in an utter passivity. From the neck upwards, the head was not in a normal state. What was this?

It means the whole mind was liberated for a while from imprisonment in the body sense and became free in the passivity of the wider Self.

16 August 1934

*

When I spoke of the inner mind of the Asram, I was only using a succinct expression for the “minds of the members of the Asram” and I was not thinking of the collective mind of the group. But the action of the Mother in the meditation is at once collective and individual. She is trying to bring down the right consciousness in the atmosphere of the Asram—for the action of the minds and vital of the sadhaks does create a general atmosphere. She has taken this meditation in the evening as a brief period in which all is concentrated in the sole force of the

descending Power. The sadhaks must feel that they are there only to concentrate, only to receive, only to be open to the Mother and nothing else matters.

November 1934

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About the meditation and the seat, the Mother gives this meditation *only* for bringing down the true light and consciousness into the sadhaks. She does not want it to be turned into a formality and she does not want any personal questions to arise there. It should be solely a meditation and concentration without personal or other desires or claims or ideas rising there and interfering with her object. That is why there can be no fixing of seats or other considerations having nothing to do with the sadhana.

2 November 1934

*

I did not come to the Meditation Hall for the evening meditation, but remained near X's room. At meditation time I fell into the same inwardness or sleepiness as in the Hall. Is it not possible to do so usually?

It is the pressure of the Force on the physical consciousness which produces that result of inwardness, though the translation of it into sleepiness can only be a transitory failing of the physical consciousness which is accustomed to associate inward-going with sleep. There is no reason why you should not do it usually if you find that suitable.

It seems as if at the time of meditation, the atmosphere of the Meditation Hall extends to all the Asram houses.

It is natural that it should be so as the Mother when she concentrates on the inner work is accustomed spontaneously to spread her consciousness over the whole Asram. So to anyone who is sensitive, it must be felt anywhere in the Asram, though perhaps more strongly in the nearer houses on an occasion like the evening meditation.

7 November 1934

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When I try to meditate in the Mother's presence, my concentration breaks. There is a rush of thoughts, such as "what is the Mother bringing down?" and "what is the Mother's will?" Why does this happen?

It is simply a bad habit of the mind, a wrong activity. It is not in the least useful for the mind to ask or try to determine what the Mother wills or is bringing — that only interferes. It has simply to remain quiet and concentrated and leave the Power to act.

11 November 1934

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What Mother would like you to do is to come to the Meditation and Pranam putting aside all feelings of ego, anger, quarrel with others, demand for this or that, thinking only of your sadhana and making yourself quiet to receive from her the only things that are really precious and needful. 22 September 1936

*

Today during the meditation with the Mother, I felt that I could receive her help easily and naturally, without the least effort or strain. Does this mean that something in the being naturally becomes quiet by her physical presence?

It is not by the physical presence but by the Mother's concentration at the time of Meditation which brings the quiet to those who can receive it. 6 March 1937

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It is now clear that all along during meditation and pranam I have approached the Mother with a wrong consciousness. My approach was not passive, but always fully active — I pulled from above and below as intensely as I could. The result was that the centres were active, especially the eye-brow centre and the muladhara.

All that is in place in ordinary meditation, so long as there is not the complete silence of the mind and the automatic action in the silence. But the quiet mind is entirely necessary if you meditate with the Mother. Otherwise the mind goes on with its activities

on its own lines and cannot be conscious of or receptive to the Mother's movement.

18 July 1937

The Morning Pranam

No one should look upon the Pranam either as a formal routine or an obligatory ceremony or think himself under any compulsion to come there. The object of the Pranam is not that sadhaks should offer a formal or ritual daily homage to the Mother, but that the sadhaks may receive along with the Mother's blessings whatever spiritual help or influence they are in a condition to receive or assimilate. It is important to maintain a quiet and collected atmosphere for that purpose.

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The Mother wants you to say to X that if he feels any reluctance or any other contrary feeling in making Pranam, he must remember that there is no *obligation* to come — for him or anyone else. He must feel himself perfectly free not to come, if he does not want.

27 November 1931

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The Mother gives in both ways. Through the eyes it is to the psychic, through the hand to the material.

29 September 1932

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This morning I was late for Pranam. On my way there, I met X, who told me, "Why hurry? One can have pranam everywhere." I said, "Yes, but Mother is there." He said, "Mother is everywhere." I could not answer him, but what I feel is that there is a special Power in the hall where Mother is. When I am conscious, I feel something special and different near Mother. Also by her blessing I often feel an action of Power working on my head. So I don't think there is no difference if Mother is there or not.

You are quite right in that. Otherwise the Mother would not be here in a body.

X has a developed and advanced soul and he knows things which are impossible for me to understand. I often think I have no soul, or perhaps I have a soul but it is quite immature.

You have a soul and a beautiful one. Only it was covered up and not looking out through the instruments — now it is coming to the surface and all that will change. 18 September 1933

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Does the Mother work from the overmind at the Pranam?

Not from the ordinary overmind, but from the Power above it. Naturally the overmind has to be used as a channel.

22 November 1933

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Shall we ever be able to understand the Mother's working at the Pranam? We feel only that something has been received. We do not know what she gave or how we received it or what is the inner meaning of her putting her hand on our head. We are not conscious of what she is giving us while gazing into our eyes. Are these mysteries to remain uninterpreted forever?

You have to develop the inner intuitive response first — i.e. to think and perceive less with the mind and more with the inner consciousness. Most people do everything with the mind and how can the mind know? The mind depends on the senses for its knowledge. 10 July 1936

Experiences during Pranam

Today I was meditating in the Pranam Hall. As soon as the Mother took her seat, I saw in vision a range of mountains from which white light was coming out. What is the meaning? From what plane does it come?

Mental. The mountain is the symbol of the ascent from the lower to the higher. The white light is the Mother's light, the light of

the Divine Consciousness descending from the heights.

7 August 1933

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Today, looking at the Mother at the Pranam, there was a good receptivity. She stood before me a while longer than usual, and I experienced her working. The whole of my head was filled with nothing but her light. Is this true? Did she really do that?

She does so every time, only today you not only received but were consciously receptive.

8 May 1934

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After today's Pranam I experienced an unimaginable depth in the heart and a great fire bursting out of it.

That is of course the psychic depth and the psychic fire.

5 May 1936

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Today when I was making pranam, I felt that this body must be crushed to pieces and laid at the Mother's feet. I also felt an emotion in my heart. What is the meaning of this emotion?

It was some feeling of aspiration in the vital. But the form is exaggerated. The body has not to be crushed to pieces but purified and made into a body in which the Divine can dwell.

Right Way to Make Pranam

If you wept this time and not on the other occasions, it was because you were more open — more ready for the psychic being to rise to the surface. The Mother has noticed in this respect a great progress in you and what you felt today was the sign of this opening.

1933

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Whatever connection I have with the Mother lasts only half a minute during the Pranam; whatever I have to give or take

happens during that time. The whole day's sadhana depends upon those thirty seconds.

Quite a wrong idea. The Mother's contact is there all the day and the night also. If one keeps the right contact with her inwardly all day, the Pranam will bear its right fruit, for you will be in the right condition to receive. To make the whole day depend upon the Pranam, the whole inner attitude depend on the most outer aspect of the outer contact is to turn the whole thing topsy-turvy. It is the fundamental mistake made by the physical mind and vital which is the cause of the whole trouble. 16 March 1935

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My psychic knows that whatever our condition — full of inertia, attacks and difficulties — all must disappear when one gets the Mother's touch at Pranam. Why then do so many say that they return from Pranam in the same bad state in which they came?

Naturally, when there is not the opening they will feel nothing, for the consciousness will not respond — the Force then works behind the veil to prepare things, but gives no immediate visible result. 6 April 1935

*

The Mother deals with each one in a different way, according to their need and their nature, not according to any fixed mental rule. It would be absurd for her to do the same thing with everybody as if all were machines which had to be touched and handled in the same way. It does not at all mean that she has more affection for one than for another or those she touches in a particular way are better sadhaks or less so. The sadhaks think in that way because they are full of ignorance and ego. Instead of thinking whether the Mother favours one more or the other less, comparing and watching what she does, they ought to be concerned at Pranam with only their own spiritual reception of her influence. Pranam is for that and not for these other things which have nothing to do with sadhana.

Jealousy and envy are things common to human nature, but

these are the very things that a sadhak ought to throw out of himself. Otherwise why is he a sadhak at all? He is supposed to be here for seeking the Divine—but in the seeking for the Divine, jealousy, envy, anger, etc. have no place. They are movements of the ego and can only create obstacles to the union with the Divine.

It is much better to remember that one is seeking for the Divine and make that the whole governing idea and aim of the life. It is that which pleases the Mother more than anything else; these jealousies and envies and competitions for her favour can only displease and distress her.

31 October 1935

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The reason of the difference in approaching the Mother is that formerly you came to her with your external being, external mind and vital and in your vital there were things it did not want the Mother to see or change or else it felt uncomfortable under the pressure of the Mother's force at pranam, because that was a pressure on it to change. But now you are approaching the Mother with your soul and that brings with it the true feeling and true relation it has always had with the Mother. Besides, your mind and vital—even the outer mind and vital—are now open and willing and glad to share in the true psychic feeling and relation.

The heaviness in the head due to the pressure is pleasant and not harmful because it is due to the higher force pressing down and bringing into the head something of the substance of the higher consciousness.

1 November 1935

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If there is an obstacle at pranam, it must be something wrong in the attitude—perhaps the old error of expecting some outward sign of love, approval or favour from the Mother. The pranam is not for that, but for receiving from her inwardly through the meditation and through the pranam itself. Nothing must be demanded—the consciousness must be surrendered and quiet to receive what she thinks best to give.

24 May 1936

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I think it is better for you not to come to the Mother just now, until you have found the true inner poise. At the present time it is far better for all not to come to her as a routine, but only when the being is open and ready to receive.

The Mother's Expression at Pranam

When one does something wrong, the Mother shows us at Pranam that she does not like it. Does she do this so that we will not make the same mistake again? When one does a right action and she gives herself fully at Pranam, does it not mean that she is happy with our right action? If she is not showing her liking or disliking at Pranam, then what is she showing us by her special expression?

She wants to show you nothing; it has nothing to do with the doings or misdoings of the sadhaks. Pranam is not intended for watching the Mother's expression or what she does with this one or that one or in what way she smiles or with how much of her hand she blesses — the sadhaks' preoccupation with these things is childish and for the most part full of mistaken inferences, imaginations, often curiosity, desire for gossip, criticism etc. Such a state of mind is a hindrance, not a help to sadhana. The proper attitude is one of self-dedication and simple and straightforward receptivity to what the Mother wishes to give, an undisturbed and undisturbing openness to her working in the being.

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Many of the sadhaks are in the habit of thinking Mother is displeased, not smiling at them, angry when it is quite otherwise. This usually happens when their own consciousness is not at peace or when they are thinking or conscious of faults or wrong movements or wrong acts that they may have done. The idea that the Mother is angry is an imagination; if there is anything not as usual, it is in the sadhak himself and not in the Mother.

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What came between the Mother and myself when our eyes met at Pranam? Up till the moment our eyes met, everything was all right. Then looking into them, there was this momentary repulsion and shrinking.

I suppose the shrinking and repulsion were in yourself? for there was none and could be none in the Mother. It must be some part in yourself (physical consciousness perhaps?) that is not in the Light and may not want to be.

31 January 1932

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All fear ought to be cast out. This movement of fear belongs to a still unchanged part of the vital which answers to the old ideas, feelings and reactions. Its only effect is to make you misinterpret the Mother's attitude or the intention in her words or looks or expression. If the Mother becomes serious or has an ironic smile, that does not in the least mean that she is angry or has withdrawn her affection; on the contrary, it is with those with whom she is most inwardly intimate that she feels most free to become like that — even to give them severe chidings. They in their turn understand her and do not get upset or afraid, — they only turn to look inside themselves and see what it is on which she is putting her pressure. That pressure they regard as a privilege and a sign of her grace. Fear stands in the way of this complete intimacy and confidence and creates only misunderstanding; you must cast it out altogether.

22 May 1932

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There is no chance of the Mother giving you the "look" you fear. On your side do not imagine one when it is not there — any number of people are still doing that.

The Mother's Smile at Pranam

After coming from Pranam I felt that Mother did not smile at me, and then there was a very slight feeling of resistance to her somewhere. Is this what you meant when you wrote about the hostiles throwing inertia into the physical mind?

At the time it so happened that the Mother gave you a smile of welcome and approval, but she felt someone saying, "He will not notice that you have smiled" — it was the hostile formation. This is how they work — by this kind of obscuration to blind the mind and senses first and on the basis of a wrong observation or failure of observation build up suggestions of a depressing or disturbing character. It happens to many sadhaks at pranam time to make this kind of mistake about the Mother's smile or expression and to worry themselves thinking she is displeased with them. This is a kind of deception against which one must be on one's guard and such suggestions must always be rejected.

12 February 1933

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You should certainly throw away the vital demand and the disturbance which it creates in your sadhana. Mother gives her smile to all and she does not withhold it from some and give it to others. When people think otherwise, it is because some vital disturbance, depression or demand or some movement of jealousy, envy or competition distorts their vision.

27 February 1933

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Some days after Pranam I feel intensely happy and a wave of serene calm and joy passes over me. On other days, though there is calmness, there is no intensity of joy. I think it has something to do with the Mother's smile.

Don't start having that idea. It is quite untrue and those who indulge it raise vital reactions and imaginations in themselves and provoke much unnecessary trouble.

If her smile is hearty and beaming, there is a proportionate reaction in me. But is that the true cause of my joy or does it depend on the inner state of my psychic being, of which I know nothing?

It is in yourself that there is the variation — not of the psychic

being which is always all right, but of the rest, mind, vital or body.

4 March 1933

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Your idea about Mother's mysterious smile is your own imagination—Mother says that she smiled with the utmost kindness and took the most helpful attitude possible towards you. I had written to you already that you must not put these erroneous imaginations between yourself and the Mother; for they push the help given away from you. These imaginations and their effect on you are suggested by the same vital forces that are disturbing you so that you may not get free from the disturbance.

My help and the Mother's help are there—you have only to keep yourself open to it to recover.

27 March 1933

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Today my lower vital rose up and disturbed me because the Mother did not smile at me. For years and years I have suffered so much from unquietness at the thought that Mother is displeased with me.

These things ought to be entirely rejected. When they rise they often twist the consciousness so much as to falsify sometimes the vision itself and always the feeling. The Mother has observed constantly that the people on whom she has smiled tell her she has been glowering and severe or that she has been displeased, when there was no displeasure in her and then on the strength of that they go wrong altogether.

10 April 1933

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Your mistake is to find a "censorious touch" in the smile where there is none. When the Mother extended her forgiveness—which meant there was something to forgive, her judgment was founded on your own letters. You seem to think that the Mother in some way condemned you and was partial to the others. Her view was that all were in the wrong and each had need of forgiveness—and each asked for and had it.

How is it that your mind still returns on these things instead

of going forward to the difficult spiritual change? The Mother had put them behind her, for a thing repented is a thing abolished. Be assured that there was no remembrance of them in her smile or her attitude towards you.

27 May 1933

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The Mother did not smile at me today at Pranam. Did she see something very untoward in me?

It is a mistake to think that the Mother's not smiling means either displeasure or disapproval of something wrong in the sadhak. It is very often merely a sign of absorption or inner concentration. On this occasion Mother was putting a question to your soul.

31 July 1933

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The physical being feels the need of the Mother's smile when it meets her look. Is it a kind of desire?

Yes. There has to be no disturbance when it does not come (knowing that its absence is not a sign of displeasure or anything of the kind) — then the Ananda of receiving it will be purer.

11 December 1933

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Yesterday when I did pranam, the Mother did not smile at me. Not seeing her smile, I spent the whole day miserably.

On that day Mother did not smile at anybody. It was not personal to you. A particular Power was acting in her which did not act in the ordinary way.

10 April 1934

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I felt at Pranam as if Mother withdrew her smile, but later I realised that she did smile — and even if she did not smile I received peace and became more inward at that time. Besides, after so many disturbances and wrongs on my part, I do not always deserve a smile. So either way I do not worry.

It is usually imagination or impression, at least that has been

seen in most cases. When the Mother does not smile, it is not from displeasure but in almost every case from some reason not connected with any action of the sadhak, but either from absorption or concentration on something that is being done. As you say, it does not matter — what is important is to receive what has to be received.

4 November 1934

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Why do I rejoice only when Mother smiles at me or gives me a special opportunity? I ought to rejoice in all situations. If after living so many years near you and her I still feel like this, I am not worthy of being here.

It is a very strange logic. Even among those who have made the most progress or been always the closest to the Mother, this or similar feelings still recur. It is not that they have not to be overcome, but to argue from their persistence that one is unfit to stay here is to make a large conclusion on a very small basis. This is again the kind of suggestion that comes in from the surrounding physical Ignorance. Things like these last so obstinately because they have become habits or recurrent feelings in the external physical being; they will disappear when the external being becomes filled with the Mother's light.

30 May 1935

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The Mother has been always specially careful in your case not to show displeasure or censure of any kind to you. To the others also she smiles always in the same way, for she knows the consequences to herself if she does not. But in spite of that, even when she smiles most kindly, they write to her that she has shown displeasure, withheld her smile, smiled in an ironical or blasting way, that they will commit suicide, go away etc. etc. The whole thing has become most intolerable and if the Pranam is to be nothing but an occasion for this kind of thing, it is better the Pranam should cease.

December 1936

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What sort of things can come under the category of "demand and desire"? What is the exact form of "demand and desire"?

There are no special sort of things—demand and desire can cover all things whatsoever—they are subjective, not objective and have no special form. Demand is when you claim something to get or possess, desire is a general term. If one expects that the Mother shall smile at him at the Pranam and feels wronged if one does not get it, that is a demand. If one wants it and grieves at not getting it, but without revolt or sense of an unjust deprivation that shows desire. If one feels joy at her smile, but remains calm in its absence knowing that all the Mother does is good, then there is no demand or desire. 13 September 1938

Smiles and Seriousness

Sometimes the Mother looks at us smilingly, as if she were pleased; at other times she looks in quite a different way, as if seriously.

Why not? The Mother cannot be serious, absorbed, drawn into herself? Or do you think it is only displeasure against the sadhaks that can make her so? 18 June 1934

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During some dark periods such as now, I am awfully afraid to go to Pranam, lest I should have the misfortune to see the Mother's grave face, with no smile at all.

All this about the Mother's smile and her gravity is simply a trick of the vital. Very often I notice people talk of the Mother's being grave, stern, displeased, angry at Pranam when there has been nothing of the kind—they have attributed to her something created by their own vital imagination. Apart from that, the Mother's smiling or not smiling has nothing to do with the sadhak's merits or demerits, fitness or unfitness—it is not deliberately done as a reward or a punishment. The Mother smiles on all without regard to these things. When she does not smile, it is because she is either in trance, or absorbed, or concentrated

on something within the sadhak that needs her attention—something that has to be done for him or brought down or looked at. It does not mean that there is anything bad or wrong in him. I have told this a hundred times to any number of sadhaks—but in many the vital does not want to accept that because it would lose its main source of grievance, revolt, abhiman, desire to go away or give up the Yoga, things which are very precious to it. The very fact that it has these results and leads to nothing but these darknesses ought to be enough to show you that this imagination about Mother's not smiling as a sign of absence of her grace or love is a device and suggestion of the Adversary. You have to drive away these things and give some chance for the psychic with its deeper and truer love and surrender to come forward and take up the Adhar as its kingdom. 28 July 1934

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So many sadhaks are not able to understand the Mother's seriousness at Pranam. They find it difficult not to feel that they have displeased her in some way or other. Could you not clarify the cause of the seriousness?

The whole foundation of the difficulty is erroneous. It is the wrong idea that if Mother is serious it must be because of some personal displeasure against "me"—each sadhak who complains of being the "me". I have repeated a hundred times to complaints that it is not so, but nobody will give up this idea—it is too precious to the ego. The Mother's seriousness is due to some absorption in some work she is doing or, very often, to some strong attack of hostile forces in the atmosphere.

19 April 1935

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About Mother's seriousness at Pranam, you wrote: "The Mother's seriousness is due to some absorption in some work she is doing or, very often, to some strong attack of hostile forces in the atmosphere." But I never felt any hostile attack before going to Pranam; rather the attack comes afterwards when my vital fails to endure her seriousness.

It does not matter whether you feel any attack or not—the attack is there. In fact for the last several months the atmosphere is full of the most violent attacks threatening the very existence of the Yoga and the Asram and the sadhaks personally or the body of the Mother. If you are not touched that is a matter for which you ought to be grateful to the Mother instead of your vital getting upset because she is doing her work.

20 April 1935

Wrong Ideas about the Mother's Showing Displeasure

Why did the Mother have such a look of seriousness when I went to her? I have given up everything to take shelter in her, but sometimes I feel that she is displeased with me; then I wonder for whom I am living.

So long as you do not get rid of this silly illusion about the Mother's "seriousness", this kind of thing can always recur. I have told everyone the truth about it, that it is their own minds which wrongly think the Mother is serious and displeased with them. It is under the pressure of a Force of Falsehood that wants them to get upset and to destroy their peace and set them against the Mother that these things come. Yet you all go on still listening to the Force of Falsehood. It is only when you reject the falsehood that you will be free from these troubles.

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I have the idea that the Mother is completely displeased with me. Have I done something wrong or written something that has displeased her?

The idea is absolutely without foundation. It is the constant illusion that the sadhaks are getting that the Mother is displeased with them, that they have done something wrong or said or written something wrong and therefore she is severe or distant, that her expression or her action shows it etc. Very often they think this even when she smiles on them most kindly. It is a purely subjective feeling generated by some difficulty in themselves. The

Mother is not displeased with people because they have difficulties; it is only a reason for giving more of her help and support. All these ideas you speak of are suggestions generated by the adverse pressure on you. You can rely always on the Mother's Grace and you may be perfectly sure that we shall not throw you off — our support will be always with you. 4 July 1933

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Today at Pranam the Mother was not as usual with me. I got the idea of her displeasure and it disturbed me for a time.

There was certainly no such idea in Mother's mind. People have that idea because it is an old and rooted one in their minds and it is true that at one time it had some meaning when Mother was dealing with the vital difficulties of the sadhaks. But now it is different. At the present stage of descent into the physical the Mother is meeting all with a large equanimity, tolerating all the mistakes of the sadhaks and only bringing an inner pressure, supporting all with her force as much as they will allow her. This has been so for a considerable time past — but the physical mind of the sadhaks does not find it easy to accept the change and they seek for expressions and interpretations that are not there. This is farther complicated by the fact that now the Mother has little time to rest or sleep — and when it is like that she goes easily into trance at Pranam and when in trance she may in her body forget to smile or give the blessing etc. It is why I have had to warn people that they must not misinterpret these things.

19 November 1933

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Yesterday and this morning after Pranam the idea came that the Mother was displeased with me, she was treating me coldly and that she was throwing me off. I tried to reject it, but it came back again and again. Of course, there cannot be any truth in it, but it kept repeating itself in feelings, not so much in the thoughts.

Certainly, there is not and cannot be any truth in such suggestions. Neither displeasure nor coldness are possible and

throwing off is too absurd even to be considered. It is the attempt of the forces to set in vibration certain feelings habitual to the human vital—and it is a phenomenon that is constantly seen in the sadhana that when all substantial or even plausible reason is taken away from these vibrations, they are thrown upon the vital without any apparent cause or justifying reason by mere force of habitual response to some covert or subconscious stimulus. The one thing to do is to detach oneself at once or as soon as possible and see it for what it is and throw it off with decision.

26 December 1933

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This morning, as I watched the Mother come down the stairs before meditation, I thought that her face looked very displeased. Why? What have I done wrong? Can this be my imagination? Can one's eyes tell such lies?

Certainly they can and the mind can distort still farther. There are any number of people who have written to the Mother that she did not smile and was fierce and severe when she had been most kind and smiling to them, knowing that they were in trouble. There have been hundreds of cases in which people have heard the opposite of what she said and refused to believe otherwise until or unless others who had been present told them they were mistaken. Note that they did not believe the Mother's denial, but at once believed other sadhaks when they confirmed the Mother. We have singular disciples! As for the mind twisting and misinterpreting the Mother's looks, speech, action, that is so ordinary and everyday that it hardly needs mention, so if you are going to trust your mind and senses so absolutely, you will go on mistaking the Mother to the end of the chapter. It is only the psychic being that can know and understand her.

11 September 1935

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It is a great pity you allowed the thought that the Mother was severe with you to come in and throw you down. These thoughts are never true and whenever a sadhak indulges them, he is always

invaded by the old movements. The Mother's love and kindness have always been the same and will always remain the same to you, so you should never accept this idea that she is displeased or severe. But whatever the mistakes or the difficulties, our help will be with you and the Mother's force will work to bring you out and get you back the psychic openness and peace which you had for many days this time and which is bound to return and become permanent after a while.

19 November 1935

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I do not at all understand why you should think that the Mother was displeased with you for any reason whatever. She was just as she is always with you. Even if you had made any mistake, the Mother now is disposed to overlook mistakes and leave it to the pressure of the Light and the psychic being of the sadhak to set things right. But why on earth should she be displeased because you wanted to stop the French lessons with X or for any such trivial reason! Whether you continue or suspend your lessons is a detail which has to be settled in accordance with the condition of your mind and the needs of your sadhana and it can be settled either way. It is surprising that you should think Mother could show displeasure over so slight a matter. You must get over a nervousness of this kind and not disturb your good condition by imaginations — for it is an imagination, since it had no reality behind it. Have a more perfect confidence and do not let your mind create difficulties where there are none.

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Understand once for all that Mother is not using the Pranam to show her pleasure and displeasure; it is not meant for that purpose. The only circumstance under which Mother's attitude at Pranam is likely to be influenced by the actions of the sadhak is when there is some great betrayal or a violent breach of the main rules of spiritual life such as an act of sexual intercourse or when the sadhak has become pointedly hostile to the Mother and the Yoga. But then it is not a special show of displeasure at

Pranam, but a withdrawal of the gift of grace which is quite a different matter.

Wrong Ideas about the Mother's Smile and Touch

Sometimes when Mother smiles, people take it as an approval of their wrong activities. A sort of vanity comes in and says, "Oh, Mother is smiling. Don't worry; go on as you like." Or else there is a competition: "Oh, see how long Mother has put her hand on me." But if these constructions are wrong, why have they gained such currency? For on them people judge and criticise others.

It is a great mistake. We are persistently correcting it, but a legend has been formed and people cling to it. 5 July 1933

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I do not think your reasoning that you were in the physical consciousness and therefore the observation of the physical fact [*of the Mother's touch*] is likely to be correct is very sound. The physical consciousness is full of impressions and that they are not entirely reliable has begun to be more and more recognised — it is the reason why the statements of different people about the same physical fact differ widely. Especially when there is a depression or a pressure of adverse forces the impression given to the senses is often distorted or modified in the sense of the depression or of the suggestion made — of that we have had innumerable instances.

But apart from that it is a mistake to measure the power of the blessing by these details. I have known instances in which the Mother omitted to put her hand at all on the head of a sadhak and yet the force was felt double of what he or she usually received. That was because the Mother was very concentrated and putting a full force out. Even so a finger on the head with a strong power put out may mean much more than the full hand on the head with less in the touch. 21 August 1933

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If the Mother's putting her hand or giving her smile at Pranam is all a mental construction, why do I get so terribly upset? I have to find some way to get out of it when it comes.

The obsession about the smile and touch has to be overcome and rejected because it has become an instrument of the contrary Forces to upset the sadhaks and hamper their progress. I have seen any number of cases in which the sadhak is going on well or even having high experiences and change of consciousness and suddenly this imagination comes across and all is confusion, revolt, sorrow, despair and the inner work is interrupted and endangered. In most cases this attack brings with it a sensory delusion so that even if the Mother smiles more than usual or gives the blessing with all her force, she is told, "You did not smile, you did not touch" or "you hardly touched". There have been any number of instances of that also—the Mother telling me, "I saw X disturbed or else a suggestion coming towards him and I gave him my kindest smile and blessing", and yet afterwards we get a letter affirming just the contrary, "You did not smile etc." And you are all ready to give the Mother the lie, because you felt, you saw and your senses cannot be deceived! As if a mind disturbed does not twist the sense observation also! as if it were not a common fact of psychology that one constantly gets an impression according to his mood or thought! Even if the smile or touch were less, it should not be the cause of such upheavals, if there is not an intention in it and there is no intention at all as we have constantly warned all of you. Of course the cause is that the sadhaks apply the movements of a vital human love to the Mother and the ordinary vital human love is full of contrary movements of distrust, misunderstanding, jealousy, anger, despair. But in Yoga this is most undesirable—for here trust in the Mother, faith in her divine Love is of great importance; anything that denies or disturbs it opens the door to obstacles and wrong reactions. It is not that there should be no love in the vital, but it must purify itself of these reactions and fix itself on the psychic being's trust and confident self-giving. Then there can be the full progress.

30 June 1935

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Our ideas about the Mother's hand or smile at Pranam are not constant. If Mother puts the hand all right, then one finds her smile less. If both the hand and smile are all right, one finds he has been given a smaller lotus than others. If nothing else is found, then one remembers that in 1932 Mother did not treat me well. It must be the wolf in the lower vital at work.

Yes, it is the insatiable demand of the vital and when the vital is up reason gets no chance. It was the experience of this insatiable demand that made the Mother draw back and retire from the free outward self-giving she had begun. The more she gave, the more was demanded and the more dissatisfied people became and each was jealous of the others — life was becoming impossible and sadhana was certainly not profiting! 30 June 1935

*

Today after the Pranam, even though the Mother did not smile or put her hand as usual, my consciousness remained high. The ego determines its revolt according to her smile and touch, but today it remained quiescent. I don't know how it happened.

The ego acts according to these things when it dominates; when it does not dominate or is not present, then these motives can have no effect. The whole question is whether ego leads or something else leads. If the higher consciousness leads, then even if the Mother does not smile or put her hand at all, there will be no egoistic reaction. Once the Mother did that with a sadhika, being herself in trance — the result was that the sadhika got a greater force and Ananda than she had ever got when the Mother put her hand fully. 11 November 1935

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All this idea about the Mother's looks and her hand in the blessing which is current in the Asram is perfectly irrational, false, even imbecile. I have a hundred times written to people that the whole thing is wrong and rests on a false suggestion of the adverse forces made in order to create a disturbance. The Mother does not refrain from smiling or vary her smile or her

manner of blessing in order to show displeasure or because of anything the sadhak has done. She does not, as certain people annoyingly believe, dose out her smiles or blessings in such a way as to assign a number of marks for each sadhak according to his good behaviour or bad behaviour. These variations are *not* intended to assign a competitive place to each sadhak, as to schoolboys in a class. All these ideas are absolutely absurd, trivial and unspiritual. The Asram is not a schoolboys' class nor is the Yoga a competitive examination. All this is the creation of the narrow physical mind and vital ego and desire. If the sadhaks want to get a true basis and make true progress, they must get these ideas out of their minds altogether. Yet they cling obstinately to it in spite of all I can write, so dear is this falsehood to their mind. You must get rid of it altogether. At the Pranam the Mother puts her force to help the sadhak — what he ought to do is to receive quietly and simply, not to spoil the occasion by these foolish ideas and by watching who gets more of her hand or smile and who gets less. All that must go. 8 December 1936

The Mother's Hand at Pranam

If the Mother does not put her hand on my head or keep it there for long, does it mean that I was not in a fit condition to receive well?

No, it means only that these days there are nearly 140 people and Mother has to do it quickly — otherwise Pranam would not end. 22 November 1932

*

I was not going to send this letter, thinking it will make Mother angry and that she will irritate me still more at Pranam by putting her hand only just a little, as yesterday. Anyway, it is now becoming impossible to live.

Why should you think that Mother will be angry? We have ourselves told you to write everything frankly and conceal nothing — so there is not the least likelihood that she will resent what you write. Moreover she knows perfectly well the difficulties of

the sadhana and of human nature and, if there is goodwill and a sincere aspiration such as you have, any stumblings or falterings of the moment will not make any difference in her attitude to the sadhak. The Mother thinks you must have had a wrong impression about her putting her hand just a little only — for she was just the same with you inwardly as always and there had been no reason why there should be any change. 17 April 1933

*

If the Mother does not put her hand on the head in Pranam, it does not mean that she is displeased — it may have quite other causes. People have this idea but they are quite mistaken. Some time ago the Mother failed to put her hand on the head of a sadhika at Pranam for two days. People mocked at her and looked down at her. As a matter of fact she was having remarkable realisations and getting more power from the Mother at Pranam than on ordinary days. The whole idea is an error.

2 August 1933

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I could not understand the Mother's intention in not blessing me with her hand when I made pranam.

There was no intention. It has happened with others but always when Mother was in trance or absorbed within. It does not in the least depend on the condition of the sadhak and has no meaning against him. 26 September 1933

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It seems someone has said that I take too long in doing pranam and Mother is a little annoyed. Is this true? In my ignorance I am unable to grasp her hints.

It is true that you take too long in the Pranam — Mother gave you several hints but you did not seem to understand. If it were not for the overlong time taken by the Pranam with so many people, Mother would not mind — but it is becoming impossible because people take so long in coming to make their pranam. It is better if you take only a short time. The power of the blessing

does not depend on the length of the pranam made.

22 October 1933

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It is entirely untrue that Mother was pushing you away today. There may be days when she is absorbed and therefore physically inattentive to what her hand is doing. But today she was specially attentive to you and at the Pranam she was putting force on you for peace, tranquillity and the removal of the difficulty. If she at all acted by the palm or anything else, it was for that she was acting. About this there can be no mistake, for she was specially conscious of her action and purpose today. What must have happened was that something must have felt the pressure and intervened and persuaded your physical mind by suggestion that it was *you* she was pushing away, not the difficulty. This is a very clear instance of how easy it is for the sadhaks to make a wrong inference and think that the Mother is doing the very opposite of what she is doing. Very often when she has concentrated most to help them by pressing out their difficulties, they have written to her, "You were very severe and displeased with me this morning." The only way to avoid these wrong reactions is to have full psychic confidence in the Mother, believing that all she does is for their good and out of the Divine Mother's care for them and not against them. Then nothing of this kind will happen. Those who do that, can get the full help of her concentration even if in her absorption she does not touch the head or smile. That is why I have constantly told the sadhaks not to put their own interpretations on the Mother's appearance or actions at the Pranam—because these interpretations may always be wrong and make an opening for an unfounded depression and an attack.

23 January 1934

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X complained to me that the Mother did not put her hand on her head at Pranam today.

Too much demand in people's minds so that the Mother seldom feels free to do what is best. Pranam and the rest have their

importance, but they ought not to feel upset or frustrated by the smallest change. Each ought to learn to have a sufficient inner life and inner connection to fall back on that whenever the outer is changed or interrupted.

14 June 1934

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What to write of my miserable condition? Today, when I expected the Mother to hold me up a little more, I got the reverse. But perhaps it is necessary to make a man suffer sometimes.

Mother put her hand just as usual. Not only so, but as she saw your condition needed special help, she tried to give it. But when you are in this condition, it is unfortunate that you are so much occupied with the feeling of misery as to feel nothing else, nothing that does not minister to or increase the misery. Support you always have; there is absolutely no reason why we should withhold it. If anyone is in serious trouble in this Asram, that falls on us and most on the Mother—so it is absurd to suppose that we should take pleasure in anyone suffering. Suffering, illness, vital storms (lusts, revolts, angers) are so many contradictions of what we are striving for and therefore obstacles to our work. To end them as soon as possible is the only will we can have, not to keep them in existence.

If you could only acquire the power to detach yourself somewhere in you when these storms come, not to be swept away by the push or the thoughts that rise! Then there would be something that could feel the support and be able to react against these forces.

28 June 1935

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It was not because of any fault of yours that the Mother gave only a short blessing; she has to do that for all who come at the beginning because they need to go quickly to their work. If you want a longer blessing, you must come afterwards. But, when you have to come early, you can get as much out of the Mother's short blessing, if you are quiet and open.

Feeling the Mother's Touch at Pranam

Is it possible to receive the Mother's influence at a distance, for instance at the time of Pranam? Sometimes when I did not come for the morning meditation I felt the atmosphere of the meditation hall wherever I was.

It is possible to receive, but not in the same way. There is an element, a touch on the physical consciousness that is wanting.

30 May 1933

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Today I saw with open eyes diamond white light descending on the sides of the Mother's ears; while doing pranam I felt a strange kind of touch and with it something entered inside me. When I returned home, I was still absorbed in pure bliss. What was it that descended into me?

There is always a touch coming from the Mother at pranam, one has to be conscious and open only to receive it.

14 November 1933

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During the morning Pranam, when X went for darshan and the Mother pressed her hand on his head, at the same time I felt her hand on my head as a concrete touch. How does this happen?

It shows that the subtle physical is growing conscious and felt the touch and blessings of the Mother which is always there.

20 March 1935

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Someone ignorant might ask how one can realise the value of pranam in the half-a-minute Mother has permitted to many. But one ought to know that inner things never depend on the time.

Obviously, the time has nothing to do with it. One hour's touch or a moment's touch—as much can be done by the one as by the other.

18 April 1935

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The Mother's inner or subtle touch, which I have sometimes felt, simply had not the same effect as her physical touch during the Pranam. The inner touch came and disappeared within a few seconds, leaving practically no effect, whilst the Pranam touch left its impress for a long time even when there was depression and resistance.

It is because you have lived in your outer and not in your inner being that it is like that. But unless you open to the inner touch, the inner being cannot develop. I mean by the inner being the inner mind, the inner vital, the inner physical, the inner psychic.

3 February 1937

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Could you explain what you mean by the inner touch?

The inner touch is the Mother's influence felt in the inner being.

When I was having experiences and realisations, why did I not feel the inner touch? It is said that without the inner touch, one cannot have such experiences, which are the fruit of the inner being's development.

You did not feel it because the inner being was not awake to it—it felt only the results—and these results were not experiences in the inner being itself but of the Self above. 6 February 1937

Flowers at Pranam

What does the Mother mean by giving us flowers at the Pranam?

Simply to put the power indicated upon you if you are willing to receive it. It is a progress suggested and offered.

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I felt hurt when the Mother stopped giving me flowers, but now I feel that I have not yet learned the first lesson of Yoga—to surrender to the Mother and accept that whatever she does for me is done for the best. Also, have I not myself told

her several times not to give me flowers. Once I got very disturbed when people asked me why Mother gave me such poor flowers. But now I have got on the right track again. You will change me completely so that all of me belongs to you and the Mother.

As regards what you say retrospectively about the giving of flowers, there were there two mistakes,

(1) The one you have yourself seen; you should accept what the Mother sees to be best and most helpful, not judging by your own standard, as it is she alone who has the right knowledge about those things.

(2) Never base yourself or your idea of the Mother and her actions on what others say—as when they told you you had wrong flowers. How can they judge or know? Their utterances may be the result of very wrong judgments and their statements may be misstatements.

Now that you have seen the right thing, go by the way I have indicated to you, the way of confidence and true self-giving.

May 1932

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The Mother was so kind as to give me a message in the form of six flowers. Their significances are: Devotion, Faith, Mental Sincerity, Resolution, Divine Help and Peace in the Vital. But I did not understand the exact meaning of the message. Will you kindly explain it?

The Divine Help was put inside the flower of faith — when that is done, the two flowers form a single idea = faith in Divine Help.

The meaning was simply that these are the conditions for the realisation in the Yoga — devotion, faith in Divine help, resolution, mental sincerity, peace in the vital — if these are there, the realisation will come.

10 February 1933

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What is the significance of the Mother's giving us flowers at Pranam?

It is meant to help the realisation of the thing the flower stands for.

28 April 1933

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When giving the Bhakti flower, it is the power of Bhakti, the possibility of it that Mother offers to you—if you can open yourself and receive it.

13 June 1933

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When the Mother gives us flowers, are we to aspire for the things they stand for or does she give these things with the flowers?

There is no fixed rule—sometimes it is the one, sometimes the other. But even when the thing is given, it is given in power—it has to be realised by the sadhak in consciousness and for that aspiration is necessary.

17 November 1933

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Today the Mother gave me a “Vital purity” flower, but my vital does not like this flower because it lowers the vital in the opinion of people. “Other people get flowers with good significances, I get only this kind of flower”—unable to repel this suggestion, my vital got roused and I suffered.

“Vital purity” is also a flower of good significance expressing a very high thing. When the Mother gives a flower like that, she gives the Force along with it. But you must receive the force, not think about people’s opinion of you or your prestige with them which is a thing not worth a thought.

22 November 1933

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Today the Mother gave me the flower Progress. I felt she was telling me that I am just sitting and I ought to move forward. What should I understand by it?

When the Mother gives a flower, she gives the power of the thing it means—if the sadhak is ready or willing to receive it, he can do so.

17 March 1934

*

X prophesies that I will get a "Divine Love" flower today; she wants half my share! I said I never get the nice white flowers she does. In any case we do not get what our mind thinks we should get.

Obviously not—the mind chooses according to likings or fancies or else to some mental idea of what should be; the Mother chooses by intuitive observation or else an inspiration of what is needed.

9 July 1934

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At Pranam I observed that Mother was giving smaller lotuses to outside sadhaks and big, full lotuses to those she loves more. To my fate came a medium lotus and from that time all was finished. I could neither work nor sit steadily.

Why on earth do you get these fits of comparison and measurement? They are quite foreign to Mother's thoughts or intention. She did not choose at all in giving to the sadhaks,—all were mixed together, whatever came to her hand she gave.

5 April 1935

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You say there was nothing intended in the giving of particular lotuses, but I find it hard to believe. First, Mother cannot be unconscious of what she is doing. Second, it would not create so much disturbance as to make me give up work and lose all strength, if there were not something behind it.

All these ideas are formations in your own mind and suggestions from a wrong force. It is the usual trick of certain forces to represent the Mother as a sort of malignant and insincere tyrant taking a pleasure in disturbing and torturing people and lying to them at every step. I wonder that a clear mind like yours should get so clouded as not to see the trick or fail to perceive that if she is like that she cannot be the Mother. But the singularity is that such ideas seem to spring up in almost everybody as soon as they get a little disturbed and they never seem to see the sheer illogicality of the thing. This has been a disease, it is true, that has sprung up and stuck in the Asram mind since almost the

beginning and if it is somewhat diminished in generality and force, is still there. When it disappears altogether, it will be a great day for the collective sadhana.

5 April 1935

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Are flowers mere symbols and nothing more? Can the flower symbolising silence, for example, help in the realisation of silence?

It is when Mother puts her force into the flower that it becomes more than a symbol. It then can become very effective, if there is receptivity in the one who receives.

19 July 1937

Avoiding Pranam

Is the idea of not coming to Pranam usually a hostile suggestion?

It is a hostile suggestion almost always.

How can the idea of not coming to Pranam be accepted, as some have done?

Various motives are played upon — pride, the desire not to be like others, not to be dependent on the Mother, the wish to protect some wrong movement from the Mother's control, the idea of doing the sadhana in one's own way free from the pressure of the Truth etc.

30 May 1933

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I felt a disinclination to come to Pranam, a dryness and lack of interest in anything, an absence of love for Mother. What is the use of going to Pranam in such a dry manner or simply for protection or peace or any such selfish object?

That is a suggestion which should be entirely rejected. It is the usual attack trying to act on the physical consciousness through dryness and depression.

24 February 1934

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I have often seen that X would be quite cheerful just before coming for Pranam, but when he came in front of Mother he looked sorrowful and displeased. What was the reason?

X is doing like many others — they are cheerful outside, but sorrowful or displeased or suffering when they come to the Mother or write to her. There is a sort of idea (which was long current in the Asram) and there is still a feeling in the vital that the more you do that with the Mother the more you will get out of her. Of course it is absurdly untrue — the truth is the opposite; the more one is cheerfully open to her and lives in the light and gladness, the more one is likely to receive.

Pranam and Non-Pranam Days

What are these stupid waves moving about the atmosphere? People say: "Non-pranam day means a day of rest for the sadhana."

It is the ordinary attitude of the physical consciousness — but once the fundamental consciousness is fixed, there is no reason why the sadhana should stop for a single day or need rest.

1 April 1935

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False suggestions have been telling me that I have no love for the Mother. But on every non-pranam day the sadhana refuses to move forward. How can this happen unless not only the inner being, but even the mind and the physical have a good deal of love for her? Only my love for the Mother is not outwardly expressed because it wants to take a psychic form, not a vital one. But as long as the outer mind and vital are not psychicised, it is not possible to have a psychic expression in the outer being all the time, but only for a few limited moments. Is this correct?

Yes, but the vital's test is very foolish. If the sadhana goes on whether you see the Mother or not, that would rather show that the psychic connection is permanently there and active always and does not depend on the physical contact. The vital seems to

think the sadhana ought to cease if you do not see the Mother, but that would only mean that the love and devotion need the stimulus of physical contact; the greatest test of love and devotion is on the contrary when it burns as strongly in long absence as in the presence. If your sadhana went on as well on non-pranam as on pranam days it would not prove that love and devotion are not there, but that they are so strong as to be self-existent in all circumstances.

8 June 1936

Fixed Places at Pranam

Are the places in the pranam hall fixed for each individual person? Today I was meditating there when suddenly X came and told me to move, saying it was his place. There was an empty place at my side, so I told him to sit there, but he refused and told me I was sitting in his fixed place. Then I moved over, but Y came and told me to move, for it was his fixed place. To avoid any disturbance I quickly left the place, but I must confess that I was annoyed and it disturbed my meditation. In fact X comes only once in a blue moon to the morning meditation, yet he wants his place to be reserved for ever.

Mother has not fixed places for anyone but the rule of the "fixed place" does obtain in the morning Pranam. It is Nolini who sees after these things. So you had better find a place in the sun not claimed or pegged out yet by any imperial Power and inform Nolini that you now claim that country.

23 July 1936

The Change from Pranam to Meditation

The present arrangement about the morning Meditation is for so long as the Mother has need of rest. It is not intended as a permanent arrangement. Only, if the sadhaks really want the Pranam to continue as before, they should make a better use of it. Many spend the time looking at what the Mother is doing, whom she smiles on, whom she pats or how she blesses people and gossip about it afterwards — most take it as a routine. All that is a wrong spirit and it puts a great strain on the Mother

who has to fight all the time against the wrong forces this wrong attitude brings into the atmosphere.

30 January 1937

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There is a conspiracy among the gods to take away Mother into retirement: no Pranam henceforth. Sir, they have taken you away already and now if Mother withdraws, well, we can do the same one by one.

Well, if people withdraw into themselves, they might find the Mother there!

1 February 1937

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Did your remark "people withdraw into themselves" carry a suggestion that Mother's personal touch is not necessary or essential?

It is not essential — the inner touch is the essential thing. But it can be of immense help if properly received. For certain things it is essential but these certain things nobody yet is ready for.

Some people believe that the inner touch is not essential; whatever is necessary can be had through meditation or otherwise.

Whatever is necessary for the inner being, yes.

As a matter of fact, plenty of people are glad because now they can do whatever they please.

But there was never any necessity for such people coming to the Pranam! It is not obligatory.

I know from my own experience that we have abused the Pranam. To tell you frankly, when the morning meditation started I was glad, and I was not quite certain it was not better than Pranam, for I thought, "Now I am free from those worries about Mother's looks." Even then I believe that there is something great in the physical touch of the Mother, and one can't afford to lose it under any circumstance; of course one must have the right attitude.

That is it. The Pranam (like the soup in the evening before) has been very badly misused. What is the Pranam for? That people might receive in the most direct and integral way — a way that includes the physical consciousness and makes it a channel — what the Mother could give them and they were ready for. Instead people sit as if at a court reception noting what the Mother does (and generally misobserving), making inferences, gossiping afterwards as to her attitude to this or that person, who is the more favoured, who is less favoured — as if the Mother were doling out her favour or disfavour or appreciations or disapprovals there, just as courtiers in a court might do. What an utterly unspiritual attitude. How can the Mother's work be truly done in such an atmosphere? How can there be the right reception? Naturally it reacts on the sadhak, creates any amount of misconception, wrong feelings etc. — creates an open door for the suggestions of the Adversary who delights in falsehood and administers plenty of it to the minds of the sadhaks. This apart from the fact that many throw all sorts of undesirable things on the Mother through the Pranam. The whole thing tends to become a routine, even where there are not these reactions. Some of course profit, those who can keep something of the right attitude. If there were the right attitude in all, well by this time things would have gone very far towards the spiritual goal.

What is the right attitude for real love and devotion? Is it to be psychically depressed because Mother is not coming for pranam any more or is it to try to get her within?

Psychic depression (a queer phrase — you mean vital, I suppose) can help no one. To try to receive within is always the true thing, whether through meditation or pranam. 2 February 1937

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Even though I feel Mother during the morning meditation, it is not the same thing as the Pranam was. I feel as though a fundamental support has been taken away — something one could hold on to is not there. I was thinking how nice it would be if the Mother gave Pranam in the evening, so that after the

struggle of the day we could turn a little more inward and have her soothing touch.

The difficulty is that apart from the slight incident to the eye that has happened, Mother badly needs a rest from the storm she has undergone physically so long and I don't think it would be wise to disregard the need any longer—for the storm has been there a long time. I hope that after a period of rest, things can be renewed but at present meditation is the only way, for there is no strain on her.

3 February 1937

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In regard to the proposed change which would vary Pranam with Meditation—not stop pranam altogether. It had nothing to do with the temporary rest taken by the Mother—that was absolutely indispensable. I had often asked her to take some rest before but she had refused because it might disturb the sadhaks too much—what happened made the break physically indispensable. The sadhaks ought to concede that much to her after she has laboured night and day for so many years without giving herself any real rest even at night. You yourself wrote asking her to take the rest she needed. Even so she did not fail to begin going down morning and evening and renewing interviews as soon as it was physically possible.

10 February 1937

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X feels the stopping of pranam so profoundly that he is depressed. But to make one's sadhana or life depend on the Mother's touch is to have a vital sadhana and a vital life, transient and superficial.

It is only if one can feel the inward touch of the Mother without the necessity of the physical contact that the true value of the latter can be really active. Otherwise there is a danger of its becoming like a mere artificial stimulant or a pulling of vital force from her for one's own benefit.

2 March 1937

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Some people seem to think that to prepare themselves for the inner touch of the Mother, they have to go through the preliminary stage of having her physical touch at Pranam. So the question is: Is it possible for all, at the very beginning, to develop the inner touch without the physical touch?

If they are so dependent on the physical touch that they cannot feel anything when it is not there, this means that they have not used it at all for developing the inner connection; if they had, the inner connection after so many years would already be there. The inner connection can only be developed by an inner concentration and aspiration, not by a mere outward pranam every day. What most people do is simply to pull vital force from the Mother and live on it—but that is not the object of the Pranam.

4 March 1937

*

Pulling is a psychological act—people are always pulling vital force from each other though they do not do it consciously, i.e. with a purpose in the mind—it is instinctive in the vital to draw force from wherever it can. All contact is in fact a receiving and giving of vital forces in a small or great degree. You have yourself said that after meeting such and such person you felt empty and exhausted—that means the person drew your vital force out of you. That is what people do at pranam, instead of being quiet and receptive, they pull vitally. It can be stopped by cutting off connection, but if the Mother did that at pranam, then the pranam would be useless.

5 March 1937

*

For many people the present morning meditation with the Mother has had a good result. They are able to receive better than when there was only pranam. But in my case the withdrawal of pranam has meant a reduction of psychological pressure by 84 percent.

Different people react differently to the change. Pranam had become to many a routine, to many a mere occasion of pulling the Mother's vital forces away from her so as to supply themselves

with vital provender for the day, to many a mere occasion for gossip as to how the Mother had behaved with this one or that one (all founded on their own "observation", imagination and inference); the attitude to it had become twisted. If there had been the right attitude in all and the right use of the contact, it would have been a different matter.

25 March 1937

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Mother has told you what to reply to X about other points. You may add this from me, that all this about Mother's smile and displeasure is simply the wrong play of the vital in her. It is because so many of the sadhaks were indulging in this wrong play of the vital about Mother's smile and her pleasure and displeasure and all kinds of revolts and jealousies and anger against the Mother and canvassing despondency and talk of going away etc. that the Pranam had to be stopped. Nothing can be worse for the sadhana than to give play to ignorant vital movements like these. She must throw these things away from her if she wants to make any progress in sadhana.

22 April 1937

Outsiders at Pranam

The permission for Pranam and meditation cannot be given. In between the Darshans it will now be no longer allowed to people from outside or only in exceptional cases.

14 December 1935

*

Why on earth can't people wait for outsiders to ask for Pranam instead of goading them to come to it? It makes the Pranam cheap and makes people think we are yearning for them to come and make Pranam, which is a damned mistake and not conducive to the dignity of the spiritual life.

25 September 1938

Making Pranam at a Distance

I am trying to sit in concentration [*in Bombay*], but I am unable to do anything except offering pranams to the Mother.

Am I proceeding correctly?

Write to him that what he is doing is quite right. While making the Pranam he should aspire to be open to the Mother's influence and her workings in him and to become conscious of her workings.

29 August 1930

Making Pranam to Others

Why is there this imagination? X is as human as she can be and not in the least superhuman. Nobody is to be bowed down to except myself and the Mother. Be on your guard against allowing these or other imaginations to take hold of you — they come easily when the mind is exalted and should be looked at carefully, not accepted without discernment.

22 November 1932

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It [*the wish to make pranam to others*] is a wrong suggestion from somewhere. It is very necessary not to take the attitude of Pranam to others or to give even in thought a place at all approaching or similar to the Mother's.

27 July 1934

*

In a dream it was Pranam time. There was a boyish looking person to whom all had to do pranam by the Mother's order. Someone made pranam to him and I noted that the boyish person spoke some words in anger. I hesitated, but since Mother had told us to do it, I had to do pranam and so did all the others. Why these wrong pranams and Mother's order?

It was evidently a vital formation, as Mother's order could not possibly be for the pranam to be to another, since such a thing is forbidden and would be disastrous.

It is the kind of formation X was persistently making that all must approach and realise the Truth through him and he even hoped that one day we would realise the fact that the supramental Truth had descended into him and into him alone and would order all to approach it and us only through him! You

probably saw in your dream something like that moving about and the dream gave it form. Several people had this delusion before, but I think with X it went out of the Asram. Still some remnants may be floating still.

9 September 1934

Pranam in the Reception Hall

It seems X has often criticised Y for sitting and doing pranam and meditation in the Reception Hall near the photographs. I do not understand this propaganda of X—does the Mother want him to do that?

It is X's own idea. The only thing Mother insisted on is that the Reception Hall is primarily meant for visitors and at the time when visitors come sadhaks should not occupy the place or do meditation or pranam there. There has never been any restriction on meditation or pranam before our photographs as such—external worship was never forbidden. It is only a question of the place being kept mainly for its original purpose. Z had at one time almost occupied the place keeping some kind of mattress or something there and meditating for long periods—that was objected to certainly. Idolatry comes in only when the image pushes out the Person—there were one or two who said that for them that (the photograph there) was the Mother (more even than the living Person). There was a growing atmosphere of excess about all this and the Mother had to recall people to a sense of measure. That is all. But there is no prohibition of it on principle.

15 March 1935

The Soup Ceremony

I saw in dream: The Mother is giving me soup. I am taking the soup from the Mother's hand and bowing down at her feet. What is the reason for this dream? What is the spiritual meaning of the soup which the Mother used to give us?

The soup was instituted in order to establish a means by which the sadhak might receive something from the Mother by an interchange in the material consciousness. Owing to the past

association probably you see like that when your material consciousness in dream receives something from the Mother.

27 July 1933

The Value of Darshan

The Mother is within but the darshan of her helps to realise the Divine on the physical plane also. 11 May 1933

*

I would like to know if it is harmful to talk while waiting for the Mother to come out? I sometimes cannot help talking, laughing and joking.

If you attach any value to the darshan, it is better to be *recueilli*. If her coming is only one incident of the day's routine like taking dinner, then of course it does not matter. 24 July 1933

*

Is there any difference between *recueilli* and concentrated?

Recueilli means drawn back, quiet and collected in oneself.

25 July 1933

*

The best way for Darshan is to keep oneself very collected and quiet and open to receive whatever the Mother gives.

12 February 1937

Public Darshan Days

Mother, Lord, on the 24th I shall take my food only after having your darshan. Mother, Lord, destroy all my wrong thoughts and feelings.

That is quite wrong. Fasting will not in the least remove any bad things — it is by receiving the Mother's Light and Force in you that they will go. You must eat tomorrow. 23 November 1933

*

I wonder if it is pleasant on Darshan days for the Mother to be touched by 300 people with various things in their vitals and physicals. Perhaps above the Overmind one feels all as the Divine, so the touch and all else is taken delight in as a play of the Divine behind all. Yet her body must be feeling a little uneasy at these touches.

Not uneasy; but it is not easy to absorb and deal with all that when the number is so many and so much is foreign matter.

1 September 1934

*

X is hopeful that the Mother will see Y before they leave Pondicherry. If bringing her for Darshan is not possible, could Mother see her at some other time?

Mother cannot see her. The most we can concede is that she may be brought for Darshan in the way proposed, but she must simply take the blessing and pass, there must be no lingering. It is a mistake to bring sick people or the insane to the Darshan for cure — the Darshan is not meant for that. If anything is to be done or can be done for them, it can be done at a distance. The Force that acts at the time of Darshan is of another kind and one deranged or feeble in mind cannot receive or cannot assimilate it — it may produce a contrary effect owing to this incapacity if received at all. If the Force is withheld, then Darshan is useless, if received by such people it is unsafe. It is similar reasons which dictate the rule forbidding children of tender years to be brought to the Darshan.

13 August 1937

The First Blessing

No — we don't put our picture inside anybody when we give the first blessing. But if you go on looking inside, you will one day find the Mother there.

Aspects of the Mother's Life in the Ashram

The Mother's Music

It is not by knowledge of music that the understanding [of *the Mother's music*] comes; nor is it by effort of the mind—it is by becoming inwardly silent, opening within and getting the spontaneous feeling of what is in the music. 1932

*

I feel within me a tendency for music, but I understand nothing of harmony, tune and rhythm. Yet sometimes when I hear the Mother's music, I am spellbound and lose all sense of time.

It is not necessary to have technical knowledge in order to feel what is behind the music. Mother of course does not play for the sake of a technical musical effect, but to bring down something from the higher planes and that anyone can receive who is open.

16 September 1933

*

When I entered the Mother's room, she had just finished playing for a long time—that is why I did not expect her to play for me.

The Mother has played music from her childhood upwards—so it is no trouble to her to sing or play several times.

16 September 1933

*

Why does my mind become so full of joy listening to the Mother's music? Today while listening to her play, my mind, my heart, my whole consciousness became full of peace and joy and then went high up somewhere.

What else is the Mother's music except the bringing down of these things? She does not play or sing merely for the music's

sake, but to call down the Divine Consciousness and its Powers.

16 September 1933

*

Yesterday when the Mother was playing her music, I was much struck by the descent of forces in me. I clearly experienced these three elements: aspiration, surrender and the receiving of blessings. First, her soul as the immanent Divine aspired to the transcendent Divine; it was a call for her transcendent Self to come down and take possession of the downtrodden natures of her children. Then the surrender: in her zeal for union with her highest Divine Self, she almost loses herself. Then from the highest, her Voice comes down for the benefit of her children. She receives the blessings from above and showers them upon all her children. I do not know how far I am right.

I think it is fairly correct. At any rate the first and second parts are quite correct. I do not remember the third in this form but it was a firm assurance of the realisation. 27 September 1933

*

Is it true that when the Mother plays on the organ she calls down the Gods of the higher planes to help us?

Not consciously.

9 February 1934

*

You wrote in reply to my letter of yesterday: "Not consciously." Does it mean that the Gods are attracted to the Mother's music and so come down to hear it?

They may be.

10 February 1934

*

When the Mother plays the organ, something new enters into my consciousness. Does she really bring down something while playing?

If she did not bring something, why should she play at all?

19 April 1934

*

Yesterday I heard the Mother playing Indian music and a few days ago she was corresponding with X about Indian music.

The Mother's music has often been recognised by Y as Indian music of this or that raga. The Mother plays whatever comes through her—she does not usually play any previously composed music whether European or Indian—the latter in fact she has never learned.

11 September 1934

*

Some people think that in the Overmind and Supermind there will be no need of prayer or aspiration. They must have forgotten that even our Mother has aspired constantly, day and night, or that when she plays her music we feel that she is praying.

Yes. All that is very true. It is a prayer or an invocation that Mother makes in the music.

1 June 1935

The Mother's Attitude towards Music and Other Arts

Why should you think the Mother does not approve of expression,—provided it is the right expression of the right thing,—or suppose that silence and true expression are contradictory? The truest expression comes out of an absolute inner silence. The spiritual silence is not a mere emptiness; nor is it indispensable to abstain from all activity in order to find it.

26 April 1931

*

For the moment I am answering only to your question about the music. Let me say at once that all of you seem to have too great an aptitude for making drastic conclusions on the strength of very minor facts. It is always perilous to take two or three small facts, put them together and build upon them a big inference. It

becomes still more dangerous when you emphasise minor facts and set aside or belittle the meaning of the main ones. In this case the main facts are (1) that the Mother has loved music all her life and found it a key to spiritual experience, (2) that she has given all encouragement to your music in special and to the music of others also. She has also made clear the relation of Art and Beauty with Yoga. It is therefore rather extraordinary that anyone should think she only tolerates music here and considers it inconsistent with Yoga. It is perfectly true that Music or Art are not either the first or the only thing in life for her,—any more than Poetry or Literature are with me,—the Divine, the divine consciousness, the discovery of the conditions for a divine life are and must be our one concern, with Art, Poetry or Music as parts or means only of the divine life or expression of the Divine Truth and the Divine Beauty. That does not mean that they are only “tolerated”, but that they are put in their right place.

29 October 1932

*

At the music one or two words of X's song practically made me weep with rapture, and some of Y's soft and deep turns of phrase almost led to tears. Afterwards it was silence. Is it the Mahalakshmi aspect of the Mother that is working these days?

On the music days it is always the Mahalakshmi aspect that is prominent.

25 December 1933

*

What can be stranger than this idea of yours that Mother likes only European music and does not like or appreciate Indian music—that she only pretends to do it or that she tolerates it so as not to discourage people! Remember that it is the Mother who has always praised and supported your music and put her force behind you so that your music might develop into spiritual perfection and beauty. In your poetry it was I that supported you most, in detail; the Mother could only do it with a general force, because she could not read the original (though she found them

in translations very beautiful), but that in music it has been just the other way round. You surely are not going to say that all that was unfelt? And the development of X? That too was Indian music, not European. And then when I write to you in praise of your music, do you think it is only my opinion that I am transmitting? Most often it is her words that I use to express our common feeling.

26 December 1933

*

There have been instances where people have taken up music with your approval, and they have worked at it only to find out later that it was not their line. What a waste of time for nothing! This is the thought that curbs my enthusiasm for writing poetry. Otherwise I quite understand that one has to suffer the "pangs of delivery". What do you say?

Approval or permission? People get it into their heads that they would like to do some music, because it is the fashion or because they like it so much, and the Mother may tolerate it or say, "All right, try." That does not mean they are predestined or doomed to be musicians — or poets — or painters according to the case. Perhaps one of them who try may bloom, others drop off. X starts painting and shows only a fanciful dash at first, after a time he brings out work, remarkable work. Y does clever facile things; one day he begins to deepen and a possible painter in the making outlines. Others, — well, they don't. But they can try — they will learn something about painting at least.

Labour at your sestets if the spirit pushes you. The Angel of Poetry may be delivered out of the labour, even if with a forceps.

24 May 1935

*

You have spoken of your singing. You know well that we approve of it and I have constantly stressed its necessity for you as well as that of your poetry. But the Mother absolutely forbade X's singing. To music for some again she is indifferent or discourages it, for others she approves as for Y, Z and others. For some time she encouraged the concerts, afterwards she stopped them.

You drew from the prohibition to X and the stopping of the concerts that Mother did not like music or did not like Indian music or considered music bad for sadhana and all sorts of strange mental reasons like that. Mother prohibited X because while music was good for you, it was spiritually poison to X — the moment he began to think of it and of audiences, all the vulgarity and unspirituality in his nature rose to the surface. You can see what he is doing with it now! So again with the concerts — though in a different way — she stopped them because she had seen that wrong forces were coming into their atmosphere which had nothing to do with the music in itself; her motives were not mental. It was for similar reasons that she drew back from big public displays like Udayshankar's. On the other hand she favoured and herself planned the exhibition of paintings at the Town Hall. She was not eager for you to have your big audiences for your singing because she found the atmosphere full of mixed forces and found too you had afterwards usually a depression; but she has always approved of your music in itself done privately or before a small audience. If you consider then, you will see that here there is no mental rule, but in each case the guidance is determined by spiritual reasons which are of a flexible character and look only at what in each case are the spiritual conditions, benefits, possibilities. There is no other consideration, no rule. Music, painting, poetry and many other activities which are of the mind and vital can be used as part of spiritual development or of the work and for a spiritual purpose — “it depends on the spirit in which they are done”.

24 October 1936

Golconde¹

The institution of visitors' cards was not made for love of discipline or rule-making, but out of practical necessity. People from the town were coming in pretending to be visitors and taking their meals in the dining room and unpermitted visitors were

¹ A large Ashram residence and guesthouse built in the late 1930s. — Ed.

passing themselves in for the Darshan; it was not possible for the dining room workers or the gatekeepers to know all the visitors or who were or were not genuine. I don't see myself why anybody should object or resent this necessary precaution. The alternative would be to let everybody who wanted enter for the Darshan and to let anybody who wanted to take his meal in the dining room. That would soon make things impossible.

As for X's handbag that is part of the special rules for Golconde. These rules, which do not obtain for the rest of the Asram houses, are read out to everybody who is to stay in Golconde and if he does not want he can be given accommodation elsewhere. X seemed to be very happy about his stay here; if he was not really so and felt badly about these rules, why on earth did he refuse to stay in your place?

I may mention that he told Y that there were two things he specially admired in the Asram, first the fact that everybody here rich or poor or of whatever caste was on the same level, and secondly the discipline of the Asram. He said, according to Y, that the absence of discipline was the great bane in India, neither individuals nor groups had any discipline. Then why did he weep merely because he was not allowed to put his handbag in a place not intended for it? I do not agree myself with him in the idea that there is perfect discipline in the Asram; on the contrary, there is a great lack of it, much indiscipline, quarrelling and self-assertion. What there is, is organisation and order which the Mother has been able to establish and maintain in spite of all that. That organisation and order is necessary for all collective work; it has been an object of admiration and surprise for all from outside who have observed the Asram; it is the reason why the Asram has been able to survive and outlive the malignant attacks of the Catholic priests and of many people in Pondicherry who would otherwise have got it dissolved long ago. The Mother knew very well what she was doing and what was necessary for the work she had to do.

Discipline itself is not something especially Western; in Oriental countries like Japan, China and India it was at one time all-regulating and supported by severe sanctions in a way that

Westerners would not tolerate. Socially whatever objections we may make to it, it is a fact that it preserved Hindu religion and Hindu society through the ages and through all vicissitudes. In the political field there was on the contrary indiscipline, individualism and strife; that is one reason why India collapsed and entered into servitude. Organisation and order were attempted but failed to endure. Even in the spiritual life India has had not only the free wandering ascetic, a law to himself, but has felt impelled to create orders of Sannyasins with their rules and governing bodies and there have also been monastic institutions with a strict discipline. Since no work can be done successfully without these things — even the individual worker, the artist for instance, has to go through a severe discipline in order to become efficient — why should the Mother be held to blame if she insists on discipline in the exceedingly difficult work she has had put in her charge?

I don't see on what ground you expect order and organisation to be carried on without rules and without discipline. You seem to say that people should be allowed complete freedom with only such discipline as they choose to impose upon themselves; that might do if the only thing to be done were for each individual to get some inner realisation and life did not matter or if there were no collective life or work or none that had any importance. But this is not the case here. We have undertaken a work which includes life and action and the physical world. In what I am trying to do, the spiritual realisation is the first necessity, but it cannot be complete without an outer realisation also in life, in man, in this world. Spiritual consciousness within but also spiritual life without. The Asram as it is now is not that ideal, for that all its members would have to live in a spiritual consciousness and not in the ordinary egoistic mind and mainly rajasic vital nature. But all the same, the Asram is a first form which our effort has taken, a field in which the preparatory work has to be done. The Mother has to maintain it and for that all this order and organisation has to be there and it cannot be done without rules and discipline. Discipline is even necessary for the overcoming of the ego and the mental preferences and

the rajasic vital nature, as a help to it at any rate. If these were overcome outward rules etc. would be less necessary; spontaneous agreement, unity, harmony and spontaneous right action might take its place. But while the present state of things exists, with the abandonment or leaving out of discipline except such as people might choose or not choose to impose upon themselves, the result would be failure and disaster. One has only to think what would have been the result if there had been no rules and no discipline prohibiting sex-indulgence; even with them things have not been so very good. On that principle the work also would have gone to pot, there would have been nothing but strife, assertion by each worker of his own idea and self-will and constant clashes; even as it is, that has abounded and it is only the Mother's authority, the frame of work she has given and her skill in getting incompatibles to act together that has kept things going.

I do not find that Mother is a rigid disciplinarian. On the contrary, I have seen with what a constant leniency, tolerant patience and kindness she has met the huge mass of indiscipline, disobedience, self-assertion, revolt that has surrounded her, even abuse to her very face and violent letters overwhelming her with the worst kind of vituperation. A rigid disciplinarian would not have treated these things like that.

I do not know what ill-treatment visitors have received, apart from the insistence on rules of which you complain, but it cannot be a general complaint, otherwise the number of visitors would not be constantly increasing nor would so many people want to come back again or even come every time or so many want to stay on if the Mother allowed them. After all they do not come here on the basis of a social occasion but for Darshan of those whom they regard to be spiritually great or in the case of constant visitors for a share in the life of the Asram and for spiritual advantage and for both of these motives one would expect them to submit willingly to the conditions imposed and not to mind a little inconvenience.

As regards Golconde and its rules — they are not imposed elsewhere — there is a reason for them and they are not imposed

for nothing. In Golconde Mother has worked out her own idea through Raymond, Sammer and others. First, Mother believes in beauty as a part of spirituality and divine living; secondly, she believes that physical things have the Divine Consciousness underlying them as much as living things; and thirdly, that they have an individuality of their own and ought to be properly treated, used in the right way, not misused or improperly handled or hurt or neglected so that they perish soon or lose their full beauty or value; she feels the consciousness in them and is so much in sympathy with them that what in other hands may be spoilt or wasted in a short time lasts with her for years or decades. It is on this basis that she planned Golconde. First, she wanted a high architectural beauty, and in this she succeeded—architects and people with architectural knowledge have admired it with enthusiasm as a remarkable achievement; one spoke of it as the finest building of its kind he had seen, with no equal in all Europe or America; and a French architect, pupil of a great master, said it executed superbly the idea which his master had been seeking for but failed to realise; but also she wanted all the objects in it, the rooms, the fittings, the furniture to be individually artistic and to form a harmonious whole. This too was done with great care. Moreover, each thing was arranged to have its own use, for each thing there was a place, and there should be no mixing up, or confused and wrong use. But all this had to be kept up and carried out in practice; for it was easy for people living there to create a complete confusion and misuse and to bring everything to disorder and ruination in a short time. That was why the rules were made and for no other purpose. The Mother hoped that if the right people were accommodated there or others trained to a less rough and ready living than is common, her idea could be preserved and the wasting of all the labour and expense avoided.

Unfortunately the crisis of accommodation came and we were forced to house people in Golconde who could not be accommodated elsewhere and a careful choice could not be made. So, often there was damage and misuse and the Mother had to spend sometimes 200/300 Rupees after Darshan to repair

things and restore what had been realised. Z has taken the responsibility of the house and of keeping things right as much as possible. That was why she interfered in the handbag affair—it was as much a tragedy for the table as for the doctor, for it got scratched and spoiled by the handbag—and tried to keep both the bag and shaving utensils in the places that had been assigned for them. If I had been in the doctor's place, I would have been grateful to her for her care and solicitude instead of being upset by what ought to have been for him trifles although, because of her responsibility, they had for her their importance. Anyhow, this is the rationale for the rules and they do not seem to me to be meaningless regulation and discipline.

Finally, about financial arrangements. It has been an arduous and trying work for the Mother and myself to keep up this Asram, with its ever-increasing numbers, to make both ends meet and at times to prevent deficit budgets and their results, especially in this war time, when the expenses have climbed to a dizzy and fantastic height. Only one accustomed to these things or who had similar responsibilities can understand what we have gone through. Carrying on anything of this magnitude without any settled income could not have been done if there had not been the working of a Divine Force. Works of charity are not part of our work, there are other people who can see to that. We have to spend all on the work we have taken in hand and what we get is nothing compared to what is needed. We cannot undertake things that would bring in money in the ordinary ways. We have to use whatever means are possible. There is no general rule that spiritual men must do works of charity or they should receive and care for whatever visitors come or house and feed them. If we do it, it is because it has become part of our work. The Mother charges visitors for accommodation and food because she has expenses to meet and cannot make money out of air; she charges in fact less than her expense. It is quite natural that she should not like people to take advantage of her and allow those who try to take meals in the dining room under false pretences; even if they are a few at first, yet if this were allowed, a few would soon become a legion. As for people being

allowed to come in freely for Darshan without permission, which would soon convert me into a thing for show and an object of curiosity, often critical or hostile curiosity, it is I who would be the first to cry "stop".

I have tried to explain our standpoint and have gone to some length to do it. Whether it is agreed with or not, at any rate it is a standpoint and I think a rational one. I am writing only on the surface and I do not speak of what is behind or from the Yogic standpoint, the standpoint of the Yogic consciousness from which we act; that would be more difficult to express. This is merely for intellectual satisfaction, and there there is always room for dispute.

25 February 1945

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As for Golconde, it is in that house of all the 80 or more houses in the Asram that she has been trying to carry out her idea of physical things, their harmony and order and proper treatment, she has not been imposing it elsewhere except in the matter of cleanliness and hygiene, which are surely not objectionable. I may say that you are mistaken in thinking that everybody who stays in Golconde is in a state of misery or revolt. On the contrary, there are many who have asked to be put and are put there at their own request every time they come. And they are not Europeans. Mother thoroughly appreciated and praised the old Indian way of living, its simplicity, harmony and order when she saw it exemplified by X and his brother in the Asram, but that is not the way of living most prevalent nowadays which is a mixture. Chairs, tables, electric fans etc. are European introductions, but I don't suppose those who have got accustomed to them would like to give them up or return to the true simplicity of Indian life. That however is by the way. But I fail to see why you should treat this external trifles as of so stupendous an importance. Mother should be free to carry out her idea in this corner of her kingdom; all that is to be seen is that those who violently dislike it should not stay in Golconde.

25 October 1945

The French Book *L'Ether Vivant*

Many of the questions asked in your letter about the condition after death are dealt with in the French book *L'Ether Vivant*. This book was written by Paul Richard, but all the substance was taken by him from the Mother, as he himself had no knowledge about these things. You can send the book to the Mother and she will mark the passages. You should also read what is said in the *Conversations* about these things.

18 November 1931

Meeting the Dead

Is there any indication the Mother has received to tell her that my brother's soul really wanted at the end to come to her Light and the Master's?

Mother cannot say particularly because so many people come to her in the night for the passage to the other side whom she has not known in the body. Your brother may very well have been one of them and in view of X's account, there is little doubt that he must have been.

December 1933

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When Mother said that it was not good to try to meet the dead, she was speaking from a spiritual standpoint which is not usually known or regarded by the spiritists.

25 August 1936

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It is not for everything that the souls of the departed come direct to the Mother, but this is a special action of hers and usually she sees the persons whom she has to help. But she has seen only X's mental being and it was still interested in earthly things; his vital being she has not seen and it is that that usually comes for help. Some however come at a later stage of the passage and not at first.

8 December 1936

Speaking to People about Past Lives

The Mother only speaks to people about their past births when she sees definitely some scene or memory of their past in concentration; but this happens rarely nowadays. 30 June 1933

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Mother does not usually look into past lives; only when things come of themselves from the past she looks. 24 July 1934

Sending Ethereal Beings to the Sadhaks

X said that ever since he wrote the sonnet "Hieroglyphics" as a joke, sonnets no longer come to him; this, you said, is because sonnets have a being of their own which is shocked by any crudity, jesting or misuse. My mind then caught the idea that there are beings, probably of the intuitive plane, who have very subtle and refined vibrations. At times they enter human beings and then something of their peace, refinement and purity manifests in men. But if there is anger, passion, desire, vanity or unrefinement, they recede and live in their own region. These beings are ethereal, peaceful, pure, loving, shy, like beautiful children. One should not injure their sense of harmony, purity, refinement and beauty by allowing any lower vital crudities. Mother sends one of these beings to each of us according to his possibility.

There is much truth in what you write — there are beings of that kind and your description is good. But it is not to *each* one that Mother sends them — only to some when there is an opening.

28 January 1934

An Occult or Yogic Faculty

X has reported Mother's observation correctly but he does not seem to have understood it. The Mother never meant that by merely willing one could know at once what was in someone else or that all one's impressions about him would be spontaneously and infallibly correct. What she meant was that there

is a faculty or power (an occult or Yogic faculty) by which one can get the right perceptions and impressions and if one has the will to do so, one can develop it. Not at once, not by an easy method — tra la la and there you are: it may take years and one has to be careful and scrupulous about it. For these are intuitive perceptions and intuition is a thing that can easily be imitated by many other movements of consciousness that are much more fallible. Your impressions may be mental or vital and a mental or vital impression may have something to justify it or may not — but even in the first case there is no certainty at all that it will be correct; even if there is that something, it may be incorrectly caught or caught with much mixture of error, twisted into falsehood, put in the wrong way etc. etc. And there may be no justification at all; it may be a mere wrong formation of your own mind or vital or else somebody else's wrong impression conveyed to you and accepted by you as your own. Your impression may be the result of a want of affinity between you and the other person, so that if he impresses you as null and neutral, it is because you cannot feel what is in him, it does not come home to you — or, again, if you feel that he is in a wrong condition, it may be only because his vital vibrations rub yours the wrong way. There are lots of things like that which one must have the power to distinguish very carefully and exactly; until one knows one's own consciousness and its operations well, one cannot know the operations of the consciousness of others. But it is possible to develop a certain direct sight or a certain direct feeling or contact by which one can know, but only after much time and much careful, scrupulous and vigilant observation and self-training. Till then one can't go about saying that this is an advanced sadhak or that one is not advanced and that other is no good at all. Even if one knows, it is not necessary always to air one's knowledge.

9 February 1935

The Mother Takes upon Herself Difficulties and Illnesses

Why did the Mother fall ill last time, she who is beyond the reach of death and disease? Why did she take medicine like

her blind children, she who is the cause of all medicines? Why did she suffer innocently like her frail children? Was it all a show to mask her infiniteness? Kindly write something to stop these questions in my mind.

It is much easier for the sadhak by faith in the Mother to get free from illness than for the Mother to keep free — because the Mother by the very nature of her work had to identify herself with the sadhaks, to support all their difficulties, to receive into herself all the poison in their nature, to take up besides all the difficulties of the universal earth-Nature, including the possibility of death and disease in order to fight them out. If she had not done that, not a single sadhak would have been able to practise this Yoga. The Divine has to put on humanity in order that the human being may rise to the Divine. This is a simple truth, but nobody in the Asram seems able to understand that the Divine can do that and yet remain different from them — can still remain the Divine.

8 May 1933

*

People believe that their difficulties and illnesses are taken away by the Mother and so she sometimes suffers or, as X puts it, "Mother has to pay." Is this suffering due to the identity of consciousness that the Mother calls into play and thus enters into the depths of obscure Matter? But at that rate there would be too great an onrush of these things on her from many sadhaks. An idea comes to me of taking upon myself some of these difficulties and illnesses so that I can also suffer with her pleasantly?

Pleasantly? It would be anything but pleasant either for you or for us.

But perhaps all these ideas are only conjectures of people.

It is rather a crude statement of a fact. The Mother in order to do her work had to take all the sadhaks inside her personal being and consciousness; thus personally (not merely impersonally) taken inside, all the disturbances and difficulties in them including illness could throw themselves upon her in a way that

could not have happened if she had not renounced the self-protection of separateness. Not only illnesses of others could translate themselves into attacks on her body — these she could generally throw off as soon as she knew from what quarter and why it came — but their inner difficulties, revolts, outbursts of anger and hatred against her could have the same and a worse effect. That was the only danger for her (because inner difficulties are easily surmountable), but matter and the body are the weak point or crucial point of our Yoga, since this province has never been conquered by the spiritual Power, the old Yogas having either left it alone or used on it only a detailed mental and vital force, not the general spiritual force. It was the reason why after a serious illness caused by a terribly bad state of the Asram atmosphere, I had to insist on her partial retirement so as to minimise the most concrete part of the pressure upon her. Naturally the full conquest of the physical would revolutionise matters, but as yet it is the struggle.

31 March 1934

*

Is it inevitable that in the process of conversion and transformation all these resistances, disturbances, revolts should come? Could they be eliminated to some extent from the very beginning of one's sadhana so that there would be less of these things for the Mother to take into herself?

The nature of the terrestrial consciousness and of humanity being what it is, these things were to some extent inevitable. It is only a very few who escape with the slighter adverse movements only. But after a time these things should disappear. It does so disappear in individuals — but there seems to be a great difficulty in getting it to disappear from the atmosphere of the Asram — somebody or other always takes it up and from him it tries to spread to others. It is of course because there is behind it one of the principles of life according to the Ignorance — a deeply rooted tendency of vital Nature. But it is the very aim of sadhana to overcome that and substitute a truer and diviner vital Force.

1 April 1934

*

You have written to me that standing is not good for Mother, and yet I see the Mother standing in concentration on the staircase for at least fifteen minutes every night. Remembering what you told me, I feel so anxious. I feel she has only to sit down on a seat or a chair. Can it not be done, please?

When Mother stands on the stairs in full concentration it is quite a different thing from standing talking with people. In the former condition nothing can touch her. In the second she has to identify herself with the general physical consciousness and open herself to its forces, so the conditions are not the same. Nowadays there is an improvement in the physical, but still limits must be kept.

5 November 1934

*

There are people who tend to take away one's vital strength. What should one do? Should one not talk to others or merely exchange smiles with them or walk gravely past them? Should one try to help others at all?

The danger of helping others is the danger of taking upon oneself their difficulties. If one can keep oneself separate and help, this does not occur. But the tendency in helping is to take the person partially or completely into one's larger self. That is what the Mother has had to do with the sadhaks and the reason why she has sometimes to suffer — for one cannot always be on guard against any backwash when one is absorbed or in action. There is also the difficulty that the persons helped get the habit of drawing and pulling on your forces instead of leaving it to you to give just what you can and ought to give. And many other smaller possibilities one who helps others has to face.

29 January 1935

*

Somebody told me that when the Mother tries to do something with X, if his vital does not agree, he revolts against her with such a force that it sometimes brings illness to her body.

There are many who did that in the past. I don't know that he

does it now. But all bad thoughts upon the Mother or throwing of impurities on her may affect her body as she has taken the sadhaks into her consciousness, nor can she send these things back to them as it might hurt them.

17 March 1936

*

Do people really throw their impurities on the Mother or does she draw their impurities into herself in order to purify them?

There is not the slightest necessity for the Mother drawing impurities into herself—any more than for the sadhak inviting impurity to come into himself. Impurity has to be thrown away, not drawn in.

18 March 1936

*

I don't know whether the Mother was joking or was serious when she wrote to me: "But why should I have any desires either? You want me to be burdened with desires about you, so that you be free from desires? That might be good for you—not for me." I suppose this was a joke. Certainly we all wish to unload our desires on the Mother so that she may reject them or transform them.

The idea of unburdening desires, imperfections, impurities, illnesses on the Mother so that she may bear the results instead of the sadhaks is a curious one. I suppose it is a continuation of the Christian idea of Christ suffering on the cross for the sake of humanity. But it has nothing to do with the Yoga of transformation.

1 November 1936

*

Do our grumblings and imputations against the Mother hurt her in some way? Does this have any undesirable effect on her body?

I cannot say that it does not have an effect—sometimes it may not have, if she is on her guard, at other times it has. It is not the imputations that do it, but the force behind which throws the darkness in you and takes the form of a vital upsetting in you

but passes on to her as an attack on the body since other things in her are unattackable. That is why these moods should never be formed against her.

12 January 1937

*

What you saw is correct, but if the attitude of the sadhak is the true psychic attitude, then the Mother has not to suffer; she can act on them without anything falling on her.

22 January 1937

*

Mother has stopped the Pranam because something happened with her eyes. Sometimes we notice that she catches a cold. How do these things happen since she is the incarnated Divine?

It is due to attacks. As the material is not yet conquered, the Mother's body has to bear the attacks which come daily and to which the sadhaks freely open the doors. If she cut off her consciousness altogether from that of the sadhaks or put them outside her consciousness, these things would not happen.

8 February 1937

*

I could not help writing in order to know why the Mother's left cheek was swollen. I was shocked to see it at the Sunday meditation. Is it due to the impurities of the sadhaks thrown on her, which she gladly receives for our relief? Or is it due to some other reason?

It is due to the impurities of the sadhaks thrown on the Mother.

How calmly she bears the agonies of her children. Is there no end to it? Will it disappear after the full transformation of the physical?

There seems to be no remedy possible before the physical change. If the Mother puts an inner wall between her and the sadhaks, it would not happen, but then they would be unable to receive anything from her. If all were more careful to come to her with

their deepest or highest consciousness, then there would be less chance of these things happening.

3 May 1937

The Mother and Medicines

I know that we inflict a lot of undesirable things on the Mother and that sometimes she does not reject them, but takes them upon herself. But why should she not reject her cold and accept a medicine to do it? I am therefore enclosing a new phial, an olfactory; Mother should take half-a-dozen inhalations in each nostril four times a day. That is all that is necessary.

Mother does not use medicines so it is no use sending them to her. But there are people who send to her suggestions such as "Oh you are very ill, you won't be able to sit through the Pranam" and some of these are thrown with force and she has to work them out of the system, as happened today at Pranam. If you will give these people a medicine which will stop this habit of theirs, it will be very useful.

5 September 1936

*

I am afraid Mother still has a strong photophobia. X said there is ptosis also . . .

What is ptosis?

which may remain if neglected.

Why do people make such prognostications? Suggestions of the kind ought never to be made, mentally even—they might act like suggestions and do more harm than any good medicines could do.

X doesn't understand, and neither do I, why Mother doesn't take kindly to medicines and doctors when it could be cured in a short time, he says. Well, what could I say! Shall we stop medical reports or do you see them? Frankly, I don't know how much our allopathic medicines can help.

Then why don't you understand? If medicines can't help, what's the use of putting foreign matter in the eye merely because it is a medicine? Medicines have a quite different action on the Mother's body than they would have on yours or X's or anybody else's and the reaction is not usually favourable. Her physical consciousness is not the same as that of ordinary people — though even in ordinary people it is not so identical in all cases as science would have us believe.

1 February 1937

*

I am surprised to hear that even "prognostications" are very harmful. So far we have taken these things as simple superstitions.

Prognostications of that kind should not be lightly thought or spoken — especially in the case of the Mother — in other cases, even if there is a possibility or probability, they should be kept confidential from the person affected, unless it is necessary to inform. This is because of the large part played by state of consciousness and suggestion in illness.

What is ptosis? Ptosis means drooping of the upper eyelid by a paralysis temporary or otherwise.

But, confound it, there is nothing of the kind. The drooping of the eyelid was quite voluntary.

2 February 1937

*

Whatever little doctors have found by experience to be effective, you absolutely disallow. For instance, they recommend Calomel for diarrhoea; you say it is not to be given . . .

It is no use discussing these matters — the Mother's views are too far removed from the traditional nostrums to be understood by a medical mind, except those that have got out of the traditional groove or those who after long experience have seen things and can become devastatingly frank about the limitations of their own "science".

Milk of Magnesia is usually harmless; but it can also be harmful, as it was in this case.

Ideas differ. Both the Mother and X were horrified at the idea of a child of 4 months being given a purgative. The leading children's doctor in France told the Mother no child under 12 months should be given a purgative, as it is likely to do great harm and may be dangerous. But here, we understand, it is the practice to dose children freely with purgatives from their day of birth almost. Perhaps that and overadministration of medicines is one cause of excessive infant mortality. 4 April 1937

*

Once Mother asked me to try this method of diagnosis: instead of analysing the various possibilities and probabilities and then diagnosing by elimination, to just keep quiet and go at it. So also in the case of choosing medicines. Just wait for the true intuition of the thing to come.

Well, so that's how the Mother's statements are understood! A free permit for anything and everything calling itself an intuition to go crashing into the field of action! Go at it, indeed! Poor it!

What the Mother says in the matter is what she said to Dr. X with his entire agreement — viz. reading from symptoms by the doctors is usually a mere balancing between possibilities (of course except in clear and simple cases) and the conclusion is a guess. It may be a right guess and then it will be all right, or it may be a wrong guess and then all will be wrong unless Nature is too strong for the doctor and overcomes the consequences of his error — or at the least the treatment will be ineffective. On the contrary if one develops the diagnostic flair, one can see at once what is the real thing among the possibilities and see what is to be done. That is what the most successful doctors have, — they have this flashlight which shows them the true point. X agreed and said the cause of the guessing was that there were whole sets of symptoms which could belong to any one of several diseases and to decide is a most delicate and subtle business, no amount of book knowledge or reasoning will ensure a right decision. A

special insight is needed that looks through the symptoms and not merely at them. This last sentence, by the way, is my own, not X's. About development of intuition afterwards — no time tonight.

6 April 1937

*

I am afraid X has obstinate constipation. Treatment? Well, I am damned, for except enema castor oil is the medicine for children in our "science".

All "science" does not recommend castor oil for children—I think it is a nineteenth century fad which has prolonged itself. The Mother's "children's doctor" told her it should not be done — also in her own case when a child the doctors peremptorily stopped it on the ground that it spoiled the stomach and liver. I suppose you will say doctors disagree? They do! When Y's child reached Madras, the first doctor said "Stop mother's milk for three days", the second said "Mother's milk to be taken at once, at once!" So, sir. Anyhow for X Mother proposes diet first—small bananas Z will give, very good for constipation—papaya if available in the garden. Also as he is pimply, cocoanut water on an empty stomach. Afterwards we can see if medicine is necessary.

9 April 1937

The Mother and Eye Treatment

I believe the Mother is using glasses for reading. Would she like to try my treatment [*palming, etc.*]?

The Mother has seen that these methods are perfectly effective, but she cannot follow a treatment because she has no time. Her sight is variable: when she can rest and concentrate a little and do what is necessary, she can read without glasses. 8 July 1934

Giving Money to the Mother

You will find with this a letter from the Mother giving you her point of view with regard to the request for a written statement

from herself about approaching people for money. You must make X understand that this is not done and cannot be done. If he feels moved to do this as work for the Mother, the knowledge that it is needed should be enough. It is not a question of a public appeal for funds, but of getting friends and sympathisers to help. You will see from the Mother's letter the spirit in which it should be done.

circa 29 April 1938

*

The Mother has never objected to people who "cannot pay" residing or visiting the Asram without paying; she expects payment only from visitors who can pay. She did object strongly to the action of some rich visitors (on one occasion) who came here, spent money lavishly on purchases etc. and went off without giving anything to the Asram or even the smallest offering to the Mother, that is all.

21 October 1943

*

My book is going into a second edition. The publisher promises to send me what he owes me (to be offered to the Mother, of course). So far he hasn't sent me a pice. I wonder how much he will send in the end? Do you think I am getting too commercial?

If you give the money to the Mother, that can't be commercial; commerce implies personal profit, and here your profit is only spiritual.

2 April 1944

The Mother's Accounts

X showed me the play of numbers in his account book today. The total was Rs. 7 As. 7 Ps. 7. Today is also the 7th day of the 7th month of the year and after I decided to write to you about this I saw that the number on the door of the house where I was working was also 7. Elsewhere one does not come across such a play of numbers. I think it occurs here because the numbers (perhaps the occult beings of numbers) feel at ease in our atmosphere — as do the sparrows in the main building! — and they play with the numbers if one plays upon them and

loves them. In government departments and other places they feel the atmosphere mechanical, heavy and rigorous and so they do not find any joy in such play.

I suppose your explanation is correct — at least from the occult point of view. The Mother is always having these numerical harmonies in her accounts.

7 July 1936

The Mother's Attire

Why does the Mother wear rich and beautiful clothes?

Beauty is as much an expression of the Divine as Knowledge, Power or Ananda. Does anyone ask why does the Mother want to manifest the divine consciousness by knowledge or by power and not by ignorance and weakness?² It would not be a more absurd or meaningless question than this one put by the vital against wearing artistic and beautiful dress. 27 February 1933

*

Does it make any difference to the Mother's consciousness whether she puts on the best saris or the old ones, whether she lives in a palace or in a forest? What do these outer things add to the inner reality?

Outer things are the expression of something in the inner reality. A fine sari or a palace are expressions of the principle of beauty in things and that is their main value. The Divine Consciousness is not bound by these things and has no attachment, but it is also not bound to abstain from them if beauty in things is part of its intended action. The Mother, when the Asram was still unformed, was wearing patched cotton saris; when she took up the work, it was necessary to change her habits, so she did so.

22 October 1935

² The Mother also replied to this question. She wrote: "Is it your idea that the Divine should be represented on earth by poverty and ugliness?" — Ed.

The Mother's Photograph

When I get sleepy during meditation, I often just sit in a quietly concentrated wakefulness and look at the Mother's photo or your photo. Can I get the same amount of benefit simply by looking at Mother's photo or yours with all the concentration I can command?

Yes, very many do.

Sometimes in that state I pray; sometimes the inside is void — no thoughts or words at all, so I simply gaze. Am I pursuing the right line?

Yes.

10 March 1933

The Mother's Naming of Cats

The Mother gave names for cats because they understand and answer; she has never given any for birds and does not wish to do it. Now even for cats she is not giving names. 28 April 1932

The Mother's Symbol

In the chakra which is printed on the book *The Mother*, what colours are appropriate for the central dot and for the "four powers"? I am thinking of preparing a powder design with a little addition at the circumference.

Centre and 4 powers white. The 12 all of different colours, in three groups, (1) top group red passing through orange towards yellow, (2) next group yellow passing through green towards blue, (3) blue passing through violet towards red. If white is not convenient, the centre may be gold (powder). 20 March 1934

*

In the chakra for the central circle you have asked me to use either white or gold — suppose I use gold at the centre, then should I use white at the strap around it? In that case the straps

around the two bigger circles will have gold and the central strap alone will have white.

The central circle need not have a strap — simply a gold disc.

11 April 1934

*

I have frequently been thinking of the Mother's symbol (chakra) and its significance. I have understood it as follows:

Central circle — Transcendental power.

Four inner petals — Four powers working from the Supermind to Overmind.

Twelve outer petals — Division of four into twelve powers from Overmind to Intuition and mind.

Is my conception at all tenable?

Essentially (in general principle) the 12 powers are the vibrations that are necessary for the complete manifestation. These are the 12 seen from the beginning above the Mother's head. Thus there are really 12 rays from the sun, not 7, 12 planets etc.

As to the exact interpretation of the detail of the powers, I see nothing against the arrangement you have made. It can stand very well.

15 April 1934

The Mother's Flag

About the blue flag. I presume you mean the flag with the white lotus. If so, it is the Mother's flag, for the white lotus is her symbol as the red lotus is mine. The blue of the flag is meant to be the colour of Krishna and so represents the spiritual or Divine Consciousness which it is her work to establish so that it may reign upon earth. This is the meaning of the flag being used as the Ashram flag, that our work is to bring down this consciousness and make it the leader of the world's life.

14 March 1949

Section Five
On Three Works of the Mother

600

On *Prières et Méditations de la Mère*

General Comments on the Mother's *Prières*¹

There are some prayers of the Mother written before she came here in 1914 in which there are ideas of transformation and manifestation. Did she have these ideas long before she came here?

The Mother had been spiritually conscious from her youth, even from her childhood, upward and she had done sadhana and developed this knowledge very long before she came to India.

23 December 1933

*

In some of the Mother's prayers which are addressed to "divin Maître" I find the words: "avec notre divine Mère". How can the Mother and "divin Maître" have a "divine Mère"? It is as if the Mother was not the "divine Mère" and there was some other Mother, and the "divin Maître" was not the Transcendent and had also a "divine Mère"! Or is it that all these are addressed to something impersonal?

The Prayers are mostly written in an identification with the earth-consciousness. It is the Mother in the lower nature addressing the Mother in the higher nature, the Mother herself carrying on the sadhana of the earth-consciousness for the transformation praying to herself above from whom the forces of transformation come. This continues till the identification of the earth-consciousness and the higher consciousness is effected. The word "notre" is general, I believe, referring to all born into the earth-consciousness — it does not mean "the Mother of

¹ First published in 1932 as *Prières et Méditations de la Mère*, this book is now published as *Prières et Méditations* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1990). The page numbers given after phrases quoted from the prayers in this subsection refer to the 1990 edition. Translations of the French words are given in the Note on the Texts. — Ed.

the ‘*Divin Maître*’ and myself”. It is the Divine who is always referred to as *Divin Maître* and *Seigneur*. There is the Mother who is carrying on the sadhana and the Divine Mother, both being one but in different poises, and both turn to the *Seigneur* or Divine Master. This kind of prayer from the Divine to the Divine you will find also in the Ramayan and the Mahabharat.

21 August 1936

*

Mother, I have started reading your prayers in the French original with X. May I get one copy for myself?

The rule is that Mother never gives a copy unless she gets a letter in French written by the person without help asking for it. He must know enough French to do that.

14 September 1936

Comments on Specific Prières

In her prayer of 17 May 1914, the Mother says, “*Telles furent les deux phrases que j'écrivis hier par une sorte de nécessité absolue. La première, comme si la puissance de la prière ne serait complète que si elle était tracée sur le papier.*” [p. 158]

Is it true that a prayer is less powerful when it is kept within oneself and not expressed in speech or writing? Is its expression necessary to make it completely powerful?

It was not meant as a general rule — it was only a necessity felt with regard to that particular prayer and that experience. It all depends on the person, the condition, the need of the moment or of that stage or phase of the consciousness. These things in spiritual experience are always plastic and variable. In some conditions or in one phase or at one moment expression may be needed to bring out the effectuating force of the prayer or the stability of the experience; in another condition or phase or at another moment it may be the opposite, expression would rather disperse the force or break the stability.

21 June 1936

*

Nothing seems more important to me than that “*Ta splendeur*

veut rayonner" [p. 192], as the Mother says in her prayer of 16 June 1914. Ideas of sadhana or of perfection for oneself or of being an instrument seem flat and insipid. After all, the individual does not really exist when considered from the standpoint of the vast universal movement of consciousness.

It is correct. Perfection for oneself is not the true ideal; sadhana and instrumentation are only useful as a means for the "*rayonnement*".

22 April 1936

*

The passage in the *Prières* that came up tonight is this: "*et le raisonnement est une faculté humaine, c'est-à-dire individuelle*" [p. 201]. I am not able to see what it points to.

When the divine consciousness is veiled, one has to fall back on the reason, but the human reason is an individual action quite unreliable. That is the sense.

18 June 1932

*

The Mother says in her prayer of 31 July 1914 that spiritual experience is willed ("*elle est consciente, voulue*" [p. 231]) by the Divine. Am I then to suppose that the dearth or abundance of experiences in any given case is willed by the Divine?

To say so has no value unless you realise all things as coming from the Divine. One who has realised as the Mother had realised in the midst of terrible sufferings and difficulties that even these came from the Divine and were preparing her for her work can make spiritual use of such an attitude. For others it may lead to wrong conclusions.

10 May 1934

*

The Mother, in her prayer of 4 August 1914, says: "*Les hommes, poussés par le conflit des forces, accomplissent un sublime sacrifice*" [p. 235]. Apparently she refers to the great war; but as a result of that war, has any "*pure lumière*" filled the hearts of men or the "*Force Divine*" spread on earth as she says later in the same prayer; has anything beneficial come

out of that chaos? Since the nations are once more preparing for war and are in a state of constant conflict, there seems to be no indication of any change in the inner condition of men. People want war. Even people in a country like India seem to secretly wish for another great war. Hardly anyone seems to require Peace, Light or Love.

There has been a change for the worse—the descent of the vital world into the human. On the other hand except in the “possessed” nations there is a greater longing for peace and feeling that such things ought not to happen. India did not get any real touch of the war. However what the Mother was thinking of was an opening to the spiritual truth. That has at least tried to come. There is a widespread dissatisfaction with the old material civilisation, a seeking for some deeper light and truth —only unfortunately it is being taken advantage of by the old religions and only a very small minority is consciously searching for the new Light.

9 June 1936

*

You say that after the great war there was “the descent of the vital world into the human”. But did not the vital world already descend on earth—in Matter—even before human beings came? What other vital world remained yet to descend into the human? And how is it that it decided to come down just at present—to prevent the higher Light from coming down or finding room in the human world?

When there is a pressure on the vital world due to the preparing Descent from above, that world usually precipitates something of itself into the human. The vital world is very large and far exceeds the human in extent. But usually it dominates by influence not by descent. Of course the effort of this part of the vital world is always to maintain humanity under its sway and prevent the higher Light.

9 June 1936

*

If, as you say, there has been a “change for the worse” due to the descent of the vital world, would it not make the

supramental descent in the earth-consciousness impossible or postpone its coming to some distant future instead of here and now? Moreover, the “possessed” nations are endowed with all the possible material power, making it difficult for any movement of peace to be successful. Except for their egoistic plans, nothing will be allowed to succeed.

The vital descent cannot prevent the supramental — still less can the possessed nations do it by their material power, since the supramental descent is primarily a spiritual fact which will bear its necessary outward consequences. What previous vital descents have done is to falsify the Light that came down as in the history of Christianity where it took possession of the teaching and distorted it and deprived it of any widespread fulfilment. But the supermind is by definition a Light that cannot be distorted if it acts in its own right and by its own presence. It is only when it holds itself back and allows inferior Powers of consciousness to use a diminished and already deflected Truth that the knowledge can be seized by the vital Forces and made to serve their own purpose.

12 June 1936

*

In her prayer of 16 August 1914, the Mother refers to “*chacun des grands êtres Asouriques qui ont résolu d'être Tes serviteurs*” [p. 244]. How is it that the Asuras have determined to be the servants of the Divine? Is it exploitation or a “*coup de diplomatie*”?

It was in reference to Asuras who had taken birth in human bodies — a thing they usually avoid if they can, for they prefer to possess human beings without taking birth — with the claim that they wanted to regenerate themselves by serving the Divine and doing his work. It did not succeed very well.

15 June 1936

*

Who are the “*grands êtres Asouriques*” mentioned by the Mother who had taken birth in human bodies claiming to serve the Divine? Since they are “*grands*” they must have been well-known persons. I can see only one — Rasputin. Hitler,

Stalin and Co. do not claim to serve the Divine.

Mother was not speaking of these but of others met by herself. But “grands” here does not mean great in the worldly sense, that is incarnating in famous people, but powerful in the vital world.

20 June 1936

*

In her prayer of 8 October 1914, the Mother says: “*La joie contenue dans l’activité est compensée et équilibrée par la joie plus grande peut-être encore contenue dans le retrait de toute activité*” [p. 286]. This state of “greater joy” (“*la joie plus grande*”), Mother explains, is that of Sachchidananda. Does this not suggest that there is a joy in non-activity superseding that of activity? If such be the case, one would naturally aspire for this greater joy, since an ever greater joy is the aim of our sadhana. Is it not so?

Do you think the Mother has a rigid mind like you people and was laying down a hard and fast rule for all time and all people and all conditions? It refers to a certain stage when the consciousness is sometimes in activity and when not in activity is withdrawn in itself. Afterwards comes a stage when the Sachchidananda condition is there in work also. There is a still farther stage when both are as it were one, but that is the supramental. The two states are the silent Brahman and the active Brahman and they can alternate (1st stage), coexist (2d stage), fuse (3d stage). If you reach even the first stage then you can think of applying Mother’s dictum, but why misapply it now?

My question is this: can this state of greater joy, Sachchidananda, be realised while one is actually doing work?

Certainly it is realisable in work. Good Lord! how could the integral Yoga exist if it were not?

22 December 1934

*

In her prayer of 3 November 1914, the Mother says that “*dans tous les coins du monde une de Tes divines pierres est posée par la puissance de la pensée consciente et formatrice*”

[p. 296]. Is this not similar to the fact that when Rama came he had with him some Devas and other higher beings to assist him in his work on the earth? I believe there are various such “divine stones” (“divines pierres”) now in various countries who will be gradually called to assist in the work of manifestation. Perhaps just now they are not awakened and called.

It is very probable. But at present it is only in France that anyone is awake, with some movement towards it in America. People from other parts have sometimes come and gone, but they were evidently not the stones chosen.

5 September 1936

*

The Mother’s prayer of 12 December 1914 begins: “*Il faut à chaque instant savoir tout perdre pour tout gagner*” [p. 311]. The Isha Upanishad says: “*tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ*”. To gain all by losing all comes to the same thing as to enjoy by renouncing. Both ideas seem to have the same source in the depths.

Yes, certainly. It is essentially the same truth put in different ways. It might be put in a negative form — “if we cling to things as they are in their imperfection in the Ignorance, we cannot have them in their truth and perfection in the Divine Light, Harmony and Ananda.”

16 August 1935

*

[In her prayer of 20 December 1916, the Mother wrote out a long “communication” she received in her evening meditation from Çakya-Mouni (pp. 366–67). A disciple asked who this was.]

Çakya-Mouni is a name of Buddha — “the sage of the Çakyas” — the clan to which Buddha belonged by birth and of which his father was the “king”.

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Last night I was reading the Mother’s prayer of 21 December 1916 and I was struck by this: “*Il [mon être] sait que cet état*

d'amour actif doit être constant et impersonnel, c'est-à-dire tout à fait indépendant des circonstances et des personnes, puisqu'il ne peut et ne doit être concentré sur aucune en particulier” [p. 369]. This gave me a sort of key to the ever-stormy trouble in my own nature. I always expect some sort of return when I do anything for anybody. That should go. I should neither have a clinging for such returns nor any attachment to human contacts, however soothing. Without a repudiation of the human way of approach, I can never establish any harmony within which is “independent of circumstances or persons”. The difficulty, of course, is that Divine Love appears to me too impersonal and cold, that is, lacking in warmth though not a cold harmony. But perhaps Divine Love is not like that.

Love cannot be cold—for there is no such thing as cold love, but the love of which the Mother speaks in that passage is something very pure, fixed and constant; it does not leap like fire and sink for want of fuel, but is steady and all-embracing and self-existent like the light of the sun. There is also a divine love that is personal, but it is not like the ordinary personal human love dependent on any return from the person—it is personal but not egoistic,—it goes from the real being in the one to the real being in the other. But to find that, liberation from the ordinary human way of approach is necessary.

21 November 1936

*

X has given me a book, *Eveillez-vous*, in which there are some ideas similar to our own. For example, there are some lines about “someone coming down”, put in a Theosophical way. And there is the idea that when the Awakening comes, there will be strong resistance from those who are opposed to evolution; in other words the idea of hostile beings is there. Also the sentence, “*La Paix régnera sur terre*”—has the author not copied these words from the Mother’s prayers?

Not necessarily, as the phrase can easily come to one who has read the Bible and the English are very biblical. The idea of the hostile beings also is not new, in fact it is as old as the Veda. The expectation of the Advent is also pretty widespread, as according

to the old prophecies it must be when the Advent is due.

16 September 1935

Hearing the Mother Read Her *Prières*

Today as I sat on the staircase hearing the Mother read from *Prières et Méditations*, I felt a thrilling sensation, as if all the parts of my being — body, mental, vital and psychic — were aspiring. How did this thrilling sensation come?

When an intense Power is put out, it will naturally give a thrill to those who receive it.

Reading the Mother's *Prières*

While reading Mother's *Prières* I feel as if I am not reading the words or thoughts but contacting something quiet, pleasant and formless behind them.

Yes, it is so. The words are only a vehicle. When the consciousness opens one feels all that is behind the words.

11 March 1933

On Conversations with the Mother

Comments on Specific Conversations¹

The Mother asks: “What do you want the Yoga for? To get power?” [p. 1] Does “power” here mean the power to communicate one’s own experience to others?

Power is a general term — it is not confined to a power to communicate. The most usual form of power is control over things, persons, events, forces.

“What is required is concentration — concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose” [p. 1]. Is the Divine’s Will different from its Purpose?

The two words have not the same meaning. Purpose means the intention, the object in view towards which the Divine is working. Will is a wider term than that.

“Concentrate in the heart” [p. 1]. What is concentration?
What is meditation?

Concentration here means gathering of the consciousness into one centre and fixing it on one object or on one idea or in one condition. Meditation is a general term which can include many kinds of inner activity.

1 January 1937

*

In *Conversations* the Mother says: “A fire is burning there, in

¹ These conversations of 1929 were first published in 1931 as *Conversations with the Mother*. They now form the first part of *Questions and Answers 1929–1931* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), volume 3 of the *Collected Works of the Mother*. The page numbers given after quoted passages in this subsection refer to the 2003 edition.—Ed.

the deep quietude of the heart” [p. 1]. Is this the psychic fire or the psychic being?

A fire is not a being — it is the psychic fire, an intense condition of aspiration.

*

“A fire is burning there. . . . It is the divinity in you — your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates” [p. 1]. I have never seen this fire in me. Yet I feel I know the divinity in me. I feel I hear its voice and I try my utmost to follow its dictates. Should I doubt my feeling?

No, what you feel is probably the intimation from the psychic being through the mind. To be directly conscious of the psychic fire, one must have the subtle vision and subtle sense active or else the direct action of the psychic acting as a manifest power in the consciousness.

“We have all met in previous lives” [p. 3]. Who precisely are “we”? Do both of you remember me? Did I often serve you for this work in the past?

It is a general principle announced which covers all who are called to the work. At the time the Mother was seeing the past (or part of it) of those to whom she spoke and that is why she said this. At present we are too much occupied with the crucial work in the physical consciousness to go into these things. Moreover we find that it encouraged a sort of vital romanticism in the sadhaks which made them attach more importance to these things than to the hard work of sadhana, so we have stopped speaking of past lives and personalities.

2 January 1937

*

In *Conversations* the Mother says: “We have all met in previous lives. . . . We are of one family and have worked through ages for the victory of the Divine” [p. 3]. Is this true of all people who come and stay here? But there have been many who came and went away.

Those who went away were also of these and still are of that circle. Temporary checks do not make any difference to the essential truth of the soul's seeking.

In what way have we "worked through ages for the victory of the Divine"? How much has been achieved till now?

By the victory is meant the final emergence of the embodied consciousness on earth from the bondage of the Ignorance. That had to be prepared through the ages by a spiritual evolution. Naturally the work up till now has been a preparation of which the long spiritual effort and experience of the past has been the outcome. It has reached a point at which the decisive effort has become possible.

18 June 1933

*

"There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline) and the other of surrender" [p. 4]. Once you interpreted a vision I had as Agni, the fire of purification and tapasya, producing the Sun of Truth. What path do I follow? What place has tapasya in the path of surrender? Can one do absolutely without tapasya in the path of surrender?

There is a tapasya that takes place automatically as the result of surrender and there is a discipline that one carries out by one's own unaided effort—it is the latter that is meant in the "two paths of Yoga". But Agni as the fire of tapasya can burn in either case.

4 January 1937

*

The Mother, in her *Conversations*, says that "the first effect of Yoga . . . is to take away the mental control" [p. 5] so that the ideas and desires which were so long checked become surprisingly prominent and create difficulties. Would you not call these forces the consequence of yogic pressure?

They were not prominent because they were getting some satisfaction or at least the vital generally was getting indulged in one way or another. When they are no longer indulged then they

become obstreperous. But they are not new forces created by the Yoga — they were there all the time.

What is meant by the mental control being removed, is that the mental simply kept them in check but could not remove them. So in Yoga the mental has to be replaced by the psychic or spiritual self-control which could do what the mental cannot. Only many sadhaks do not make this exchange in time and withdraw the mental control merely.

12 May 1933

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"The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them" [p. 5]. What are the other impulses referred to?

It refers to strong vital impulses.

"The whole world is full of the poison. You take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him" [p. 6]. How long is a sadhak subject to this fear of catching contagion? I feel I won't catch such a contagion now. Is my feeling trustworthy?

I don't know that it is. One has to go very far on the path before one is so secure as that.

4 January 1937

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In *Conversations* the Mother says that if the central being has surrendered, then the chief difficulty is gone [p. 7]. What is this central being? Is it the psychic?

The central being is the Purusha. If it is surrendered, then all the other beings can be offered to the Divine and the psychic being brought in front.

18 April 1933

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In *Conversations* the Mother says: "One who dances and jumps and screams has the feeling that he is somehow very unusual in his excitement; and his vital nature takes great

pleasure in that” [p. 11]. Does she mean that one should be usual instead of unusual in one’s excitement during spiritual experience?

The Mother did not mean that one must be usual in one’s excitement at all — she meant that the man is not only excited but also wants to be unusual (extraordinary) in his excitement. The excitement itself is bad and the desire to seem extraordinary is worse.

7 June 1933

*

“But to those who possess the necessary basis and foundation we say, on the contrary, ‘Aspire and draw’ ” [p. 11]. Does this capacity to aspire and draw indicate a great advance already made towards perfection?

No. It is a comparatively elementary stage.

5 January 1937

*

In the chapter on dream in the *Conversations*, I came across the following passage: “In sleep you fell into the grip of these subconscious² regions and they opened and swallowed all that you had laboriously built up in your conscious hours” [p. 15]. If these regions swallow all one has achieved during the day, is it not necessary to be conscious at night as well as in the day?

At night, when one sinks into the subconscious after being in a good state of consciousness, we find that state gone and we have to labour to get it back again. On the other hand, if the sleep is of the better kind, one may wake up in a good condition. Of course, it is better to be conscious in sleep, if one can.

25 June 1933

*

“Spiritual experience means the contact with the Divine in oneself (or without, which comes to the same thing in that domain)” [p. 17]. What is meant by the Divine “without”?

² In the text of Conversations, the word used is “unconscious”, not “subconscious”. — Ed.

Does it mean the cosmic Divine or the transcendental Divine or both?

It means the Divine seen outside in things, beings, events etc. etc.

Was Jeanne d'Arc's nature transformed even a little because of her relation with the two archangels, the two beings of the Overmind? [pp. 17-18]

I don't see how the question of transformation comes in. Jeanne d'Arc was not practising Yoga or seeking transformation.

5 January 1937

*

"You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond" [p. 23]. Is this as elementary a stage as the stage of "aspire and draw"?³

Not so elementary.

"But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine" [p. 25]. If one does this completely, has he anything more to do?

No. But it is not easy to do it completely.

How can we recognise someone who gives all he has and is and does to the Divine?

You can't, unless you have the inner vision.

14 January 1937

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³ See the letter of 5 January 1937 on page 614.—Ed.

What does Mother mean by this sentence in *Conversations*: “When you eat, you must feel that it is the Divine who is eating through you” [p. 23]?

It means an offering of the food not to the ego or desire but to the Divine, who is behind all action. 11 January 1935

*

In Chapter 7 of *Conversations*, there is a paragraph which I quote below: “The condition to be aimed at, the real achievement of Yoga, the final perfection and attainment, for which all else is only a preparation, is a consciousness in which it is impossible to do anything without the Divine; for then if you are without the Divine, the very source of your action disappears; knowledge, power, all are gone. But so long as you feel that the powers you use are your own, you will not miss the Divine support” [p. 26]. I am unable to follow the last line. Will my lord explain it to me?

It means that in the full spiritual consciousness the sense of separate existence and my and mine disappear. All depends on the Divine and exists only by the Divine. The ordinary consciousness does not feel or miss this Divine support because it takes as its own the knowledge and power that are given to it; it is quite satisfied with that and is not aware of the Divine Existence behind it, or the Divine Force and Knowledge. 19 April 1937

*

“For there is nothing in the world which has not its ultimate truth and support in the Divine” [p. 27]. To know this perfectly by experience is to have a very great attainment, perhaps the final attainment, I think. Am I right?

Yes.

“Obviously, what has happened had to happen; it would not have been, if it had not been intended” [p. 28]. Then what is the place of repentance in man’s life? Has it any place in the life of a sadhak?

The place of repentance is in its effect for the future—if it induces the nature to turn from the state of things that brought about the happening. For the sadhak however it is not repentance but recognition of a wrong movement and the necessity of its not recurring that is needed.

“ . . . you are tied to the chain of Karma, and there, in that chain, whatever happens is rigorously the consequence of what has been done before” [p. 30]. Does “before” mean all the past lives, beginning from the very first up to this one?

That is taking things in the mass. In a metaphysical sense whatever happens is the consequence of all that has gone before up to the moment of the action. Practically, particular consequences have particular antecedents in the past and it is these that are said to determine it.

From where are these quotations? In the exact intention of a sentence much sometimes depends on the context.

19 January 1937

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“The intellect that believes too much in its own importance and wants satisfaction for its own sake, is an obstacle to the higher realisation.

But this is true not in any special sense or for the intellect alone, but generally and of other faculties as well. For example, people do not regard an all-engrossing satisfaction of the vital desires or the animal appetites as a virtue; the moral sense is accepted as a mentor to tell one the bounds that one may not transgress. It is only in his intellectual activities that man thinks he can do without any such mentor or censor!” [p. 33]

The subject is too large for any special instances to be usefully given, as an instance can only illustrate one side or field of a very various action. The point is that people take no trouble to see whether their intellect is giving them right thoughts, right conclusions, right views on things and persons, right indications about their conduct or course of action. They have their idea and accept it as truth or follow it simply because it is *their* idea.

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

23 March 1937

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"Many people would tell you wonderful tales of how the world was built and how it will proceed in the future, how and where you were born in the past and what you will be hereafter, the lives you have lived and the lives you will still live. All this has nothing to do with spiritual life" [p. 40]. Is what such people say complete humbug? Is there a process other than the spiritual by which one can know all these things?

Often it is, but even if it is correct, it has nothing spiritual in it. Many mediums, clairvoyants or people with a special faculty, tell you these things. That faculty is no more spiritual than the capacity to build a bridge or to cook a nice dish or to solve a mathematical problem. There are intellectual capacities, there are occult capacities,—that is all.

20 January 1937

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"They [*human beings who are like vampires*] are not human; there is only a human form or appearance. . . . Their method is to try first to cast their influence upon a man; then they enter

slowly into his atmosphere and in the end may get complete possession of him, driving out entirely the real human soul and personality" [p. 42]. My younger brother has married a girl who, the Mother has said, is vampirelike to some extent. Is he then under all these risks? What precautions should he take? Shall I warn him?

First of all what is meant is not that the vampire or vital being even in possession of a human body tries to possess yet another human being. All that is the description of how a disembodied (vampire) vital being takes possession of a human body without being born into it in the ordinary way — for that is their desire, to possess a human body but not by the way of birth. Once thus humanised, the danger they are for others is that they feed on the vitality of those who are in contact with them — that is all.

Secondly in this case, Mother only said vampirelike to some extent. That does not mean that she is one of these beings, but has to some extent the habit of feeding on the vitality of others. There is no need to say anything to your brother — it would only disturb him and not help in the least. 27 January 1937

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In *Conversations* the Mother speaks of the power of thought: "Let us say, for instance, that you have a keen desire for a certain person to come and that, along with this vital impulse of desire, a strong imagination accompanies the mental form you have made. . . . And if there is a sufficient power of will in your thought-form, if it is a well-built formation, it will arrive at its own realisation" [pp. 50–51]. In the example given, suppose one has no strong desire that a person should come, but still thoughts or imaginations loosely form in the mind. Would that loose formation go and induce that person to come?

It might; especially if that person were himself desirous of coming, it could give the decisive push. But in most cases desire or will behind the thought-force would be necessary.

26 August 1936

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In *Conversations* the Mother says about the hostile forces: "If you have overlooked in your own being even a single detail, they will come and put their touch upon that neglected spot and make it so painfully evident that you will be forced to change" [p. 66]. When sadhaks overlook even a single detail on the path of transformation, is it not possible that the Divine will make them conscious of it rather than becoming conscious through a painful wound by the hostile forces?

If they are sufficiently open to the Divine it can be done—but most sadhaks have too much egoism and lack of faith and obscurity and self-will and vital desires,—it is that that shuts them to the Mother and calls in the action of the hostile forces.

Those who cannot reject their lower nature fully are made to suffer at the hands of the hostile forces and get wounded by them. What is the best means for them to go forward?

Faith in the Mother and complete surrender.

"This illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature. It hurts progress because it brings on you the necessity of rushing always into some excited movement" [p. 67]. What is meant by "illusion of action"?

Illusion means that they think their action is all-important and its egoistic objects are the truth that must be followed.

17 June 1933

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In *Conversations* the Mother says about the nervous envelope: "Depression and discouragement have a very adverse effect; they cut out holes in it, as it were, in its very stuff, render it weak and unresisting and open to hostile attacks an easy passage" [p. 89]. In one sense this means that a man with goodwill should not discourage anyone from his wrong ideas, impulses or movements. There is also the way of keeping silent when dealing with such a person—but even that sometimes hurts him more than a point-blank discouragement.

The knowledge about the bad effect of depression is meant for the sadhak to learn to avoid these things. He cannot expect people to flatter his failures or mistakes or indulge his foibles merely because he has the silly habit of indulging in depression and hurting his nervous envelope if that is done. To keep himself free from depression is his business, not that of others. For instance some people have the habit of getting into depression if the Mother does not comply with their desires — it does not follow that the Mother must comply with their desires in order to keep them jolly — they must learn to get rid of this habit of mind. So with people's want of encouragement or praise for all they do. One can be silent or non-intervening, but if even that depresses them, it is their own fault and nobody else's.

Would the bad effects of depression and discouragement indicated by the Mother happen in ordinary life also?

Of course, it is the same in ordinary life — depression is always hurtful. But in sadhana it is more serious because it becomes a strong obstacle to the smooth and rapid progress towards the goal.

18 July 1936

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In *Conversations* the Mother writes: "Surrender will not diminish, but increase; it will not lessen or weaken or destroy your personality, it will fortify and aggrandise it" [p. 114]. Is this meant in an external sense or in an internal sense only?

It is meant in the inner sense only — no outer greatness is meant. All submission is regarded by the ego as lowering and lessening itself, but really submission to the Divine increases and strengthens the being, that is what is meant.

25 August 1937

*

It seems difficult to understand when the Mother says that spiritual sacrifice is joyful [p. 114].

She was speaking of the true spiritual sacrifice of self-giving, not the bringing of an unwilling heart to the altar.

17 October 1935

A Translation of *Conversations*

About the Gujarati translation of the *Conversations* the Mother had told you she did not want it published or sent outside. In the original or in translation, the book is not one meant to be given or shown to everybody. If X wants to make copies for himself and Y he can do so; but, as it comes from the Asram, it might be taken for an authoritative issue from the Asram. It should be understood that it is *your* translation, only made for your personal use; we have not seen it and cannot therefore guarantee its correctness.

29 March 1932

Reading the Mother's *Conversations* and *Prières*

I have a friend in Dacca to whom I want to send the Mother's *Conversations* and her *Prières*. This lady knows French, though she knows nothing about the Yoga or about you. If you think I may send the books — after seeing her photo — I shall send them.

The Prayers ought not to be given to anyone who is not practising Yoga. The "Conversations" are for those who are interested in Yoga.

8 December 1933

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When I read the Mother's *Conversations* or her *Prières*, I often feel as if I come in contact with her consciousness. If one reads these two books constantly and thought about them alone, could one not make one's consciousness more and more intense till it becomes like Mother's? Of course, it might be only the mental that would be intensified and elevated, but perhaps by that intensity the vital and other parts of the being could pass beyond their usual condition.

It is possible to intensely identify oneself with the Mother's consciousness through what you read — in that case the result you speak of could come. It could also have an effect on the vital up to a certain point.

21 August 1935

On *Entretiens avec la Mère*

Comments on Specific *Entretiens*¹

In *Entretiens* the Mother says: “*Même ceux qui ont la volonté de s'enfuir [du monde], quand ils arrivent de l'autre côté, peuvent trouver que la fuite ne sert pas à grand-chose après tout*” [p. 28]. What does “arrivent de l'autre côté” mean? Does it mean “when they come into this world” or “when they go into the world of silence which they realised”?

No — “arrivent de l'autre côté” simply means “when they die”. What Mother intended was that when they actually arrive at their Nirvana they find it is not the ultimate solution or largest realisation of the Supreme and they must eventually come back and have their share of the world action to reach that largest realisation.

2 May 1935

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The Mother says in *Entretiens*: “*En fait, la mort a été attachée à toute vie sur terre*” [p. 41]. The words “*En fait*” and “*attachée*” tend to give the impression that after all death is inevitable. But the preceding sentence (“*Si cette croyance pouvait être rejetée, d'abord de la mentalité consciente, . . . la mort ne serait plus inévitable*”) brings in an ambiguity because it does not make death so inevitable; it introduces a condition, an “if” by which death could be avoided. But the categoricity of the sentence with “*En fait*” rather decreases one’s expectation of a material immortality. Moreover, the “if” in the other sentence is too formidable to be satisfied.

There is no ambiguity that I can see. “*En fait*” and “*attachée*” do not convey any sense of inevitability. “*En fait*” means simply

¹ *Entretiens avec la Mère* is the Mother’s translation of her conversations of 1929, which were spoken in English. This translation is now published as the first part of *Entretiens 1929–1931* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1994). The page numbers given after the quoted passages in this subsection refer to the 1994 edition.—Ed.

that in fact, actually, as things are at present all life (on earth) has death attached to it as its end; but it does not in the least convey the idea that it can never be otherwise or that this is the unalterable law of all existence. It is at present a fact for certain reasons which are stated,—due to certain mental and physical circumstances—if these are changed, death is not inevitable any longer. Obviously the alteration can only come “if” certain conditions are satisfied—all progress and change by evolution depends upon an “if” which gets satisfied. If the animal mind had not been pushed to develop speech and reason, mental man would never have come into existence,—but the “if”, a stupendous and formidable one, was satisfied. So with the ifs that condition a farther progress.

31 July 1936

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There are some lines in *Entretiens* which I do not find in the English *Conversations*. For example, in the conversation about hostile forces, the Mother speaks about some “*êtres pervers et hostiles de plus grande envergure et d'une plus haute origine que tous ceux dont j'ai parlé jusqu'à présent*” [p. 69]. These new hostiles are not of the lower cosmic plane. If they are of a “*plus haute origine*”, they must belong to the higher worlds. Does this mean that the hostiles exist in the higher worlds up to the Supramental?

I believe the Mother was referring to the mental Asuras as opposed to the vital hostiles. There are no hostiles above the mind and cannot be, for it is with the mind that the opposition begins.

When the *Conversations* were translated, Mother made certain corrections so as to express the thought better than in the original report.

19 October 1935

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In *Entretiens* the Mother speaks of “*la marche interne de l'univers*” [p. 100]. Is there really an internal progress in the universe? Except in a few individuals there is hardly any change or progress in countries. It seems to me that, internally and externally, the universe is moving in a circle and always

crosses the same points on the circle, but essentially the quality of the points is the same.

“*Univers*” in French usually means not the whole universe but the “world”—the earth. There must be a progress in the earth-consciousness, otherwise there could have been no evolution. The evolution of mankind may go by circles or spirals, but there is all the same an opening of more and more complete possibilities till the possibility of the evolution of a higher race becomes valid.

1 September 1936

Part Three
Translations of
Prayers of the Mother

Prayers and Meditations

There is a Power that no ruler can command; there is a Happiness that no earthly success can bring; there is a Light that no wisdom can possess; there is a Knowledge that no philosophy and no science can master; there is a Bliss of which no satisfaction of desire can give the enjoyment; there is a thirst for Love that no human relation can appease; there is a Peace that one finds nowhere here, not even in death.

It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Bliss, the Love, the Peace that flow from the Divine Grace.

Sri Aurobindo's translation
of the Mother's prayer of December 28, 1928

Prayers and Meditations¹

November 28, 1913²

Mother Divine, grant that today may bring to us a completer consecration to Thy Will, a more integral gift of ourselves to Thy work, a more total forgetfulness of self, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in a communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire, we may be united always more and more closely to Thee and become Thy servitors worthy of Thee. Remove from us all egoism, root out all petty vanity, greed and obscurity. May we be all ablaze with Thy divine Love; make us Thy torches in the world.

February 15, 1914

O Thou, sole Reality, Light of our light and Life of our life, Love supreme, Saviour of the world, grant that more and more I may be perfectly awakened to the awareness of Thy constant presence. Let all my acts conform to Thy law; let there be no difference between my will and Thine. Extricate me from the illusory consciousness of my mind, from its world of fantasies; let me identify my consciousness with the Absolute Consciousness, for that art Thou.

Give me constancy in the will to attain the end, give me firmness and energy and the courage which shakes off all torpor and lassitude.

Give me the peace of perfect disinterestedness, the peace that makes Thy presence felt and Thy intervention effective, the peace that is ever victorious over all bad will and every obscurity.

¹ Of the more than three hundred prayers in Prières et Méditations de la Mère, Sri Aurobindo translated twenty-four fully or in part. These twenty-four translations are presented in this section.

² The Mother titled this prayer: "A morning prayer". —Ed.

Grant, I implore Thee, that all in my being may be identified with Thee. May I be nothing else any more than a flame of love utterly awakened to a supreme realisation of Thee.

August 27, 1914

To be the divine love, love powerful, infinite, unfathomable, in every activity, in all the worlds of being—it is for this I cry to Thee, O Lord. Let me be consumed by this love divine, love powerful, infinite, unfathomable, in every activity, in all the worlds of being! Transmute me into that burning brazier so that all the atmosphere of earth may be purified with its flame.

O, to be Thy Love infinitely....

August 31, 1914

In this formidable disorder and terrible destruction can be seen a great working, a necessary toil preparing the earth for a new sowing which will rise in marvellous spikes of grain and give to the world the shining harvest of a new race.... The vision is clear and precise, the plan of Thy divine law so plainly traced that peace has come back and installed itself in the hearts of the workers. There are no more doubts and hesitations, no longer any anguish or impatience. There is only the grand straight line of the work eternally accomplishing itself in spite of all, against all, despite all contrary appearances and illusory detours. These physical personalities, moments unseizable in the infinite Becoming, know that they will have made humanity take one farther step, infallibly and without care for the inevitable results, whatever be the apparent momentary consequences: they unite themselves with Thee, O Master eternal, they unite themselves with Thee, O Mother universal, and in this double identity with That which is beyond and That which is all the manifestation they taste the infinite joy of the perfect certitude.

Peace, peace in all the world....

War is an appearance,

Turmoil is an illusion,

Peace is there, immutable peace.

Mother, sweet Mother who I am, Thou art at once the destroyer and the builder.

The whole universe lives in Thy breast with all its life innumerable and Thou livest in Thy immensity in the least of its atoms.

And the aspiration of Thy infinitude turns towards That which is not manifested, to cry to it for a manifestation ever more complete and more perfect.

All is, in one time, in a triple and clairvoyant total consciousness, the Individual, the Universal, the Infinite.

September 1, 1914

O Mother Divine, with what fervour, what ardent love I came to Thee in Thy deepest consciousness, in Thy high status of sublime love and perfect felicity, and I nestled so close into Thy arms and loved Thee with so intense a love that I became altogether Thyselv. Then in the silence of our mute ecstasy a voice from yet profounder depths arose and the voice said, "Turn towards those who have need of thy love." All the grades of consciousness appeared, all the successive worlds. Some were splendid and luminous, well ordered and clear; there knowledge was resplendent, expression was harmonious and vast, will was potent and invincible. Then the worlds darkened in a multiplicity more and more chaotic, the Energy became violent and the material world obscure and sorrowful. And when in our infinite love we perceived in its entirety the hideous suffering of the world of misery and ignorance, when we saw our children locked in a sombre struggle, flung upon each other by energies that had deviated from their true aim, we willed ardently that the light of Divine Love should be made manifest, a transfiguring force at the centre of these distracted elements. Then, that the will might be yet more powerful and effective, we turned towards Thee, O unthinkable Supreme, and we implored Thy aid. And from the unsounded depths of the Unknown a reply came sublime and formidable and we knew that the earth was saved.

September 25, 1914

A new light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

September 28, 1914

My pen is mute to chant Thy presence, O Lord; yet art Thou like a king who has taken entire possession of his kingdom. Thou art there, organising, putting all in place, developing and increasing every province. Thou awakenest those that were asleep. Thou makest active those that were sinking towards inertia; Thou art building a harmony out of the whole. A day will come when the harmony shall be achieved and all the country shall be by its very life the bearer of Thy word and Thy manifestation.

But meanwhile my pen is mute to chant Thy praises.

September 30, 1914

O Thou, Sublime Love, to whom I gave never any other name, but who art so wholly the very substance of my being, Thou whom I feel vibrant and alive in the least of my atoms even as in the infinite universe and beyond, Thou who breathest in every breath, movest in the heart of all activities, art radiant through all that is of good will and hidden behind all sufferings, Thou for whom I cherish a cult without limit which grows ever more intense, permit that I may with more and more reason feel that I am Thyself wholly.

And Thou, O Lord, who art all this made one and much more, O sovereign Master, extreme limit of our thought, who standest for us at the threshold of the Unknown, make rise from that Unthinkable some new splendour, some possibility of a loftier and more integral realisation, that Thy work may be accomplished and the universe take one step farther towards the sublime Identity, the supreme Manifestation.

And now my pen falls mute and I adore Thee in silence.

October 5, 1914

In the calm silence of Thy contemplation, O Divine Master, Nature is fortified and tempered anew. All principle of individuality is overpassed, she is plunged in Thy infinity that allows oneness to be realised in all domains without confusion, without disorder. The combined harmony of that which persists, that which progresses and that which eternally is, is little by little accomplished in an always more complex, more extended and more lofty equilibrium. And this interchange of the three modes of life allows the plenitude of the manifestation.

Many seek Thee at this hour in anguish and incertitude. May I be their mediator with Thee that Thy Light may illumine them, that Thy Peace may appease. My being is now only a point of support for Thy action and a centre for Thy consciousness. Where now are the limits, whither have fled the obstacles? Thou art the sovereign Lord of Thy kingdom.

October 7, 1914

Oh, let Light be poured on all the earth and Peace inhabit every heart. . . . Almost all know only the material life heavy, inert, conservative, obscure; their vital forces are so tied to this physical form of existence that, even when left to themselves and outside the body, they are still solely occupied with these material contingencies that are yet so harassing and painful. . . . Those in whom the mental life is awakened are restless, tormented, agitated, arbitrary, despotic. Caught altogether in the whirl of the renewals and transformations of which they dream, they are ready to destroy everything without knowledge of any foundation on which to construct and with their light made only of blinding flashes they increase yet more the confusion rather than help it to cease.

In all there lacks the unchanging peace of Thy sovereign contemplation and the calm vision of Thy immutable Eternity.

And with the infinite gratitude of the individual being to whom Thou hast accorded this surpassing grace, I implore Thee,

O Lord, that under cover of the present turmoil, in the very heart of this extreme confusion the miracle may be accomplished and Thy Law of supreme serenity and pure unchanging Light become visible to the perception of all and govern the earth in a humanity at last awakened to Thy divine consciousness.

O sweet Master, Thou hast heard my prayer, Thou wilt reply to my call.

October 14, 1914

Mother Divine, Thou art with us; every day Thou givest me the assurance, and closely united in an identity which grows more and more total, more and more constant, we turn to the Lord of the universe and to That which is beyond in a great aspiration towards the new Light. All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness. Cradled on the immensity of the eternal becoming, ourselves those becoming, we contemplate hushed and glad the eternity of the immobile Silence where all is realised in the perfect Consciousness and immutable Existence, miraculous gate of all the unknown that is beyond.

Then is the veil torn, the inexpressible Glory uncovered and, suffused with the ineffable Splendour, we turn back towards the world to bring it the glad tidings.

Lord, Thou hast given me the happiness infinite. What being, what circumstances can have the power to take it away from me?

October 25, 1914

My aspiration to Thee, O Lord, has taken the form of a beautiful rose, harmonious, full in bloom, rich in fragrance. I stretch it out to Thee with both arms in a gesture of offering and I ask of Thee: "If my understanding is limited, widen it; if my knowledge is obscure, enlighten it; if my heart is empty of ardour, set it aflame; if my love is insignificant, make it intense; if my feelings are ignorant and egoistic, give them the full consciousness in the Truth." And the "I" which demands this of Thee, O Lord, is not a little personality lost amidst thousands of others; it is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour.

In the perfect silence of my contemplation all widens to infinity, and in the perfect peace of that silence Thou appearest in the resplendent glory of Thy Light.

November 8, 1914

For the plenitude of Thy Light we invoke Thee, O Lord! Awaken in us the power to express Thee.

All is mute in the being as in a desert crypt; but in the heart of the shadow, in the bosom of the silence burns the lamp that can never be extinguished, the fire of an ardent aspiration to know Thee and totally to live Thee.

The nights follow the days, new dawns unweariedly succeed to past dawns, but always there mounts the scented flame that no stormwind can force to vacillate. Higher it climbs and higher and one day attains the vault still closed, the last obstacle opposing our union. And so pure, so erect, so proud is the flame that suddenly the obstacle is dissolved.

Then Thou appearest in all Thy splendour, in the dazzling force of Thy infinite glory; at Thy contact the flame changes into a column of light that chases the shadows away for ever.

And the Word leaps forth, a supreme revelation!

February 15, 1915

O Lord of Truth, thrice have I implored Thy manifestation invoking Thee with deep fervour.

Then, as always, the whole being made its total submission. At that moment the consciousness perceived the individual being mental, vital and physical, covered all over with dust and this being lay prostrate before Thee, its forehead touching the earth, dust in the dust, and it cried to Thee, "O Lord, this being made of dust prostrates itself before Thee praying to be consumed with the fire of the Truth that it may henceforth manifest only Thee." Then Thou saidst to it, "Arise, thou art pure of all that is dust." And suddenly, in a stroke, all the dust sank from it like a cloak that falls on the earth, and the being appeared erect, always as substantial but resplendent with a dazzling light.

March 3, 1915

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

March 7, 1915

I am exiled from every spiritual happiness, and of all ordeals this, O Lord, is surely the most painful that Thou canst impose: but most of all the withdrawal of Thy Will which seems to be a sign of total disapprobation. Strong is the growing sense of rejection and it needs all the ardour of an untiring faith to keep the external consciousness thus abandoned to itself from being invaded by an irremediable sorrow. . . .

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

If it were possible to come definitively out of this external consciousness, to take refuge in the divine consciousness! But that Thou hast forbidden and still and always Thou forbidst it. No flight out of the world! The burden of its darkness and ugliness must be borne to the end even if all divine succour seems to be withdrawn. I must remain in the bosom of the Night and walk on without compass, without beacon-light, without inner guide. . . .

I will not even implore Thy mercy; for what Thou willst for me, I too will. All my energy is in tension solely to advance, always to advance, step after step, despite the depth of the darkness, despite the obstacles of the way, and whatever comes, O Lord, it is with a fervent and unchanging love that Thy decision will be welcomed. Even if Thou findest the instrument unfit to serve Thee, the instrument belongs to itself no more, it is Thine; Thou canst destroy or magnify it, it exists not in itself, it wills nothing, it can do nothing without Thee.

March 8, 1915

For the most part the condition is one of calm and profound indifference; the being feels neither desire nor repulsion, neither enthusiasm nor depression, neither joy nor sorrow. It regards life as a spectacle in which it takes only a very small part; it perceives its actions and reactions, conflicts and forces as things that at once belong to its own existence which overflows the small personality on every side and yet to that personality are altogether foreign and remote.

But from time to time a great Breath passes, a great Breath of sorrow, of anguished isolation, of spiritual destitution,—one might almost say, the despairing appeal of Earth abandoned by the Divine. It is a pang as silent as it is cruel, a sorrow submissive, without revolt, without any desire to avoid or pass out of it and full of an infinite sweetness in which suffering and felicity are closely wedded, something infinitely vast, great and deep, too great, too deep perhaps to be understood by men — something that holds in it the seed of Tomorrow.

December 26, 1916

Always the word Thou makest me hear in the silence is sweet and encouraging, O Lord. But I see not in what this instrument is worthy of the grace Thou accordest to it or how it will have the capacity to realise what Thou attendest from it. All in it appears so small, weak and ordinary, so lacking in intensity and force and amplitude in comparison with what it should be to undertake this overwhelming role. But I know that what the mind thinks is of little importance. The mind itself knows it and, passive, it awaits the working out of Thy decree.

Thou bidst me strive without cease, and I could wish to have the indomitable ardour that prevails over every difficulty. But Thou hast put in my heart a peace so smiling that I fear I no longer know even how to strive. Things develop in me, faculties and activities, as flowers bloom, spontaneously and without effort, in a joy to be and a joy to grow, a joy to manifest Thee,

whatever the mode of Thy manifestation. If struggle there is, it is so gentle and easy that it can hardly be given the name. But how small is this heart to contain so great a love! and how weak this vital and physical being to carry the power to distribute it! Thus Thou hast placed me on the threshold of the marvellous Way, but will my feet have the strength to advance upon it? . . . But Thou repliest to me that my movement is to soar and it would be an error to wish to walk. . . . O Lord, how infinite is Thy compassion! Once more Thou hast taken me in Thy omnipotent arms and cradled me on Thy unfathomable heart, and Thy heart said to me, "Torment not thyself at all, be confident like a child: art thou not myself crystallised for my work?"

December 27, 1916

O my beloved Lord, my heart is bowed before Thee, my arms are stretched towards Thee imploring Thee to set all this being on fire with Thy sublime love that it may radiate from there on the world. My heart is wide open in my breast; my heart is open and turned towards Thee, it is open and empty that Thou mayst fill it with Thy divine Love; it is empty of all but Thee and Thy presence fills it through and through and yet leaves it empty, for it can contain also all the infinite variety of the manifested world. . . .

O Lord, my arms are outstretched in supplication towards Thee, my heart is wide open before Thee, that Thou mayst make of it a reservoir of Thy infinite love.

"Love me in all things, everywhere and in all beings" was Thy reply. I prostrate myself before Thee and ask of Thee to give me that power.

December 29, 1916

O my sweet Lord, teach me to be the instrument of Thy Love.

March 31, 1917

Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine Breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume and all becomes more friendly.

How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy joy is sufficient to efface so much darkness, so many sorrows and a single ray of Thy glory can light up thus the dullest pebble, illumine the blackest consciousness!

Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped-for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine Breath.

At these blessed hours all earth sings a hymn of gladness, the grasses shudder with pleasure, the air is vibrant with light, the trees lift towards heaven their most ardent prayer, the chant of the birds becomes a canticle, the waves of the sea billow with love, the smile of children tells of the infinite and the souls of men appear in their eyes.

Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime presence and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift?

O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyselv in me.

Drop by drop Thou allowest to fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty love. When these drops of eternal light descend softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain upon earth of golden stars one by one from a sombre firmament.

All kneels in mute devotion before this ever-renewed miracle.

April 28, 1917

"Lo! here are flowers and benedictions! here is the smile of divine Love! It is without preferences and without repulsions. It streams out towards all in a generous flow and never takes back its marvellous gifts."

Her arms outstretched in a gesture of ecstasy, the eternal Mother pours upon the world the unceasing dew of her purest love.

July 12, 1918

Suddenly, before Thee, all my pride fell. I understood how futile it was in Thy Presence to wish to surmount oneself, and I wept, wept abundantly and without constraint the sweetest tears of my life. Tears sweet and beneficent, tears that opened my heart without constraint before Thee and melted in one miraculous moment all the remaining obstacles that could separate me from Thee!

And now, although I weep no longer, I feel so near, so near to Thee that my whole being quivers with joy.

Let me stammer out my homage:

I have cried too with the joy of a child, "O supreme and only Confidant, Thou who knowest beforehand all we can say to Thee because Thou art its source!"

"O supreme and only Friend, Thou who acceptest, Thou who lovest, Thou who understandest us just as we are, because it is Thyself who hast so made us!"

"O supreme and only Guide, Thou who never gainsayest our highest will because it is Thou Thyself who willest in it!"

"It would be folly to seek elsewhere than in Thee for one who will listen, understand, love and guide, since always Thou art there ready to our call and never wilt Thou fail us."

"Thou hast made me know the supreme, the sublime joy of a perfect confidence, an absolute security, a surrender total and without reserve or colouring, free from effort and constraint."

"Joyous like a child I have smiled and wept at once before Thee, O my well-Beloved!"

December 28, 1928

There is a Power that no ruler can command; there is a Happiness that no earthly success can bring; there is a Light that no wisdom can possess; there is a Knowledge that no philosophy and no science can master; there is a Bliss of which no satisfaction of desire can give the enjoyment; there is a thirst for Love that no human relation can appease; there is a Peace that one finds nowhere here, not even in death.

It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Bliss, the Love, the Peace that flow from the Divine Grace.

Radha's Prayer

Radha's Prayer¹

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

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

13 January 1932

¹ *The Mother originally wrote this prayer in English and then translated it into French the following day. Later Sri Aurobindo translated the French version into English; this is the translation presented above. The Mother's original prayer in English is given in the Note on the Texts.—Ed.*

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

THE MOTHER WITH LETTERS ON THE MOTHER consists of two separate but related works: *The Mother*, a collection of short prose pieces on the Mother, and *Letters on the Mother*, a selection of letters by Sri Aurobindo in which he referred to the Mother in her transcendent, universal and individual aspects. In addition, the volume contains Sri Aurobindo's translations of selections from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* as well as his translation of "Radha's Prayer". *The Mother*, the *Letters* and the translations are published in three separate parts.

PART ONE: THE MOTHER

The Mother was first published as a booklet in 1928. It consists of six chapters, all of which were written in 1927. Each chapter has a separate history.

Chapter 1. Sri Aurobindo wrote this essay as a message for distribution on 21 February 1927, the birthday of the Mother. Three months earlier, after an important spiritual experience of 24 November 1926, Sri Aurobindo had withdrawn from outward contacts and placed the Mother in charge of the disciples who had gathered around him. He told them at that time to turn entirely to her for spiritual and practical guidance. This message therefore had a special significance in its immediate historical context. In 1928 it was published as the first chapter of *The Mother*.

Chapter 2. Sri Aurobindo wrote this piece after he had finished replying to a series of questions asked by Motilal Mehta, a disciple living in Gujarat, in a letter dated 30 May 1927. Motilal's questions and Sri Aurobindo's replies are published on page 107 of *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. One of Motilal's questions referred to the message that is published as Chapter 1 of *The Mother*. Another question asked for "the

signs of the coming of the Divine Grace". Sri Aurobindo concluded his reply to this question as follows: "Calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a self-deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection." He then expanded on this theme in a continuation of the letter, which a year later was published as the second chapter of *The Mother*.

Chapter 3. Sri Aurobindo wrote this piece as a letter to Punamchand Shah, a disciple living in Gujarat, on 1 August 1927. In 1928 it was published as the third chapter of *The Mother*.

Chapter 4. Sri Aurobindo wrote this undated piece as a letter to Punamchand Shah. At the time Punamchand was involved in the collection of money for Sri Aurobindo's work. (See *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 428–38.) In 1928 the letter was published as the fourth chapter of *The Mother*.

Chapter 5. Sri Aurobindo wrote this piece as a letter to Punamchand Shah on 19 August 1927. In 1928 it was published as the fifth chapter of *The Mother*.

Chapter 6. Sri Aurobindo wrote this essay dealing with the four aspects of the Mother and related topics in the autumn of 1927 with the idea of publishing it in the booklet that eventually became *The Mother*. Referring to the essay in a letter to Punamchand Shah dated 3 October 1927, he wrote: "The 'Four Aspects' is half written and will be finished in a few days. It has been decided to publish these four writings with the February message in Calcutta."¹ The essay was published as the sixth chapter of *The Mother* in 1928.

Once Sri Aurobindo had finished work on the "Four Aspects" essay, he gave his attention to the planned booklet. Work on the project was underway on 21 November, when he wrote in a letter that the publication of the booklet had been entrusted to Rameshwar De of the Arya Sahitya Bhawan, Calcutta. The publishers completed their work during the early part of 1928. Copies of the booklet reached the Ashram in Pondicherry in April of that year. The book has been reprinted many times since 1928. The text in the present volume has been checked against Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts and early editions.

¹ *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, p. 429.

In the present text there are three verbal corrections which differ from previous editions; all three follow the manuscript readings. The corrections are: (1) page 11, line 30: money *corrected to* money-force; (2) page 13, line 28: breathing or *corrected to* breathing and; (3) page 25, line 17: alteration *corrected to* alternation.

Sri Aurobindo accorded *The Mother* a special place among his works. In 1937 he wrote to a disciple who had sent him the draft of a review of the book: “I think it [*the review*] will give the reader the impression that *The Mother* is a philosophical or practical exposition of Yoga — while its atmosphere is really not that at all.” To a disciple who asked if he should continue the practice of reciting *The Mother* “silently with an aspiration to know what it contains”, Sri Aurobindo replied, “Yes, if you find that it helps you.”²

PART TWO: LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

Sri Aurobindo wrote the letters included in this part between 1927 and 1950. They have been selected by the editors from the much larger body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to disciples during those years. Significant letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: *Letters on Poetry and Art* (volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (volumes 28–31), *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (volume 35), and the present volume. Letters of Sri Aurobindo written before 1927 to his family, friends, associates and early disciples are included in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest* (volume 36). The titles of these works specify the nature of the letters included in each, but there is some overlap. There are, for example, many letters mentioning the Mother in *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. Those selected for inclusion in the present volume have the Mother as their central focus. The questions and comments of the correspondent, which are printed along with many of the letters, bring out the historical circumstances in which they were written.

Many of the letters in the present volume appeared earlier in *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother* (1951), *Sri Aurobindo on*

² *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 102.

Himself and on the Mother (1953), and *The Mother with Letters on the Mother and Translations of Prayers and Meditations*, volume 25 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (1972).

The Writing of the Letters

Sri Aurobindo wrote most of the letters included in this volume to members of his Ashram, the rest to correspondents living outside it. Ashram members wrote to him in notebooks or on loose sheets of paper that were sent to him in an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside that Sri Aurobindo’s secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they were able to. A good number, however, wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. Most letters were addressed to the Mother, even though most correspondents assumed that Sri Aurobindo would reply to them.

Sri Aurobindo generally replied on the sheets of paper (bound or loose) on which the correspondents wrote their comments and questions, writing below them or in the margin or between the lines. Sometimes, however, he wrote his answer on a separate, small sheet of paper from a “bloc-note” pad. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. In other cases, particularly when the correspondent was living outside the Ashram, he addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted, paraphrased or translated Sri Aurobindo’s reply and signed the letter himself.

While going through Sri Aurobindo’s replies, the reader should keep in mind that each one was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. Each subject taken up was one that arose in regard to the correspondent’s inner or outer needs, or in answer to the correspondent’s questions. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies in accordance with his relationship with the correspondent (or, in the case of people writing from outside, the lack of it).

Although the letters were written to specific recipients, they contain much of general interest. This justifies their inclusion in a volume

destined for the general public. But it is important for the reader to bear in mind some remarks that Sri Aurobindo made during the 1930s about the proper use of his letters:

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all.³

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.⁴

The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time.⁵

Sri Aurobindo wrote the great majority of these letters between 1931 and 1937. He sometimes dated his answers, but most of the dates given at the end of the letters are those of the letters or notebook entries to which he was replying.

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter letters in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. But a good number of the letters were, as mentioned above, typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their

³ *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 475.

⁴ *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, p. 473.

⁵ *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, p. 349.

own personal use or for circulation within the Ashram. Circulation was at first restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples. When letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons mentioned by Sri Aurobindo were indicated by initials, or by the letters X, Y, etc. Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretary and sometimes presented to him for revision. Sometimes the typed copies contained typing errors or textual alterations. Recipients of letters, when they typed them up, sometimes omitted passages that seemed to them to be of no general interest. In a few cases, recipients added words or phrases that they believed made Sri Aurobindo's intentions clearer. Some of these alterations remained even after Sri Aurobindo revised the copies.

Sri Aurobindo's revision amounted sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter, sometimes to making minor changes here and there. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. When necessary, he also rewrote the openings or other parts of the answers in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question.

The Publication of the Letters

During the early 1950s, the principal editor of Sri Aurobindo's letters conceived and organised two volumes containing Sri Aurobindo's letters on the Mother and on himself. The first of these, *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*, was published in 1951. The second, *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, was published two years later. The editor arranged the contents of the latter volume in three parts: (1) Sri Aurobindo on Himself: Notes and Letters on His Life; (2) Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother; and (3) Sri Aurobindo on the Mother. Part 3 was an expansion of the text of *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother* (1951).

In 1972, the material making up *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* was incorporated in two different volumes: *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* (volume 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library) and *The Mother with Letters on the Mother and Translations of Prayers and Meditations* (volume 25 of the Centenary Library).

In THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, the material in Part One of *On Himself* is incorporated in two volumes: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (volume 35) and *Autobiographical Notes* (volume 36), and is discussed in the Note on the Texts in those volumes. The material in Part Two of *On Himself*, headed “Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother”, is incorporated in Part Two of the present volume, primarily in Section Two, “The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Integral Yoga”. The present volume contains many letters on the Mother that did not appear in the Centenary Library edition of *The Mother with Letters on the Mother and On Himself*.

The editor of *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother* (1951) and *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) included edited versions of the correspondents’ questions if he thought they would help the reader to understand Sri Aurobindo’s replies. He also placed headings before individual letters or groups of letters and supplied the dates if they were known. The editors of the present volume have continued these practices, adding many headings and edited questions, and supplying dates for all letters that were dated or for which there was reliable dating information.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters in the Present Volume

The corpus of Sri Aurobindo’s correspondence between 1927 and 1950 consists of tens of thousands of replies that he wrote to hundreds of correspondents. Most of the replies, however, were written to a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his Ashram. A smaller number of disciples, no more than a dozen, received more than half of the entire body of published letters. In compiling the volumes of Sri Aurobindo’s correspondence published in THE COMPLETE WORKS, the editors have gone through all known manuscripts, typed copies or photographic copies of manuscripts, and printed texts. From these sources they have selected the letters that seemed suitable for publication. This selection includes most letters consisting of more than a few words that deal with topics of general interest. Electronic texts of the selected letters were then produced and checked against all handwritten, typed and printed versions.

The selection and arrangement of the material in this volume is the work of the editors. The underlying structure of Part Two of *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (1972) has been preserved, but the letters have been rearranged under new section and group headings. In a note of February 1936, Sri Aurobindo wrote that the placing of letters in group categories was possible in the case of "letters about sadhana", which could "very easily fall under different heads".

Part Two, "Letters on the Mother" consists of almost 1400 separate items, an "item" being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; other items, however, consist of portions of single letters, or two or more letters or portions of letters that were joined together by earlier editors or typists and revised in that form by Sri Aurobindo. In the present volume portions of letters that had been separated by previous editors have sometimes been reunited. In some cases, however, the separation has been considered justifiable and been retained.

In some cases the text of a given letter has been published in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Some of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*. Sometimes Sri Aurobindo's revised version of a letter has been placed in *Letters on Yoga*, while the original handwritten version, along with the recipient's question, has been put in *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo's letters, names of members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and of disciples living outside the Ashram have been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter.

Following a practice begun in *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother* (1951) and *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953), the editors of the present volume have included the questions to which Sri Aurobindo replied, or the portions of the correspondents' letters on which he commented, whenever these are available and helpful for understanding his replies or comments. As a rule, only as much of a correspondent's letter has been given as is needed to understand

the response. In some cases the questions have been lightly revised for the sake of clarity. Mistakes of grammar, spelling and punctuation due to the correspondent's imperfect grasp of English have been corrected. Questions written in languages other than English have been translated. When the question is not available, only Sri Aurobindo's reply is printed.

Readers should note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled the word "Asram" without an "h" though some of his correspondents occasionally wrote "Ashram". By the late 1940s, when "Ashram" had become the standard spelling in the Ashram's publications, Sri Aurobindo was no longer writing letters himself but dictated them to a disciple, who tended to write "Ashram". This spelling therefore occurs in letters of the final period, as well as in headings and other editorial matter throughout the book.

French Original of a Letter in Section Four

In the letter of 27 February 1933 on page 596, the question and the Mother's reply to it in the footnote were originally written in French:

Pourquoi la Mère s'habille-t-elle avec des vêtements riches et beaux?

The Mother: *Avez-vous donc pour conception que le Divin doit être représenté sur terre par la pauvreté et la laideur?*

English Translations of French Words in "On Prières et Méditations de la Mère" in Section Five

Page	French Original — English Translation
601	<i>divin Maître</i> — divine Master
601	<i>avec notre divine Mère</i> — with our divine Mother
602	<i>Seigneur</i> — Lord
602	<i>Telles furent les deux phrases que j'écrivis hier par une sorte de nécessité absolue. La première, comme si la puissance de la prière ne serait complète que si elle était tracée sur le papier</i> — These were two sentences I wrote yesterday

- by a kind of absolute necessity. The first, as though the power of the prayer would not be complete unless it were traced on paper.
- 602 *Ta splendeur veut rayonner* — Thy splendour wants to radiate
603 *et le raisonnement est une faculté humaine, c'est-à-dire individuelle* — but reasoning is a human faculty, that is, it is individual
- 603 *elle est consciente, voulue* — it is conscious, willed
- 603 *Les hommes, poussés par le conflit des forces, accomplissent un sublime sacrifice* — Men, driven by the conflict of forces, are performing a sublime sacrifice
- 603 *pure lumière* — pure light
- 603 *Force Divine* — divine Force
- 605 *chacun des grands êtres Asouriques qui ont résolu d'être Tes serviteurs* — each one of the great Asuric beings who have resolved to be Thy servitors
- 605 *coup de diplomatie* — diplomatic coup
- 606 *La joie contenue dans l'activité est compensée et équilibrée par la joie plus grande peut-être encore contenue dans le retrait de toute activité* — The joy that is contained in activity is compensated and balanced by the perhaps still greater joy contained in withdrawal from all activity
- 606 *dans tous les coins du monde une de Tes divines pierres est posée par la puissance de la pensée consciente et formatrice* — in every corner of the world one of Thy divine stones is laid by the power of conscious and formative thought
- 607 *Il faut à chaque instant savoir tout perdre pour tout gagner* — We must know at each moment how to lose everything that we may gain everything
- 607 *Il [mon être] sait que cet état d'amour actif doit être constant et impersonnel, c'est-à-dire tout à fait indépendant des circonstances et des personnes, puisqu'il ne peut et ne doit être concentré sur aucune en particulier* — It [my being] knows that this active state of love should be constant and impersonal, that is, absolutely independent of circumstances and persons, since it cannot and must not be concentrated upon any one thing in particular

- 608 *La Paix régnera sur terre* — Peace will reign upon earth

**Original English Texts of French Words
in “On Entretiens avec la Mère” in Section Five**

French Translation — English Original

- 623 *Même ceux qui ont la volonté de s'enfuir [du monde], quand ils arrivent de l'autre côté, peuvent trouver que la fuite ne sert pas à grand-chose après tout* — And as for those who have the will of running away [from the world], even they, when they go over to the other side, may find that the flight was not of much use after all.
- 623 *En fait, la mort a été attachée à toute vie sur terre* — Death as a fact has been attached to all life upon earth
- 623 *Si cette croyance pouvait être rejetée, d'abord de la mentalité consciente, . . . la mort ne serait plus inévitable* — If this belief could be cast out first from the conscious mind, . . . death would no longer be inevitable
- 624 *êtres pervers et hostiles de plus grande envergure et d'une plus haute origine que tous ceux dont j'ai parlé jusqu'à présent* — perverse or hostile beings of a greater make and higher origin than those of whom I have till now spoken
- 624 *la marche interne de l'univers* — the inner march of the universe

PART THREE: TRANSLATIONS OF PRAYERS OF THE MOTHER

Prières et Méditations de la Mère

The Mother's *Prières et Méditations de la Mère* consists of extracts from her spiritual journal which she selected for publication. The first edition of the French original was printed for private circulation in 1932. An edition meant for the general public was released in 1944, and new editions followed in 1952, 1973, 1980 and 1990. In 1952 the title was shortened to *Prières et Méditations*.

An English translation of the entire text of *Prières et Méditations de la Mère* was published in 1948. A second, newly translated edition

came out in 1979; the text of this edition was reproduced in 2003.

Of the 313 prayers in the original French edition of *Prières et Méditations de la Mère*, only 24 were translated fully or in part by Sri Aurobindo. His own handwritten manuscripts of these prayers or parts of prayers still exist. Twenty-two of the 24 translations were first published in 1941 in *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, which contained 61 prayers; the remaining two translations were published subsequently: the prayer of 28 November 1913 was brought out in 1962 in a slightly enlarged edition of the book above; the prayer of 28 December 1928 came out in 1979 in a complete translation of all the prayers, entitled *Prayers and Meditations*, which is volume 1 of the Collected Works of the Mother. These 24 translations, along with “Radha’s Prayer”, make up the contents of Part Three of the present volume. Sri Aurobindo also revised in his own hand translations of around one hundred prayers done by others. These revised translations have not been included in the present volume; more than half were first published in the 1941 edition mentioned above.

Radha’s Prayer. The Mother originally wrote “Radha’s Prayer” in English on 12 January 1932 and rendered it into French the following day. Sri Aurobindo then translated the French version into English.

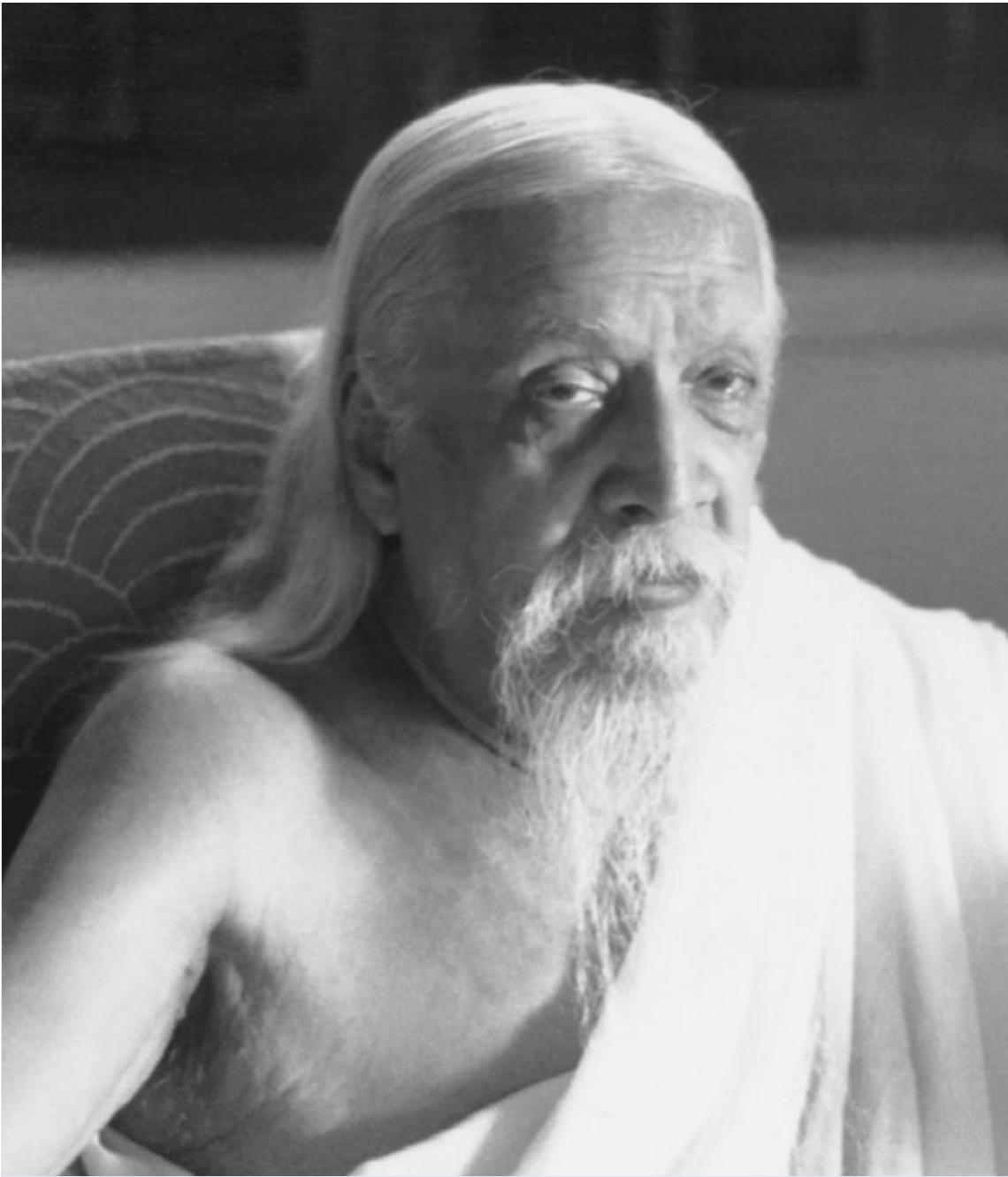
The Mother wrote this prayer for a disciple who was preparing to perform a dance about Radha. In a letter to the disciple the Mother wrote:

To complete what I told you yesterday about Radha’s dance
I have noted this down as an indication of the thought and
feeling Radha must have within her when she stands at the
end in front of Krishna:

“Every thought of my mind, every emotion of my heart,
every movement of my being, every feeling and every sensation,
each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all, all is
yours, yours absolutely, yours without reserve. You can decide
my life or my death, my happiness or my sorrow, my pleasure
or my pain; whatever you do with me, whatever comes to me
from you will lead me to the Divine Rapture.”⁶

⁶ *Words of the Mother–III* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2004), Collected Works of the Mother, volume 15, p. 209.

33-34



Sri Aurobindo

Savitri

VOLUMES 33 and 34
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Savitri

a Legend and a Symbol

Publisher's Note

The writing of *Savitri* extended over much of the later part of Sri Aurobindo's life. The earliest known manuscript is dated 1916. The original narrative poem was recast several times in the first phase of composition. By around 1930, Sri Aurobindo had begun to turn it into an epic with a larger scope and deeper significance.

Transformed into "A Legend and a Symbol", *Savitri* became his major literary work which he continued to expand and perfect until his last days. In the late 1940s, when his eyesight was failing, he took the help of a scribe and dictated the extensive final stages of revision.

Separate cantos started to appear in print in 1946. Part One of the first edition was published in 1950. The next year, after Sri Aurobindo's passing, the rest of the poem was brought out in a second volume.

In the second edition (1954), Sri Aurobindo's letters on *Savitri* were added. They are omitted from the present edition and included in *Letters on Poetry and Art*.

The present text is that of the fourth ("revised") edition which came out in 1993. Each line has been checked to eliminate any unintentional discrepancies between the final manuscript or dictation and the printed form of the poem.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

Book One

The Book of Beginnings

Canto I	
The Symbol Dawn	1
Canto II	
The Issue	11
Canto III	
The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release	22
Canto IV	
The Secret Knowledge	46
Canto V	
The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness	74

Book Two

The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds

Canto I	
The World-Stair	95
Canto II	
The Kingdom of Subtle Matter	103
Canto III	
The Glory and the Fall of Life	116
Canto IV	
The Kingdoms of the Little Life	132
Canto V	
The Godheads of the Little Life	151

CONTENTS

Canto VI	
The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life	173
Canto VII	
The Descent into Night	202
Canto VIII	
The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness	220
Canto IX	
The Paradise of the Life-Gods	233
Canto X	
The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind	238
Canto XI	
The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind	260
Canto XII	
The Heavens of the Ideal	277
Canto XIII	
In the Self of Mind	283
Canto XIV	
The World-Soul	289
Canto XV	
The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge	297

Book Three

The Book of the Divine Mother

Canto I	
The Pursuit of the Unknowable	305
Canto II	
The Adoration of the Divine Mother	310
Canto III	
The House of the Spirit and the New Creation	317

CONTENTS

Canto IV	
The Vision and the Boon	334

PART TWO

Book Four

The Book of Birth and Quest

Canto I	
The Birth and Childhood of the Flame	349
Canto II	
The Growth of the Flame	359
Canto III	
The Call to the Quest	369
Canto IV	
The Quest	377

Book Five

The Book of Love

Canto I	
The Destined Meeting-Place	389
Canto II	
Satyavan	392
Canto III	
Satyavan and Savitri	400

Book Six

The Book of Fate

Canto I	
The Word of Fate	415
Canto II	
The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain	437

CONTENTS

Book Seven

The Book of Yoga

Canto I	
The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart's Grief and Pain	465
Canto II	
The Parable of the Search for the Soul	474
Canto III	
The Entry into the Inner Countries	488
Canto IV	
The Triple Soul-Forces	503
Canto V	
The Finding of the Soul	522
Canto VI	
Nirvana and the Discovery of the All-Negating Absolute	532
Canto VII	
The Discovery of the Cosmic Spirit and the Cosmic Consciousness	551

Book Eight

The Book of Death

“Canto III”	
Death in the Forest	561

PART THREE

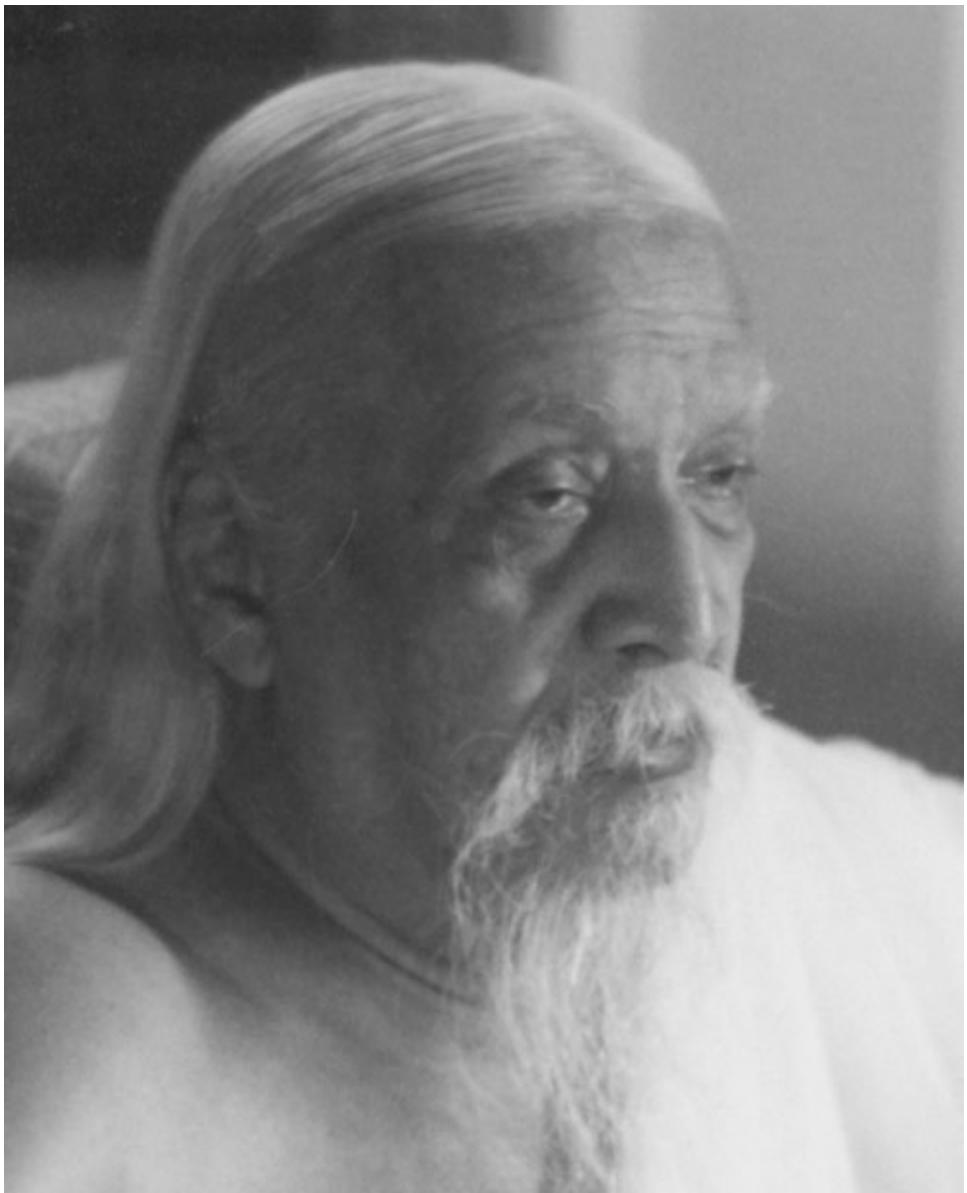
Book Nine

The Book of Eternal Night

Canto I	
Towards the Black Void	571

CONTENTS

Canto II	
The Journey in Eternal Night and the Voice of the Darkness	582
Book Ten	
The Book of the Double Twilight	
Canto I	
The Dream Twilight of the Ideal	599
Canto II	
The Gospel of Death and Vanity of the Ideal	607
Canto III	
The Debate of Love and Death	621
Canto IV	
The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real	641
Book Eleven	
The Book of Everlasting Day	
Canto I	
The Eternal Day: The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consummation	671
Book Twelve	
Epilogue	
The Return to Earth	715



Sri Aurobindo in 1950

Something shoud bears unearthly sombre, grand
 Part A
 & work like Heaven's denial of being,
 But
 ¶ Such were the wonders of a shape, The form,
 At pleasure, ~~and~~^{all} most beautiful, The form,
 Bore the deep pity of destroying gods
 In its appalling eyes. Eternal Night
 Reserved the dire beauty of an immortal face
 Dying worse, receiving all that lives
 ¶ To its featureless heart forever. Under ^{Recently} its lids
 Were movement ^{unconscious} of pleasure and beneath ^{opposed} of bewilder
 The brows ^{clearing} greater large godlike lids
 Aware of adamantine necessity
 Silent beheld the writhing that is life.
 ¶ The two opposed each other with their eyes,
 Woman and unceasal god. They reeved
 Two equal powers ^{that should never part} seeming each other left
 The last ^{births}
 Above huge-purposed among trivial things,
 Learning each other in the school of life,
 ¶ Like ~~the~~ antagonists before they ^{were}
 In dreadful combat to poison ~~themselves~~ ^{alone}
 Then to her ears retuning earthly sounds,
 Fretting the heart strings with ~~its~~ own joy,
 arose a sad and formidable voice
 ¶ That seemed the whole adverse world. "Well," said ^{the last}
 Thy passionate influence and known me, O slave

1916 version of a passage in Book Nine, Canto One

A page of a 1947 draft for Book Ten, Canto Four

Author's Note

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

SRI AUROBINDO

PART ONE

BOOKS I-III

BOOK ONE
The Book of Beginnings

Canto One

The Symbol Dawn

IT WAS the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.
A power of fallen boundless self awake
Between the first and the last Nothingness,
Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
And the tardy process of mortality
And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.
As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown
Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.
Athwart the vain enormous trance of Space,
Its formless stupor without mind or life,
A shadow spinning through a soulless Void,
Thrown back once more into unthinking dreams,
Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulfs
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.
The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.
Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;
A nameless movement, an unthought Idea

Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,
Something that wished but knew not how to be,
Teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance.
A throe that came and left a quivering trace,
Gave room for an old tired want unfilled,
At peace in its subconscious moonless cave
To raise its head and look for absent light,
Straining closed eyes of vanished memory,
Like one who searches for a bygone self
And only meets the corpse of his desire.
It was as though even in this Nought's profound,
Even in this ultimate dissolution's core,
There lurked an unremembering entity,
Survivor of a slain and buried past
Condemned to resume the effort and the pang,
Reviving in another frustrate world.
An unshaped consciousness desired light
And a blank prescience yearned towards distant change.
As if a childlike finger laid on a cheek
Reminded of the endless need in things
The heedless Mother of the universe,
An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast.
Insensibly somewhere a breach began:
A long lone line of hesitating hue
Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
Troubled the far rim of life's obscure sleep.
Arrived from the other side of boundlessness
An eye of deity peered through the dumb deeps;
A scout in a reconnaissance from the sun,
It seemed amid a heavy cosmic rest,
The torpor of a sick and weary world,
To seek for a spirit sole and desolate
Too fallen to recollect forgotten bliss.
Intervening in a mindless universe,
Its message crept through the reluctant hush
Calling the adventure of consciousness and joy

And, conquering Nature's disillusioned breast,
Compelled renewed consent to see and feel.
A thought was sown in the unsounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness' depths,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time
As if a soul long dead were moved to live:
But the oblivion that succeeds the fall,
Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past,
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And old experience laboured out once more.
All can be done if the god-touch is there.
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference.
As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight.
The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.
Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.
The brief perpetual sign recurred above.
A glamour from unreached transcendences
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,

A message from the unknown immortal Light
Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.
An instant's visitor the godhead shone.
On life's thin border awhile the Vision stood
And bent over earth's pondering forehead curve.
Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss
In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
A brilliant code penned with the sky for page.
Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed
Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares;
A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
Almost was flung on the opaque Inane.
Once more a tread perturbed the vacant Vasts;
Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm
Parted the eternal lids that open heaven;
A Form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
Ambassador twixt eternity and change,
The omniscient Goddess leaned across the breadths
That wrap the fated journeyings of the stars
And saw the spaces ready for her feet.
Once she half looked behind for her veiled sun,
Then, thoughtful, went to her immortal work.
Earth felt the Imperishable's passage close:
The waking ear of Nature heard her steps
And wideness turned to her its limitless eye,
And, scattered on sealed depths, her luminous smile
Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.
All grew a consecration and a rite.
Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven;
The wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind
Arose and failed upon the altar hills;
The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky.

Here where our half-lit ignorance skirts the gulfs
On the dumb bosom of the ambiguous earth,
Here where one knows not even the step in front
And Truth has her throne on the shadowy back of doubt,
On this anguished and precarious field of toil
Outspread beneath some large indifferent gaze,
Impartial witness of our joy and bale,
Our prostrate soil bore the awakening ray.
Here too the vision and prophetic gleam
Lit into miracles common meaningless shapes;
Then the divine afflatus, spent, withdrew,
Unwanted, fading from the mortal's range.
A sacred yearning lingered in its trace,
The worship of a Presence and a Power
Too perfect to be held by death-bound hearts,
The prescience of a marvellous birth to come.
Only a little the god-light can stay:
Spiritual beauty illumining human sight
Lines with its passion and mystery Matter's mask
And squanders eternity on a beat of Time.
As when a soul draws near the sill of birth,
Adjoining mortal time to Timelessness,
A spark of deity lost in Matter's crypt
Its lustre vanishes in the inconscient planes,
That transitory glow of magic fire
So now dissolved in bright accustomed air.
The message ceased and waned the messenger.
The single Call, the unaccompanied Power,
Drew back into some far-off secret world
The hue and marvel of the supernal beam:
She looked no more on our mortality.
The excess of beauty natural to god-kind
Could not uphold its claim on time-born eyes;
Too mystic-real for space-tenancy
Her body of glory was expunged from heaven:
The rarity and wonder lived no more.

There was the common light of earthly day.
Affranchised from the respite of fatigue
Once more the rumour of the speed of Life
Pursued the cycles of her blinded quest.
All sprang to their unvarying daily acts;
The thousand peoples of the soil and tree
Obeyed the unforeseeing instant's urge,
And, leader here with his uncertain mind,
Alone who stares at the future's covered face,
Man lifted up the burden of his fate.

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner's chant
And, lured by the beauty of the apparent ways,
Acclaimed their portion of ephemeral joy.
Akin to the eternity whence she came,
No part she took in this small happiness;
A mighty stranger in the human field,
The embodied Guest within made no response.
The call that wakes the leap of human mind,
Its chequered eager motion of pursuit,
Its fluttering-hued illusion of desire,
Visited her heart like a sweet alien note.
Time's message of brief light was not for her.
In her there was the anguish of the gods
Imprisoned in our transient human mould,
The deathless conquered by the death of things.
A vaster Nature's joy had once been hers,
But long could keep not its gold heavenly hue
Or stand upon this brittle earthly base.
A narrow movement on Time's deep abyssm,
Life's fragile littleness denied the power,
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.

Earth's grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears
Rejected the undying rapture's boon:
Offered to the daughter of infinity
Her passion-flower of love and doom she gave.
In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice.
A prodigal of her rich divinity,
Her self and all she was she had lent to men,
Hoping her greater being to implant
And in their body's lives acclimatise
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil.
Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;
It trembles at its naked power of Truth
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.
Inflicting on the heights the abyssm's law,
It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;
It meets the sons of God with death and pain.
A glory of lightnings traversing the earth-scene,
Their sun-thoughts fading, darkened by ignorant minds,
Their work betrayed, their good to evil turned,
The cross their payment for the crown they gave,
Only they leave behind a splendid Name.
A fire has come and touched men's hearts and gone;
A few have caught flame and risen to greater life.
Too unlike the world she came to help and save,
Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant breast
And from its dim chasms welled a dire return,
A portion of its sorrow, struggle, fall.
To live with grief, to confront death on her road,—
The mortal's lot became the Immortal's share.

Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
Outcast from her inborn felicity,
Accepting life's obscure terrestrial robe,
Hiding herself even from those she loved,
The godhead greater by a human fate.
A dark foreknowledge separated her
From all of whom she was the star and stay;
Too great to impart the peril and the pain,
In her torn depths she kept the grief to come.
As one who watching over men left blind
Takes up the load of an unwitting race,
Harbouring a foe whom with her heart she must feed,
Unknown her act, unknown the doom she faced,
Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare.
The long-foreknown and fatal morn was here
Bringing a noon that seemed like every noon.
For Nature walks upon her mighty way
Unheeding when she breaks a soul, a life;
Leaving her slain behind she travels on:
Man only marks and God's all-seeing eyes.
Even in this moment of her soul's despair,
In its grim rendezvous with death and fear,
No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid;
She told the secret of her woe to none:
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute.
Yet only her outward self suffered and strove;
Even her humanity was half divine:
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.
Apart, living within, all lives she bore;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world:
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic mights;
The universal Mother's love was hers.
Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,

Her own calamity its private sign,
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword.
A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose.
At first life grieved not in her burdened breast:
On the lap of earth's original somnolence
Inert, released into forgetfulness,
Prone it reposed, unconscious on mind's verge,
Obtuse and tranquil like the stone and star.
In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms
She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,
Nothing recalling of the sorrow here.
Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,
And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
And recognised the close and lingering ache,
Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place,
But knew not why it was there nor whence it came.
The Power that kindles mind was still withdrawn:
Heavy, unwilling were life's servitors
Like workers with no wages of delight;
Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn;
The unassisted brain found not its past.
Only a vague earth-nature held the frame.
But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load.
At the summons of her body's voiceless call
Her strong far-winging spirit travelled back,
Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,
Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,
Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams
Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep.
Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,
Illumined swiftly were life's darkened rooms,
And memory's casements opened on the hours
And the tired feet of thought approached her doors.
All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants, encircled her

Like giant figures wrestling in the night:
The godheads from the dim Inconscient born
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,
A guardian of the uncooled abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into Space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.
Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.
All the fierce question of man's hours relived.
The sacrifice of suffering and desire
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy
Began again beneath the eternal Hand.
Awake she endured the moments' serried march
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
And heard the ignorant cry of living things.
Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.
Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
This was the day when Satyavan must die.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Issue

AWHILE, withdrawn in secret fields of thought,
Her mind moved in a many-imaged past
That lived again and saw its end approach:
Dying, it lived imperishably in her;
Transient and vanishing from transient eyes,
Invisible, a fateful ghost of self,
It bore the future on its phantom breast.
Along the fleeting event's far-backward trail
Regressed the stream of the insistent hours,
And on the bank of the mysterious flood
Peopled with well-loved forms now seen no more
And the subtle images of things that were,
Her witness spirit stood reviewing Time.
All that she once had hoped and dreamed and been,
Flew past her eagle-winged through memory's skies.
As in a many-hued flaming inner dawn,
Her life's broad highways and its sweet bypaths
Lay mapped to her sun-clear recording view,
From the bright country of her childhood's days
And the blue mountains of her soaring youth
And the paradise groves and peacock wings of Love
To joy clutched under the silent shadow of doom
In a last turn where heaven raced with hell.
Twelve passionate months led in a day of fate.
An absolute supernatural darkness falls
On man sometimes when he draws near to God:
An hour arrives when fail all Nature's means;
Forced out from the protecting Ignorance
And flung back on his naked primal need,
He at length must cast from him his surface soul
And be the ungarbed entity within:

That hour had fallen now on Savitri.
A point she had reached where life must be in vain
Or, in her unborn element awake,
Her will must cancel her body's destiny.
For only the unborn spirit's timeless power
Can lift the yoke imposed by birth in Time.
Only the Self that builds this figure of self
Can rase the fixed interminable line
That joins these changing names, these numberless lives,
These new oblivious personalities
And keeps still lurking in our conscious acts
The trail of old forgotten thoughts and deeds,
Disown the legacy of our buried selves,
The burdensome heirship to our vanished forms
Accepted blindly by the body and soul.
An episode in an unremembered tale,
Its beginning lost, its motive and plot concealed,
A once living story has prepared and made
Our present fate, child of past energies.
The fixity of the cosmic sequences
Fastened with hidden inevitable links
She must disrupt, dislodge by her soul's force
Her past, a block on the Immortal's road,
Make a rased ground and shape anew her fate.
A colloquy of the original Gods
Meeting upon the borders of the unknown,
Her soul's debate with embodied Nothingness
Must be wrestled out on a dangerous dim background:
Her being must confront its formless Cause,
Against the universe weigh its single self.
On the bare peak where Self is alone with Nought
And life has no sense and love no place to stand,
She must plead her case upon extinction's verge,
In the world's death-cave uphold life's helpless claim
And vindicate her right to be and love.
Altered must be Nature's harsh economy;

Acquittance she must win from her past's bond,
An old account of suffering exhaust,
Strike out from Time the soul's long compound debt
And the heavy servitudes of the Karmic Gods,
The slow revenge of unforgiving Law
And the deep need of universal pain
And hard sacrifice and tragic consequence.
Out of a timeless barrier she must break,
Penetrate with her thinking depths the Void's monstrous hush,
Look into the lonely eyes of immortal Death
And with her nude spirit measure the Infinite's night.
The great and dolorous moment now was close.
A mailed battalion marching to its doom,
The last long days went by with heavy tramp,
Long but too soon to pass, too near the end.
Alone amid the many faces loved,
Aware among unknowing happy hearts,
Her armoured spirit kept watch upon the hours
Listening for a foreseen tremendous step
In the closed beauty of the inhuman wilds.
A combatant in silent dreadful lists,
The world unknowing, for the world she stood:
No helper had she save the Strength within;
There was no witness of terrestrial eyes;
The Gods above and Nature sole below
Were the spectators of that mighty strife.
Around her were the austere sky-pointing hills,
And the green murmurous broad deep-thoughted woods
Muttered incessantly their muffled spell.
A dense magnificent coloured self-wrapped life
Draped in the leaves' vivid emerald monotone
And set with chequered sunbeams and blithe flowers
Immured her destiny's secluded scene.
There had she grown to the stature of her spirit:
The genius of titanic silences
Steeping her soul in its wide loneliness

Had shown to her her self's bare reality
And mated her with her environment.
Its solitude greatened her human hours
With a background of the eternal and unique.
A force of spare direct necessity
Reduced the heavy framework of man's days
And his overburdening mass of outward needs
To a first thin strip of simple animal wants,
And the mighty wildness of the primitive earth
And the brooding multitude of patient trees
And the musing sapphire leisure of the sky
And the solemn weight of the slowly-passing months
Had left in her deep room for thought and God.
There was her drama's radiant prologue lived.
A spot for the eternal's tread on earth
Set in the clostral yearning of the woods
And watched by the aspiration of the peaks
Appeared through an aureate opening in Time,
Where stillness listening felt the unspoken word
And the hours forgot to pass towards grief and change.
Here with the suddenness divine advents have,
Repeating the marvel of the first descent,
Changing to rapture the dull earthly round,
Love came to her hiding the shadow, Death.
Well might he find in her his perfect shrine.
Since first the earth-being's heavenward growth began,
Through all the long ordeal of the race,
Never a rarer creature bore his shaft,
That burning test of the godhead in our parts,
A lightning from the heights on our abyss.
All in her pointed to a nobler kind.
Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflew the ways of Thought to unborn things.
Ardent was her self-poised unstumbling will;

Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple-door to things beyond.
Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight
Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.
A wide self-giving was her native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky
Enveloped with its greatness all that came
And gave a sense as of a greatened world:
Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
Her high passion a blue heaven's equipoise.
As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness,
Feel her bright nature's glorious ambience,
And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule.
A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;
Love in her was wider than the universe,
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.
The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell:
Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,
Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath

Spiritual that can make all things divine.
For even her gulfs were secracies of light.
At once she was the stillness and the word,
A continent of self-diffusing peace,
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire;
The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.
In her he found a vastness like his own,
His high warm subtle ether he refound
And moved in her as in his natural home.
In her he met his own eternity.

Till then no mournful line had barred this ray.
On the frail breast of this precarious earth,
Since her orbed sight in its breath-fastened house,
Opening in sympathy with happier stars
Where life is not exposed to sorrowful change,
Remembered beauty death-claimed lids ignore
And wondered at this world of fragile forms
Carried on canvas-strips of shimmering Time,
The impunity of unborn Mights was hers.
Although she leaned to bear the human load,
Her walk kept still the measures of the gods.
Earth's breath had failed to stain that brilliant glass:
Unsmeared with the dust of our mortal atmosphere
It still reflected heaven's spiritual joy.
Almost they saw who lived within her light
Her playmate in the sempiternal spheres
Descended from its unattainable realms
In her attracting advent's luminous wake,
The white-fire dragon-bird of endless bliss
Drifting with burning wings above her days:
Heaven's tranquil shield guarded the missioned child.
A glowing orbit was her early term,
Years like gold raiment of the gods that pass;
Her youth sat throned in calm felicity.
But joy cannot endure until the end:

There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note.
On her too closed the inescapable Hand:
The armed Immortal bore the snare of Time.
One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,
The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.
August and pitiless in his calm outlook,
Heightening the Eternal's dreadful strategy,
He measured the difficulty with the might
And dug more deep the gulf that all must cross.
Assailing her divinest elements,
He made her heart kin to the striving human heart
And forced her strength to its appointed road.
For this she had accepted mortal breath;
To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
And must confront the riddle of man's birth
And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.
Whether to bear with Ignorance and death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,
Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.
But not to submit and suffer was she born;
To lead, to deliver was her glorious part.
Here was no fabric of terrestrial make
Fit for a day's use by busy careless Powers.
An image fluttering on the screen of Fate,
Half-animated for a passing show,
Or a castaway on the ocean of Desire
Flung to the eddies in a ruthless sport
And tossed along the gulfs of Circumstance,
A creature born to bend beneath the yoke,

A chattel and a plaything of Time's lords,
Or one more pawn who comes destined to be pushed
One slow move forward on a measureless board
In the chess-play of the earth-soul with Doom,—
Such is the human figure drawn by Time.
A conscious frame was here, a self-born Force.
In this enigma of the dusk of God,
This slow and strange uneasy compromise
Of limiting Nature with a limitless Soul,
Where all must move between an ordered Chance
And an uncaring blind Necessity,
Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
If once it met the intense original Flame,
An answering touch might shatter all measures made
And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite.
A gaol is this immense material world:
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed Law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God:
Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.
A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.
Thus is the throne of the Inconscient safe
While the tardy coilings of the aeons pass
And the Animal browses in the sacred fence
And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more.
But one stood up and lit the limitless flame.
Arraigned by the dark Power that hates all bliss
In the dire court where life must pay for joy,
Sentenced by the mechanic justicer

To the afflicting penalty of man's hopes,
Her head she bowed not to the stark decree
Baring her helpless heart to destiny's stroke.
So bows and must the mind-born will in man
Obedient to the statutes fixed of old,
Admitting without appeal the nether gods.
In her the superhuman cast its seed.
Inapt to fold its mighty wings of dream
Her spirit refused to hug the common soil,
Or, finding all life's golden meanings robbed,
Compound with earth, struck from the starry list,
Or quench with black despair the God-given light.
Accustomed to the eternal and the true,
Her being conscious of its divine founts
Asked not from mortal frailty pain's relief,
Patched not with failure bargain or compromise.
A work she had to do, a word to speak:
Writing the unfinished story of her soul
In thoughts and actions graved in Nature's book,
She accepted not to close the luminous page,
Cancel her commerce with eternity,
Or set a signature of weak assent
To the brute balance of the world's exchange.
A force in her that toiled since earth was made,
Accomplishing in life the great world-plan,
Pursuing after death immortal aims,
Repugned to admit frustration's barren role,
Forfeit the meaning of her birth in Time,
Obey the government of the casual fact
Or yield her high destiny up to passing Chance.
In her own self she found her high recourse;
She matched with the iron law her sovereign right:
Her single will opposed the cosmic rule.
To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.
At the Unseen's knock upon her hidden gates
Her strength made greater by the lightning's touch

Awoke from slumber in her heart's recess.
It bore the stroke of That which kills and saves.
Across the awful march no eye can see,
Barring its dreadful route no will can change,
She faced the engines of the universe;
A heart stood in the way of the driving wheels:
Its giant workings paused in front of a mind,
Its stark conventions met the flame of a soul.
A magic leverage suddenly is caught
That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.
All now seems Nature's massed machinery;
An endless servitude to material rule
And long determination's rigid chain,
Her firm and changeless habits aping Law,
Her empire of unconscious deft device
Annul the claim of man's free human will.
He too is a machine amid machines;
A piston brain pumps out the shapes of thought,
A beating heart cuts out emotion's modes;
An insentient energy fabricates a soul.
Or the figure of the world reveals the signs
Of a tied Chance repeating her old steps
In circles around Matter's binding-posts.
A random series of inept events
To which reason lends illusive sense, is here,
Or the empiric Life's instinctive search,
Or a vast ignorant mind's colossal work.
But wisdom comes, and vision grows within:
Then Nature's instrument crowns himself her king;
He feels his witnessing self and conscious power;
His soul steps back and sees the Light supreme.

A Godhead stands behind the brute machine.
This truth broke in in a triumph of fire;
A victory was won for God in man,
The deity revealed its hidden face.
The great World-Mother now in her arose:
A living choice reversed fate's cold dead turn,
Affirmed the spirit's tread on Circumstance,
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.
A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

*The Yoga of the King:
The Yoga of the Soul's Release*

A WORLD'S desire compelled her mortal birth.
One in the front of the immemorial quest,
Protagonist of the mysterious play
In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms
And limits his eternity by the hours
And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air,
Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power.
His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality.
A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads,
His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
His human self like a translucent cloak
Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world.
Affiliated to cosmic Space and Time
And paying here God's debt to earth and man
A greater sonship was his divine right.
Although consenting to mortal ignorance,
His knowledge shared the Light ineffable.
A strength of the original Permanence
Entangled in the moment and its flow,
He kept the vision of the Vasts behind:
A power was in him from the Unknowable.
An archivist of the symbols of the Beyond,
A treasurer of superhuman dreams,
He bore the stamp of mighty memories
And shed their grandiose ray on human life.
His days were a long growth to the Supreme.
A skyward being nourishing its roots

On sustenance from occult spiritual founts
Climbed through white rays to meet an unseen Sun.
His soul lived as eternity's delegate,
His mind was like a fire assailing heaven,
His will a hunter in the trails of light.
An ocean impulse lifted every breath;
Each action left the footprints of a god,
Each moment was a beat of puissant wings.
The little plot of our mortality
Touched by this tenant from the heights became
A playground of the living Infinite.
This bodily appearance is not all;
The form deceives, the person is a mask;
Hid deep in man celestial powers can dwell.
His fragile ship conveys through the sea of years
An incognito of the Imperishable.
A spirit that is a flame of God abides,
A fiery portion of the Wonderful,
Artist of his own beauty and delight,
Immortal in our mortal poverty.
This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite,
This screened unrecognised Inhabitant,
Initiate of his own veiled mysteries,
Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought.
In the mute strength of the occult Idea
Determining predestined shape and act,
Passenger from life to life, from scale to scale,
Changing his imaged self from form to form,
He regards the icon growing by his gaze
And in the worm foresees the coming god.
At last the traveller in the paths of Time
Arrives on the frontiers of eternity.
In the transient symbol of humanity draped,
He feels his substance of undying self
And loses his kinship to mortality.
A beam of the Eternal smites his heart,

His thought stretches into infinitude;
All in him turns to spirit vastnesses.
His soul breaks out to join the Oversoul,
His life is oceaned by that superlife.
He has drunk from the breasts of the Mother of the worlds;
A topless Supernature fills his frame:
She adopts his spirit's everlasting ground
As the security of her changing world
And shapes the figure of her unborn mights.
Immortally she conceives herself in him,
In the creature the unveiled Creatrix works:
Her face is seen through his face, her eyes through his eyes;
Her being is his through a vast identity.
Then is revealed in man the overt Divine.
A static Oneness and dynamic Power
Descend in him, the integral Godhead's seals;
His soul and body take that splendid stamp.
A long dim preparation is man's life,
A circle of toil and hope and war and peace
Tracked out by Life on Matter's obscure ground.
In his climb to a peak no feet have ever trod,
He seeks through a penumbra shot with flame
A veiled reality half-known, ever missed,
A search for something or someone never found,
Cult of an ideal never made real here,
An endless spiral of ascent and fall
Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God.
Across our nature's border line we escape
Into Supernature's arc of living light.
This now was witnessed in that son of Force;
In him that high transition laid its base.
Original and supernal Immanence
Of which all Nature's process is the art,
The cosmic Worker set his secret hand

To turn this frail mud-engine to heaven-use.
A Presence wrought behind the ambiguous screen:
It beat his soil to bear a Titan's weight,
Refining half-hewn blocks of natural strength
It built his soul into a statued god.
The Craftsman of the magic stuff of self
Who labours at his high and difficult plan
In the wide workshop of the wonderful world,
Modelled in inward Time his rhythmic parts.
Then came the abrupt transcendent miracle:
The masked immaculate Grandeur could outline,
At travail in the occult womb of life,
His dreamed magnificence of things to be.
A crown of the architecture of the worlds,
A mystery of married Earth and Heaven
Annexed divinity to the mortal scheme.
A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.
For him mind's limiting firmament ceased above.
In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day
A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault;
The conscious ends of being went rolling back:
The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined its continent.
Overpassed was this world of rigid limiting forms:
Life's barriers opened into the Unknown.
Abolished were conception's covenants
And, striking off subjection's rigorous clause,
Annulled the soul's treaty with Nature's nescience.
All the grey inhibitions were torn off
And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid;
Truth unpartitioned found immense sky-room;
An empyrean vision saw and knew;
The bounded mind became a boundless light,
The finite self mated with infinity.
His march now soared into an eagle's flight.
Out of apprenticeship to Ignorance

Wisdom upraised him to her master craft
And made him an archmason of the soul,
A builder of the Immortal's secret house,
An aspirant to supernal Timelessness:
Freedom and empire called to him from on high;
Above mind's twilight and life's star-led night
There gleamed the dawn of a spiritual day.

As so he grew into his larger self,
Humanity framed his movements less and less;
A greater being saw a greater world.
A fearless will for knowledge dared to erase
The lines of safety Reason draws that bar
Mind's soar, soul's dive into the Infinite.
Even his first steps broke our small earth-bounds
And loitered in a vaster freer air.
In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might
He caught up lightly like a giant's bow
Left slumbering in a sealed and secret cave
The powers that sleep unused in man within.
He made of miracle a normal act
And turned to a common part of divine works,
Magnificently natural at this height,
Efforts that would shatter the strength of mortal hearts,
Pursued in a royalty of mighty ease
Aims too sublime for Nature's daily will:
The gifts of the spirit crowding came to him;
They were his life's pattern and his privilege.
A pure perception lent its lucent joy:
Its intimate vision waited not to think;
It enveloped all Nature in a single glance,
It looked into the very self of things;
Deceived no more by form he saw the soul.
In beings it knew what lurked to them unknown;
It seized the idea in mind, the wish in the heart;
It plucked out from grey folds of secrecy

The motives which from their own sight men hide.
He felt the beating life in other men
Invade him with their happiness and their grief;
Their love, their anger, their unspoken hopes
Entered in currents or in pouring waves
Into the immobile ocean of his calm.
He heard the inspired sound of his own thoughts
Re-echoed in the vault of other minds;
The world's thought-streams travelled into his ken;
His inner self grew near to others' selves
And bore a kinship's weight, a common tie,
Yet stood untouched, king of itself, alone.
A magical accord quickened and attuned
To ethereal symphonies the old earthy strings;
It raised the servitors of mind and life
To be happy partners in the soul's response,
Tissue and nerve were turned to sensitive chords,
Records of lustre and ecstasy; it made
The body's means the spirit's acolytes.
A heavenlier function with a finer mode
Lit with its grace man's outward earthliness;
The soul's experience of its deeper sheaths
No more slept drugged by Matter's dominance.
In the dead wall closing us from wider self,
Into a secrecy of apparent sleep,
The mystic tract beyond our waking thoughts,
A door parted, built in by Matter's force,
Releasing things unseized by earthly sense:
A world unseen, unknown by outward mind
Appeared in the silent spaces of the soul.
He sat in secret chambers looking out
Into the luminous countries of the unborn
Where all things dreamed by the mind are seen and true
And all that the life longs for is drawn close.
He saw the Perfect in their starry homes
Wearing the glory of a deathless form,

Lain in the arms of the Eternal's peace,
Rapt in the heart-beats of God-ecstasy.
He lived in the mystic space where thought is born
And will is nursed by an ethereal Power
And fed on the white milk of the Eternal's strengths
Till it grows into the likeness of a god.
In the Witness's occult rooms with mind-built walls
On hidden interiors, lurking passages
Opened the windows of the inner sight.
He owned the house of undivided Time.
Lifting the heavy curtain of the flesh
He stood upon a threshold serpent-watched,
And peered into gleaming endless corridors,
Silent and listening in the silent heart
For the coming of the new and the unknown.
He gazed across the empty stillnesses
And heard the footsteps of the undreamed Idea
In the far avenues of the Beyond.
He heard the secret Voice, the Word that knows,
And saw the secret face that is our own.
The inner planes uncovered their crystal doors;
Strange powers and influences touched his life.
A vision came of higher realms than ours,
A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,
Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived men
And subtler bodies than these passing frames,
Objects too fine for our material grasp,
Acts vibrant with a superhuman light
And movements pushed by a superconscious force,
And joys that never flowed through mortal limbs,
And lovelier scenes than earth's and happier lives.
A consciousness of beauty and of bliss,
A knowledge which became what it perceived,
Replaced the separated sense and heart
And drew all Nature into its embrace.
The mind leaned out to meet the hidden worlds:

Air glowed and teemed with marvellous shapes and hues,
In the nostrils quivered celestial fragrances,
On the tongue lingered the honey of paradise.
A channel of universal harmony,
Hearing was a stream of magic audience,
A bed for occult sounds earth cannot hear.
Out of a covert tract of slumber self
The voice came of a truth submerged, unknown
That flows beneath the cosmic surfaces,
Only mid an omniscient silence heard,
Held by intuitive heart and secret sense.
It caught the burden of secracies sealed and dumb,
It voiced the unfulfilled demand of earth
And the song of promise of unrealised heavens
And all that hides in an omnipotent Sleep.
In the unceasing drama carried by Time
On its long listening flood that bears the world's
Insoluble doubt on a pilgrimage without goal,
A laughter of sleepless pleasure foamed and spumed
And murmurings of desire that cannot die:
A cry came of the world's delight to be,
The grandeur and greatness of its will to live,
Recall of the soul's adventure into space,
A traveller through the magic centuries
And being's labour in Matter's universe,
Its search for the mystic meaning of its birth
And joy of high spiritual response,
Its throb of satisfaction and content
In all the sweetness of the gifts of life,
Its large breath and pulse and thrill of hope and fear,
Its taste of pangs and tears and ecstasy,
Its rapture's poignant beat of sudden bliss,
The sob of its passion and unending pain.
The murmur and whisper of the unheard sounds
Which crowd around our hearts but find no window
To enter, swelled into a canticle

Of all that suffers to be still unknown
And all that labours vainly to be born
And all the sweetness none will ever taste
And all the beauty that will never be.
Inaudible to our deaf mortal ears
The wide world-rhythms wove their stupendous chant
To which life strives to fit our rhyme-beats here,
Melting our limits in the illimitable,
Tuning the finite to infinity.
A low muttering rose from the subconscious caves,
The stammer of the primal ignorance;
Answer to that inarticulate questioning,
There stooped with lightning neck and thunder's wings
A radiant hymn to the Inexpressible
And the anthem of the superconscious light.
All was revealed there none can here express;
Vision and dream were fables spoken by truth
Or symbols more veridical than fact,
Or were truths enforced by supernatural seals.
Immortal eyes approached and looked in his,
And beings of many kingdoms neared and spoke:
The ever-living whom we name as dead
Could leave their glory beyond death and birth
To utter the wisdom which exceeds all phrase:
The kings of evil and the kings of good,
Appellants at the reason's judgment seat,
Proclaimed the gospel of their opposites,
And all believed themselves spokesmen of God:
The gods of light and titans of the dark
Battled for his soul as for a costly prize.
In every hour loosed from the quiver of Time
There rose a song of new discovery,
A bow-twang's hum of young experiment.
Each day was a spiritual romance,
As if he was born into a bright new world;
Adventure leaped an unexpected friend,

And danger brought a keen sweet tang of joy;
Each happening was a deep experience.
There were high encounters, epic colloquies,
And counsels came couched in celestial speech,
And honeyed pleadings breathed from occult lips
To help the heart to yield to rapture's call,
And sweet temptations stole from beauty's realms
And sudden ecstasies from a world of bliss.
It was a region of wonder and delight.
All now his bright clairaudience could receive;
A contact thrilled of mighty unknown things.
Awakened to new unearthly closenesses,
The touch replied to subtle infinities,
And with a silver cry of opening gates
Sight's lightnings leaped into the invisible.
Ever his consciousness and vision grew;
They took an ampler sweep, a loftier flight;
He passed the border marked for Matter's rule
And passed the zone where thought replaces life.
Out of this world of signs suddenly he came
Into a silent self where world was not
And looked beyond into a nameless vast.
These symbol figures lost their right to live,
All tokens dropped our sense can recognise;
There the heart beat no more at body's touch,
There the eyes gazed no more on beauty's shape.
In rare and lucent intervals of hush
Into a signless region he could soar
Packed with the deep contents of formlessness
Where world was into a single being rapt
And all was known by the light of identity
And Spirit was its own self-evidence.
The Supreme's gaze looked out through human eyes
And saw all things and creatures as itself
And knew all thought and word as its own voice.
There unity is too close for search and clasp

And love is a yearning of the One for the One,
And beauty is a sweet difference of the Same
And oneness is the soul of multitude.
There all the truths unite in a single Truth,
And all ideas rejoin Reality.
There knowing herself by her own timeless self,
Wisdom supernal, wordless, absolute
Sat uncompanioned in the eternal Calm,
All-seeing, motionless, sovereign and alone.
There knowledge needs not words to embody Idea;
Idea, seeking a house in boundlessness,
Weary of its homeless immortality,
Asks not in thought's carved brilliant cell to rest
Whose single window's clipped outlook on things
Sees only a little arc of God's vast sky.
The boundless with the boundless there consorts;
While there, one can be wider than the world;
While there, one is one's own infinity.
His centre was no more in earthly mind;
A power of seeing silence filled his limbs:
Caught by a voiceless white epiphany
Into a vision that surpasses forms,
Into a living that surpasses life,
He neared the still consciousness sustaining all.
The voice that only by speech can move the mind
Became a silent knowledge in the soul;
The strength that only in action feels its truth
Was lodged now in a mute omnipotent peace.
A leisure in the labour of the worlds,
A pause in the joy and anguish of the search
Restored the stress of Nature to God's calm.
A vast unanimity ended life's debate.
The war of thoughts that fathers the universe,
The clash of forces struggling to prevail
In the tremendous shock that lights a star
As in the building of a grain of dust,

The grooves that turn their dumb ellipse in space
Ploughed by the seeking of the world's desire,
The long regurgitations of Time's flood,
The torment edging the dire force of lust
That wakes kinetic in earth's dullard slime
And carves a personality out of mud,
The sorrow by which Nature's hunger is fed,
The oestrus which creates with fire of pain,
The fate that punishes virtue with defeat,
The tragedy that destroys long happiness,
The weeping of Love, the quarrel of the Gods,
Ceased in a truth which lives in its own light.
His soul stood free, a witness and a king.
Absorbed no more in the moment-ridden flux
Where mind incessantly drifts as on a raft
Hurried from phenomenon to phenomenon,
He abode at rest in indivisible Time.
As if a story long written but acted now,
In his present he held his future and his past,
Felt in the seconds the uncounted years
And saw the hours like dots upon a page.
An aspect of the unknown Reality
Altered the meaning of the cosmic scene.
This huge material universe became
A small result of a stupendous force:
Overtaking the moment the eternal Ray
Illumined That which never yet was made.
Thought lay down in a mighty voicelessness;
The toiling Thinker widened and grew still,
Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart:
His soul could sail beyond thought's luminous bar;
Mind screened no more the shoreless infinite.
Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed
Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars
The superconscious realms of motionless Peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute

And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.
There came not form or any mounting voice;
There only were Silence and the Absolute.
Out of that stillness mind new-born arose
And woke to truths once inexpressible,
And forms appeared, dumbly significant,
A seeing thought, a self-revealing voice.
He knew the source from which his spirit came:
Movement was married to the immobile Vast;
He plunged his roots into the Infinite,
He based his life upon eternity.

Only awhile at first these heavenlier states,
These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.
The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
The body's stone stillness and the life's hushed trance,
The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.
The restless nether members tire of peace;
A nostalgia of old little works and joys,
A need to call back small familiar selves,
To tread the accustomed and inferior way,
The need to rest in a natural pose of fall,
As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,
Replace the titan will for ever to climb,
On the heart's altar dim the sacred fire.
An old pull of subconscious cords renews;
It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,
Or a dull gravitation drags us down
To the blind driven inertia of our base.
This too the supreme Diplomat can use,
He makes our fall a means for greater rise.
For into ignorant Nature's gusty field,
Into the half-ordered chaos of mortal life
The formless Power, the Self of eternal light
Follow in the shadow of the spirit's descent;

The twin duality for ever one
Chooses its home mid the tumults of the sense.
He comes unseen into our darker parts
And, curtained by the darkness, does his work,
A subtle and all-knowing guest and guide,
Till they too feel the need and will to change.
All here must learn to obey a higher law,
Our body's cells must hold the Immortal's flame.
Else would the spirit reach alone its source
Leaving a half-saved world to its dubious fate.
Nature would ever labour unredeemed;
Our earth would ever spin unhelped in Space,
And this immense creation's purpose fail
Till at last the frustrate universe sank undone.
Even his godlike strength to rise must fall:
His greater consciousness withdrew behind;
Dim and eclipsed, his human outside strove
To feel again the old sublimities,
Bring the high saving touch, the ethereal flame,
Call back to its dire need the divine Force.
Always the power poured back like sudden rain,
Or slowly in his breast a presence grew;
It clambered back to some remembered height
Or soared above the peak from which it fell.
Each time he rose there was a larger poise,
A dwelling on a higher spirit plane;
The Light remained in him a longer space.
In this oscillation between earth and heaven,
In this ineffable communion's climb
There grew in him as grows a waxing moon
The glory of the integer of his soul.
A union of the Real with the unique,
A gaze of the Alone from every face,
The presence of the Eternal in the hours
Widening the mortal mind's half-look on things,
Bridging the gap between man's force and Fate

Made whole the fragment-being we are here.
At last was won a firm spiritual poise,
A constant lodging in the Eternal's realm,
A safety in the Silence and the Ray,
A settlement in the Immutable.
His heights of being lived in the still Self;
His mind could rest on a supernal ground
And look down on the magic and the play
Where the God-child lies on the lap of Night and Dawn
And the Everlasting puts on Time's disguise.
To the still heights and to the troubled depths
His equal spirit gave its vast assent:
A poised serenity of tranquil strength,
A wide unshaken look on Time's unrest
Faced all experience with unaltered peace.
Indifferent to the sorrow and delight,
Untempted by the marvel and the call,
Immobile it beheld the flux of things,
Calm and apart supported all that is:
His spirit's stillness helped the toiling world.
Inspired by silence and the closed eyes' sight
His force could work with a new luminous art
On the crude material from which all is made
And the refusal of Inertia's mass
And the grey front of the world's Ignorance
And nescient Matter and the huge error of life.
As a sculptor chisels a deity out of stone
He slowly chipped off the dark envelope,
Line of defence of Nature's ignorance,
The illusion and mystery of the Inconscient
In whose black pall the Eternal wraps his head
That he may act unknown in cosmic Time.
A splendour of self-creation from the peaks,
A transfiguration in the mystic depths,
A happier cosmic working could begin
And fashion the world-shape in him anew,

God found in Nature, Nature fulfilled in God.
Already in him was seen that task of Power:
Life made its home on the high tops of self;
His soul, mind, heart became a single sun;
Only life's lower reaches remained dim.
But there too, in the uncertain shadow of life,
There was a labour and a fiery breath;
The ambiguous cowled celestial puissance worked
Watched by the inner Witness's moveless peace.
Even on the struggling Nature left below
Strong periods of illumination came:
Lightnings of glory after glory burned,
Experience was a tale of blaze and fire,
Air rippled round the argosies of the Gods,
Strange riches sailed to him from the Unseen;
Splendours of insight filled the blank of thought,
Knowledge spoke to the inconscient stillnesses,
Rivers poured down of bliss and luminous force,
Visits of beauty, storm-sweeps of delight
Rained from the all-powerful Mystery above.
Thence stooped the eagles of Omniscience.
A dense veil was rent, a mighty whisper heard;
Repeated in the privacy of his soul,
A wisdom-cry from rapt transcendences
Sang on the mountains of an unseen world;
The voices that an inner listening hears
Conveyed to him their prophet utterances,
And flame-wrapped outbursts of the immortal Word
And flashes of an occult revealing Light
Approached him from the unreachable Secrecy.
An inspired Knowledge sat enthroned within
Whose seconds illumined more than reason's years:
An ictus of revealing lustre fell
As if a pointing accent upon Truth,
And like a sky-flare showing all the ground
A swift intuitive discernment shone.

One glance could separate the true and false,
Or raise its rapid torch-fire in the dark
To check the claimants crowding through mind's gates
Covered by the forged signatures of the gods,
Detect the magic bride in her disguise
Or scan the apparent face of thought and life.

Oft inspiration with her lightning feet,
A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,
Traversed the soundless corridors of his mind
Bringing her rhythmic sense of hidden things.
A music spoke transcending mortal speech.
As if from a golden phial of the All-Bliss,
A joy of light, a joy of sudden sight,
A rapture of the thrilled undying Word
Poured into his heart as into an empty cup,
A repetition of God's first delight
Creating in a young and virgin Time.
In a brief moment caught, a little space,
All-Knowledge packed into great wordless thoughts
Lodged in the expectant stillness of his depths
A crystal of the ultimate Absolute,
A portion of the inexpressible Truth
Revealed by silence to the silent soul.
The intense creatrix in his stillness wrought;
Her power fallen speechless grew more intimate;
She looked upon the seen and the unforeseen,
Unguessed domains she made her native field.
All-vision gathered into a single ray,
As when the eyes stare at an invisible point
Till through the intensity of one luminous spot
An apocalypse of a world of images
Enters into the kingdom of the seer.
A great nude arm of splendour suddenly rose;
It rent the gauze opaque of Nescience:
Her lifted finger's keen unthinkable tip

Bared with a stab of flame the closed Beyond.
An eye awake in voiceless heights of trance,
A mind plucking at the unimaginable,
Overleaping with a sole and perilous bound
The high black wall hiding superconsciousness,
She broke in with inspired speech for scythe
And plundered the Unknowable's vast estate.
A gleaner of infinitesimal grains of Truth,
A sheaf-binder of infinite experience,
She pierced the guarded mysteries of World-Force
And her magic methods wrapped in a thousand veils;
Or she gathered the lost secrets dropped by Time
In the dust and crannies of his mounting route
Mid old forsaken dreams of hastening Mind
And buried remnants of forgotten space.
A traveller between summit and abyss,
She joined the distant ends, the viewless deeps,
Or streaked along the roads of Heaven and Hell
Pursuing all knowledge like a questing hound.
A reporter and scribe of hidden wisdom talk,
Her shining minutes of celestial speech,
Passed through the masked office of the occult mind,
Transmitting gave to prophet and to seer
The inspired body of the mystic Truth.
A recorder of the inquiry of the gods,
Spokesman of the silent seeings of the Supreme,
She brought immortal words to mortal men.
Above the reason's brilliant slender curve,
Released like radiant air dimming a moon,
Broad spaces of a vision without line
Or limit swam into his spirit's ken.
Oceans of being met his voyaging soul
Calling to infinite discovery;
Timeless domains of joy and absolute power
Stretched out surrounded by the eternal hush;
The ways that lead to endless happiness

Ran like dream-smiles through meditating vasts:
Disclosed stood up in a gold moment's blaze
White sun-steppes in the pathless Infinite.
Along a naked curve in bourneless Self
The points that run through the closed heart of things
Shadowed the indeterminable line
That carries the Everlasting through the years.
The magician order of the cosmic Mind
Coercing the freedom of infinity
With the stark array of Nature's symbol facts
And life's incessant signals of event,
Transmuted chance recurrences into laws,
A chaos of signs into a universe.
Out of the rich wonders and the intricate whorls
Of the spirit's dance with Matter as its mask
The balance of the world's design grew clear,
Its symmetry of self-arranged effects
Managed in the deep perspectives of the soul,
And the realism of its illusive art,
Its logic of infinite intelligence,
Its magic of a changing eternity.
A glimpse was caught of things for ever unknown:
The letters stood out of the unmoving Word:
In the immutable nameless Origin
Was seen emerging as from fathomless seas
The trail of the Ideas that made the world,
And, sown in the black earth of Nature's trance,
The seed of the Spirit's blind and huge desire
From which the tree of cosmos was conceived
And spread its magic arms through a dream of space.
Immense realities took on a shape:
There looked out from the shadow of the Unknown
The bodiless Namelessness that saw God born
And tries to gain from the mortal's mind and soul
A deathless body and a divine name.
The immobile lips, the great surreal wings,

The visage masked by superconscious Sleep,
The eyes with their closed lids that see all things,
Appeared of the Architect who builds in trance.
The original Desire born in the Void
Peered out; he saw the hope that never sleeps,
The feet that run behind a fleeting fate,
The ineffable meaning of the endless dream.
Hardly for a moment glimpsed viewless to Mind,
As if a torch held by a power of God,
The radiant world of the everlasting Truth
Glimmered like a faint star bordering the night
Above the golden Overmind's shimmering ridge.
Even were caught as through a cunning veil
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts
Of Wisdom suckling the child-laughter of Chance,
Silence, the nurse of the Almighty's power,
The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,
And of the Timeless the still brooding face,
And the creative eye of Eternity.
The inspiring goddess entered a mortal's breast,
Made there her study of divining thought
And sanctuary of prophetic speech
And sat upon the tripod seat of mind:
All was made wide above, all lit below.
In darkness' core she dug out wells of light,
On the undiscovered depths imposed a form,
Lent a vibrant cry to the unuttered vasts,
And through great shoreless, voiceless, starless breadths
Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought
Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable.
A Voice in the heart uttered the unspoken Name,
A dream of seeking Thought wandering through Space
Entered the invisible and forbidden house:
The treasure was found of a supernal Day.
In the deep subconscious glowed her jewel-lamp;

Lifted, it showed the riches of the Cave
Where, by the miser traffickers of sense
Unused, guarded beneath Night's dragon paws,
In folds of velvet darkness draped they sleep
Whose priceless value could have saved the world.
A darkness carrying morning in its breast
Looked for the eternal wide returning gleam,
Waiting the advent of a larger ray
And rescue of the lost herds of the Sun.
In a splendid extravagance of the waste of God
Dropped carelessly in creation's spendthrift work,
Left in the chantiers of the bottomless world
And stolen by the robbers of the Deep,
The golden shekels of the Eternal lie,
Hoarded from touch and view and thought's desire,
Locked in blind antres of the ignorant flood,
Lest men should find them and be even as Gods.
A vision lightened on the viewless heights,
A wisdom illumined from the voiceless depths:
A deeper interpretation greatened Truth,
A grand reversal of the Night and Day;
All the world's values changed heightening life's aim;
A wiser word, a larger thought came in
Than what the slow labour of human mind can bring,
A secret sense awoke that could perceive
A Presence and a Greatness everywhere.
The universe was not now this senseless whirl
Borne round inert on an immense machine;
It cast away its grandiose lifeless front,
A mechanism no more or work of Chance,
But a living movement of the body of God.
A spirit hid in forces and in forms
Was the spectator of the mobile scene:
The beauty and the ceaseless miracle
Let in a glow of the Unmanifest:
The formless Everlasting moved in it

Seeking its own perfect form in souls and things.
Life kept no more a dull and meaningless shape.
In the struggle and upheaval of the world
He saw the labour of a godhead's birth.
A secret knowledge masked as Ignorance;
Fate covered with an unseen necessity
The game of chance of an omnipotent Will.
A glory and a rapture and a charm,
The All-Blissful sat unknown within the heart;
Earth's pains were the ransom of its prisoned delight.
A glad communion tinged the passing hours;
The days were travellers on a destined road,
The nights companions of his musing spirit.
A heavenly impetus quickened all his breast;
The trudge of Time changed to a splendid march;
The divine Dwarf towered to unconquered worlds,
Earth grew too narrow for his victory.
Once only registering the heavy tread
Of a blind Power on human littleness,
Life now became a sure approach to God,
Existence a divine experiment
And cosmos the soul's opportunity.
The world was a conception and a birth
Of Spirit in Matter into living forms,
And Nature bore the Immortal in her womb,
That she might climb through him to eternal life.
His being lay down in bright immobile peace
And bathed in wells of pure spiritual light;
It wandered in wide fields of wisdom-self
Lit by the rays of an everlasting sun.
Even his body's subtle self within
Could raise the earthly parts towards higher things
And feel on it the breath of heavenlier air.
Already it journeyed towards divinity:
Upbuoyed upon winged winds of rapid joy,
Upheld to a Light it could not always hold,

It left mind's distance from the Truth supreme
And lost life's incapacity for bliss.
All now suppressed in us began to emerge.

Thus came his soul's release from Ignorance,
His mind and body's first spiritual change.
A wide God-knowledge poured down from above,
A new world-knowledge broadened from within:
His daily thoughts looked up to the True and One,
His commonest doings welled from an inner Light.
Awakened to the lines that Nature hides,
Attuned to her movements that exceed our ken,
He grew one with a covert universe.
His grasp surprised her mightiest energies' springs;
He spoke with the unknown Guardians of the worlds,
Forms he desried our mortal eyes see not.
His wide eyes bodied viewless entities,
He saw the cosmic forces at their work
And felt the occult impulse behind man's will.
Time's secrets were to him an oft-read book;
The records of the future and the past
Outlined their excerpts on the etheric page.
One and harmonious by the Maker's skill,
The human in him paced with the divine;
His acts betrayed not the interior flame.
This forged the greatness of his front to earth.
A genius heightened in his body's cells
That knew the meaning of his fate-hedged works
Akin to the march of unaccomplished Powers
Beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities.
Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came.
The universal strengths were linked with his;
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,

He drew the energies that transmute an age.
Immeasurable by the common look,
He made great dreams a mould for coming things
And cast his deeds like bronze to front the years.
His walk through Time outstripped the human stride.
Lonely his days and splendid like the sun's.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Secret Knowledge

ON A height he stood that looked towards greater heights.
Our early approaches to the Infinite
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge
While lingers yet unseen the glorious sun.
What now we see is a shadow of what must come.
The earth's uplook to a remote Unknown
Is a preface only of the epic climb
Of human soul from its flat earthly state
To the discovery of a greater self
And the far gleam of an eternal Light.
This world is a beginning and a base
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;
An unborn Power must build reality.
A deathbound littleness is not all we are:
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses
Await discovery in our summit selves;
Unmeasured breadths and depths of being are ours.
Akin to the ineffable Secrecy,
Mystic, eternal in unrealised Time,
Neighbours of Heaven are Nature's altitudes.
To these high-peaked dominions sealed to our search,
Too far from surface Nature's postal routes,
Too lofty for our mortal lives to breathe,
Deep in us a forgotten kinship points
And a faint voice of ecstasy and prayer
Calls to those lucent lost immensities.
Even when we fail to look into our souls
Or lie embedded in earthly consciousness,
Still have we parts that grow towards the light,
Yet are there luminous tracts and heavens serene
And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy

And temples to the godhead none can see.
A shapeless memory lingers in us still
And sometimes, when our sight is turned within,
Earth's ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes;
There is a short miraculous escape.
This narrow fringe of clamped experience
We leave behind meted to us as life,
Our little walks, our insufficient reach.
Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
Still regions of imperishable Light,
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
And calm immensities of spirit space.
In the unfolding process of the Self
Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery
Elects a human vessel of descent.
A breath comes down from a supernal air,
A Presence is born, a guiding Light awakes,
A stillness falls upon the instruments:
Fixed, motionless like a marble monument,
Stone-calm, the body is a pedestal
Supporting a figure of eternal Peace.
Or a revealing Force sweeps blazing in;
Out of some vast superior continent
Knowledge breaks through trailing its radiant seas,
And Nature trembles with the power, the flame.
A greater Personality sometimes
Possesses us which yet we know is ours:
Or we adore the Master of our souls.
Then the small bodily ego thins and falls;
No more insisting on its separate self,
Losing the punctilio of its separate birth,
It leaves us one with Nature and with God.
In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.

A wider consciousness opens then its doors;
Invading from spiritual silences
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile
To commune with our seized illumined clay
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance
Or in some deep internal solitude
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,
The signals of eternity appear.
The truth mind could not know unveils its face,
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,
We love what common hearts repel and dread;
Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;
A Voice calls from the chambers of the soul;
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.
These signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul;
Or through the earthly coverings something breaks,
A grace and beauty of spiritual light,
The murmuring tongue of a celestial fire.
Ourselves and a high stranger whom we feel,
It is and acts unseen as if it were not;
It follows the line of sempiternal birth,
Yet seems to perish with its mortal frame.
Assured of the Apocalypse to be,
It reckons not the moments and the hours;
Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change
In the sure deliberate process of world-force
And the long march of all-revealing Time.

It is the origin and the master-clue,
A silence overhead, an inner voice,
A living image seated in the heart,
An unwalled wideness and a fathomless point,
The truth of all these cryptic shows in Space,
The Real towards which our strivings move,
The secret grandiose meaning of our lives.
A treasure of honey in the combs of God,
A Splendour burning in a tenebrous cloak,
It is our glory of the flame of God,
Our golden fountain of the world's delight,
An immortality cowled in the cape of death,
The shape of our unborn divinity.
It guards for us our fate in depths within
Where sleeps the eternal seed of transient things.
Always we bear in us a magic key
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope.
A burning Witness in the sanctuary
Regards through Time and the blind walls of Form;
A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes;
He sees the secret things no words can speak
And knows the goal of the unconscious world
And the heart of the mystery of the journeying years.

But all is screened, subliminal, mystical;
It needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn,
It needs the power of a spiritual gaze.
Else to our waking mind's small moment look
A goalless voyage seems our dubious course
Some Chance has settled or hazarded some Will,
Or a Necessity without aim or cause
Unwillingly compelled to emerge and be.
In this dense field where nothing is plain or sure,
Our very being seems to us questionable,
Our life a vague experiment, the soul
A flickering light in a strange ignorant world,

The earth a brute mechanic accident,
A net of death in which by chance we live.
All we have learned appears a doubtful guess,
The achievement done a passage or a phase
Whose farther end is hidden from our sight,
A chance happening or a fortuitous fate.
Out of the unknown we move to the unknown.
Ever surround our brief existence here
Grey shadows of unanswered questionings;
The dark Inconscient's signless mysteries
Stand up unsolved behind Fate's starting-line.
An aspiration in the Night's profound,
Seed of a perishing body and half-lit mind,
Uplifts its lonely tongue of conscious fire
Towards an undying Light for ever lost;
Only it hears, sole echo of its call,
The dim reply in man's unknowing heart
And meets, not understanding why it came
Or for what reason is the suffering here,
God's sanction to the paradox of life
And the riddle of the Immortal's birth in Time.
Along a path of aeons serpentine
In the coiled blackness of her nescient course
The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.
A Being is in her whom she hopes to know,
A Word speaks to her heart she cannot hear,
A Fate compels whose form she cannot see.
In her unconscious orbit through the Void
Out of her mindless depths she strives to rise,
A perilous life her gain, a struggling joy;
A Thought that can conceive but hardly knows
Arises slowly in her and creates
The idea, the speech that labels more than it lights;
A trembling gladness that is less than bliss
Invades from all this beauty that must die.
Alarmed by the sorrow dragging at her feet

And conscious of the high things not yet won,
Ever she nurses in her sleepless breast
An inward urge that takes from her rest and peace.
Ignorant and weary and invincible,
She seeks through the soul's war and quivering pain
The pure perfection her marred nature needs,
A breath of Godhead on her stone and mire.
A faith she craves that can survive defeat,
The sweetness of a love that knows not death,
The radiance of a truth for ever sure.
A light grows in her, she assumes a voice,
Her state she learns to read and the act she has done,
But the one needed truth eludes her grasp,
Herself and all of which she is the sign.
An inarticulate whisper drives her steps
Of which she feels the force but not the sense;
A few rare intimations come as guides,
Immense divining flashes cleave her brain,
And sometimes in her hours of dream and muse
The truth that she has missed looks out on her
As if far off and yet within her soul.
A change comes near that flees from her surmise
And, ever postponed, compels attempt and hope,
Yet seems too great for mortal hope to dare.
A vision meets her of supernal Powers
That draw her as if mighty kinsmen lost
Approaching with estranged great luminous gaze.
Then is she moved to all that she is not
And stretches arms to what was never hers.
Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,
Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods
Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time
What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,
A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,
A Will expressive of soul's deity,
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,

A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.
For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:
Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.
Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,
Clear in a greater light than reason owns:
Our intuitions are its title-deeds;
Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.
Earth's winged chimaeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,
The impossible God's sign of things to be.
But few can look beyond the present state
Or overleap this matted hedge of sense.
All that transpires on earth and all beyond
Are parts of an illimitable plan
The One keeps in his heart and knows alone.
Our outward happenings have their seed within,
And even this random Fate that imitates Chance,
This mass of unintelligible results,
Are the dumb graph of truths that work unseen:
The laws of the Unknown create the known.
The events that shape the appearance of our lives
Are a cipher of subliminal quiverings
Which rarely we surprise or vaguely feel,
Are an outcome of suppressed realities
That hardly rise into material day:
They are born from the spirit's sun of hidden powers
Digging a tunnel through emergency.
But who shall pierce into the cryptic gulf
And learn what deep necessity of the soul
Determined casual deed and consequence?
Absorbed in a routine of daily acts,
Our eyes are fixed on an external scene;
We hear the crash of the wheels of Circumstance
And wonder at the hidden cause of things.
Yet a foreseeing Knowledge might be ours,
If we could take our spirit's stand within,
If we could hear the muffled daemon voice.

Too seldom is the shadow of what must come
Cast in an instant on the secret sense
Which feels the shock of the invisible,
And seldom in the few who answer give
The mighty process of the cosmic Will
Communicates its image to our sight,
Identifying the world's mind with ours.
Our range is fixed within the crowded arc
Of what we observe and touch and thought can guess
And rarely dawns the light of the Unknown
Waking in us the prophet and the seer.
The outward and the immediate are our field,
The dead past is our background and support;
Mind keeps the soul prisoner, we are slaves to our acts;
We cannot free our gaze to reach wisdom's sun.
Inheritor of the brief animal mind,
Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,
In the succession of the moments lives;
To a changing present is his narrow right;
His memory stares back at a phantom past,
The future flees before him as he moves;
He sees imagined garments, not a face.
Armed with a limited precarious strength,
He saves his fruits of work from adverse chance.
A struggling ignorance is his wisdom's mate:
He waits to see the consequence of his acts,
He waits to weigh the certitude of his thoughts,
He knows not what he shall achieve or when;
He knows not whether at last he shall survive,
Or end like the mastodon and the sloth
And perish from the earth where he was king.
He is ignorant of the meaning of his life,
He is ignorant of his high and splendid fate.
Only the Immortals on their deathless heights
Dwelling beyond the walls of Time and Space,
Masters of living, free from the bonds of Thought,

Who are overseers of Fate and Chance and Will
And experts of the theorem of world-need,
Can see the Idea, the Might that change Time's course,
Come maned with light from undiscovered worlds,
Hear, while the world toils on with its deep blind heart,
The galloping hooves of the unforeseen event,
Bearing the superhuman Rider, near
And, impassive to earth's din and startled cry,
Return to the silence of the hills of God;
As lightning leaps, as thunder sweeps, they pass
And leave their mark on the trampled breast of Life.
Above the world the world-creators stand,
In the phenomenon see its mystic source.
These heed not the deceiving outward play,
They turn not to the moment's busy tramp,
But listen with the still patience of the Unborn
For the slow footsteps of far Destiny
Approaching through huge distances of Time,
Unmarked by the eye that sees effect and cause,
Unheard mid the clamour of the human plane.
Attentive to an unseen Truth they seize
A sound as of invisible augur wings,
Voices of an unplumbed significance,
Mutterings that brood in the core of Matter's sleep.
In the heart's profound audition they can catch
The murmurs lost by Life's uncaring ear,
A prophet-speech in Thought's omniscient trance.
Above the illusion of the hopes that pass,
Behind the appearance and the overt act,
Behind this clock-work Chance and vague surmise,
Amid the wrestle of force, the trampling feet,
Across the cries of anguish and of joy,
Across the triumph, fighting and despair,
They watch the Bliss for which earth's heart has cried
On the long road which cannot see its end
Winding undetected through the sceptic days

And to meet it guide the unheedful moving world.
Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.
When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

A Consciousness that knows not its own truth,
A vagrant hunter of misleading dawns,
Between the being's dark and luminous ends
Moves here in a half-light that seems the whole:
An interregnum in Reality
Cuts off the integral Thought, the total Power;
It circles or stands in a vague interspace,
Doubtful of its beginning and its close,
Or runs upon a road that has no end;
Far from the original Dusk, the final Flame
In some huge void Inconscience it lives,
Like a thought persisting in a wide emptiness.

As if an unintelligible phrase
Suggested a million renderings to the Mind,
It lends a purport to a random world.
A conjecture leaning upon doubtful proofs,
A message misunderstood, a thought confused
Missing its aim is all that it can speak
Or a fragment of the universal word.
It leaves two giant letters void of sense
While without sanction turns the middle sign
Carrying an enigmatic universe,
As if a present without future or past
Repeating the same revolution's whirl
Turned on its axis in its own Inane.
Thus is the meaning of creation veiled;
For without context reads the cosmic page:
Its signs stare at us like an unknown script,
As if appeared screened by a foreign tongue
Or code of splendour signs without a key
A portion of a parable sublime.
It wears to the perishable creature's eyes
The grandeur of a useless miracle;
Wasting itself that it may last awhile,
A river that can never find its sea,
It runs through life and death on an edge of Time;
A fire in the Night is its mighty action's blaze.
This is our deepest need to join once more
What now is parted, opposite and twain,
Remote in sovereign spheres that never meet
Or fronting like far poles of Night and Day.
We must fill the immense lacuna we have made,
Re-wed the closed finite's lonely consonant
With the open vowels of Infinity,
A hyphen must connect Matter and Mind,
The narrow isthmus of the ascending soul:
We must renew the secret bond in things,
Our hearts recall the lost divine Idea,

Reconstitute the perfect word, unite
The Alpha and the Omega in one sound;
Then shall the Spirit and Nature be at one.
Two are the ends of the mysterious plan.
In the wide signless ether of the Self,
In the unchanging Silence white and nude,
Aloof, resplendent like gold dazzling suns
Veiled by the ray no mortal eye can bear,
The Spirit's bare and absolute potencies
Burn in the solitude of the thoughts of God.
A rapture and a radiance and a hush,
Delivered from the approach of wounded hearts,
Denied to the Idea that looks at grief,
Remote from the Force that cries out in its pain,
In his inalienable bliss they live.
Immaculate in self-knowledge and self-power,
Calm they repose on the eternal Will.
Only his law they count and him obey;
They have no goal to reach, no aim to serve.
Implacable in their timeless purity,
All barter or bribe of worship they refuse;
Unmoved by cry of revolt and ignorant prayer
They reckon not our virtue and our sin;
They bend not to the voices that implore,
They hold no traffic with error and its reign;
They are guardians of the silence of the Truth,
They are keepers of the immutable decree.
A deep surrender is their source of might,
A still identity their way to know,
Motionless is their action like a sleep.
At peace, regarding the trouble beneath the stars,
Deathless, watching the works of Death and Chance,
Immobile, seeing the millenniums pass,
Untouched while the long map of Fate unrolls,
They look on our struggle with impartial eyes,
And yet without them cosmos could not be.

Impervious to desire and doom and hope,
Their station of inviolable might
Moveless upholds the world's enormous task,
Its ignorance is by their knowledge lit,
Its yearning lasts by their indifference.
As the height draws the low ever to climb,
As the breadths draw the small to adventure vast,
Their aloofness drives man to surpass himself.
Our passion heaves to wed the Eternal's calm,
Our dwarf-search mind to meet the Omniscient's light,
Our helpless hearts to enshrine the Omnipotent's force.
Acquiescing in the wisdom that made hell
And the harsh utility of death and tears,
Acquiescing in the gradual steps of Time,
Careless they seem of the grief that stings the world's heart,
Careless of the pain that rends its body and life;
Above joy and sorrow is that grandeur's walk:
They have no portion in the good that dies,
Mute, pure, they share not in the evil done;
Else might their strength be marred and could not save.
Alive to the truth that dwells in God's extremes,
Awake to a motion of all-seeing Force,
The slow outcome of the long ambiguous years
And the unexpected good from woeful deeds,
The immortal sees not as we vainly see.
He looks on hidden aspects and screened powers,
He knows the law and natural line of things.
Undriven by a brief life's will to act,
Unharassed by the spur of pity and fear,
He makes no haste to untie the cosmic knot
Or the world's torn jarring heart to reconcile.
In Time he waits for the Eternal's hour.
Yet a spiritual secret aid is there;
While a tardy Evolution's coils wind on
And Nature hews her way through adamant
A divine intervention thrones above.

Alive in a dead rotating universe
We whirl not here upon a casual globe
Abandoned to a task beyond our force;
Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate
And through the bitterness of death and fall
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.
It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;
In its unslackening grasp it keeps for us safe
The one inevitable supreme result
No will can take away and no doom change,
The crown of conscious Immortality,
The godhead promised to our struggling souls
When first man's heart dared death and suffered life.
One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:
Our errors are his steps upon the way;
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,
His knowledge overrules our nescience;
Whatever the appearance we must bear,
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.
After we have served this great divided world
God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right.
A date is fixed in the calendar of the Unknown,
An anniversary of the Birth sublime:
Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,
All will come near that now is naught or far.
These calm and distant Mights shall act at last.
Immovably ready for their destined task,
The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances
Await the sound of the Incarnate's voice
To leap and bridge the chasms of Ignorance
And heal the hollow yearning gulfs of Life
And fill the abyss that is the universe.

Here meanwhile at the Spirit's opposite pole
In the mystery of the deeps that God has built
For his abode below the Thinker's sight,
In this compromise of a stark absolute Truth
With the Light that dwells near the dark end of things,
In this tragi-comedy of divine disguise,
This long far seeking for joy ever near,
In the grandiose dream of which the world is made,
In this gold dome on a black dragon base,
The conscious Force that acts in Nature's breast,
A dark-robed labourer in the cosmic scheme
Carrying clay images of unborn gods,
Executrix of the inevitable Idea
Hampered, enveloped by the hoops of Fate,
Patient trustee of slow eternal Time,
Absolves from hour to hour her secret charge.
All she foresees in masked imperative depths;
The dumb intention of the unconscious gulfs
Answers to a will that sees upon the heights,
And the evolving Word's first syllable
Ponderous, brute-sensed, contains its luminous close,
Privy to a summit victory's vast descent
And the portent of the soul's immense uprise.

All here where each thing seems its lonely self
Are figures of the sole transcendent One:
Only by him they are, his breath is their life;
An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay.
A playmate in the mighty Mother's game,
One came upon the dubious whirling globe
To hide from her pursuit in force and form.
A secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep,
A shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word,
He was here before the elements could emerge,
Before there was light of mind or life could breathe.
Accomplice of her cosmic huge pretence,

His semblances he turns to real shapes
And makes the symbol equal with the truth:
He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time.
He is the substance, he the self of things;
She has forged from him her works of skill and might:
She wraps him in the magic of her moods
And makes of his myriad truths her countless dreams.
The Master of being has come down to her,
An immortal child born in the fugitive years.
In objects wrought, in the persons she conceives,
Dreaming she chases her idea of him,
And catches here a look and there a gest:
Ever he repeats in them his ceaseless births.
He is the Maker and the world he made,
He is the vision and he is the Seer;
He is himself the actor and the act,
He is himself the knower and the known,
He is himself the dreamer and the dream.
There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met
And light and darkness are their eyes' interchange;
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;
They are married secretly in our thought and life.
The universe is an endless masquerade:
For nothing here is utterly what it seems;
It is a dream-fact vision of a truth
Which but for the dream would not be wholly true,
A phenomenon stands out significant
Against dim backgrounds of eternity;
We accept its face and pass by all it means;
A part is seen, we take it for the whole.
Thus have they made their play with us for roles:
Author and actor with himself as scene,
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she.
Here on the earth where we must fill our parts,

We know not how shall run the drama's course;
Our uttered sentences veil in their thought.
Her mighty plan she holds back from our sight:
She has concealed her glory and her bliss
And disguised the Love and Wisdom in her heart;
Of all the marvel and beauty that are hers,
Only a darkened little we can feel.
He too wears a diminished godhead here;
He has forsaken his omnipotence,
His calm he has foregone and infinity.
He knows her only, he has forgotten himself;
To her he abandons all to make her great.
He hopes in her to find himself anew,
Incarnate, wedding his infinity's peace
To her creative passion's ecstasy.
Although possessor of the earth and heavens,
He leaves to her the cosmic management
And watches all, the Witness of her scene.
A supernumerary on her stage,
He speaks no words or hides behind the wings.
He takes birth in her world, waits on her will,
Divines her enigmatic gesture's sense,
The fluctuating chance turns of her mood,
Works out her meanings she seems not to know
And serves her secret purpose in long Time.
As one too great for him he worships her;
He adores her as his regent of desire,
He yields to her as the mover of his will,
He burns the incense of his nights and days
Offering his life, a splendour of sacrifice.
A rapt solicitor for her love and grace,
His bliss in her to him is his whole world:
He grows through her in all his being's powers;
He reads by her God's hidden aim in things.
Or, a courtier in her countless retinue,
Content to be with her and feel her near

He makes the most of the little that she gives
And all she does drapes with his own delight.
A glance can make his whole day wonderful,
A word from her lips with happiness wings the hours.
He leans on her for all he does and is:
He builds on her largesses his proud fortunate days
And trails his peacock-plumaged joy of life
And suns in the glory of her passing smile.
In a thousand ways he serves her royal needs;
He makes the hours pivot around her will,
Makes all reflect her whims; all is their play:
This whole wide world is only he and she.

This is the knot that ties together the stars:
The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
His acts are her commandment's registers.
Happy, inert, he lies beneath her feet:
His breast he offers for her cosmic dance
Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,
And none could bear but for his strength within,
Yet none would leave because of his delight.
His works, his thoughts have been devised by her,
His being is a mirror vast of hers:
Active, inspired by her he speaks and moves;
His deeds obey her heart's unspoken demands:
Passive, he bears the impacts of the world
As if her touches shaping his soul and life:
His journey through the days is her sun-march;
He runs upon her roads; hers is his course.
A witness and student of her joy and dole,
A partner in her evil and her good,
He has consented to her passionate ways,
He is driven by her sweet and dreadful force.
His sanctioning name initials all her works;

His silence is his signature to her deeds;
In the execution of her drama's scheme,
In her fancies of the moment and its mood,
In the march of this obvious ordinary world
Where all is deep and strange to the eyes that see
And Nature's common forms are marvel-wefts,
She through his witness sight and motion of might
Unrolls the material of her cosmic Act,
Her happenings that exalt and smite the soul,
Her force that moves, her powers that save and slay,
Her Word that in the silence speaks to our hearts,
Her silence that transcends the summit Word,
Her heights and depths to which our spirit moves,
Her events that weave the texture of our lives
And all by which we find or lose ourselves,
Things sweet and bitter, magnificent and mean,
Things terrible and beautiful and divine.
Her empire in the cosmos she has built,
He is governed by her subtle and mighty laws.
His consciousness is a babe upon her knees,
His being a field of her vast experiment,
Her endless space is the playground of his thoughts;
She binds to knowledge of the shapes of Time
And the creative error of limiting mind
And chance that wears the rigid face of fate
And her sport of death and pain and Nescience,
His changed and struggling immortality.
His soul is a subtle atom in a mass,
His substance a material for her works.
His spirit survives amid the death of things,
He climbs to eternity through being's gaps,
He is carried by her from Night to deathless Light.
This grand surrender is his free-will's gift,
His pure transcendent force submits to hers.
In the mystery of her cosmic ignorance,
In the insoluble riddle of her play,

A creature made of perishable stuff,
In the pattern she has set for him he moves,
He thinks with her thoughts, with her trouble his bosom heaves;
He seems the thing that she would have him seem,
He is whatever her artist will can make.
Although she drives him on her fancy's roads,
At play with him as with her child or slave,
To freedom and the Eternal's mastery
And immortality's stand above the world,
She moves her seeming puppet of an hour.
Even in his mortal session in body's house,
An aimless traveller between birth and death,
Ephemeral dreaming of immortality,
To reign she spurs him. He takes up her powers;
He has harnessed her to the yoke of her own law.
His face of human thought puts on a crown.
Held in her leash, bound to her veiled caprice,
He studies her ways if so he may prevail
Even for an hour and she work out his will;
He makes of her his moment passion's serf:
To obey she feigns, she follows her creature's lead:
For him she was made, lives only for his use.
But conquering her, then is he most her slave;
He is her dependent, all his means are hers;
Nothing without her he can, she rules him still.
At last he wakes to a memory of Self:
He sees within the face of deity,
The Godhead breaks out through the human mould:
Her highest heights she unmasks and is his mate.
Till then he is a plaything in her game;
Her seeming regent, yet her fancy's toy,
A living robot moved by her energy's springs,
He acts as in the movements of a dream,
An automaton stepping in the grooves of Fate,
He stumbles on driven by her whip of Force:
His thought labours, a bullock in Time's fields;

His will he thinks his own, is shaped in her forge.
Obedient to World-Nature's dumb control,
Driven by his own formidable Power,
His chosen partner in a titan game,
Her will he has made the master of his fate,
Her whim the dispenser of his pleasure and pain;
He has sold himself into her regal power
For any blow or boon that she may choose:
Even in what is suffering to our sense,
He feels the sweetness of her mastering touch,
In all experience meets her blissful hands;
On his heart he bears the happiness of her tread
And the surprise of her arrival's joy
In each event and every moment's chance.
All she can do is marvellous in his sight:
He revels in her, a swimmer in her sea,
A tireless amateur of her world-delight,
He rejoices in her every thought and act
And gives consent to all that she can wish;
Whatever she desires he wills to be:
The Spirit, the innumerable One,
He has left behind his lone eternity,
He is an endless birth in endless Time,
Her finite's multitude in an infinite Space.

The master of existence lurks in us
And plays at hide-and-seek with his own Force;
In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.
The Immanent lives in man as in his house;
He has made the universe his pastime's field,
A vast gymnasium of his works of might.
All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,
Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;
Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,
Immortal, dallies with mortality.
The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,

The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.
Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,
He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe
And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.
He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,
Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,
A luminous individual Power, alone.

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space:
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He has built a million figures of his power;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self,
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise;
Then in a figure of divinity
The Maker shall recast us and impose
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould
Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,
Touching the moment with eternity.
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.

But meanwhile all is a shadow cast by a dream
And to the musing and immobile spirit
Life and himself don the aspect of a myth,
The burden of a long unmeaning tale.
For the key is hid and by the Inconscient kept;
The secret God beneath the threshold dwells.
In a body obscuring the immortal Spirit
A nameless Resident vesting unseen powers
With Matter's shapes and motives beyond thought
And the hazard of an unguessed consequence,
An omnipotent indiscernible Influence,
He sits, unfelt by the form in which he lives
And veils his knowledge by the groping mind.
A wanderer in a world his thoughts have made,
He turns in a chiaroscuro of error and truth
To find a wisdom that on high is his.
As one forgetting he searches for himself;
As if he had lost an inner light he seeks:
As a sojourner lingering amid alien scenes
He journeys to a home he knows no more.
His own self's truth he seeks who is the Truth;
He is the Player who became the play,
He is the Thinker who became the thought;
He is the many who was the silent One.
In the symbol figures of the cosmic Force
And in her living and inanimate signs
And in her complex tracery of events
He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself,
Till the thousandfold enigma has been solved
In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.

This was his compact with his mighty mate,
For love of her and joined to her for ever
To follow the course of Time's eternity,
Amid magic dramas of her sudden moods
And the surprises of her masked Idea
And the vicissitudes of her vast caprice.

Two seem his goals, yet ever are they one
And gaze at each other over bourneless Time;
Spirit and Matter are their end and source.
A seeker of hidden meanings in life's forms,
Of the great Mother's wide uncharted will
And the rude enigma of her terrestrial ways
He is the explorer and the mariner
On a secret inner ocean without bourne:
He is the adventurer and cosmologist
Of a magic earth's obscure geography.
In her material order's fixed design
Where all seems sure and, even when changed, the same,
Even though the end is left for ever unknown
And ever unstable is life's shifting flow,
His paths are found for him by silent fate;
As stations in the ages' weltering flood
Firm lands appear that tempt and stay awhile,
Then new horizons lure the mind's advance.
There comes no close to the finite's boundlessness,
There is no last certitude in which thought can pause
And no terminus to the soul's experience.
A limit, a farness never wholly reached,
An unattained perfection calls to him
From distant boundaries in the Unseen:
A long beginning only has been made.

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,
This is World-Matter's slow discoverer,
Who, launched into this small corporeal birth,
Has learned his craft in tiny bays of self,
But dares at last unplumbed infinitudes,
A voyager upon eternity's seas.
In his world-adventure's crude initial start
Behold him ignorant of his godhead's force,
Timid initiate of its vast design.
An expert captain of a fragile craft,

A trafficker in small impermanent wares,
At first he hugs the shore and shuns the breadths,
Dares not to affront the far-off perilous main.
He in a petty coastal traffic plies,
His pay doled out from port to neighbour port,
Content with his safe round's unchanging course,
He hazards not the new and the unseen.
But now he hears the sound of larger seas.
A widening world calls him to distant scenes
And journeyings in a larger vision's arc
And peoples unknown and still unvisited shores.
On a commissioned keel his merchant hull
Serves the world's commerce in the riches of Time
Severing the foam of a great land-locked sea
To reach unknown harbour lights in distant climes
And open markets for life's opulent arts,
Rich bales, carved statuettes, hued canvases,
And jewelled toys brought for an infant's play
And perishable products of hard toil
And transient splendours won and lost by the days.
Or passing through a gate of pillar-rocks,
Venturing not yet to cross oceans unnamed
And journey into a dream of distances
He travels close to unfamiliar coasts
And finds new haven in storm-troubled isles,
Or, guided by a sure compass in his thought,
He plunges through a bright haze that hides the stars,
Steering on the trade-routes of Ignorance.
His prow pushes towards undiscovered shores,
He chances on unimagined continents:
A seeker of the islands of the Blest,
He leaves the last lands, crosses the ultimate seas,
He turns to eternal things his symbol quest;
Life changes for him its time-constructed scenes,
Its images veiling infinity.
Earth's borders recede and the terrestrial air

Hangs round him no longer its translucent veil.
He has crossed the limit of mortal thought and hope,
He has reached the world's end and stares beyond;
The eyes of mortal body plunge their gaze
Into Eyes that look upon eternity.
A greater world Time's traveller must explore.
At last he hears a chanting on the heights
And the far speaks and the unknown grows near:
He crosses the boundaries of the unseen
And passes over the edge of mortal sight
To a new vision of himself and things.
He is a spirit in an unfinished world
That knows him not and cannot know itself:
The surface symbol of his goalless quest
Takes deeper meanings to his inner view;
His is a search of darkness for the light,
Of mortal life for immortality.
In the vessel of an earthly embodiment
Over the narrow rails of limiting sense
He looks out on the magic waves of Time
Where mind like a moon illuminates the world's dark.
There is limned ever retreating from the eyes,
As if in a tenuous misty dream-light drawn,
The outline of a dim mysterious shore.
A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,
He voyages through a starry world of thought
On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun.
Across the noise and multitudinous cry,
Across the rapt unknowable silences,
Through a strange mid-world under supernal skies,
Beyond earth's longitudes and latitudes,
His goal is fixed outside all present maps.
But none learns whither through the unknown he sails
Or what secret mission the great Mother gave.
In the hidden strength of her omnipotent Will,
Driven by her breath across life's tossing deep,

Through the thunder's roar and through the windless hush,
Through fog and mist where nothing more is seen,
He carries her sealed orders in his breast.
Late will he know, opening the mystic script,
Whether to a blank port in the Unseen
He goes or, armed with her fiat, to discover
A new mind and body in the city of God
And enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house
And make the finite one with Infinity.
Across the salt waste of the endless years
Her ocean winds impel his errant boat,
The cosmic waters plashing as he goes,
A rumour around him and danger and a call.
Always he follows in her force's wake.
He sails through life and death and other life,
He travels on through waking and through sleep.
A power is on him from her occult force
That ties him to his own creation's fate,
And never can the mighty Traveller rest
And never can the mystic voyage cease
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
And the morns of God have overtaken his night.
As long as Nature lasts, he too is there,
For this is sure that he and she are one;
Even when he sleeps, he keeps her on his breast:
Whoever leaves her, he will not depart
To repose without her in the Unknowable.
There is a truth to know, a work to do;
Her play is real; a Mystery he fulfils:
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths

And raise a lost Power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.
For this he left his white infinity
And laid on the spirit the burden of the flesh,
That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless Space.

END OF CANTO FOUR

Canto Five

*The Yoga of the King:
The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness*

THIS knowledge first he had of time-born men.
Admitted through a curtain of bright mind
That hangs between our thoughts and absolute sight,
He found the occult cave, the mystic door
Near to the well of vision in the soul,
And entered where the Wings of Glory brood
In the silent space where all is for ever known.
Indifferent to doubt and to belief,
Avid of the naked real's single shock
He shore the cord of mind that ties the earth-heart
And cast away the yoke of Matter's law.
The body's rules bound not the spirit's powers:
When life had stopped its beats, death broke not in;
He dared to live when breath and thought were still.
Thus could he step into that magic place
Which few can even glimpse with hurried glance
Lifted for a moment from mind's laboured works
And the poverty of Nature's earthly sight.
All that the Gods have learned is there self-known.
There in a hidden chamber closed and mute
Are kept the record graphs of the cosmic scribe,
And there the tables of the sacred Law,
There is the Book of Being's index page;
The text and glossary of the Vedic truth
Are there; the rhythms and metres of the stars
Significant of the movements of our fate:
The symbol powers of number and of form,
And the secret code of the history of the world
And Nature's correspondence with the soul
Are written in the mystic heart of Life.

In the glow of the spirit's room of memories
He could recover the luminous marginal notes
Dotting with light the crabbed ambiguous scroll,
Rescue the preamble and the saving clause
Of the dark Agreement by which all is ruled
That rises from material Nature's sleep
To clothe the Everlasting in new shapes.
He could re-read now and interpret new
Its strange symbol letters, scattered abstruse signs,
Resolve its oracle and its paradox,
Its riddling phrases and its blindfold terms,
The deep oxymoron of its truth's repliques,
And recognise as a just necessity
Its hard conditions for the mighty work,—
Nature's impossible Herculean toil
Only her warlock-wisecraft could enforce,
Its law of the opposition of the gods,
Its list of inseparable contraries.
The dumb great Mother in her cosmic trance
Exploiting for creation's joy and pain
Infinity's sanction to the birth of form,
Accepts indomitably to execute
The will to know in an inconscient world,
The will to live under a reign of death,
The thirst for rapture in a heart of flesh,
And works out through the appearance of a soul
By a miraculous birth in plasm and gas
The mystery of God's covenant with the Night.
Once more was heard in the still cosmic Mind
The Eternal's promise to his labouring Force
Inducing the world-passion to begin,
The cry of birth into mortality
And the opening verse of the tragedy of Time.
Out of the depths the world's buried secret rose;
He read the original ukase kept back
In the locked archives of the spirit's crypt,

And saw the signature and fiery seal
Of Wisdom on the dim Power's hooded work
Who builds in Ignorance the steps of Light.
A sleeping deity opened deathless eyes:
He saw the unshaped thought in soulless forms,
Knew Matter pregnant with spiritual sense,
Mind dare the study of the Unknowable,
Life its gestation of the Golden Child.
In the light flooding thought's blank vacancy,
Interpreting the universe by soul signs
He read from within the text of the without:
The riddle grew plain and lost its catch obscure.
A larger lustre lit the mighty page.
A purpose mingled with the whims of Time,
A meaning met the stumbling pace of Chance
And Fate revealed a chain of seeing Will;
A conscious wideness filled the old dumb Space.
In the Void he saw throned the Omniscience supreme.

A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,
And to discern the superhuman's form
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.
The glory he had glimpsed must be his home.
A brighter heavenlier sun must soon illume
This dusk room with its dark internal stair,
The infant soul in its small nursery school
Mid objects meant for a lesson hardly learned
Outgrow its early grammar of intellect
And its imitation of Earth-Nature's art,
Its earthly dialect to God-language change,
In living symbols study Reality
And learn the logic of the Infinite.
The Ideal must be Nature's common truth,
The body illumined with the indwelling God,
The heart and mind feel one with all that is,

A conscious soul live in a conscious world.
As through a mist a sovereign peak is seen,
The greatness of the eternal Spirit appeared,
Exiled in a fragmented universe
Amid half-semblances of diviner things.
These now could serve no more his regal turn;
The Immortal's pride refused the doom to live
A miser of the scanty bargain made
Between our littleness and bounded hopes
And the compassionate Infinitudes.
His height repelled the lowness of earth's state:
A wideness discontented with its frame
Resiled from poor assent to Nature's terms,
The harsh contract spurned and the diminished lease.
Only beginnings are accomplished here;
Our base's Matter seems alone complete,
An absolute machine without a soul.
Or all seems a misfit of half ideas,
Or we saddle with the vice of earthly form
A hurried imperfect glimpse of heavenly things,
Guesses and travesties of celestial types.
Here chaos sorts itself into a world,
A brief formation drifting in the void:
Apings of knowledge, unfinished arcs of power,
Flamings of beauty into earthly shapes,
Love's broken reflexes of unity
Swim, fragment-mirrorings of a floating sun.
A packed assemblage of crude tentative lives
Are pieced into a tessellated whole.
There is no perfect answer to our hopes;
There are blind voiceless doors that have no key;
Thought climbs in vain and brings a borrowed light,
Cheated by counterfeits sold to us in life's mart,
Our hearts clutch at a forfeited heavenly bliss.
There is provender for the mind's satiety,
There are thrills of the flesh, but not the soul's desire.

Here even the highest rapture Time can give
Is a mimicry of ungrasped beatitudes,
A mutilated statue of ecstasy,
A wounded happiness that cannot live,
A brief felicity of mind or sense
Thrown by the World-Power to her body-slave,
Or a simulacrum of enforced delight
In the seraglios of Ignorance.
For all we have acquired soon loses worth,
An old disvalued credit in Time's bank,
Imperfection's cheque drawn on the Inconscient.
An inconsequence dogs every effort made,
And chaos waits on every cosmos formed:
In each success a seed of failure lurks.
He saw the doubtfulness of all things here,
The incertitude of man's proud confident thought,
The transience of the achievements of his force.
A thinking being in an unthinking world,
An island in the sea of the Unknown,
He is a smallness trying to be great,
An animal with some instincts of a god,
His life a story too common to be told,
His deeds a number summing up to nought,
His consciousness a torch lit to be quenched,
His hope a star above a cradle and grave.
And yet a greater destiny may be his,
For the eternal Spirit is his truth.
He can re-create himself and all around
And fashion new the world in which he lives:
He, ignorant, is the Knower beyond Time,
He is the Self above Nature, above Fate.

His soul retired from all that he had done.
Hushed was the futile din of human toil,
Forsaken wheeled the circle of the days;
In distance sank the crowded tramp of life.

The Silence was his sole companion left.
Impassive he lived immune from earthly hopes,
A figure in the ineffable Witness' shrine
Pacing the vast cathedral of his thoughts
Under its arches dim with infinity
And heavenward brooding of invisible wings.
A call was on him from intangible heights;
Indifferent to the little outpost Mind,
He dwelt in the wideness of the Eternal's reign.
His being now exceeded thinkable Space,
His boundless thought was neighbour to cosmic sight:
A universal light was in his eyes,
A golden influx flowed through heart and brain;
A Force came down into his mortal limbs,
A current from eternal seas of Bliss;
He felt the invasion and the nameless joy.
Aware of his occult omnipotent Source,
Allured by the omniscient Ecstasy,
A living centre of the Illimitable
Widened to equate with the world's circumference,
He turned to his immense spiritual fate.
Abandoned on a canvas of torn air,
A picture lost in far and fading streaks,
The earth-nature's summits sank below his feet:
He climbed to meet the infinite more above.
The Immobile's ocean-silence saw him pass,
An arrow leaping through eternity
Suddenly shot from the tense bow of Time,
A ray returning to its parent sun.
Opponent of that glory of escape,
The black Inconscient swung its dragon tail
Lashing a slumbrous Infinite by its force
Into the deep obscurities of form:
Death lay beneath him like a gate of sleep.
One-pointed to the immaculate Delight,
Questing for God as for a splendid prey,

He mounted burning like a cone of fire.
To a few is given that godlike rare release.
One among many thousands never touched,
Engrossed in the external world's design,
Is chosen by a secret witness Eye
And driven by a pointing hand of Light
Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes.
A pilgrim of the everlasting Truth,
Our measures cannot hold his measureless mind;
He has turned from the voices of the narrow realm
And left the little lane of human Time.
In the hushed precincts of a vaster plan
He treads the vestibules of the Unseen,
Or listens following a bodiless Guide
To a lonely cry in boundless vacancy.
All the deep cosmic murmur falling still,
He lives in the hush before the world was born,
His soul left naked to the timeless One.
Far from compulsion of created things
Thought and its shadowy idols disappear,
The moulds of form and person are undone:
The ineffable Wideness knows him for its own.
A lone forerunner of the Godward earth,
Among the symbols of yet unshaped things
Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn,
He journeys to meet the Incommunicable,
Hearing the echo of his single steps
In the eternal courts of Solitude.
A nameless Marvel fills the motionless hours.
His spirit mingles with eternity's heart
And bears the silence of the Infinite.

In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
His being towered into pathless heights,
Naked of its vesture of humanity.

As thus it rose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany:
His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.
In a moment shorter than death, longer than Time,
By a Power more ruthless than Love, happier than Heaven,
Taken sovereignly into eternal arms,
Haled and coerced by a stark absolute bliss,
In a whirlwind circuit of delight and force
Hurried into unimaginable depths,
Upborne into immeasurable heights,
It was torn out from its mortality
And underwent a new and bourneless change.
An Omniscient knowing without sight or thought,
An indecipherable Omnipotence,
A mystic Form that could contain the worlds,
Yet make one human breast its passionate shrine,
Drew him out of his seeking loneliness
Into the magnitudes of God's embrace.
As when a timeless Eye annuls the hours
Abolishing the agent and the act,
So now his spirit shone out wide, blank, pure:
His wakened mind became an empty slate
On which the Universal and Sole could write.
All that represses our fallen consciousness
Was taken from him like a forgotten load:
A fire that seemed the body of a god
Consumed the limiting figures of the past
And made large room for a new self to live.
Eternity's contact broke the moulds of sense.
A greater Force than the earthly held his limbs,
Huge workings bared his undiscovered sheaths,

Strange energies wrought and screened tremendous hands
Unwound the triple cord of mind and freed
The heavenly wideness of a Godhead's gaze.
As through a dress the wearer's shape is seen,
There reached through forms to the hidden absolute
A cosmic feeling and transcendent sight.
Increased and heightened were the instruments.
Illusion lost her aggrandising lens;
As from her failing hand the measures fell,
Atomic looked the things that loomed so large.
The little ego's ring could join no more;
In the enormous spaces of the self
The body now seemed only a wandering shell,
His mind the many-frescoed outer court
Of an imperishable Inhabitant:
His spirit breathed a superhuman air.
The imprisoned deity rent its magic fence.
As with a sound of thunder and of seas,
Vast barriers crashed around the huge escape.
Immutably coeval with the world,
Circle and end of every hope and toil
Inexorably drawn round thought and act,
The fixed immovable peripheries
Effaced themselves beneath the Incarnate's tread.
The dire velamen and the bottomless crypt
Between which life and thought for ever move,
Forbidden still to cross the dim dread bounds,
The guardian darknesses mute and formidable,
Empowered to circumscribe the wingless spirit
In the boundaries of Mind and Ignorance,
Protecting no more a dual eternity
Vanished rescinding their enormous role:
Once figure of creation's vain ellipse,
The expanding zero lost its giant curve.
The old adamantine vetoes stood no more:
Overpowered were earth and Nature's obsolete rule;

The python coils of the restricting Law
Could not restrain the swift arisen God:
Abolished were the scripts of destiny.
There was no small death-hunted creature more,
No fragile form of being to preserve
From an all-swallowing Immensity.
The great hammer-beats of a pent-up world-heart
Burst open the narrow dams that keep us safe
Against the forces of the universe.
The soul and cosmos faced as equal powers.
A boundless being in a measureless Time
Invaded Nature with the infinite;
He saw unpathed, unwalled, his titan scope.

All was uncovered to his sealless eye.
A secret Nature stripped of her defence,
Once in a dreaded half-light formidable,
Overtaken in her mighty privacy
Lay bare to the burning splendour of his will.
In shadowy chambers lit by a strange sun
And opening hardly to hid mystic keys
Her perilous arcanes and hooded Powers
Confessed the advent of a mastering Mind
And bore the compulsion of a time-born gaze.
Incalculable in their wizard modes,
Immediate and invincible in the act,
Her secret strengths native to greater worlds
Lifted above our needy limited scope,
The occult privilege of demigods
And the sure power-pattern of her cryptic signs,
Her diagrams of geometric force,
Her potencies of marvel-fraught design
Courted employment by an earth-nursed might.
A conscious Nature's quick machinery
Armed with a latent splendour of miracle
The prophet-passion of a seeing Mind,

And the lightning bareness of a free soul-force.
All once impossible deemed could now become
A natural limb of possibility,
A new domain of normalcy supreme.
An almighty occultist erects in Space
This seeming outward world which tricks the sense;
He weaves his hidden threads of consciousness,
He builds bodies for his shapeless energy;
Out of the unformed and vacant Vast he has made
His sorcery of solid images,
His magic of formative number and design,
The fixed irrational links none can annul,
This criss-cross tangle of invisible laws;
His infallible rules, his covered processes,
Achieve unerringly an inexplicable
Creation where our error carves dead frames
Of knowledge for a living ignorance.
In her mystery's moods divorced from the Maker's laws
She too as sovereignly creates her field,
Her will shaping the undetermined vasts,
Making a finite of infinity;
She too can make an order of her caprice,
As if her rash superb wagered to outvie
The veiled Creator's cosmic seccrecies.
The rapid footsteps of her fantasy,
Amid whose falls wonders like flowers rise,
Are surer than reason, defter than device
And swifter than Imagination's wings.
All she new-fashions by the thought and word,
Compels all substance by her wand of Mind.
Mind is a mediator divinity:
Its powers can undo all Nature's work:
Mind can suspend or change earth's concrete law.
Affranchised from earth-habit's drowsy seal
The leaden grip of Matter it can break;
Indifferent to the angry stare of Death,

It can immortalise a moment's work:
A simple fiat of its thinking force,
The casual pressure of its slight assent
Can liberate the Energy dumb and pent
Within its chambers of mysterious trance:
It makes the body's sleep a puissant arm,
Holds still the breath, the beatings of the heart,
While the unseen is found, the impossible done,
Communicates without means the unspoken thought;
It moves events by its bare silent will,
Acts at a distance without hands or feet.
This giant Ignorance, this dwarfish Life
It can illumine with a prophet sight,
Invoke the bacchic rapture, the Fury's goad,
In our body arouse the demon or the god,
Call in the Omniscient and Omnipotent,
Awake a forgotten Almightiness within.
In its own plane a shining emperor,
Even in this rigid realm, Mind can be king:
The logic of its demigod Idea
In the leap of a transitional moment brings
Surprises of creation never achieved
Even by Matter's strange unconscious skill.
All's miracle here and can by miracle change.
This is that secret Nature's edge of might.
On the margin of great immaterial planes,
In kingdoms of an untrammelled glory of force,
Where Mind is master of the life and form
And soul fulfils its thoughts by its own power,
She meditates upon mighty words and looks
On the unseen links that join the parted spheres.
Thence to the initiate who observes her laws
She brings the light of her mysterious realms:
Here where he stands, his feet on a prostrate world,
His mind no more cast into Matter's mould,
Over their bounds in spurts of splendid strength

She carries their magician processes
And the formulas of their stupendous speech,
Till heaven and hell become purveyors to earth
And the universe the slave of mortal will.
A mediatrix with veiled and nameless gods
Whose alien will touches our human life,
Imitating the World-Magician's ways
She invents for her self-bound free-will its grooves
And feigns for magic's freaks a binding cause.
All worlds she makes the partners of her deeds,
Accomplices of her mighty violence,
Her daring leaps into the impossible:
From every source she has taken her cunning means,
She draws from the free-love marriage of the planes
Elements for her creation's tour-de-force:
A wonder-weft of knowledge incalculable,
A compendium of divine invention's feats
She has combined to make the unreal true
Or liberate suppressed reality:
In her unhedged Circean wonderland
Pell-mell she shepherds her occult mightinesses;
Her mnemonics of the craft of the Infinite,
Jets of the screened subliminal's caprice,
Tags of the gramarye of Inconscience,
Freedom of a sovereign Truth without a law,
Thoughts that were born in the immortals' world,
Oracles that break out from behind the shrine,
Warnings from the daemonic inner voice
And peeps and lightning-leaps of prophecy
And intimations to the inner ear,
Abrupt interventions stark and absolute
And the Superconscious's unaccountable acts,
Have woven her balanced web of miracles
And the weird technique of her tremendous art.
This bizarre kingdom passed into his charge.
As one resisting more the more she loves,

Her great possessions and her power and lore
She gave, compelled, with a reluctant joy;
Herself she gave for rapture and for use.
Absolved from aberrations in deep ways,
The ends she recovered for which she was made:
She turned against the evil she had helped
Her engined wrath, her invisible means to slay;
Her dangerous moods and arbitrary force
She surrendered to the service of the soul
And the control of a spiritual will.
A greater despot tamed her despotism.
Assailed, surprised in the fortress of her self,
Conquered by her own unexpected king,
Fulfilled and ransomed by her servitude,
She yielded in a vanquished ecstasy,
Her sealed hermetic wisdom forced from her,
Fragments of the mystery of omnipotence.

A border sovereign is the occult Force.
A threshold guardian of the earth-scene's Beyond,
She has canalised the outbreaks of the Gods
And cut through vistas of intuitive sight
A long road of shimmering discoveries.
The worlds of a marvellous Unknown were near,
Behind her an ineffable Presence stood:
Her reign received their mystic influences,
Their lion-forces crouched beneath her feet;
The future sleeps unknown behind their doors.
Abysms infernal gaped round the soul's steps
And called to its mounting vision peaks divine:
An endless climb and adventure of the Idea
There tirelessly tempted the explorer mind
And countless voices visited the charmed ear;
A million figures passed and were seen no more.
This was a forefront of God's thousandfold house,
Beginnings of the half-screened Invisible.

A magic porch of entry glimmering
Quivered in a penumbra of screened Light,
A court of the mystical traffic of the worlds,
A balcony and miraculous façade.
Above her lightened high immensities;
All the unknown looked out from boundlessness:
It lodged upon an edge of hourless Time,
Gazing out of some everlasting Now,
Its shadows gleaming with the birth of gods,
Its bodies signalling the Bodiless,
Its foreheads glowing with the Oversoul,
Its forms projected from the Unknowable,
Its eyes dreaming of the Ineffable,
Its faces staring into eternity.
Life in him learned its huge subconscious rear;
The little fronts unlocked to the unseen Vasts:
Her gulfs stood nude, her far transcendences
Flamed in transparencies of crowded light.

A giant order was discovered here
Of which the tassel and extended fringe
Are the scant stuff of our material lives.
This overt universe whose figures hide
The secrets merged in superconscious light,
Wrote clear the letters of its glowing code:
A map of subtle signs surpassing thought
Was hung upon a wall of inmost mind.
Illumining the world's concrete images
Into significant symbols by its gloss,
It offered to the intuitive exegete
Its reflex of the eternal Mystery.
Ascending and descending twixt life's poles
The seried kingdoms of the graded Law
Plunged from the Everlasting into Time,
Then glad of a glory of multitudinous mind
And rich with life's adventure and delight

And packed with the beauty of Matter's shapes and hues
Climbed back from Time into undying Self,
Up a golden ladder carrying the soul,
Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's extremes.
In this drop from consciousness to consciousness
Each leaned on the occult Inconscient's power,
The fountain of its needed Ignorance,
Archmason of the limits by which it lives.
In this soar from consciousness to consciousness
Each lifted tops to That from which it came,
Origin of all that it had ever been
And home of all that it could still become.
An organ scale of the Eternal's acts,
Mounting to their climax in an endless Calm,
Paces of the many-visaged Wonderful,
Predestined stadia of the evolving Way,
Measures of the stature of the growing soul,
They interpreted existence to itself
And, mediating twixt the heights and deeps,
United the veiled married opposites
And linked creation to the Ineffable.
A last high world was seen where all worlds meet;
In its summit gleam where Night is not nor Sleep,
The light began of the Trinity supreme.
All there discovered what it seeks for here.
It freed the finite into boundlessness
And rose into its own eternities.
The Inconscient found its heart of consciousness,
The idea and feeling groping in Ignorance
At last clutched passionately the body of Truth,
The music born in Matter's silences
Plucked nude out of the Ineffable's fathomlessness
The meaning it had held but could not voice;
The perfect rhythm now only sometimes dreamed
An answer brought to the torn earth's hungry need
Rending the night that had concealed the Unknown,

Giving to her her lost forgotten soul.
A grand solution closed the long impasse
In which the heights of mortal effort end.
A reconciling Wisdom looked on life;
It took the striving undertones of mind
And took the confused refrain of human hopes
And made of them a sweet and happy call;
It lifted from an underground of pain
The inarticulate murmur of our lives
And found for it a sense illimitable.
A mighty oneness its perpetual theme,
It caught the soul's faint scattered utterances,
Read hardly twixt our lines of rigid thought
Or mid this drowse and coma on Matter's breast
Heard like disjointed mutterings in sleep;
It grouped the golden links that they had lost
And showed to them their divine unity,
Saving from the error of divided self
The deep spiritual cry in all that is.
All the great Words that toiled to express the One
Were lifted into an absoluteness of light,
An ever-burning Revelation's fire
And the immortality of the eternal Voice.
There was no quarrel more of truth with truth;
The endless chapter of their differences
Retold in light by an omniscient Scribe
Travelled through difference towards unity,
Mind's winding search lost every tinge of doubt
Led to its end by an all-seeing speech
That garbed the initial and original thought
With the finality of an ultimate phrase:
United were Time's creative mood and tense
To the style and syntax of Identity.
A paean swelled from the lost musing deeps;
An anthem pealed to the triune ecstasies,
A cry of the moments to the Immortal's bliss.

As if the strophes of a cosmic ode,
A hierarchy of climbing harmonies
Peopled with voices and with visages
Aspired in a crescendo of the Gods
From Matter's abysses to the Spirit's peaks.
Above were the Immortal's changeless seats,
White chambers of dalliance with eternity
And the stupendous gates of the Alone.
Across the unfolding of the seas of self
Appeared the deathless countries of the One.
A many-miracled Consciousness unrolled
Vast aim and process and unfettered norms,
A larger Nature's great familiar roads.
Affranchised from the net of earthly sense
Calm continents of potency were glimpsed;
Homelands of beauty shut to human eyes,
Half-seen at first through wonder's gleaming lids,
Surprised the vision with felicity;
Sunbelts of knowledge, moonbelts of delight
Stretched out in an ecstasy of widenesses
Beyond our indigent corporeal range.
There he could enter, there awhile abide.
A voyager upon uncharted routes
Fronting the viewless danger of the Unknown,
Adventuring across enormous realms,
He broke into another Space and Time.

END OF CANTO FIVE
END OF BOOK ONE

BOOK TWO

The Book of the Traveller
of the Worlds

Canto One

The World-Stair

ALONE he moved watched by the infinity
Around him and the Unknowable above.
All could be seen that shuns the mortal eye,
All could be known the mind has never grasped;
All could be done no mortal will can dare.
A limitless movement filled a limitless peace.
In a profound existence beyond earth's
Parent or kin to our ideas and dreams
Where Space is a vast experiment of the soul,
In an immaterial substance linked to ours
In a deep oneness of all things that are,
The universe of the Unknown arose.
A self-creation without end or pause
Revealed the grandeurs of the Infinite:
It flung into the hazards of its play
A million moods, a myriad energies,
The world-shapes that are fancies of its Truth
And the formulas of the freedom of its Force.
It poured into the Ever-stable's flux
A bacchic rapture and revel of Ideas,
A passion and motion of everlastingness.
There rose unborn into the Unchanging's surge
Thoughts that abide in their deathless consequence,
Words that immortal last though fallen mute,
Acts that brought out from Silence its dumb sense,
Lines that convey the inexpressible.
The Eternal's stillness saw in unmoved joy
His universal Power at work display
In plots of pain and dramas of delight
The wonder and beauty of her will to be.
All, even pain, was the soul's pleasure here;

Here all experience was a single plan,
The thousandfold expression of the One.
All came at once into his single view;
Nothing escaped his vast intuitive sight,
Nothing drew near he could not feel as kin:
He was one spirit with that immensity.
Images in a supernal consciousness
Embodying the Unborn who never dies,
The structured visions of the cosmic Self
Alive with the touch of being's eternity
Looked at him like form-bound spiritual thoughts
Figuring the movements of the Ineffable.
Aspects of being donned world-outline; forms
That open moving doors on things divine,
Became familiar to his hourly sight;
The symbols of the Spirit's reality,
The living bodies of the Bodiless
Grew near to him, his daily associates.
The exhaustless seeings of the unsleeping Mind,
Letterings of its contact with the invisible,
Surrounded him with countless pointing signs;
The voices of a thousand realms of Life
Missioned to him her mighty messages.
The heaven-hints that invade our earthly lives,
The dire imaginations dreamed by Hell,
Which if enacted and experienced here
Our dulled capacity soon would cease to feel
Or our mortal frailty could not long endure,
Were set in their sublime proportions there.
There lived out in their self-born atmosphere,
They resumed their topless pitch and native power;
Their fortifying stress upon the soul
Bit deep into the ground of consciousness
The passion and purity of their extremes,
The absoluteness of their single cry
And the sovereign sweetness or violent poetry

Of their beautiful or terrible delight.
All thought can know or widest sight perceive
And all that thought and sight can never know,
All things occult and rare, remote and strange
Were near to heart's contact, felt by spirit-sense.
Asking for entry at his nature's gates
They crowded the widened spaces of his mind,
His self-discovery's flaming witnesses,
Offering their marvel and their multitude.
These now became new portions of himself,
The figures of his spirit's greater life,
The moving scenery of his large time-walk
Or the embroidered tissue of his sense:
These took the place of intimate human things
And moved as close companions of his thoughts,
Or were his soul's natural environment.
Tireless the heart's adventure of delight,
Endless the kingdoms of the Spirit's bliss,
Unnumbered tones struck from one harmony's strings;
Each to its wide-winged universal poise,
Its fathomless feeling of the All in one,
Brought notes of some perfection yet unseen,
Its single retreat into Truth's secracies,
Its happy sidelight on the Infinite.
All was found there the Unique has dreamed and made
Tinging with ceaseless rapture and surprise
And an opulent beauty of passionate difference
The recurring beat that moments God in Time.
Only was missing the sole timeless Word
That carries eternity in its lonely sound,
The Idea self-luminous key to all ideas,
The integer of the Spirit's perfect sum
That equates the unequal All to the equal One,
The single sign interpreting every sign,
The absolute index to the Absolute.

There walled apart by its own innerness
In a mystical barrage of dynamic light
He saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile
Erect like a mountain-chariot of the Gods
Motionless under an inscrutable sky.
As if from Matter's plinth and viewless base
To a top as viewless, a carved sea of worlds
Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme
Ascended towards breadths immeasurable;
It hoped to soar into the Ineffable's reign:
A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown.
So it towered up to heights intangible
And disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast
As climbs a storeyed temple-tower to heaven
Built by the aspiring soul of man to live
Near to his dream of the Invisible.
Infinity calls to it as it dreams and climbs;
Its spire touches the apex of the world;
Mounting into great voiceless stillnesses
It marries the earth to screened eternities.
Amid the many systems of the One
Made by an interpreting creative joy
Alone it points us to our journey back
Out of our long self-loss in Nature's deeps;
Planted on earth it holds in it all realms:
It is a brief compendium of the Vast.
This was the single stair to being's goal.
A summary of the stages of the spirit,
Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies
Refashioned in our secret air of self
A subtle pattern of the universe.
It is within, below, without, above.
Acting upon this visible Nature's scheme
It wakens our earth-matter's heavy doze
To think and feel and to react to joy;
It models in us our diviner parts,

Lifts mortal mind into a greater air,
Makes yearn this life of flesh to intangible aims,
Links the body's death with immortality's call:
Out of the swoon of the Inconscience
It labours towards a superconscious Light.
If earth were all and this were not in her,
Thought could not be nor life-delight's response:
Only material forms could then be her guests
Driven by an inanimate world-force.
Earth by this golden superfluity
Bore thinking man and more than man shall bear;
This higher scheme of being is our cause
And holds the key to our ascending fate;
It calls out of our dense mortality
The conscious spirit nursed in Matter's house.
The living symbol of these conscious planes,
Its influences and godheads of the unseen,
Its unthought logic of Reality's acts
Arisen from the unspoken truth in things,
Have fixed our inner life's slow-scaled degrees.
Its steps are paces of the soul's return
From the deep adventure of material birth,
A ladder of delivering ascent
And rungs that Nature climbs to deity.
Once in the vigil of a deathless gaze
These grades had marked her giant downward plunge,
The wide and prone leap of a godhead's fall.
Our life is a holocaust of the Supreme.
The great World-Mother by her sacrifice
Has made her soul the body of our state;
Accepting sorrow and unconsciousness
Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove
The many-patterned ground of all we are.
An idol of self is our mortality.
Our earth is a fragment and a residue;
Her power is packed with the stuff of greater worlds

And steeped in their colour-lustres dimmed by her drowse;
An atavism of higher births is hers,
Her sleep is stirred by their buried memories
Recalling the lost spheres from which they fell.
Unsatisfied forces in her bosom move;
They are partners of her greater growing fate
And her return to immortality;
They consent to share her doom of birth and death;
They kindle partial gleams of the All and drive
Her blind laborious spirit to compose
A meagre image of the mighty Whole.
The calm and luminous Intimacy within
Approves her work and guides the unseeing Power.
His vast design accepts a puny start.
An attempt, a drawing half-done is the world's life;
Its lines doubt their concealed significance,
Its curves join not their high intended close.
Yet some first image of greatness trembles there,
And when the ambiguous crowded parts have met
The many-toned unity to which they moved,
The Artist's joy shall laugh at reason's rules;
The divine intention suddenly shall be seen,
The end vindicate intuition's sure technique.
A graph shall be of many meeting worlds,
A cube and union-crystal of the gods;
A Mind shall think behind Nature's mindless mask,
A conscious Vast fill the old dumb brute Space.
This faint and fluid sketch of soul called man
Shall stand out on the background of long Time
A glowing epitome of eternity,
A little point reveal the infinitudes.
A Mystery's process is the universe.
At first was laid a strange anomalous base,
A void, a cipher of some secret Whole,
Where zero held infinity in its sum
And All and Nothing were a single term,

An eternal negative, a matrix Nought:
Into its forms the Child is ever born
Who lives for ever in the vasts of God.
A slow reversal's movement then took place:
A gas belched out from some invisible Fire,
Of its dense rings were formed these million stars;
Upon earth's new-born soil God's tread was heard.
Across the thick smoke of earth's ignorance
A Mind began to see and look at forms
And groped for knowledge in the nescient Night:
Caught in a blind stone-grip Force worked its plan
And made in sleep this huge mechanical world,
That Matter might grow conscious of its soul
And like a busy midwife the life-power
Deliver the zero carrier of the All.
Because eternal eyes turned on earth's gulfs
The lucent clarity of a pure regard
And saw a shadow of the Unknowable
Mirrored in the Inconscient's boundless sleep,
Creation's search for self began its stir.
A spirit dreamed in the crude cosmic whirl,
Mind flowed unknowing in the sap of life
And Matter's breasts suckled the divine Idea.
A miracle of the Absolute was born;
Infinity put on a finite soul,
All ocean lived within a wandering drop,
A time-made body housed the Illimitable.
To live this Mystery out our souls came here.

A Seer within who knows the ordered plan
Concealed behind our momentary steps,
Inspires our ascent to viewless heights
As once the abysmal leap to earth and life.
His call had reached the Traveller in Time.
Apart in an unfathomed loneliness,
He travelled in his mute and single strength

Bearing the burden of the world's desire.
A formless Stillness called, a nameless Light.
Above him was the white immobile Ray,
Around him the eternal Silences.
No term was fixed to the high-pitched attempt;
World after world disclosed its guarded powers,
Heaven after heaven its deep beatitudes,
But still the invisible Magnet drew his soul.
A figure sole on Nature's giant stair,
He mounted towards an indiscernible end
On the bare summit of created things.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Kingdom of Subtle Matter

IN THE impalpable field of secret self,
This little outer being's vast support
Parted from vision by earth's solid fence,
He came into a magic crystal air
And found a life that lived not by the flesh,
A light that made visible immaterial things.
A fine degree in wonder's hierarchy,
The kingdom of subtle Matter's faery craft
Outlined against a sky of vivid hues,
Leaping out of a splendour-trance and haze,
The wizard revelation of its front.
A world of lovelier forms lies near to ours,
Where, undisguised by earth's deforming sight,
All shapes are beautiful and all things true.
In that lucent ambience mystically clear
The eyes were doors to a celestial sense,
Hearing was music and the touch a charm,
And the heart drew a deeper breath of power.
There dwell earth-nature's shining origins:
The perfect plans on which she moulds her works,
The distant outcomes of her travailing force,
Repose in a framework of established fate.
Attempted vainly now or won in vain,
Already were mapped and scheduled there the time
And figure of her future sovereignties
In the sumptuous lineaments traced by desire.
The golden issue of mind's labyrinth plots,
The riches unfound or still uncaught by our lives,
Unsullied by the attaint of mortal thought
Abide in that pellucid atmosphere.
Our vague beginnings are overtaken there,

Our middle terms sketched out in prescient lines,
Our finished ends anticipated live.
This brilliant roof of our descending plane,
Intercepting the free boon of heaven's air,
Admits small inrushes of a mighty breath
Or fragrant circuits through gold lattices;
It shields our ceiling of terrestrial mind
From deathless suns and the streaming of God's rain,
Yet canalises a strange irised glow,
And bright dews drip from the Immortal's sky.
A passage for the Powers that move our days,
Occult behind this grosser Nature's walls,
A gossamer marriage-hall of Mind with Form
Is hidden by a tapestry of dreams;
Heaven's meanings steal through it as through a veil,
Its inner sight sustains this outer scene.
A finer consciousness with happier lines,
It has a tact our touch cannot attain,
A purity of sense we never feel;
Its intercession with the eternal Ray
Inspires our transient earth's brief-lived attempts
At beauty and the perfect shape of things.
In rooms of the young divinity of power
And early play of the eternal Child
The embodiments of his outwinging thoughts
Laved in a bright everlasting wonder's tints
And lulled by whispers of that lucid air
Take dream-hued rest like birds on timeless trees
Before they dive to float on earth-time's sea.
All that here seems has lovelier semblance there.
Whatever our hearts conceive, our heads create,
Some high original beauty forfeiting,
Thence exiled here consents to an earthly tinge.
Whatever is here of visible charm and grace
Finds there its faultless and immortal lines;
All that is beautiful here is there divine.

Figures are there undreamed by mortal mind:
Bodies that have no earthly counterpart
Traverse the inner eye's illumined trance
And ravish the heart with their celestial tread
Persuading heaven to inhabit that wonder sphere.
The future's marvels wander in its gulfs;
Things old and new are fashioned in those depths:
A carnival of beauty crowds the heights
In that magic kingdom of ideal sight.
In its antechambers of splendid privacy
Matter and soul in conscious union meet
Like lovers in a lonely secret place:
In the clasp of a passion not yet unfortunate
They join their strength and sweetness and delight
And mingling make the high and low worlds one.
Intruder from the formless Infinite
Daring to break into the Inconscient's reign,
The spirit's leap towards body touches ground.
As yet unwrapped in earthly lineaments,
Already it wears outlasting death and birth,
Convincing the abyss by heavenly form,
A covering of its immortality
Alive to the lustre of the wearer's rank,
Fit to endure the rub of Change and Time.
A tissue mixed of the soul's radiant light
And Matter's substance of sign-burdened Force,—
Imagined vainly in our mind's thin air
An abstract phantasm mould of mental make,—
It feels what earthly bodies cannot feel
And is more real than this grosser frame.
After the falling of mortality's cloak
Lightened is its weight to heighten its ascent;
Refined to the touch of finer environments
It drops old patterned palls of denser stuff,
Cancels the grip of earth's descending pull
And bears the soul from world to higher world,

Till in the naked ether of the peaks
The spirit's simplicity alone is left,
The eternal being's first transparent robe.
But when it must come back to its mortal load
And the hard ensemble of earth's experience,
Then its return resumes that heavier dress.
For long before earth's solid vest was forged
By the technique of the atomic Void,
A lucent envelope of self-disguise
Was woven round the secret spirit in things.
The subtle realms from those bright sheaths are made.
This wonder-world with all its radiant boon
Of vision and inviolate happiness,
Only for expression cares and perfect form;
Fair on its peaks, it has dangerous nether planes;
Its light draws towards the verge of Nature's lapse;
It lends beauty to the terror of the gulfs
And fascinating eyes to perilous Gods,
Invests with grace the demon and the snake.
Its trance imposes earth's conscience,
Immortal it weaves for us death's sombre robe
And authorises our mortality.
This medium serves a greater Consciousness:
A vessel of its concealed autocracy,
It is the subtle ground of Matter's worlds,
It is the immutable in their mutable forms,
In the folds of its creative memory
It guards the deathless type of perishing things:
Its lowered potencies found our fallen strengths;
Its thought invents our reasoned ignorance;
Its sense fathers our body's reflexes.
Our secret breath of untried mightier force,
The lurking sun of an instant's inner sight,
Its fine suggestions are a covert fount
For our iridescent rich imaginings
Touching things common with transfiguring hues

Till even earth's mud grows rich and warm with the skies
And a glory gleams from the soul's decadence.
Its knowledge is our error's starting-point;
Its beauty dons our mud-mask ugliness,
Its artist good begins our evil's tale.
A heaven of creative truths above,
A cosmos of harmonious dreams between,
A chaos of dissolving forms below,
It plunges lost in our inconscient base.
Out of its fall our denser Matter came.

Thus taken was God's plunge into the Night.
This fallen world became a nurse of souls
Inhabited by concealed divinity.
A Being woke and lived in the meaningless void,
A world-wide Nescience strove towards life and thought,
A Consciousness plucked out from mindless sleep.
All here is driven by an insentient will.
Thus fallen, inconscient, frustrate, dense, inert,
Sunk into inanimate and torpid drowse
Earth lay, a drudge of sleep, forced to create
By a subconscious yearning memory
Left from a happiness dead before she was born,
An alien wonder on her senseless breast.
This mire must harbour the orchid and the rose,
From her blind unwilling substance must emerge
A beauty that belongs to happier spheres.
This is the destiny bequeathed to her,
As if a slain god left a golden trust
To a blind force and an imprisoned soul.
An immortal godhead's perishable parts
She must reconstitute from fragments lost,
Reword from a document complete elsewhere
Her doubtful title to her divine Name.
A residue her sole inheritance,
All things she carries in her shapeless dust.

Her giant energy tied to petty forms
In the slow tentative motion of her power
With only frail blunt instruments for use,
She has accepted as her nature's need
And given to man as his stupendous work
A labour to the gods impossible.
A life living hardly in a field of death
Its portion claims of immortality;
A brute half-conscious body serves as means
A mind that must recover a knowledge lost
Held in stone grip by the world's conscience,
And wearing still these countless knots of Law
A spirit bound stand up as Nature's king.

A mighty kinship is this daring's cause.
All we attempt in this imperfect world,
Looks forward or looks back beyond Time's gloss
To its pure idea and firm inviolate type
In an absolute creation's flawless skill.
To seize the absolute in shapes that pass,
To fix the eternal's touch in time-made things,
This is the law of all perfection here.
A fragment here is caught of heaven's design;
Else could we never hope for greater life
And ecstasy and glory could not be.
Even in the littleness of our mortal state,
Even in this prison-house of outer form,
A brilliant passage for the infallible Flame
Is driven through gross walls of nerve and brain,
A Splendour presses or a Power breaks through,
Earth's great dull barrier is removed awhile,
The inconscient seal is lifted from our eyes
And we grow vessels of creative might.
The enthusiasm of a divine surprise
Pervades our life, a mystic stir is felt,
A joyful anguish trembles in our limbs;
A dream of beauty dances through the heart,

A thought from the eternal Mind draws near,
Intimations cast from the Invisible
Awaking from Infinity's sleep come down,
Symbols of That which never yet was made.
But soon the inert flesh responds no more,
Then sinks the sacred orgy of delight,
The blaze of passion and the tide of power
Are taken from us and, though a glowing form
Abides astonishing earth, imagined supreme,
Too little of what was meant has left a trace.
Earth's eyes half-see, her forces half-create;
Her rarest works are copies of heaven's art.
A radiance of a golden artifice,
A masterpiece of inspired device and rule,
Her forms hide what they house and only mime
The unseized miracle of self-born shapes
That live for ever in the Eternal's gaze.
Here in a difficult half-finished world
Is a slow toiling of unconscious Powers;
Here is man's ignorant divining mind,
His genius born from an inconscient soil.
To copy on earth's copies is his art.
For when he strives for things surpassing earth,
Too rude the workman's tools, too crude his stuff,
And hardly with his heart's blood he achieves
His transient house of the divine Idea,
His figure of a Time-inn for the Unborn.
Our being thrills with high far memories
And would bring down their dateless meanings here,
But, too divine for earthly Nature's scheme,
Beyond our reach the eternal marvels blaze.
Absolute they dwell, unborn, immutable,
Immaculate in the Spirit's deathless air,
Immortal in a world of motionless Time
And an unchanging muse of deep self-space.
Only when we have climbed above ourselves,

A line of the Transcendent meets our road
And joins us to the timeless and the true;
It brings to us the inevitable word,
The godlike act, the thoughts that never die.
A ripple of light and glory wraps the brain,
And travelling down the moment's vanishing route
The figures of eternity arrive.
As the mind's visitors or the heart's guests
They espouse our mortal brevity awhile,
Or seldom in some rare delivering glimpse
Are caught by our vision's delicate surmise.
Although beginnings only and first attempts,
These glimmerings point to the secret of our birth
And the hidden miracle of our destiny.
What we are there and here on earth shall be
Is imaged in a contact and a call.
As yet earth's imperfection is our sphere,
Our nature's glass shows not our real self;
That greatness still abides held back within.
Earth's doubting future hides our heritage:
The Light now distant shall grow native here,
The Strength that visits us our comrade power;
The Ineffable shall find a secret voice,
The Imperishable burn through Matter's screen
Making this mortal body godhead's robe.
The Spirit's greatness is our timeless source
And it shall be our crown in endless Time.
A vast Unknown is round us and within;
All things are wrapped in the dynamic One:
A subtle link of union joins all life.
Thus all creation is a single chain:
We are not left alone in a closed scheme
Between a driving of inconscient Force
And an incommunicable Absolute.
Our life is a spur in a sublime soul-range,
Our being looks beyond its walls of mind

And it communicates with greater worlds;
There are brighter earths and wider heavens than ours.
There are realms where Being broods in its own depths;
It feels in its immense dynamic core
Its nameless, unformed, unborn potencies
Cry for expression in the unshaped Vast:
Ineffable beyond Ignorance and death,
The images of its everlasting Truth
Look out from a chamber of its self-rapt soul:
As if to its own inner witness gaze
The Spirit holds up its mirrored self and works,
The power and passion of its timeless heart,
The figures of its formless ecstasy,
The grandeurs of its multitudinous might.
Thence comes the mystic substance of our souls
Into the prodigy of our nature's birth,
There is the unfallen height of all we are
And dateless fount of all we hope to be.
On every plane the hieratic Power,
Initiate of unspoken verities,
Dreams to transcribe and make a part of life
In its own native style and living tongue
Some trait of the perfection of the Unborn,
Some vision seen in the omniscient Light,
Some far tone of the immortal rhapsodist Voice,
Some rapture of the all-creating Bliss,
Some form and plan of the Beauty unutterable.
Worlds are there nearer to those absolute realms,
Where the response to Truth is swift and sure
And spirit is not hampered by its frame
And hearts by sharp division seized and rent
And delight and beauty are inhabitants
And love and sweetness are the law of life.
A finer substance in a subtler mould
Embodies the divinity earth but dreams;
Its strength can overtake joy's running feet;

Overleaping the fixed hurdles set by Time,
The rapid net of an intuitive clasp
Captures the fugitive happiness we desire.
A Nature lifted by a larger breath,
Plastic and passive to the all-shaping Fire,
Answers the flaming Godhead's casual touch:
Immune from our inertia of response
It hears the word to which our hearts are deaf,
Adopts the seeing of immortal eyes
And, traveller on the roads of line and hue,
Pursues the spirit of beauty to its home.
Thus we draw near to the All-Wonderful
Following his rapture in things as sign and guide;
Beauty is his footprint showing us where he has passed,
Love is his heart-beats' rhythm in mortal breasts,
Happiness the smile on his adorable face.
A communion of spiritual entities,
A genius of creative Immanence,
Makes all creation deeply intimate:
A fourth dimension of aesthetic sense
Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all,
To the cosmic wideness re-aligns our souls.
A kindling rapture joins the seer and seen;
The craftsman and the craft grown inly one
Achieve perfection by the magic throb
And passion of their close identity.
All that we slowly piece from gathered parts,
Or by long labour stumblingly evolve,
Is there self-born by its eternal right.
In us too the intuitive Fire can burn;
An agent Light, it is coiled in our folded hearts,
On the celestial levels is its home:
Descending, it can bring those heavens here.
But rarely burns the flame nor burns for long;
The joy it calls from those diviner heights
Brings brief magnificent reminiscences

And high splendid glimpses of interpreting thought,
But not the utter vision and delight.
A veil is kept, something is still held back,
Lest, captives of the beauty and the joy,
Our souls forget to the Highest to aspire.

In that fair subtle realm behind our own
The form is all, and physical gods are kings.
The inspiring Light plays in fine boundaries;
A faultless beauty comes by Nature's grace;
There liberty is perfection's guarantee:
Although the absolute Image lacks, the Word
Incarnate, the sheer spiritual ecstasy,
All is a miracle of symmetric charm,
A fantasy of perfect line and rule.
There all feel satisfied in themselves and whole,
A rich completeness is by limit made,
Marvel in an utter littleness abounds,
An intricate rapture riots in a small space:
Each rhythm is kin to its environment,
Each line is perfect and inevitable,
Each object faultlessly built for charm and use.
All is enamoured of its own delight.
Intact it lives of its perfection sure
In a heaven-pleased self-glad immunity;
Content to be, it has need of nothing more.
Here was not futile effort's broken heart:
Exempt from the ordeal and the test,
Empty of opposition and of pain,
It was a world that could not fear nor grieve.
It had no grace of error or defeat,
It had no room for fault, no power to fail.
Out of some packed self-bliss it drew at once
Its form-discoveries of the mute Idea
And the miracle of its rhythmic thoughts and acts,
Its clear technique of firm and rounded lives,

Its gracious people of inanimate shapes
And glory of breathing bodies like our own.
Amazed, his senses ravished with delight,
He moved in a divine, yet kindred world
Admiring marvellous forms so near to ours
Yet perfect like the playthings of a god,
Deathless in the aspect of mortality.
In their narrow and exclusive absolutes
The finite's ranked supremacies throned abide;
It dreams not ever of what might have been;
Only in boundaries can this absolute live.
In a supremeness bound to its own plan
Where all was finished and no widths were left,
No space for shadows of the immeasurable,
No room for the incalculable's surprise,
A captive of its own beauty and ecstasy,
In a magic circle wrought the enchanted Might.
The spirit stood back effaced behind its frame.
Admired for the bright finality of its lines
A blue horizon limited the soul;
Thought moved in luminous facilities,
The outer ideal's shallows its swim-range:
Life in its boundaries lingered satisfied
With the small happiness of the body's acts.
Assigned as Force to a bound corner-Mind,
Attached to the safe paucity of her room,
She did her little works and played and slept
And thought not of a greater work undone.
Forgetful of her violent vast desires,
Forgetful of the heights to which she rose,
Her walk was fixed within a radiant groove.
The beautiful body of a soul at ease,
Like one who laughs in sweet and sunlit groves,
Childlike she swung in her gold cradle of joy.
The spaces' call reached not her charmed abode,
She had no wings for wide and dangerous flight,

She faced no peril of sky or of abyss,
She knew no vistas and no mighty dreams,
No yearning for her lost infinitudes.
A perfect picture in a perfect frame,
This faery artistry could not keep his will:
Only a moment's fine release it gave;
A careless hour was spent in a slight bliss.
Our spirit tires of being's surfaces,
Transcended is the splendour of the form;
It turns to hidden powers and deeper states.
So now he looked beyond for greater light.
His soul's peak-climb abandoning in its rear
This brilliant courtyard of the House of Days,
He left that fine material Paradise.
His destiny lay beyond in larger Space.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

The Glory and the Fall of Life

AN UNEVEN broad ascent now lured his feet.
Answering a greater Nature's troubled call
He crossed the limits of embodied Mind
And entered wide obscure disputed fields
Where all was doubt and change and nothing sure,
A world of search and toil without repose.
As one who meets the face of the Unknown,
A questioner with none to give reply,
Attracted to a problem never solved,
Always uncertain of the ground he trod,
Always drawn on to an inconstant goal
He travelled through a land peopled by doubts
In shifting confines on a quaking base.
In front he saw a boundary ever unreached
And thought himself at each step nearer now,—
A far retreating horizon of mirage.
A vagrancy was there that brooked no home,
A journey of countless paths without a close.
Nothing he found to satisfy his heart;
A tireless wandering sought and could not cease.
There life is the manifest Incalculable,
A movement of unquiet seas, a long
And venturous leap of spirit into Space,
A vexed disturbance in the eternal Calm,
An impulse and passion of the Infinite.
Assuming whatever shape her fancy wills,
Escaped from the restraint of settled forms
She has left the safety of the tried and known.
Unshepherded by the fear that walks through Time,
Undaunted by Fate that dogs and Chance that springs,
She accepts disaster as a common risk;

Careless of suffering, heedless of sin and fall,
She wrestles with danger and discovery
In the unexplored expanses of the soul.
To be seemed only a long experiment,
The hazard of a seeking ignorant Force
That tries all truths and, finding none supreme,
Moves on unsatisfied, unsure of its end.
As saw some inner mind, so life was shaped:
From thought to thought she passed, from phase to phase,
Tortured by her own powers or proud and blest,
Now master of herself, now toy and slave.
A huge inconsequence was her action's law,
As if all possibility must be drained,
And anguish and bliss were pastimes of the heart.
In a gallop of thunder-hooved vicissitudes
She swept through the race-fields of Circumstance,
Or, swaying, she tossed between her heights and deeps,
Uplifted or broken on Time's inconstant wheel.
Amid a tedious crawl of drab desires
She writhed, a worm mid worms in Nature's mud,
Then, Titan-statured, took all earth for food,
Ambitioned the seas for robe, for crown the stars
And shouting strode from peak to giant peak,
Clamouring for worlds to conquer and to rule.
Then, wantonly enamoured of Sorrow's face,
She plunged into the anguish of the depths
And, wallowing, clung to her own misery.
In dolorous converse with her squandered self
She wrote the account of all that she had lost,
Or sat with grief as with an ancient friend.
A romp of violent raptures soon was spent,
Or she lingered tied to an inadequate joy
Missing the turns of fate, missing life's goal.
A scene was planned for all her numberless moods
Where each could be the law and way of life,
But none could offer a pure felicity;

Only a flickering zest they left behind
Or the fierce lust that brings a dead fatigue.
Amid her swift untold variety
Something remained dissatisfied, ever the same
And in the new saw only a face of the old,
For every hour repeated all the rest
And every change prolonged the same unease.
A spirit of her self and aim unsure,
Tired soon of too much joy and happiness,
She needs the spur of pleasure and of pain
And the native taste of suffering and unrest:
She strains for an end that never can she win.
A perverse savour haunts her thirsting lips:
For the grief she weeps which came from her own choice,
For the pleasure yearns that racked with wounds her breast;
Aspiring to heaven she turns her steps towards hell.
Chance she has chosen and danger for playfellows;
Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat.
Yet pure and bright from the Timeless was her birth,
A lost world-rapture lingers in her eyes,
Her moods are faces of the Infinite:
Beauty and happiness are her native right,
And endless Bliss is her eternal home.

This now revealed its antique face of joy,
A sudden disclosure to the heart of grief
Tempting it to endure and long and hope.
Even in changing worlds bereft of peace,
In an air racked with sorrow and with fear
And while his feet trod on a soil unsafe,
He saw the image of a happier state.
In an architecture of hieratic Space
Circling and mounting towards creation's tops,
At a blue height which never was too high
For warm communion between body and soul,
As far as heaven, as near as thought and hope,

Glimmered the kingdom of a griefless life.
Above him in a new celestial vault
Other than the heavens beheld by mortal eyes,
As on a fretted ceiling of the gods,
An archipelago of laughter and fire,
Swam stars apart in a rippled sea of sky.
Towered spirals, magic rings of vivid hue
And gleaming spheres of strange felicity
Floated through distance like a symbol world.
On the trouble and the toil they could not share,
On the unhappiness they could not aid,
Impervious to life's suffering, struggle, grief,
Untarnished by its anger, gloom and hate,
Unmoved, untouched, looked down great visioned planes
Blissful for ever in their timeless right.
Absorbed in their own beauty and content,
Of their immortal gladness they live sure.
Apart in their self-glory plunged, remote
Burning they swam in a vague lucent haze,
An everlasting refuge of dream-light,
A nebula of the splendours of the gods
Made from the musings of eternity.
Almost unbelievable by human faith,
Hardly they seemed the stuff of things that are.
As through a magic television's glass
Outlined to some magnifying inner eye
They shone like images thrown from a far scene
Too high and glad for mortal lids to seize.
But near and real to the longing heart
And to the body's passionate thought and sense
Are the hidden kingdoms of beatitude.
In some close unattained realm which yet we feel,
Immune from the harsh clutch of Death and Time,
Escaping the search of sorrow and desire,
In bright enchanted safe peripheries
For ever wallowing in bliss they lie.

In dream and trance and muse before our eyes,
Across a subtle vision's inner field,
Wide rapturous landscapes fleeting from the sight,
The figures of the perfect kingdom pass
And behind them leave a shining memory's trail.
Imagined scenes or great eternal worlds,
Dream-caught or sensed, they touch our hearts with their depths;
Unreal-seeming, yet more real than life,
Happier than happiness, truer than things true,
If dreams these were or captured images,
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.
In a swift eternal moment fixed there live
Or ever recalled come back to longing eyes
Calm heavens of imperishable Light,
Illumined continents of violet peace,
Oceans and rivers of the mirth of God
And griefless countries under purple suns.

This, once a star of bright remote idea
Or imagination's comet trail of dream,
Took now a close shape of reality.
The gulf between dream-truth, earth-fact was crossed,
The wonder-worlds of life were dreams no more;
His vision made all they unveiled its own:
Their scenes, their happenings met his eyes and heart
And smote them with pure loveliness and bliss.
A breathless summit region drew his gaze
Whose boundaries jutted into a sky of Self
And dipped towards a strange ethereal base.
The quintessence glowed of Life's supreme delight.
On a spiritual and mysterious peak
Only a miracle's high transfiguring line
Divided life from the formless Infinite
And sheltered Time against eternity.
Out of that formless stuff Time mints his shapes;
The Eternal's quiet holds the cosmic act:

The protean images of the World-Force
Have drawn the strength to be, the will to last
From a deep ocean of dynamic peace.
Inverting the spirit's apex towards life,
She spends the plastic liberties of the One
To cast in acts the dreams of her caprice,
His wisdom's call steadies her careless feet,
He props her dance upon a rigid base,
His timeless still immutability
Must standardise her creation's miracle.
Out of the Void's unseeing energies
Inventing the scene of a concrete universe,
By his thought she has fixed its paces, in its blind acts
She sees by flashes of his all-knowing Light.
At her will the inscrutable Supermind leans down
To guide her force that feels but cannot know,
Its breath of power controls her restless seas
And life obeys the governing Idea.
At her will, led by a luminous Immanence
The hazardous experimenting Mind
Pushes its way through obscure possibles
Mid chance formations of an unknowing world.
Our human ignorance moves towards the Truth
That Nescience may become omniscient,
Transmuted instincts shape to divine thoughts,
Thoughts house infallible immortal sight
And Nature climb towards God's identity.
The Master of the worlds self-made her slave
Is the executor of her fantasies:
She has canalised the seas of omnipotence;
She has limited by her laws the Illimitable.
The Immortal bound himself to do her works;
He labours at the tasks her Ignorance sets,
Hidden in the cape of our mortality.
The worlds, the forms her goddess fancy makes
Have lost their origin on unseen heights:

Even severed, straying from their timeless source,
Even deformed, obscure, accursed and fallen,—
Since even fall has its perverted joy
And nothing she leaves out that serves delight,—
These too can to the peaks revert or here
Cut out the sentence of the spirit's fall,
Recover their forfeited divinity.
At once caught in an eternal vision's sweep
He saw her pride and splendour of highborn zones
And her regions crouching in the nether deeps.
Above was a monarchy of unfallen self,
Beneath was the gloomy trance of the abyss,
An opposite pole or dim antipodes.
There were vasts of the glory of life's absolutes:
All laughed in a safe immortality
And an eternal childhood of the soul
Before darkness came and pain and grief were born
Where all could dare to be themselves and one
And Wisdom played in sinless innocence
With naked Freedom in Truth's happy sun.
There were worlds of her laughter and dreadful irony,
There were fields of her taste of toil and strife and tears;
Her head lay on the breast of amorous Death,
Sleep imitated awhile extinction's peace.
The light of God she has parted from his dark
To test the savour of bare opposites.
Here mingling in man's heart their tones and hues
Have woven his being's mutable design,
His life a forward-rippling stream in Time,
His nature's constant fixed mobility,
His soul a moving picture's changeful film,
His cosmos-chaos of personality.
The grand creatrix with her cryptic touch
Has turned to pathos and power being's self-dream,
Made a passion-play of its fathomless mystery.

But here were worlds lifted half-way to heaven.
The Veil was there but not the Shadowy Wall;
In forms not too remote from human grasp
Some passion of the inviolate purity
Broke through, a ray of the original Bliss.
Heaven's joys might have been earth's if earth were pure.
There could have reached our divinised sense and heart
Some natural felicity's bright extreme,
Some thrill of Supernature's absolutes:
All strengths could laugh and sport on earth's hard roads
And never feel her cruel edge of pain,
All love could play and nowhere Nature's shame.
But she has stabled her dreams in Matter's courts
And still her doors are barred to things supreme.
These worlds could feel God's breath visiting their tops;
Some glimmer of the Transcendent's hem was there.
Across the white aeonic silences
Immortal figures of embodied joy
Traversed wide spaces near to eternity's sleep.
Pure mystic voices in beatitude's hush
Appealed to Love's immaculate sweetesses,
Calling his honeyed touch to thrill the worlds,
His blissful hands to seize on Nature's limbs,
His sweet intolerant might of union
To take all beings into his saviour arms,
Drawing to his pity the rebel and the waif
To force on them the happiness they refuse.
A chant hymeneal to the unseen Divine,
A flaming rhapsody of white desire
Lured an immortal music into the heart
And woke the slumbering ear of ecstasy.
A purer, fierier sense had there its home,
A burning urge no earthly limbs can hold;
One drew a large unburdened spacious breath
And the heart sped from beat to rapturous beat.
The voice of Time sang of the Immortal's joy;

An inspiration and a lyric cry,
The moments came with ecstasy on their wings;
Beauty unimaginable moved heaven-bare
Absolved from boundaries in the vasts of dream;
The cry of the Birds of Wonder called from the skies
To the deathless people of the shores of Light.
Creation leaped straight from the hands of God;
Marvel and rapture wandered in the ways.
Only to be was a supreme delight,
Life was a happy laughter of the soul
And Joy was king with Love for minister.
The spirit's luminousness was bodied there.
Life's contraries were lovers or natural friends
And her extremes keen edges of harmony:
Indulgence with a tender purity came
And nursed the god on her maternal breast:
There none was weak, so falsehood could not live;
Ignorance was a thin shade protecting light,
Imagination the free-will of Truth,
Pleasure a candidate for heaven's fire;
The intellect was Beauty's worshipper,
Strength was the slave of calm spiritual law,
Power laid its head upon the breasts of Bliss.
There were summit-glories inconceivable,
Autonomies of Wisdom's still self-rule
And high dependencies of her virgin sun,
Illumined theocracies of the seeing soul
Throned in the power of the Transcendent's ray.
A vision of grandeurs, a dream of magnitudes
In sun-bright kingdoms moved with regal gait:
Assemblies, crowded senates of the gods,
Life's puissances reigned on seats of marble will,
High dominations and autocracies
And laurelled strengths and armed imperative mights.
All objects there were great and beautiful,
All beings wore a royal stamp of power.

There sat the oligarchies of natural Law,
Proud violent heads served one calm monarch brow:
All the soul's postures donned divinity.
There met the ardent mutual intimacies
Of mastery's joy and the joy of servitude
Imposed by Love on Love's heart that obeys
And Love's body held beneath a rapturous yoke.
All was a game of meeting kinglinesses.
For worship lifts the worshipper's bowed strength
Close to the god's pride and bliss his soul adores:
The ruler there is one with all he rules;
To him who serves with a free equal heart
Obedience is his princely training's school,
His nobility's coronet and privilege,
His faith is a high nature's idiom,
His service a spiritual sovereignty.
There were realms where Knowledge joined creative Power
In her high home and made her all his own:
The grand Illuminate seized her gleaming limbs
And filled them with the passion of his ray
Till all her body was its transparent house
And all her soul a counterpart of his soul.
Apotheosised, transfigured by wisdom's touch,
Her days became a luminous sacrifice;
An immortal moth in happy and endless fire,
She burned in his sweet intolerable blaze.
A captive Life wedded her conqueror.
In his wide sky she built her world anew;
She gave to mind's calm pace the motor's speed,
To thinking a need to live what the soul saw,
To living an impetus to know and see.
His splendour grasped her, her puissance to him clung;
She crowned the Idea a king in purple robes,
Put her magic serpent sceptre in Thought's grip,
Made forms his inward vision's rhythmic shapes
And her acts the living body of his will.

A flaming thunder, a creator flash,
His victor Light rode on her deathless Force;
A centaur's mighty gallop bore the god.
Life throned with mind, a double majesty.
Worlds were there of a happiness great and grave
And action tinged with dream, laughter with thought,
And passion there could wait for its desire
Until it heard the near approach of God.
Worlds were there of a childlike mirth and joy;
A carefree youthfulness of mind and heart
Found in the body a heavenly instrument;
It lit an aureate halo round desire
And freed the deified animal in the limbs
To divine gambols of love and beauty and bliss.
On a radiant soil that gazed at heaven's smile
A swift life-impulse stinted not nor stopped:
It knew not how to tire; happy were its tears.
There work was play and play the only work,
The tasks of heaven a game of godlike might:
A celestial bacchanal for ever pure,
Unstayed by faintness as in mortal frames
Life was an eternity of rapture's moods:
Age never came, care never lined the face.
Imposing on the safety of the stars
A race and laughter of immortal strengths,
The nude god-children in their play-fields ran
Smiting the winds with splendour and with speed;
Of storm and sun they made companions,
Sported with the white mane of tossing seas,
Slew distance trampled to death under their wheels
And wrestled in the arenas of their force.
Imperious in their radiance like the suns
They kindled heaven with the glory of their limbs
Flung like a divine largess to the world.
A spell to force the heart to stark delight,
They carried the pride and mastery of their charm

As if Life's banner on the roads of Space.
Ideas were luminous comrades of the soul;
Mind played with speech, cast javelins of thought,
But needed not these instruments' toil to know;
Knowledge was Nature's pastime like the rest.
Investited with the fresh heart's bright ray,
An early God-instinct's child inheritors,
Tenants of the perpetuity of Time
Still thrilling with the first creation's bliss,
They steeped existence in their youth of soul.
An exquisite and vehement tyranny,
The strong compulsion of their will to joy
Poured smiling streams of happiness through the world.
There reigned a breath of high immune content,
A fortunate gait of days in tranquil air,
A flood of universal love and peace.
A sovereignty of tireless sweetness lived
Like a song of pleasure on the lips of Time.
A large spontaneous order freed the will,
A sun-frank winging of the soul to bliss,
The breadth and greatness of the unfettered act
And the swift fire-heart's golden liberty.
There was no falsehood of soul-severance,
There came no crookedness of thought or word
To rob creation of its native truth;
All was sincerity and natural force.
There freedom was sole rule and highest law.
In a happy series climbed or plunged these worlds:
In realms of curious beauty and surprise,
In fields of grandeur and of titan power,
Life played at ease with her immense desires.
A thousand Edens she could build nor pause;
No bound was set to her greatness and to her grace
And to her heavenly variety.
Awake with a cry and stir of numberless souls,
Arisen from the breast of some deep Infinite,

Smiling like a new-born child at love and hope,
In her nature housing the Immortal's power,
In her bosom bearing the eternal Will,
No guide she needed but her luminous heart:
No fall debased the godhead of her steps,
No alien Night had come to blind her eyes.
There was no use for grudging ring or fence;
Each act was a perfection and a joy.
Abandoned to her rapid fancy's moods
And the rich coloured riot of her mind,
Initiate of divine and mighty dreams,
Magician builder of unnumbered forms
Exploring the measures of the rhythms of God,
At will she wove her wizard wonder-dance,
A Dionysian goddess of delight,
A Bacchant of creative ecstasy.

This world of bliss he saw and felt its call,
But found no way to enter into its joy;
Across the conscious gulf there was no bridge.
A darker air encircled still his soul
Tied to an image of unquiet life.
In spite of yearning mind and longing sense,
To a sad Thought by grey experience formed
And a vision dimmed by care and sorrow and sleep
All this seemed only a bright desirable dream
Conceived in a longing distance by the heart
Of one who walks in the shadow of earth-pain.
Although he once had felt the Eternal's clasp,
Too near to suffering worlds his nature lived,
And where he stood were entrances of Night.
Hardly, too close beset by the world's care,
Can the dense mould in which we have been made
Return sheer joy to joy, pure light to light.
For its tormented will to think and live
First to a mingled pain and pleasure woke

And still it keeps the habit of its birth:
A dire duality is our way to be.
In the crude beginnings of this mortal world
Life was not nor mind's play nor heart's desire.
When earth was built in the unconscious Void
And nothing was save a material scene,
Identified with sea and sky and stone
Her young gods yearned for the release of souls
Asleep in objects, vague, inanimate.
In that desolate grandeur, in that beauty bare,
In the deaf stillness, mid the unheeded sounds,
Heavy was the uncommunicated load
Of Godhead in a world that had no needs;
For none was there to feel or to receive.
This solid mass which brooked no throb of sense
Could not contain their vast creative urge:
Immersed no more in Matter's harmony,
The Spirit lost its statuesque repose.
In the uncaring trance it groped for sight,
Passioned for the movements of a conscious heart,
Famishing for speech and thought and joy and love,
In the dumb insensitive wheeling day and night
Hungered for the beat of yearning and response.
The poised conscience shaken with a touch,
The intuitive Silence trembling with a name,
They cried to Life to invade the senseless mould
And in brute forms awake divinity.
A voice was heard on the mute rolling globe,
A murmur moaned in the unlistening Void.
A being seemed to breathe where once was none:
Something pent up in dead insentient depths,
Denied conscious existence, lost to joy,
Turned as if one asleep since dateless time.
Aware of its own buried reality,
Remembering its forgotten self and right,
It yearned to know, to aspire, to enjoy, to live.

Life heard the call and left her native light.
Overflowing from her bright magnificent plane
On the rigid coil and sprawl of mortal Space,
Here too the gracious great-winged Angel poured
Her splendour and her swiftness and her bliss,
Hoping to fill a fair new world with joy.
As comes a goddess to a mortal's breast
And fills his days with her celestial clasp,
She stooped to make her home in transient shapes;
In Matter's womb she cast the Immortal's fire,
In the unfeeling Vast woke thought and hope,
Smote with her charm and beauty flesh and nerve
And forced delight on earth's insensible frame.
Alive and clad with trees and herbs and flowers
Earth's great brown body smiled towards the skies,
Azure replied to azure in the sea's laugh;
New sentient creatures filled the unseen depths,
Life's glory and swiftness ran in the beauty of beasts,
Man dared and thought and met with his soul the world.
But while the magic breath was on its way,
Before her gifts could reach our prisoned hearts,
A dark ambiguous Presence questioned all.
The secret Will that robes itself with Night
And offers to spirit the ordeal of the flesh,
Imposed a mystic mask of death and pain.
Interned now in the slow and suffering years
Sojourns the winged and wonderful wayfarer
And can no more recall her happier state,
But must obey the inert Inconscient's law,
Insensible foundation of a world
In which blind limits are on beauty laid
And sorrow and joy as struggling comrades live.
A dim and dreadful muteness fell on her:
Abolished was her subtle mighty spirit
And slain her boon of child-god happiness,
And all her glory into littleness turned

And all her sweetness into a maimed desire.
To feed death with her works is here life's doom.
So veiled was her immortality that she seemed,
Inflicting consciousness on unconscious things,
An episode in an eternal death,
A myth of being that must for ever cease.
Such was the evil mystery of her change.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Kingdoms of the Little Life

A QUIVERING trepidant uncertain world
Born from that dolorous meeting and eclipse
Appeared in the emptiness where her feet had trod,
A quick obscurity, a seeking stir.
There was a writhing of half-conscious force
Hardly awakened from the Inconscient's sleep,
Tied to an instinct-driven Ignorance,
To find itself and find its hold on things.
Inheritor of poverty and loss,
Assailed by memories that fled when seized,
Haunted by a forgotten uplifting hope,
It strove with a blindness as of groping hands
To fill the aching and disastrous gap
Between earth-pain and the bliss from which Life fell.
A world that ever seeks for something missed,
Hunts for the joy that earth has failed to keep.
Too near to our gates its unappeased unrest
For peace to live on the inert solid globe:
It has joined its hunger to the hunger of earth,
It has given the law of craving to our lives,
It has made our spirit's need a fathomless gulf.
An Influence entered mortal night and day,
A shadow overcast the time-born race;
In the troubled stream where leaps a blind heart-pulse
And the nerve-beat of feeling wakes in sense
Dividing Matter's sleep from conscious Mind,
There strayed a call that knew not why it came.
A Power beyond earth's scope has touched the earth;
The repose that might have been can be no more;
A formless yearning passions in man's heart,
A cry is in his blood for happier things:

Else could he roam on a free sunlit soil
With the childlike pain-forgetting mind of beasts
Or live happy, unmoved, like flowers and trees.
The Might that came upon the earth to bless,
Has stayed on earth to suffer and aspire.
The infant laugh that rang through time is hushed:
Man's natural joy of life is overcast
And sorrow is his nurse of destiny.
The animal's thoughtless joy is left behind,
Care and reflection burden his daily walk;
He has risen to greatness and to discontent,
He is awake to the Invisible.
Insatiate seeker, he has all to learn:
He has exhausted now life's surface acts,
His being's hidden realms remain to explore.
He becomes a mind, he becomes a spirit and self;
In his fragile tenement he grows Nature's lord.
In him Matter wakes from its long obscure trance,
In him earth feels the Godhead drawing near.
An eyeless Power that sees no more its aim,
A restless hungry energy of Will,
Life cast her seed in the body's indolent mould;
It woke from happy torpor a blind Force
Compelling it to sense and seek and feel.
In the enormous labour of the Void
Perturbing with her dreams the vast routine
And dead roll of a slumbering universe
The mighty prisoner struggled for release.
Alive with her yearning woke the inert cell,
In the heart she kindled a fire of passion and need,
Amid the deep calm of inanimate things
Arose her great voice of toil and prayer and strife.
A groping consciousness in a voiceless world,
A guideless sense was given her for her road;
Thought was withheld and nothing now she knew,
But all the unknown was hers to feel and clasp.

Obeying the push of unborn things towards birth
Out of her seal of insentient life she broke:
In her substance of unthinking mute soul-strength
That cannot utter what its depths divine,
Awoke a blind necessity to know.
The chain that bound her she made her instrument;
Instinct was hers, the chrysalis of Truth,
And effort and growth and striving nescience.
Inflicting on the body desire and hope,
Imposing on inconscience consciousness,
She brought into Matter's dull tenacity
Her anguished claim to her lost sovereign right,
Her tireless search, her vexed uneasy heart,
Her wandering unsure steps, her cry for change.
Adorer of a joy without a name,
In her obscure cathedral of delight
To dim dwarf gods she offers secret rites.
But vain unending is the sacrifice,
The priest an ignorant mage who only makes
Futile mutations in the altar's plan
And casts blind hopes into a powerless flame.
A burden of transient gains weighs down her steps
And hardly under that load can she advance;
But the hours cry to her, she travels on
Passing from thought to thought, from want to want;
Her greatest progress is a deepened need.
Matter dissatisfies, she turns to Mind;
She conquers earth, her field, then claims the heavens.
Insensible, breaking the work she has done
The stumbling ages over her labour pass,
But still no great transforming light came down
And no revealing rapture touched her fall.
Only a glimmer sometimes splits mind's sky
Justifying the ambiguous providence
That makes of night a path to unknown dawns
Or a dark clue to some diviner state.

In Nescience began her mighty task,
In Ignorance she pursues the unfinished work,
For knowledge gropes, but meets not Wisdom's face.
Ascending slowly with unconscious steps,
A foundling of the Gods she wanders here
Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell
Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.

In this slow ascension he must follow her pace
Even from her faint and dim subconscious start:
So only can earth's last salvation come.
For so only could he know the obscure cause
Of all that holds us back and baffles God
In the jail-delivery of the imprisoned soul.
Along swift paths of fall through dangerous gates
He chanced into a grey obscurity
Teeming with instincts from the mindless gulfs
That pushed to wear a form and win a place.
Life here was intimate with Death and Night
And ate Death's food that she might breathe awhile;
She was their inmate and adopted waif.
Accepting subconscience, in dumb darkness' reign
A sojourner, she hoped not any more.
There far away from Truth and luminous thought
He saw the original seat, the separate birth
Of the dethroned, deformed and suffering Power.
An unhappy face of falsity made true,
A contradiction of our divine birth,
Indifferent to beauty and to light,
Parading she flaunted her animal disgrace
Unhelped by camouflage, brutal and bare,
An authentic image recognised and signed
Of her outcast force exiled from heaven and hope,
Fallen, glorying in the vileness of her state,
The grovel of a strength once half divine,
The graceless squalor of her beast desires,

The staring visage of her ignorance,
The naked body of her poverty.
Here first she crawled out from her cabin of mud
Where she had lain inconscient, rigid, mute:
Its narrowness and torpor held her still,
A darkness clung to her uneffaced by Light.
There neared no touch redeeming from above:
The upward look was alien to her sight,
Forgotten the fearless godhead of her walk;
Renounced was the glory and felicity,
The adventure in the dangerous fields of Time:
Hardly she availed, wallowing, to bear and live.

A wide unquiet mist of seeking Space,
A rayless region swallowed in vague swathes,
That seemed, unnamed, unbodied and unhoused,
A swaddled visionless and formless mind,
Asked for a body to translate its soul.
Its prayer denied, it fumbled after thought.
As yet not powered to think, hardly to live,
It opened into a weird and pigmy world
Where this unhappy magic had its source.
On dim confines where Life and Matter meet
He wandered among things half-seen, half-guessed,
Pursued by ungrasped beginnings and lost ends.
There life was born but died before it could live.
There was no solid ground, no constant drift;
Only some flame of mindless Will had power.
Himself was dim to himself, half-felt, obscure,
As if in a struggle of the Void to be.
In strange domains where all was living sense
But mastering thought was not nor cause nor rule,
Only a crude child-heart cried for toys of bliss,
Mind flickered, a disordered infant glow,
And random shapeless energies drove towards form
And took each wisp-fire for a guiding sun.

This blindfold force could place no thinking step;
Asking for light she followed darkness' clue.
An inconscient Power groped towards consciousness,
Matter smitten by Matter glimmered to sense,
Blind contacts, slow reactions beat out sparks
Of instinct from a cloaked subliminal bed,
Sensations crowded, dumb substitutes for thought,
Perception answered Nature's wakening blows
But still was a mechanical response,
A jerk, a leap, a start in Nature's dream,
And rude unchastened impulses jostling ran
Heedless of every motion but their own
And, darkling, clashed with darker than themselves,
Free in a world of settled anarchy.
The need to exist, the instinct to survive
Engrossed the tense precarious moment's will
And an unseeing desire felt out for food.
The gusts of Nature were the only law,
Force wrestled with force, but no result remained:
Only were achieved a nescient grasp and drive
And feelings and instincts knowing not their source,
Sense-pleasures and sense-pangs soon caught, soon lost,
And the brute motion of unthinking lives.
It was a vain unnecessary world
Whose will to be brought poor and sad results
And meaningless suffering and a grey unease.
Nothing seemed worth the labour to become.

But judged not so his spirit's wakened eye.
As shines a solitary witness star
That burns apart, Light's lonely sentinel,
In the drift and teeming of a mindless Night,
A single thinker in an aimless world
Awaiting some tremendous dawn of God,
He saw the purpose in the works of Time.
Even in that aimlessness a work was done

Pregnant with magic will and change divine.
The first writhings of the cosmic serpent Force
Uncoiled from the mystic ring of Matter's trance;
It raised its head in the warm air of life.
It could not cast off yet Night's stiffening sleep
Or wear as yet mind's wonder-flecks and streaks,
Put on its jewelled hood the crown of soul
Or stand erect in the blaze of spirit's sun.
As yet were only seen foulness and force,
The secret crawl of consciousness to light
Through a fertile slime of lust and battening sense,
Beneath the body's crust of thickened self
A tardy fervent working in the dark,
The turbid yeast of Nature's passionate change,
Ferment of the soul's creation out of mire.
A heavenly process donned this grey disguise,
A fallen ignorance in its covert night
Laboured to achieve its dumb unseemly work,
A camouflage of the Inconscient's need
To release the glory of God in Nature's mud.
His sight, spiritual in embodying orbs,
Could pierce through the grey phosphorescent haze
And scan the secrets of the shifting flux
That animates these mute and solid cells
And leads the thought and longing of the flesh
And the keen lust and hunger of its will.
This too he tracked along its hidden stream
And traced its acts to a miraculous fount.
A mystic Presence none can probe nor rule,
Creator of this game of ray and shade
In this sweet and bitter paradoxical life,
Asks from the body the soul's intimacies
And by the swift vibration of a nerve
Links its mechanic throbs to light and love.
It summons the spirit's sleeping memories
Up from subconscious depths beneath Time's foam;

Oblivious of their flame of happy truth,
Arriving with heavy eyes that hardly see,
They come disguised as feelings and desires,
Like weeds upon the surface float awhile
And rise and sink on a somnambulist tide.
Impure, degraded though her motions are,
Always a heaven-truth broods in life's deeps;
In her obscurest members burns that fire.
A touch of God's rapture in creation's acts,
A lost remembrance of felicity
Lurks still in the dumb roots of death and birth,
The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight.
That rapture's smile is secret everywhere;
It flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap,
Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and flowers.
When life broke through its half-drowse in the plant
That feels and suffers but cannot move or cry,
In beast and in winged bird and thinking man
It made of the heart's rhythm its music's beat;
It forced the unconscious tissues to awake
And ask for happiness and earn the pang
And thrill with pleasure and laughter of brief delight,
And quiver with pain and crave for ecstasy.
Imperative, voiceless, ill-understood,
Too far from light, too close to being's core,
Born strangely in Time from the eternal Bliss,
It presses on heart's core and vibrant nerve;
Its sharp self-seeking tears our consciousness;
Our pain and pleasure have that sting for cause:
Instinct with it, but blind to its true joy
The soul's desire leaps out towards passing things.
All Nature's longing drive none can resist,
Comes surging through the blood and quickened sense;
An ecstasy of the infinite is her cause.
It turns in us to finite loves and lusts,
The will to conquer and have, to seize and keep,

To enlarge life's room and scope and pleasure's range,
To battle and overcome and make one's own,
The hope to mix one's joy with others' joy,
A yearning to possess and be possessed,
To enjoy and be enjoyed, to feel, to live.
Here was its early brief attempt to be,
Its rapid end of momentary delight
Whose stamp of failure haunts all ignorant life.
Inflicting still its habit on the cells
The phantom of a dark and evil start
Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do.
Although on earth are firm established lives,
A working of habit or a sense of law,
A steady repetition in the flux,
Yet are its roots of will ever the same;
These passions are the stuff of which we are made.
This was the first cry of the awaking world.
It clings around us still and clamps the god.
Even when reason is born and soul takes form,
In beast and reptile and in thinking man
It lasts and is the fount of all their life.
This too was needed that breath and living might be.
The spirit in a finite ignorant world
Must rescue so its prisoned consciousness
Forced out in little jets at quivering points
From the Inconscient's sealed infinitude.
Then slowly it gathers mass, looks up at Light.
This Nature lives tied to her origin,
A clutch of nether force is on her still;
Out of unconscious depths her instincts leap;
A neighbour is her life to insentient Nought.
Under this law an ignorant world was made.
 In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
When all was plunged in the negating Void,
Non-Being's night could never have been saved

If Being had not plunged into the dark
Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.
Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
God's force turned into a child's helplessness
Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice.
A contradiction founds the base of life:
The eternal, the divine Reality
Has faced itself with its own contraries;
Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain.
In a mysterious dispensation's law
A Wisdom that prepares its far-off ends
Planned so to start her slow aeonic game.
A blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp
Of a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
A game of hide-and-seek in twilit rooms,
A play of love and hate and fear and hope
Continues in the nursery of mind
Its hard and heavy romp of self-born twins.
At last the struggling Energy can emerge
And meet the voiceless Being in wider fields;
Then can they see and speak and, breast to breast,
In a larger consciousness, a clearer light,
The Two embrace and strive and each know each
Regarding closer now the playmate's face.
Even in these formless coilings he could feel
Matter's response to an infant stir of soul.
In Nature he saw the mighty Spirit concealed,
Watched the weak birth of a tremendous Force,
Pursued the riddle of Godhead's tentative pace,
Heard the faint rhythms of a great unborn Muse.

Then came a fierier breath of waking Life,
And there arose from the dim gulf of things

The strange creations of a thinking sense,
Existences half-real and half-dream.
A life was there that hoped not to survive:
Beings were born who perished without trace,
Events that were a formless drama's limbs
And actions driven by a blind creature will.
A seeking Power found out its road to form,
Patterns were built of love and joy and pain
And symbol figures for the moods of Life.
An insect hedonism fluttered and crawled
And basked in a sunlit Nature's surface thrills,
And dragon raptures, python agonies
Crawled in the marsh and mire and licked the sun.
Huge armoured strengths shook a frail quaking ground,
Great puissant creatures with a dwarfish brain,
And pigmy tribes imposed their small life-drift.
In a dwarf model of humanity
Nature now launched the extreme experience
And master-point of her design's caprice,
Luminous result of her half-conscious climb
On rungs twixt her sublimities and grotesques
To massive from infinitesimal shapes,
To a subtle balancing of body and soul,
To an order of intelligent littleness.
Around him in the moment-beats of Time
The kingdom of the animal self arose,
Where deed is all and mind is still half-born
And the heart obeys a dumb unseen control.
The Force that works by the light of Ignorance,
Her animal experiment began,
Crowding with conscious creatures her world-scheme;
But to the outward only were they alive,
Only they replied to touches and surfaces
And to the prick of need that drove their lives.
A body that knew not its own soul within,
There lived and longed, had wrath and joy and grief;

A mind was there that met the objective world
As if a stranger or enemy at its door:
Its thoughts were kneaded by the shocks of sense;
It captured not the spirit in the form,
It entered not the heart of what it saw;
It looked not for the power behind the act,
It studied not the hidden motive in things
Nor strove to find the meaning of it all.
Beings were there who wore a human form;
Absorbed they lived in the passion of the scene,
But knew not who they were or why they lived:
Content to breathe, to feel, to sense, to act,
Life had for them no aim save Nature's joy
And the stimulus and delight of outer things;
Identified with the spirit's outward shell,
They worked for the body's wants, they craved no more.
The veiled spectator watching from their depths
Fixed not his inward eye upon himself
Nor turned to find the author of the plot,
He saw the drama only and the stage.
There was no brooding stress of deeper sense,
The burden of reflection was not borne:
Mind looked on Nature with unknowing eyes,
Adored her boons and feared her monstrous strokes.
It pondered not on the magic of her laws,
It thirsted not for the secret wells of Truth,
But made a register of crowding facts
And strung sensations on a vivid thread:
It hunted and it fled and sniffed the winds,
Or slothed inert in sunshine and soft air:
It sought the engrossing contacts of the world,
But only to feed the surface sense with bliss.
These felt life's quiver in the outward touch,
They could not feel behind the touch the soul.
To guard their form of self from Nature's harm,
To enjoy and to survive was all their care.

The narrow horizon of their days was filled
With things and creatures that could help and hurt:
The world's values hung upon their little self.
Isolated, cramped in the vast unknown,
To save their small lives from surrounding Death
They made a tiny circle of defence
Against the siege of the huge universe:
They preyed upon the world and were its prey,
But never dreamed to conquer and be free.
Obeying the World-Power's hints and firm taboos
A scanty part they drew from her rich store;
There was no conscious code and no life-plan:
The patterns of thinking of a little group
Fixed a traditional behaviour's law.
Ignorant of soul save as a wraith within,
Tied to a mechanism of unchanging lives
And to a dull usual sense and feeling's beat,
They turned in grooves of animal desire.
In walls of stone fenced round they worked and warred,
Did by a banded selfishness a small good
Or wrought a dreadful wrong and cruel pain
On sentient lives and thought they did no ill.
Ardent from the sack of happy peaceful homes
And gorged with slaughter, plunder, rape and fire,
They made of human selves their helpless prey,
A drove of captives led to lifelong woe,
Or torture a spectacle made and holiday,
Mocking or thrilled by their torn victims' pangs;
Admiring themselves as titans and as gods
Proudly they sang their high and glorious deeds
And praised their victory and their splendid force.
An animal in the instinctive herd
Pushed by life impulses, forced by common needs,
Each in his own kind saw his ego's glass;
All served the aim and action of the pack.
Those like himself, by blood or custom kin,

To him were parts of his life, his adjunct selves,
His personal nebula's constituent stars,
Satellite companions of his solar I.
A master of his life's environment,
A leader of a huddled human mass
Hherding for safety on a dangerous earth,
He gathered them round him as if minor Powers
To make a common front against the world,
Or, weak and sole on an indifferent earth,
As a fortress for his undefended heart,
Or else to heal his body's loneliness.
In others than his kind he sensed a foe,
An alien unlike force to shun and fear,
A stranger and adversary to hate and slay.
Or he lived as lives the solitary brute;
At war with all he bore his single fate.
Absorbed in the present act, the fleeting days,
None thought to look beyond the hour's gains,
Or dreamed to make this earth a fairer world,
Or felt some touch divine surprise his heart.
The gladness that the fugitive moment gave,
The desire grasped, the bliss, the experience won,
Movement and speed and strength were joy enough
And bodily longings shared and quarrel and play,
And tears and laughter and the need called love.
In war and clasp these life-wants joined the All-Life,
Wrestlings of a divided unity
Inflicting mutual grief and happiness
In ignorance of the Self for ever one.
Arming its creatures with delight and hope
A half-awakened Nescience struggled there
To know by sight and touch the outside of things.
Instinct was formed; in memory's crowded sleep
The past lived on as in a bottomless sea:
Inverting into half-thought the quickened sense
She felt around for truth with fumbling hands,

Clutched to her the little she could reach and seize
And put aside in her subconscious cave.
So must the dim being grow in light and force
And rise to his higher destiny at last,
Look up to God and round at the universe,
And learn by failure and progress by fall
And battle with environment and doom,
By suffering discover his deep soul
And by possession grow to his own vasts.
Half-way she stopped and found her path no more.
Still nothing was achieved but to begin,
Yet finished seemed the circle of her force.
Only she had beaten out sparks of ignorance;
Only the life could think and not the mind,
Only the sense could feel and not the soul.
Only was lit some heat of the flame of Life,
Some joy to be, some rapturous leaps of sense.
All was an impetus of half-conscious Force,
A spirit sprawling drowned in dense life-foam,
A vague self grasping at the shape of things.
Behind all moved seeking for vessels to hold
A first raw vintage of the grapes of God,
On earth's mud a spilth of the supernal Bliss,
Intoxicating the stupefied soul and mind
A heady wine of rapture dark and crude,
Dim, uncast yet into spiritual form,
Obscure inhabitant of the world's blind core,
An unborn godhead's will, a mute Desire.

A third creation now revealed its face.
A mould of body's early mind was made.
A glint of light kindled the obscure World-Force;
It dowered a driven world with the seeing Idea
And armed the act with thought's dynamic point:
A small thinking being watched the works of Time.
A difficult evolution from below

Called a masked intervention from above;
Else this great, blind inconscient universe
Could never have disclosed its hidden mind,
Or even in blinkers worked in beast and man
The Intelligence that devised the cosmic scheme.
At first he saw a dim obscure mind-power
Moving concealed by Matter and dumb life.
A current thin, it streamed in life's vast flow
Tossing and drifting under a drifting sky
Amid the surge and glimmering tremulous wash,
Released in splash of sense and feeling's waves.
In the deep midst of an insentient world
Its huddled waves and foam of consciousness ran
Pressing and eddying through a narrow strait,
Carrying experience in its crowded pace.
It flowed emerging into upper light
From the deep pool of its subliminal birth
To reach some high existence still unknown.
There was no thinking self, aim there was none:
All was unorganised stress and seekings vague.
Only to the unstable surface rose
Sensations, stabs and edges of desire
And passion's leaps and brief emotion's cries,
A casual colloquy of flesh with flesh,
A murmur of heart to longing wordless heart,
Glimmerings of knowledge with no shape of thought
And jets of subconscious will or hunger's pulls.
All was dim sparkle on a foaming top:
It whirled around a drifting shadow-self
On an inconscient flood of Force in Time.
Then came the pressure of a seeing Power
That drew all into a dancing turbid mass
Circling around a single luminous point,
Centre of reference in a conscious field,
Figure of a unitary Light within.
It lit the impulse of the half-sentient flood,

Even an illusion gave of fixity
As if a sea could serve as a firm soil.
That strange observing Power imposed its sight.
It forced on flux a limit and a shape,
It gave its stream a lower narrow bank,
Drew lines to snare the spirit's formlessness.
It fashioned the life-mind of bird and beast,
The answer of the reptile and the fish,
The primitive pattern of the thoughts of man.
A finite movement of the Infinite
Came winging its way through a wide air of Time;
A march of knowledge moved in Nescience
And guarded in the form a separate soul.
Its right to be immortal it reserved,
But built a wall against the siege of death
And threw a hook to clutch eternity.
A thinking entity appeared in Space.
A little ordered world broke into view
Where being had prison-room for act and sight,
A floor to walk, a clear but scanty range.
An instrument-personality was born,
And a restricted clamped intelligence
Consented to confine in narrow bounds
Its seeking; it tied the thought to visible things,
Prohibiting the adventure of the Unseen
And the soul's tread through unknown infinities.
A reflex reason, Nature-habit's glass
Illumined life to know and fix its field,
Accept a dangerous ignorant brevity
And the inconclusive purpose of its walk
And profit by the hour's precarious chance
In the allotted boundaries of its fate.
A little joy and knowledge satisfied
This little being tied into a knot
And hung on a bulge of its environment,
A little curve cut off in measureless Space,

A little span of life in all vast Time.
A thought was there that planned, a will that strove,
But for small aims within a narrow scope,
Wasting unmeasured toil on transient things.
It knew itself a creature of the mud;
It asked no larger law, no loftier aim;
It had no inward look, no upward gaze.
A backward scholar on logic's rickety bench
Indoctrinated by the erring sense,
It took appearance for the face of God,
For casual lights the marching of the suns,
For heaven a starry strip of doubtful blue;
Aspects of being feigned to be the whole.
There was a voice of busy interchange,
A market-place of trivial thoughts and acts:
A life soon spent, a mind the body's slave
Here seemed the brilliant crown of Nature's work,
And tiny egos took the world as means
To sate awhile dwarf lusts and brief desires,
In a death-closed passage saw life's start and end
As though a blind alley were creation's sign,
As if for this the soul had coveted birth
In the wonderland of a self-creating world
And the opportunities of cosmic Space.
This creature passionate only to survive,
Fettered to puny thoughts with no wide range
And to the body's needs and pangs and joys,
This fire growing by its fuel's death,
Increased by what it seized and made its own:
It gathered and grew and gave itself to none.
Only it hoped for greatness in its den
And pleasure and victory in small fields of power
And conquest of life-room for self and kin,
An animal limited by its feeding-space.
It knew not the Immortal in its house;
It had no greater deeper cause to live.

In limits only it was powerful;
Acute to capture truth for outward use,
Its knowledge was the body's instrument;
Absorbed in the little works of its prison-house
It turned around the same unchanging points
In the same circle of interest and desire,
But thought itself the master of its jail.
Although for action, not for wisdom made,
Thought was its apex — or its gutter's rim:
It saw an image of the external world
And saw its surface self, but knew no more.
Out of a slow confused embroiled self-search
Mind grew to a clarity cut out, precise,
A gleam enclosed in a stone ignorance.
In this bound thinking's narrow leadership
Tied to the soil, inspired by common things,
Attached to a confined familiar world,
Amid the multitude of her motived plots,
Her changing actors and her million masks,
Life was a play monotonously the same.
There were no vast perspectives of the spirit,
No swift invasions of unknown delight,
No golden distances of wide release.
This petty state resembled our human days
But fixed to eternity of changeless type,
A moment's movement doomed to last through Time.
Existence bridge-like spanned the inconscient gulfs,
A half-illumined building in a mist,
Which from a void of Form arose to sight
And jutted out into a void of Soul.
A little light in a great darkness born,
Life knew not where it went nor whence it came.
Around all floated still the nescient haze.

END OF CANTO FOUR

Canto Five

The Godheads of the Little Life

A FIXED and narrow power with rigid forms,
He saw the empire of the little life,
An unhappy corner in eternity.
It lived upon the margin of the Idea
Protected by Ignorance as in a shell.
Then, hoping to learn the secret of this world
He peered across its scanty fringe of sight,
To disengage from its surface-clear obscurity
The Force that moved it and the Idea that made,
Imposing smallness on the Infinite,
The ruling spirit of its littleness,
The divine law that gave it right to be,
Its claim on Nature and its need in Time.
He plunged his gaze into the sieve of mist
That held this ill-lit straitened continent
Ringed with the skies and seas of ignorance
And kept it safe from Truth and Self and Light.
As when a searchlight stabs the Night's blind breast
And dwellings and trees and figures of men appear
As if revealed to an eye in Nothingness,
All lurking things were torn out of their veils
And held up in his vision's sun-white blaze.
A busy restless uncouth populace
Teemed in their dusky unnoted thousands there.
In a mist of secrecy wrapping the world-scene
The little deities of Time's nether act
Who work remote from Heaven's controlling eye,
Plotted, unknown to the creatures whom they move,
The small conspiracies of this petty reign
Amused with the small contrivings, the brief hopes
And little eager steps and little ways

And reptile wallowings in the dark and dust,
And the crouch and ignominy of creeping life.
A trepidant and motley multitude,
A strange pell-mell of magic artisans,
Was seen moulding the plastic clay of life,
An elfin brood, an elemental kind.
Astonished by the unaccustomed glow,
As if immanent in the shadows started up
Imps with wry limbs and carved beast visages,
Sprite-prompters goblin-wizened or faery-small,
And genii fairer but unsouled and poor
And fallen beings, their heavenly portion lost,
And errant divinities trapped in Time's dust.
Ignorant and dangerous wills but armed with power,
Half-animal, half-god their mood, their shape.
Out of the greyness of a dim background
Their whispers come, an inarticulate force,
Awake in mind an echoing thought or word,
To their sting of impulse the heart's sanction draw,
And in that little Nature do their work
And fill its powers and creatures with unease.
Its seed of joy they curse with sorrow's fruit,
Put out with error's breath its scanty lights
And turn its surface truths to falsehood's ends,
Its small emotions spur, its passions drive
To the abyss or through the bog and mire:
Or else with a goad of hard dry lusts they prick,
While jogs on devious ways that nowhere lead
Life's cart finding no issue from ignorance.
To sport with good and evil is their law;
Luring to failure and meaningless success,
All models they corrupt, all measures cheat,
Make knowledge a poison, virtue a pattern dull
And lead the endless cycles of desire
Through semblances of sad or happy chance
To an inescapable fatality.

All by their influence is enacted there.
Nor there alone is their empire or their role:
Wherever are soulless minds and guideless lives
And in a small body self is all that counts,
Wherever love and light and largeness lack,
These crooked fashioners take up their task.
To all half-conscious worlds they extend their reign.
Here too these godlings drive our human hearts,
Our nature's twilight is their lurking-place:
Here too the darkened primitive heart obeys
The veiled suggestions of a hidden Mind
That dogs our knowledge with misleading light
And stands between us and the Truth that saves.
It speaks to us with the voices of the Night:
Our darkened lives to greater darkness move;
Our seekings listen to calamitous hopes.
A structure of unseeing thoughts is built
And reason used by an irrational Force.
This earth is not alone our teacher and nurse;
The powers of all the worlds have entrance here.
In their own fields they follow the wheel of law
And cherish the safety of a settled type;
On earth out of their changeless orbit thrown
Their law is kept, lost their fixed form of things.
Into a creative chaos they are cast
Where all asks order but is driven by Chance;
Strangers to earth-nature, they must learn earth's ways,
Aliens or opposites, they must unite:
They work and battle and with pain agree:
These join, those part, all parts and joins anew,
But never can we know and truly live
Till all have found their divine harmony.
Our life's uncertain way winds circling on,
Our mind's unquiet search asks always light,
Till they have learned their secret in their source,
In the light of the Timeless and its spaceless home,

In the joy of the Eternal sole and one.
But now the Light supreme is far away:
Our conscious life obeys the Inconscient's laws;
To ignorant purposes and blind desires
Our hearts are moved by an ambiguous force;
Even our mind's conquests wear a battered crown.
A slowly changing order binds our will.
This is our doom until our souls are free.
A mighty Hand then rolls mind's firmaments back,
Infinity takes up the finite's acts
And Nature steps into the eternal Light.
Then only ends this dream of nether life.

At the outset of this enigmatic world
Which seems at once an enormous brute machine
And a slow unmasking of the spirit in things,
In this revolving chamber without walls
In which God sits impassive everywhere
As if unknown to himself and by us unseen
In a miracle of inconscient secrecy,
Yet is all here his action and his will.
In this whirl and sprawl through infinite vacancy
The Spirit became Matter and lay in the whirl,
A body sleeping without sense or soul.
A mass phenomenon of visible shapes
Supported by the silence of the Void
Appeared in the eternal Consciousness
And seemed an outward and insensible world.
There was none there to see and none to feel;
Only the miraculous Inconscient,
A subtle wizard skilled, was at its task.
Inventing ways for magical results,
Managing creation's marvellous device,
Marking mechanically dumb wisdom's points,
Using the unthought inevitable Idea,
It did the works of God's intelligence

Or wrought the will of some supreme Unknown.
Still consciousness was hidden in Nature's womb,
Unfelt was the Bliss whose rapture dreamed the worlds.
Being was an inert substance driven by Force.
At first was only an etheric Space:
Its huge vibrations circled round and round
Housing some unconceived initiative:
Upheld by a supreme original Breath
Expansion and contraction's mystic act
Created touch and friction in the void,
Into abstract emptiness brought clash and clasp:
Parent of an expanding universe
In a matrix of disintegrating force,
By spending it conserved an endless sum.
On the hearth of Space it kindled a viewless Fire
That, scattering worlds as one might scatter seeds,
Whirled out the luminous order of the stars.
An ocean of electric Energy
Formlessly formed its strange wave-particles
Constructing by their dance this solid scheme,
Its mightiness in the atom shut to rest;
Masses were forged or feigned and visible shapes;
Light flung the photon's swift revealing spark
And showed, in the minuteness of its flash
Imaged, this cosmos of apparent things.
Thus has been made this real impossible world,
An obvious miracle or convincing show.
Or so it seems to man's audacious mind
Who seats his thought as the arbiter of truth,
His personal vision as impersonal fact,
As witnesses of an objective world
His erring sense and his instruments' artifice.
Thus must he work life's tangible riddle out
In a doubtful light, by error seize on Truth
And slowly part the visage and the veil.
Or else, forlorn of faith in mind and sense,

His knowledge a bright body of ignorance,
He sees in all things strangely fashioned here
The unwelcome jest of a deceiving Force,
A parable of Maya and her might.
This vast perpetual motion caught and held
In the mysterious and unchanging change
Of the persistent movement we call Time
And ever renewing its recurrent beat,
These mobile rounds that stereotype a flux,
These static objects in the cosmic dance
That are but Energy's self-repeating whorls
Prolonged by the spirit of the brooding Void,
Awaited life and sense and waking Mind.
A little the Dreamer changed his pose of stone.
But when the Inconscient's scrupulous work was done
And Chance coerced by fixed immutable laws,
A scene was set for Nature's conscious play.
Then stirred the Spirit's mute immobile sleep;
The Force concealed broke dumbly, slowly out.
A dream of living woke in Matter's heart,
A will to live moved the Inconscient's dust,
A freak of living startled vacant Time,
Ephemeral in a blank eternity,
Infinitesimal in a dead Infinite.
A subtler breath quickened dead Matter's forms;
The world's set rhythm changed to a conscious cry;
A serpent Power twinned the insensible Force.
Islands of living dotted lifeless Space
And germs of living formed in formless air.
A Life was born that followed Matter's law,
Ignorant of the motives of its steps;
Ever inconstant, yet for ever the same,
It repeated the paradox that gave it birth:
Its restless and unstable stabilities
Recurred incessantly in the flow of Time
And purposeful movements in unthinking forms

Betrayed the heavings of an imprisoned Will.
Waking and sleep lay locked in mutual arms;
Helpless and indistinct came pleasure and pain
Trembling with the first faint thrills of a World-Soul.
A strength of life that could not cry or move,
Yet broke into beauty signing some deep delight:
An inarticulate sensibility,
Throbs of the heart of an unknowing world,
Ran through its somnolent torpor and there stirred
A vague uncertain thrill, a wandering beat,
A dim unclosing as of secret eyes.
Infant self-feeling grew and birth was born.
A godhead woke but lay with dreaming limbs;
Her house refused to open its sealed doors.
Insentient to our eyes that only see
The form, the act and not the imprisoned God,
Life hid in her pulse occult of growth and power
A consciousness with mute stifled beats of sense,
A mind suppressed that knew not yet of thought,
An inert spirit that could only be.
At first she raised no voice, no motion dared:
Charged with world-power, instinct with living force,
Only she clung with her roots to the safe earth,
Thrilled dumbly to the shocks of ray and breeze
And put out tendril fingers of desire;
The strength in her yearning for sun and light
Felt not the embrace that made her breathe and live;
Absorbed she dreamed content with beauty and hue.
At last the charmed Immensity looked forth:
Astir, vibrant, hungering, she groped for mind;
Then slowly sense quivered and thought peered out;
She forced the reluctant mould to grow aware.
The magic was chiselled of a conscious form;
Its tranced vibrations rhythmed a quick response,
And luminous stirrings prompted brain and nerve,
Awoke in Matter spirit's identity

And in a body lit the miracle
Of the heart's love and the soul's witness gaze.
Impelled by an unseen Will there could break out
Fragments of some vast impulse to become
And vivid glimpses of a secret self,
And the doubtful seeds and force of shapes to be
Awoke from the unconscious swoon of things.
An animal creation crept and ran
And flew and called between the earth and sky,
Hunted by death but hoping still to live
And glad to breathe if only for a while.
Then man was moulded from the original brute.
A thinking mind had come to lift life's moods,
The keen-edged tool of a Nature mixed and vague,
An intelligence half-witness, half-machine.
This seeming driver of her wheel of works
Missioned to motive and record her drift
And fix its law on her inconstant powers,
This master-spring of a delicate enginery,
Aspired to enlighten its user and refine
Lifting to a vision of the indwelling Power
The absorbed mechanic's crude initiative:
He raised his eyes; Heaven-light mirrored a Face.
Amazed at the works wrought in her mystic sleep,
She looked upon the world that she had made:
Wondering now seized the great automaton;
She paused to understand her self and aim,
Pondering she learned to act by conscious rule,
A visioned measure guided her rhythmic steps;
Thought bordered her instincts with a frame of will
And lit with the idea her blinded urge.
On her mass of impulses, her reflex acts,
On the Inconscient's pushed or guided drift
And mystery of unthinking accurate steps
She stuck the specious image of a self,
A living idol of disfigured spirit;

On Matter's acts she imposed a patterned law;
She made a thinking body from chemic cells
And moulded a being out of a driven force.
To be what she was not inflamed her hope:
She turned her dream towards some high Unknown;
A breath was felt below of One supreme.
An opening looked up to spheres above
And coloured shadows limned on mortal ground
The passing figures of immortal things;
A quick celestial flash could sometimes come:
The illumined soul-ray fell on heart and flesh
And touched with semblances of ideal light
The stuff of which our earthly dreams are made.
A fragile human love that could not last,
Ego's moth-wings to lift the seraph soul,
Appeared, a surface glamour of brief date
Extinguished by a scanty breath of Time;
Joy that forgot mortality for a while
Came, a rare visitor who left betimes,
And made all things seem beautiful for an hour,
Hopes that soon fade to drab realities
And passions that crumble to ashes while they blaze
Kindled the common earth with their brief flame.
A creature insignificant and small
Visited, uplifted by an unknown Power,
Man laboured on his little patch of earth
For means to last, to enjoy, to suffer and die.
A spirit that perished not with the body and breath
Was there like a shadow of the Unmanifest
And stood behind the little personal form
But claimed not yet this earthly embodiment.
Assenting to Nature's long slow-moving toil,
Watching the works of his own Ignorance,
Unknown, unfelt the mighty Witness lives
And nothing shows the Glory that is here.
A Wisdom governing the mystic world,

A Silence listening to the cry of Life,
It sees the hurrying crowd of moments stream
Towards the still greatness of a distant hour.

This huge world unintelligibly turns
In the shadow of a mused Inconscience;
It hides a key to inner meanings missed,
It locks in our hearts a voice we cannot hear.
An enigmatic labour of the spirit,
An exact machine of which none knows the use,
An art and ingenuity without sense,
This minute elaborate orchestrated life
For ever plays its motiveless symphonies.
The mind learns and knows not, turning its back to truth;
It studies surface laws by surface thought,
Life's steps surveys and Nature's process sees,
Not seeing for what she acts or why we live;
It marks her tireless care of just device,
Her patient intricacy of fine detail,
The ingenious spirit's brave inventive plan
In her great futile mass of endless works,
Adds purposeful figures to her purposeless sum,
Its gabled storeys piles, its climbing roofs
On the close-carved foundations she has laid,
Imagined citadels reared in mythic air
Or mounts a stair of dream to a mystic moon:
Transient creations point and hit the sky:
A world-conjecture's scheme is laboured out
On the dim floor of mind's incertitude,
Or painfully built a fragmentary whole.
Impenetrable, a mystery recondite
Is the vast plan of which we are a part;
Its harmonies are discords to our view
Because we know not the great theme they serve.
Inscrutable work the cosmic agencies.
Only the fringe of a wide surge we see;

Our instruments have not that greater light,
Our will tunes not with the eternal Will,
Our heart's sight is too blind and passionate.
Impotent to share in Nature's mystic tact,
Inapt to feel the pulse and core of things,
Our reason cannot sound life's mighty sea
And only counts its waves and scans its foam;
It knows not whence these motions touch and pass,
It sees not whither sweeps the hurrying flood:
Only it strives to canalise its powers
And hopes to turn its course to human ends:
But all its means come from the Inconscient's store.
Unseen here act dim huge world-energies
And only trickles and currents are our share.
Our mind lives far off from the authentic Light
Catching at little fragments of the Truth
In a small corner of infinity,
Our lives are inlets of an ocean's force.
Our conscious movements have sealed origins
But with those shadowy seats no converse hold;
No understanding binds our comrade parts;
Our acts emerge from a crypt our minds ignore.
Our deepest depths are ignorant of themselves;
Even our body is a mystery shop;
As our earth's roots lurk screened below our earth,
So lie unseen our roots of mind and life.
Our springs are kept close hid beneath, within;
Our souls are moved by powers behind the wall.
In the subterranean reaches of the spirit
A puissance acts and recks not what it means;
Using unthinking monitors and scribes,
It is the cause of what we think and feel.
The troglodytes of the subconscious Mind,
Ill-trained slow stammering interpreters
Only of their small task's routine aware
And busy with the record in our cells,

Concealed in the subliminal secracies
Mid an obscure occult machinery,
Capture the mystic Morse whose measured lilt
Transmits the messages of the cosmic Force.
A whisper falls into life's inner ear
And echoes from the dun subconscious caves,
Speech leaps, thought quivers, the heart vibrates, the will
Answers and tissue and nerve obey the call.
Our lives translate these subtle intimacies;
All is the commerce of a secret Power.

A thinking puppet is the mind of life:
Its choice is the work of elemental strengths
That know not their own birth and end and cause
And glimpse not the immense intent they serve.
In this nether life of man drab-hued and dull,
Yet filled with poignant small ignoble things,
The conscious Doll is pushed a hundred ways
And feels the push but not the hands that drive.
For none can see the masked ironic troupe
To whom our figure-selves are marionettes,
Our deeds unwitting movements in their grasp,
Our passionate strife an entertainment's scene.
Ignorant themselves of their own fount of strength
They play their part in the enormous whole.
Agents of darkness imitating light,
Spirits obscure and moving things obscure,
Unwillingly they serve a mightier Power.
Ananke's engines organising Chance,
Channels perverse of a stupendous Will,
Tools of the Unknown who use us as their tools,
Invested with power in Nature's nether state,
Into the actions mortals think their own
They bring the incoherencies of Fate,
Or make a doom of Time's slipshod caprice
And toss the lives of men from hand to hand
In an inconsequent and devious game.

Against all higher truth their stuff rebels;
Only to Titan force their will lies prone.
Inordinate their hold on human hearts,
In all our nature's turns they intervene.
Insignificant architects of low-built lives
And engineers of interest and desire,
Out of crude earthiness and muddy thrills
And coarse reactions of material nerve
They build our huddled structures of self-will
And the ill-lighted mansions of our thought,
Or with the ego's factories and marts
Surround the beautiful temple of the soul.
Artists minute of the hues of littleness,
They set the mosaic of our comedy
Or plan the trivial tragedy of our days,
Arrange the deed, combine the circumstance
And the fantasia of the moods costume.
These unwise prompters of man's ignorant heart
And tutors of his stumbling speech and will,
Movers of petty wraths and lusts and hates
And changeful thoughts and shallow emotion's starts,
These slight illusion-makers with their masks,
Painters of the decor of a dull-hued stage
And nimble scene-shifters of the human play,
Ever are busy with this ill-lit scene.
Ourselves incapable to build our fate
Only as actors speak and strut our parts
Until the piece is done and we pass off
Into a brighter Time and subtler Space.
Thus they inflict their little pigmy law
And curb the mounting slow uprise of man,
Then his too scanty walk with death they close.

This is the ephemeral creature's daily life.
As long as the human animal is lord
And a dense nether nature screens the soul,

As long as intellect's outward-gazing sight
Serves earthy interest and creature joys,
An incurable littleness pursues his days.
Ever since consciousness was born on earth,
Life is the same in insect, ape and man,
Its stuff unchanged, its way the common route.
If new designs, if richer details grow
And thought is added and more tangled cares,
If little by little it wears a brighter face,
Still even in man the plot is mean and poor.
A gross content prolongs his fallen state;
His small successes are failures of the soul,
His little pleasures punctuate frequent griefs:
Hardship and toil are the heavy price he pays
For the right to live and his last wages death.
An inertia sunk towards inconscience,
A sleep that imitates death is his repose.
A puny splendour of creative force
Is made his spur to fragile human works
Which yet outlast their brief creator's breath.
He dreams sometimes of the revels of the gods
And sees the Dionysian gesture pass,—
A leonine greatness that would tear his soul
If through his failing limbs and fainting heart
The sweet and joyful mighty madness swept:
Trivial amusements stimulate and waste
The energy given to him to grow and be.
His little hour is spent in little things.
A brief companionship with many jars,
A little love and jealousy and hate,
A touch of friendship mid indifferent crowds
Draw his heart-plan on life's diminutive map.
If something great awakes, too frail his pitch
To reveal its zenith tension of delight,
His thought to eternise its ephemeral soar,
Art's brilliant gleam is a pastime for his eyes,

A thrill that smites the nerves is music's spell.
Amidst his harassed toil and welter of cares,
Pressed by the labour of his crowding thoughts,
He draws sometimes around his aching brow
Nature's calm mighty hands to heal his life-pain.
He is saved by her silence from his rack of self;
In her tranquil beauty is his purest bliss.

A new life dawns, he looks out from vistas wide;
The Spirit's breath moves him but soon retires:
His strength was not made to hold that puissant guest.
All dulls down to convention and routine
Or a fierce excitement brings him vivid joys:
His days are tinged with the red hue of strife
And lust's hot glare and passion's crimson stain;
Battle and murder are his tribal game.

Time has he none to turn his eyes within
And look for his lost self and his dead soul.
His motion on too short an axis wheels;
He cannot soar but creeps on his long road
Or if, impatient of the trudge of Time,
He would make a splendid haste on Fate's slow road,
His heart that runs soon pants and tires and sinks;
Or he walks ever on and finds no end.

Hardly a few can climb to greater life.
All tunes to a low scale and conscious pitch.
His knowledge dwells in the house of Ignorance;
His force nears not even once the Omnipotent,
Rare are his visits of heavenly ecstasy.

The bliss which sleeps in things and tries to wake,
Breaks out in him in a small joy of life:
This scanty grace is his persistent stay;
It lightens the burden of his many ills
And reconciles him to his little world.

He is satisfied with his common average kind;
Tomorrow's hopes and his old rounds of thought,
His old familiar interests and desires

He has made into a thick and narrowing hedge
Defending his small life from the Invisible;
His being's kinship to infinity
He has shut away from him into inmost self,
Fenced off the greatnesses of hidden God.
His being was formed to play a trivial part
In a little drama on a petty stage;
In a narrow plot he has pitched his tent of life
Beneath the wide gaze of the starry Vast.
He is the crown of all that has been done:
Thus is creation's labour justified;
This is the world's result, Nature's last poise!
And if this were all and nothing more were meant,
If what now seems were the whole of what must be,
If this were not a stade through which we pass
On our road from Matter to eternal Self,
To the Light that made the worlds, the Cause of things,
Well might interpret our mind's limited view
Existence as an accident in Time,
Illusion or phenomenon or freak,
The paradox of a creative Thought
Which moves between unreal opposites,
Inanimate Force struggling to feel and know,
Matter that chanced to read itself by Mind,
Inconscience monstrously engendering soul.
At times all looks unreal and remote:
We seem to live in a fiction of our thoughts
Pieced from sensation's fanciful traveller's tale,
Or caught on the film of the recording brain,
A figment or circumstance in cosmic sleep.
A somnambulist walking under the moon,
An image of ego treads through an ignorant dream
Counting the moments of a spectral Time.
In a false perspective of effect and cause,
Trusting to a specious prospect of world-space,
It drifts incessantly from scene to scene,

Whither it knows not, to what fabulous verge.
All here is dreamed or doubtfully exists,
But who the dreamer is and whence he looks
Is still unknown or only a shadowy guess.
Or the world is real but ourselves too small,
Insufficient for the mightiness of our stage.
A thin life-curve crosses the titan whirl
Of the orbit of a soulless universe,
And in the belly of the sparse rolling mass
A mind looks out from a small casual globe
And wonders what itself and all things are.
And yet to some interned subjective sight
That strangely has formed in Matter's sightless stuff,
A pointillage minute of little self
Takes figure as world-being's conscious base.
Such is our scene in the half-light below.
This is the sign of Matter's infinite,
This the weird purport of the picture shown
To Science the giantess, measurer of her field,
As she pores on the record of her close survey
And mathematises her huge external world,
To Reason bound within the circle of sense,
Or in Thought's broad impalpable Exchange
A speculator in tenuous vast ideas,
Abstractions in the void her currency
We know not with what firm values for its base.
Only religion in this bankruptcy
Presents its dubious riches to our hearts
Or signs unprovisioned cheques on the Beyond:
Our poverty shall there have its revenge.
Our spirits depart discarding a futile life
Into the blank unknown or with them take
Death's passport into immortality.

Yet was this only a provisional scheme,
A false appearance sketched by limiting sense,

Mind's insufficient self-discovery,
An early attempt, a first experiment.
This was a toy to amuse the infant earth;
But knowledge ends not in these surface powers
That live upon a ledge in the Ignorance
And dare not look into the dangerous depths
Or to stare upward measuring the Unknown.
There is a deeper seeing from within
And, when we have left these small purlieus of mind,
A greater vision meets us on the heights
In the luminous wideness of the spirit's gaze.
At last there wakes in us a witness Soul
That looks at truths unseen and scans the Unknown;
Then all assumes a new and marvellous face:
The world quivers with a God-light at its core,
In Time's deep heart high purposes move and live,
Life's borders crumble and join infinity.
This broad, confused, yet rigid scheme becomes
A magnificent imbroglio of the Gods,
A game, a work ambiguously divine.
Our seekings are short-lived experiments
Made by a wordless and inscrutable Power
Testing its issues from inconscient Night
To meet its luminous self of Truth and Bliss.
It peers at the Real through the apparent form;
It labours in our mortal mind and sense;
Amid the figures of the Ignorance,
In the symbol pictures drawn by word and thought,
It seeks the truth to which all figures point;
It looks for the source of Light with vision's lamp;
It works to find the Doer of all works,
The unfelt Self within who is the guide,
The unknown Self above who is the goal.
All is not here a blinded Nature's task:
A Word, a Wisdom watches us from on high,
A Witness sanctioning her will and works,

An Eye unseen in the unseeing vast;
There is an Influence from a Light above,
There are thoughts remote and sealed eternities;
A mystic motive drives the stars and suns.
In this passage from a deaf unknowing Force
To struggling consciousness and transient breath
A mighty Supernature waits on Time.
The world is other than we now think and see,
Our lives a deeper mystery than we have dreamed;
Our minds are starters in the race to God,
Our souls deputed selves of the Supreme.
Across the cosmic field through narrow lanes
Asking a scanty dole from Fortune's hands
And garbed in beggar's robes there walks the One.
Even in the theatre of these small lives
Behind the act a secret sweetness breathes,
An urge of miniature divinity.
A mystic passion from the wells of God
Flows through the guarded spaces of the soul;
A force that helps supports the suffering earth,
An unseen nearness and a hidden joy.
There are muffled throbs of laughter's undertones,
The murmur of an occult happiness,
An exultation in the depths of sleep,
A heart of bliss within a world of pain.
An Infant nursed on Nature's covert breast,
An Infant playing in the magic woods,
Fluting to rapture by the spirit's streams,
Awaits the hour when we shall turn to his call.
In this investiture of fleshly life
A soul that is a spark of God survives
And sometimes it breaks through the sordid screen
And kindles a fire that makes us half-divine.
In our body's cells there sits a hidden Power
That sees the unseen and plans eternity,
Our smallest parts have room for deepest needs;

There too the golden Messengers can come:
A door is cut in the mud wall of self;
Across the lowly threshold with bowed heads
Angels of ecstasy and self-giving pass,
And lodged in an inner sanctuary of dream
The makers of the image of deity live.
Pity is there and fire-winged sacrifice,
And flashes of sympathy and tenderness
Cast heaven-lights from the heart's secluded shrine.
A work is done in the deep silences;
A glory and wonder of spiritual sense,
A laughter in beauty's everlasting space
Transforming world-experience into joy,
Inhabit the mystery of the untouched gulfs;
Lulled by Time's beats eternity sleeps in us.
In the sealed hermetic heart, the happy core,
Unmoved behind this outer shape of death
The eternal Entity prepares within
Its matter of divine felicity,
Its reign of heavenly phenomenon.
Even in our sceptic mind of ignorance
A foresight comes of some immense release,
Our will lifts towards it slow and shaping hands.
Each part in us desires its absolute.
Our thoughts covet the everlasting Light,
Our strength derives from an omnipotent Force,
And since from a veiled God-joy the worlds were made
And since eternal Beauty asks for form
Even here where all is made of being's dust,
Our hearts are captured by ensnaring shapes,
Our very senses blindly seek for bliss.
Our error crucifies Reality
To force its birth and divine body here,
Compelling, incarnate in a human form
And breathing in limbs that one can touch and clasp,
Its Knowledge to rescue an ancient Ignorance,

Its saviour light the inconscient universe.
And when that greater Self comes sea-like down
To fill this image of our transience,
All shall be captured by delight, transformed:
In waves of undreamed ecstasy shall roll
Our mind and life and sense and laugh in a light
Other than this hard limited human day,
The body's tissues thrill apotheosised,
Its cells sustain bright metamorphosis.
This little being of Time, this shadow soul,
This living dwarf-figurehead of darkened spirit
Out of its traffic in petty dreams shall rise.
Its shape of person and its ego-face
Divested of this mortal travesty,
Like a clay troll kneaded into a god
New-made in the image of the eternal Guest,
It shall be caught to the breast of a white Force
And, flaming with the paradisal touch
In a rose-fire of sweet spiritual grace,
In the red passion of its infinite change,
Quiver, awake, and shudder with ecstasy.
As if reversing a deformation's spell,
Released from the black magic of the Night,
Renouncing servitude to the dim Abyss,
It shall learn at last who lived within unseen,
And seized with marvel in the adoring heart
To the enthroned Child-Godhead kneel aware,
Trembling with beauty and delight and love.
But first the spirit's ascent we must achieve
Out of the chasm from which our nature rose.
The soul must soar sovereign above the form
And climb to summits beyond mind's half-sleep;
Our hearts we must inform with heavenly strength,
Surprise the animal with the occult god.
Then kindling the gold tongue of sacrifice,
Calling the powers of a bright hemisphere,

We shall shed the discredit of our mortal state,
Make the abyss a road for Heaven's descent,
Acquaint our depths with the supernal Ray
And cleave the darkness with the mystic Fire.

Adventuring once more in the natal mist
Across the dangerous haze, the pregnant stir,
He through the astral chaos shore a way
Mid the grey faces of its demon gods,
Questioned by whispers of its flickering ghosts,
Besieged by sorceries of its fluent force.
As one who walks unguided through strange fields
Tending he knows not where nor with what hope,
He trod a soil that failed beneath his feet
And journeyed in stone strength to a fugitive end.
His trail behind him was a vanishing line
Of glimmering points in a vague immensity;
A bodiless murmur travelled at his side
In the wounded gloom complaining against light.
A huge obstruction its immobile heart,
The watching opacity multiplied as he moved
Its hostile mass of dead and staring eyes;
The darkness glimmered like a dying torch.
Around him an extinguished phantom glow
Peopled with shadowy and misleading shapes
The vague Inconscient's dark and measureless cave.
His only sunlight was his spirit's flame.

END OF CANTO FIVE

Canto Six

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life

As ONE who between dim receding walls
Towards the far gleam of a tunnel's mouth,
Hoping for light, walks now with freer pace
And feels approach a breath of wider air,
So he escaped from that grey anarchy.
Into an ineffectual world he came,
A purposeless region of arrested birth
Where being from non-being fled and dared
To live but had no strength long to abide.
Above there gleamed a pondering brow of sky
Tormented, crossed by wings of doubtful haze
Adventuring with a voice of roaming winds
And crying for a direction in the void
Like blind souls looking for the selves they lost
And wandering through unfamiliar worlds;
Wings of vague questioning met the query of Space.
After denial dawned a dubious hope,
A hope of self and form and leave to live
And the birth of that which never yet could be,
And joy of the mind's hazard, the heart's choice,
Grace of the unknown and hands of sudden surprise
And a touch of sure delight in unsure things:
To a strange uncertain tract his journey came
Where consciousness played with unconscious self
And birth was an attempt or episode.
A charm drew near that could not keep its spell,
An eager Power that could not find its way,
A Chance that chose a strange arithmetic
But could not bind with it the forms it made,
A multitude that could not guard its sum
Which less than zero grew and more than one.

Arriving at a large and shadowy sense
That cared not to define its fleeting drift,
Life laboured in a strange and mythic air
Denuded of her sweet magnificent suns.
In worlds imagined, never yet made true,
A lingering glimmer on creation's verge,
One strayed and dreamed and never stopped to achieve:
To achieve would have destroyed that magic Space.
The marvels of a twilight wonderland
Full of a beauty strangely, vainly made,
A surge of fanciful realities,
Dim tokens of a Splendour sealed above,
Awoke the passion of the eyes' desire,
Compelled belief on the enamoured thought
And drew the heart but led it to no goal.
A magic flowed as if of moving scenes
That kept awhile their fugitive delicacy
Of sparing lines limned by an abstract art
In a rare scanted light with faint dream-brush
On a silver background of incertitude.
An infant glow of heavens near to morn,
A fire intense conceived but never lit,
Caressed the air with ardent hints of day.
The perfect longing for imperfection's charm,
The illumined caught by the snare of Ignorance,
Ethereal creatures drawn by body's lure
To that region of promise, beating invisible wings,
Came hungry for the joy of finite life
But too divine to tread created soil
And share the fate of perishable things.
The Children of the unembodied Gleam
Arisen from a formless thought in the soul
And chased by an imperishable desire,
Traversed the field of the pursuing gaze.
A Will that unpersisting failed, worked there:
Life was a search but finding never came.

There nothing satisfied, but all allured,
Things seemed to be that never wholly are,
Images were seen that looked like living acts
And symbols hid the sense they claimed to show,
Pale dreams grew real to the dreamer's eyes.
The souls came there that vainly strive for birth,
And spirits entrapped might wander through all time,
Yet never find the truth by which they live.
All ran like hopes that hunt a lurking chance;
Nothing was solid, nothing felt complete:
All was unsafe, miraculous and half-true.
It seemed a realm of lives that had no base.

Then dawned a greater seeking, broadened sky,
A journey under wings of brooding Force.
First came the kingdom of the morning star:
A twilight beauty trembled under its spear
And the throb of promise of a wider Life.
Then slowly rose a great and doubting sun
And in its light she made of self a world.
A spirit was there that sought for its own deep self,
Yet was content with fragments pushed in front
And parts of living that belied the whole
But, pieced together, might one day be true.
Yet something seemed to be achieved at last.
A growing volume of the will-to-be,
A text of living and a graph of force,
A script of acts, a song of conscious forms
Burdened with meanings fugitive from thought's grasp
And crowded with undertones of life's rhythmic cry,
Could write itself on the hearts of living things.
In an outbreak of the might of secret Spirit,
In Life and Matter's answer of delight,
Some face of deathless beauty could be caught
That gave immortality to a moment's joy,
Some word that could incarnate highest Truth

Leaped out from a chance tension of the soul,
Some hue of the Absolute could fall on life,
Some glory of knowledge and intuitive sight,
Some passion of the rapturous heart of Love.
A hierophant of the bodiless Secrecy
Interned in an unseen spiritual sheath,
The Will that pushes sense beyond its scope
To feel the light and joy intangible,
Half found its way into the Ineffable's peace,
Half captured a sealed sweetness of desire
That yearned from a bosom of mysterious Bliss,
Half manifested veiled Reality.
A soul not wrapped into its cloak of mind
Could glimpse the true sense of a world of forms;
Illumined by a vision in the thought,
Upbuoyed by the heart's understanding flame,
It could hold in the conscious ether of the spirit
The divinity of a symbol universe.

This realm inspires us with our vaster hopes;
Its forces have made landings on our globe,
Its signs have traced their pattern in our lives:
It lends a sovereign movement to our fate,
Its errant waves motive our life's high surge.
All that we seek for is prefigured there
And all we have not known nor ever sought
Which yet one day must be born in human hearts
That the Timeless may fulfil itself in things.
Incarnate in the mystery of the days,
Eternal in an unclosed Infinite,
A mounting endless possibility
Climbs high upon a topless ladder of dream
For ever in the Being's conscious trance.
All on that ladder mounts to an unseen end.
An Energy of perpetual transience makes
The journey from which no return is sure,
The pilgrimage of Nature to the Unknown.

As if in her ascent to her lost source
She hoped to unroll all that could ever be,
Her high procession moves from stage to stage,
A progress leap from sight to greater sight,
A process march from form to ampler form,
A caravan of the inexhaustible
Formations of a boundless Thought and Force.
Her timeless Power that lay once on the lap
Of a beginningless and endless Calm,
Now severed from the Spirit's immortal bliss,
Erects the type of all the joys she has lost;
Compelling transient substance into shape,
She hopes by the creative act's release
To o'erleap sometimes the gulf she cannot fill,
To heal awhile the wound of severance,
Escape from the moment's prison of littleness
And meet the Eternal's wide sublimities
In the uncertain time-field portioned here.
Almost she nears what never can be attained;
She shuts eternity into an hour
And fills a little soul with the Infinite;
The Immobile leans to the magic of her call;
She stands on a shore in the Illimitable,
Perceives the formless Dweller in all forms
And feels around her infinity's embrace.
Her task no ending knows; she serves no aim
But labours driven by a nameless Will
That came from some unknowable formless Vast.
This is her secret and impossible task
To catch the boundless in a net of birth,
To cast the spirit into physical form,
To lend speech and thought to the Ineffable;
She is pushed to reveal the ever Unmanifest.
Yet by her skill the impossible has been done:
She follows her sublime irrational plan,
Invents devices of her magic art

To find new bodies for the Infinite
And images of the Unimaginable;
She has lured the Eternal into the arms of Time.
Even now herself she knows not what she has done.
For all is wrought beneath a baffling mask:
A semblance other than its hidden truth
The aspect wears of an illusion's trick,
A feigned time-driven unreality,
The unfinished creation of a changing soul
In a body changing with the inhabitant.
Insignificant her means, infinite her work;
On a great field of shapeless consciousness
In little finite strokes of mind and sense
An endless Truth she endlessly unfolds;
A timeless mystery works out in Time.
The greatness she has dreamed her acts have missed,
Her labour is a passion and a pain,
A rapture and pang, her glory and her curse;
And yet she cannot choose but labours on;
Her mighty heart forbids her to desist.
As long as the world lasts her failure lives
Astonishing and foiling Reason's gaze,
A folly and a beauty unspeakable,
A superb madness of the will to live,
A daring, a delirium of delight.
This is her being's law, its sole resource;
She sates, though satisfaction never comes,
Her hungry will to lavish everywhere
Her many-imaged fictions of the Self
And thousand fashions of one Reality.
A world she made touched by truth's fleeing hem,
A world cast into a dream of what it seeks,
An icon of truth, a conscious mystery's shape.
It lingered not like the earth-mind hemmed in
In solid barriers of apparent fact;
It dared to trust the dream-mind and the soul.

A hunter of spiritual verities
Still only thought or guessed or held by faith,
It seized in imagination and confined
A painted bird of paradise in a cage.
This greater life is enamoured of the Unseen;
It calls to some highest Light beyond its reach,
It can feel the Silence that absolves the soul;
It feels a saviour touch, a ray divine:
Beauty and good and truth its godheads are.
It is near to heavenlier heavens than earth's eyes see,
A direr darkness than man's life can bear:
It has kinship with the demon and the god.
A strange enthusiasm has moved its heart;
It hungers for heights, it passions for the supreme.
It hunts for the perfect word, the perfect shape,
It leaps to the summit thought, the summit light.
For by the form the Formless is brought close
And all perfection fringes the Absolute.
A child of heaven who never saw his home,
Its impetus meets the eternal at a point:
It can only near and touch, it cannot hold;
It can only strain towards some bright extreme:
Its greatness is to seek and to create.

On every plane, this Greatness must create.
On earth, in heaven, in hell she is the same;
Of every fate she takes her mighty part.
A guardian of the fire that lights the suns,
She triumphs in her glory and her might:
Opposed, oppressed she bears God's urge to be born:
The spirit survives upon non-being's ground,
World-force outlasts world-disillusion's shock:
Dumb, she is still the Word, inert the Power.
Here fallen, a slave of death and ignorance,
To things deathless she is driven to aspire
And moved to know even the Unknowable.
Even nescient, null, her sleep creates a world.

When most unseen, most mightily she works;
Housed in the atom, buried in the clod,
Her quick creative passion cannot cease.
Inconscience is her long gigantic pause,
Her cosmic swoon is a stupendous phase:
Time-born, she hides her immortality;
In death, her bed, she waits the hour to rise.
Even with the Light denied that sent her forth
And the hope dead she needed for her task,
Even when her brightest stars are quenched in Night,
Nourished by hardship and calamity
And with pain for her body's handmaid, masseuse, nurse,
Her tortured invisible spirit continues still
To toil though in darkness, to create though with pangs;
She carries crucified God upon her breast.
In chill insentient depths where joy is none,
Immured, oppressed by the resisting Void
Where nothing moves and nothing can become,
Still she remembers, still invokes the skill
The Wonder-worker gave her at her birth,
Imparts to drowsy formlessness a shape,
Reveals a world where nothing was before.
In realms confined to a prone circle of death,
To a dark eternity of Ignorance,
A quiver in an inert inconscient mass,
Or imprisoned in immobilised whorls of Force,
By Matter's blind compulsion deaf and mute
She refuses motionless in the dust to sleep.
Then, for her rebel waking's punishment
Given only hard mechanic Circumstance
As the enginery of her magic craft,
She fashions godlike marvels out of mud;
In the plasm she sets her dumb immortal urge,
Helps the live tissue to think, the closed sense to feel,
Flashes through the frail nerves poignant messages,
In a heart of flesh miraculously loves,

To brute bodies gives a soul, a will, a voice.
Ever she summons as by a sorcerer's wand
Beings and shapes and scenes innumerable,
Torch-bearers of her pomps through Time and Space.
This world is her long journey through the night,
The suns and planets lamps to light her road,
Our reason is the confidante of her thoughts,
Our senses are her vibrant witnesses.
There drawing her signs from things half true, half false,
She labours to replace by realised dreams
The memory of her lost eternity.

These are her deeds in this huge world-ignorance:
Till the veil is lifted, till the night is dead,
In light or dark she keeps her tireless search;
Time is her road of endless pilgrimage.
One mighty passion motives all her works.
Her eternal Lover is her action's cause;
For him she leaped forth from the unseen Vasts
To move here in a stark unconscious world.
Its acts are her commerce with her hidden Guest,
His moods she takes for her heart's passionate moulds;
In beauty she treasures the sunlight of his smile.
Ashamed of her rich cosmic poverty,
She cajoles with her small gifts his mightiness,
Holds with her scenes his look's fidelity
And woos his large-eyed wandering thoughts to dwell
In figures of her million-impulsed Force.
Only to attract her veiled companion
And keep him close to her breast in her world-cloak
Lest from her arms he turn to his formless peace,
Is her heart's business and her clinging care.
Yet when he is most near, she feels him far.
For contradiction is her nature's law.
Although she is ever in him and he in her,
As if unaware of the eternal tie,
Her will is to shut God into her works

And keep him as her cherished prisoner
That never they may part again in Time.
A sumptuous chamber of the spirit's sleep
At first she made, a deep interior room,
Where he slumbers as if a forgotten guest.
But now she turns to break the oblivious spell,
Awakes the sleeper on the sculptured couch;
She finds again the Presence in the form
And in the light that wakes with him recovers
A meaning in the hurry and trudge of Time,
And through this mind that once obscured the soul
Passes a glint of unseen deity.
Across a luminous dream of spirit-space
She builds creation like a rainbow bridge
Between the original Silence and the Void.
A net is made of the mobile universe;
She weaves a snare for the conscious Infinite.
A knowledge is with her that conceals its steps
And seems a mute omnipotent Ignorance.
A might is with her that makes wonders true;
The incredible is her stuff of common fact.
Her purposes, her workings riddles prove;
Examined, they grow other than they were,
Explained, they seem yet more inexplicable.
Even in our world a mystery has reigned
Earth's cunning screen of trivial plainness hides;
Her larger levels are of sorceries made.
There the enigma shows its splendid prism,
There is no deep disguise of commonness;
Occult, profound comes all experience,
Marvel is ever new, miracle divine.
There is a screened burden, a mysterious touch,
There is a secrecy of hidden sense.
Although no earthen mask weighs on her face,
Into herself she flees from her own sight.
All forms are tokens of some veiled idea

Whose covert purpose lurks from mind's pursuit,
Yet is a womb of sovereign consequence.
There every thought and feeling is an act,
And every act a symbol and a sign,
And every symbol hides a living power.
A universe she builds from truths and myths,
But what she needed most she cannot build;
All shown is a figure or copy of the Truth,
But the Real veils from her its mystic face.
All else she finds, there lacks eternity;
All is sought out, but missed the Infinite.

A consciousness lit by a Truth above
Was felt; it saw the light but not the Truth:
It caught the Idea and built from it a world;
It made an Image there and called it God.
Yet something true and inward harboured there.
The beings of that world of greater life,
Tenants of a larger air and freer space,
Live not by the body or in outward things:
A deeper living was their seat of self.
In that intense domain of intimacy
Objects dwell as companions of the soul;
The body's actions are a minor script,
The surface rendering of a life within.
All forces are Life's retinue in that world
And thought and body as her handmaids move.
The universal widenesses give her room:
All feel the cosmic movement in their acts
And are the instruments of her cosmic might.
Or their own self they make their universe.
In all who have risen to a greater Life,
A voice of unborn things whispers to the ear,
To their eyes visited by some high sunlight
Aspiration shows the image of a crown:
To work out a seed that she has thrown within,

To achieve her power in them her creatures live.
Each is a greatness growing towards the heights
Or from his inner centre oceans out;
In circling ripples of concentric power
They swallow, glutted, their environment.
Even of that largeness many a cabin make;
In narrower breadths and briefer vistas pent
They live content with some small greatness won.
To rule the little empire of themselves,
To be a figure in their private world
And make the milieu's joys and griefs their own
And satisfy their life-motives and life-wants
Is charge enough and office for this strength,
A steward of the Person and his fate.
This was transition-line and starting-point,
A first immigration into heavenliness,
For all who cross into that brilliant sphere:
These are the kinsmen of our earthly race;
This region borders on our mortal state.

This wider world our greater movements gives,
Its strong formations build our growing selves;
Its creatures are our brighter replicas,
Complete the types we only initiate
And are securely what we strive to be.
As if thought-out eternal characters,
Entire, not pulled as we by contrary tides,
They follow the unseen leader in the heart,
Their lives obey the inner nature's law.
There is kept grandeur's store, the hero's mould;
The soul is the watchful builder of its fate;
None is a spirit indifferent and inert;
They choose their side, they see the god they adore.
A battle is joined between the true and false,
A pilgrimage sets out to the divine Light.
For even Ignorance there aspires to know
And shines with the lustre of a distant star;

There is a knowledge in the heart of sleep
And Nature comes to them as a conscious force.
An ideal is their leader and their king:
Aspiring to the monarchy of the sun
They call in Truth for their high government,
Hold her incarnate in their daily acts
And fill their thoughts with her inspired voice
And shape their lives into her breathing form,
Till in her sun-gold godhead they too share.
Or to the truth of Darkness they subscribe;
Whether for Heaven or Hell they must wage war:
Warriors of Good, they serve a shining cause
Or are Evil's soldiers in the pay of Sin.
For evil and good an equal tenure keep
Wherever Knowledge is Ignorance's twin.
All powers of Life towards their godhead tend
In the wideness and the daring of that air,
Each builds its temple and expands its cult,
And Sin too there is a divinity.
Affirming the beauty and splendour of her law
She claims life as her natural domain,
Assumes the world's throne or dons the papal robe:
Her worshippers proclaim her sacred right.
A red-tiaraed Falsehood they revere,
Worship the shadow of a crooked God,
Admit the black Idea that twists the brain
Or lie with the harlot Power that slays the soul.
A mastering virtue statuesques the pose,
Or a Titan passion goads to a proud unrest:
At Wisdom's altar they are kings and priests
Or their life a sacrifice to an idol of Power.
Or Beauty shines on them like a wandering star;
Too far to reach, passionate they follow her light;
In Art and life they catch the All-Beautiful's ray
And make the world their radiant treasure house:
Even common figures are with marvel robed;

A charm and greatness locked in every hour
Awakes the joy which sleeps in all things made.
A mighty victory or a mighty fall,
A throne in heaven or a pit in hell,
The dual Energy they have justified
And marked their souls with her tremendous seal:
Whatever Fate may do to them they have earned;
Something they have done, something they have been, they live.
There Matter is soul's result and not its cause.
In a contrary balance to earth's truth of things
The gross weighs less, the subtle counts for more;
On inner values hangs the outer plan.
As quivers with the thought the expressive word,
As yearns the act with the passion of the soul
This world's apparent sensible design
Looks vibrant back to some interior might.
A Mind not limited by external sense
Gave figures to the spirit's imponderables,
The world's impacts without channels registered
And turned into the body's concrete thrill
The vivid workings of a bodiless Force;
Powers here subliminal that act unseen
Or in ambush crouch waiting behind the wall
Came out in front uncovering their face.
The occult grew there overt, the obvious kept
A covert turn and shouldered the unknown;
The unseen was felt and jostled visible shapes.
In the communion of two meeting minds
Thought looked at thought and had no need of speech;
Emotion clasped emotion in two hearts,
They felt each other's thrill in the flesh and nerves
Or melted each in each and grew immense
As when two houses burn and fire joins fire:
Hate grappled hate and love broke in on love,
Will wrestled with will on mind's invisible ground;
Others' sensations passing through like waves

Left quivering the subtle body's frame,
Their anger rushed galloping in brute attack,
A charge of trampling hooves on shaken soil;
One felt another's grief invade the breast,
Another's joy exulting ran through the blood:
Hearts could draw close through distance, voices near
That spoke upon the shore of alien seas.
There beat a throb of living interchange:
Being felt being even when afar
And consciousness replied to consciousness.
And yet the ultimate oneness was not there.
There was a separateness of soul from soul:
An inner wall of silence could be built,
An armour of conscious might protect and shield;
The being could be closed in and solitary;
One could remain apart in self, alone.
Identity was not yet nor union's peace.
All was imperfect still, half-known, half-done:
The miracle of Inconscience overpassed,
The miracle of the Superconscious still,
Unknown, self-wrapped, unfelt, unknowable,
Looked down on them, origin of all they were.
As forms they came of the formless Infinite,
As names lived of a nameless Eternity.
The beginning and the end were there occult;
A middle term worked unexplained, abrupt:
They were words that spoke to a vast wordless Truth,
They were figures crowding an unfinished sum.
None truly knew himself or knew the world
Or the Reality living there enshrined:
Only they knew what Mind could take and build
Out of the secret Supermind's huge store.
A darkness under them, a bright Void above,
Uncertain they lived in a great climbing Space;
By mysteries they explained a Mystery,
A riddling answer met the riddle of things.

As he moved in this ether of ambiguous life,
Himself was soon a riddle to himself;
As symbols he saw all and sought their sense.

Across the leaping springs of death and birth
And over shifting borders of soul-change,
A hunter on the spirit's creative track,
He followed in life's fine and mighty trails
Pursuing her sealed formidable delight
In a perilous adventure without close.
At first no aim appeared in those large steps:
Only the wide source he saw of all things here
Looking towards a wider source beyond.
For as she drew away from earthly lines,
A tenser drag was felt from the Unknown,
A higher context of delivering thought
Drove her towards marvel and discovery;
There came a high release from pettier cares,
A mightier image of desire and hope,
A vaster formula, a greater scene.
Ever she circled towards some far-off Light:
Her signs still covered more than they revealed;
But tied to some immediate sight and will
They lost their purport in the joy of use,
Till stripped of their infinite meaning they became
A cipher gleaming with unreal sense.
Armed with a magical and haunted bow
She aimed at a target kept invisible
And ever deemed remote though always near.
As one who spells illumined characters,
The key-book of a crabbed magician text,
He scanned her subtle tangled weird designs
And the screened difficult theorem of her clues,
Traced in the monstrous sands of desert Time
The thread beginnings of her titan works,
Watched her charade of action for some hint,

Read the Nō-gestures of her silhouettes,
And strove to capture in their burdened drift
The dance-fantasia of her sequences
Escaping into rhythmic mystery,
A glimmer of fugitive feet on fleeing soil.
In the labyrinth pattern of her thoughts and hopes
And the byways of her intimate desires,
In the complex corners crowded with her dreams
And rounds crossed by an intrigue of irrelevant rounds,
A wanderer straying amid fugitive scenes,
He lost its signs and chased each failing guess.
Ever he met key-words, ignorant of their key.
A sun that dazzled its own eye of sight,
A luminous enigma's brilliant hood
Lit the dense purple barrier of thought's sky:
A dim large trance showed to the night her stars.
As if sitting near an open window's gap,
He read by lightning-flash on crowding flash
Chapters of her metaphysical romance
Of the soul's search for lost Reality
And her fictions drawn from spirit's authentic fact,
Her caprices and conceits and meanings locked,
Her rash unseizable freaks and mysteried turns.
The magnificent wrappings of her secrecy
That fold her desirable body out of sight,
The strange significant forms woven on her robe,
Her meaningful outlines of the souls of things
He saw, her false transparencies of thought-hue,
Her rich brocades with imaged fancies sewn
And mutable masks and broideries of disguise.
A thousand baffling faces of the Truth
Looked at him from her forms with unknown eyes
And wordless mouths unrecognisable,
Spoke from the figures of her masquerade,
Or peered from the recondite magnificence
And subtle splendour of her draperies.

In sudden scintillations of the Unknown,
Inexpressive sounds became veridical,
Ideas that seemed unmeaning flashed out truth;
Voices that came from unseen waiting worlds
Uttered the syllables of the Unmanifest
To clothe the body of the mystic Word,
And wizard diagrams of the occult Law
Sealed some precise unreadable harmony,
Or used hue and figure to reconstitute
The herald blazon of Time's secret things.
In her green wildernesses and lurking depths,
In her thickets of joy where danger clasps delight,
He glimpsed the hidden wings of her songster hopes,
A glimmer of blue and gold and scarlet fire.
In her covert lanes, bordering her chance field-paths
And by her singing rivulets and calm lakes
He found the glow of her golden fruits of bliss
And the beauty of her flowers of dream and muse.
As if a miracle of heart's change by joy
He watched in the alchemist radiance of her suns
The crimson outburst of one secular flower
On the tree-of-sacrifice of spiritual love.
In the sleepy splendour of her noons he saw,
A perpetual repetition through the hours,
Thought's dance of dragonflies on mystery's stream
That skim but never test its murmurs' race,
And heard the laughter of her rose desires
Running as if to escape from longed-for hands,
Jingling sweet anklet-bells of fantasy.
Amidst live symbols of her occult power
He moved and felt them as close real forms:
In that life more concrete than the lives of men
Throbbed heart-beats of the hidden reality:
Embodyed was there what we but think and feel,
Self-framed what here takes outward borrowed shapes.
A comrade of Silence on her austere heights

Accepted by her mighty loneliness,
He stood with her on meditating peaks
Where life and being are a sacrament
Offered to the Reality beyond,
And saw her loose into infinity
Her hooded eagles of significance,
Messengers of Thought to the Unknowable.
Identified in soul-vision and soul-sense,
Entering into her depths as into a house,
All he became that she was or longed to be,
He thought with her thoughts and journeyed with her steps,
Lived with her breath and scanned all with her eyes
That so he might learn the secret of her soul.
A witness overmastered by his scene,
He admired her splendid front of pomp and play
And the marvels of her rich and delicate craft,
And thrilled to the insistence of her cry;
Impassioned he bore the sorceries of her might,
Felt laid on him her abrupt mysterious will,
Her hands that knead fate in their violent grasp,
Her touch that moves, her powers that seize and drive.
But this too he saw, her soul that wept within,
Her seekings vain that clutch at fleeing truth,
Her hopes whose sombre gaze mates with despair,
The passion that possessed her longing limbs,
The trouble and rapture of her yearning breasts,
Her mind that toils unsatisfied with its fruits,
Her heart that captures not the one Beloved.
Always he met a veiled and seeking Force,
An exiled goddess building mimic heavens,
A Sphinx whose eyes look up to a hidden Sun.

Ever he felt near a spirit in her forms:
Its passive presence was her nature's strength;
This sole is real in apparent things,
Even upon earth the spirit is life's key,

But her solid outsides nowhere bear its trace.
Its stamp on her acts is undiscoverable.
A pathos of lost heights is its appeal.
Only sometimes is caught a shadowy line
That seems a hint of veiled reality.
Life stared at him with vague confused outlines
Offering a picture the eyes could not keep,
A story that was yet not written there.
As in a fragmentary half-lost design
Life's meanings fled from the pursuing eye.
Life's visage hides life's real self from sight;
Life's secret sense is written within, above.
The thought that gives it sense lives far beyond;
It is not seen in its half-finished design.
In vain we hope to read the baffling signs
Or find the word of the half-played charade.
Only in that greater life a cryptic thought
Is found, is hinted some interpreting word
That makes the earth-myth a tale intelligible.
Something was seen at last that looked like truth.
In a half-lit air of hazardous mystery
The eye that looks at the dark half of truth
Made out an image mid a vivid blur
And peering through a mist of subtle tints
He saw a half-blind chained divinity
Bewildered by the world in which he moved,
Yet conscious of some light prompting his soul.
Attracted to strange far-off shimmerings,
Led by the fluting of a distant Player
He sought his way amid life's laughter and call
And the index chaos of her myriad steps
Towards some total deep infinitude.
Around crowded the forest of her signs:
At hazard he read by arrow-leaps of Thought
That hit the mark by guess or luminous chance,
Her changing coloured road-lights of idea

And her signals of uncertain swift event,
The hieroglyphs of her symbol pageantries
And her landmarks in the tangled paths of Time.
In her mazes of approach and of retreat
To every side she draws him and repels,
But drawn too near escapes from his embrace;
All ways she leads him but no way is sure.
Allured by the many-toned marvel of her chant,
Attracted by the witchcraft of her moods
And moved by her casual touch to joy and grief,
He loses himself in her but wins her not.
A fugitive paradise smiles at him from her eyes:
He dreams of her beauty made for ever his,
He dreams of his mastery her limbs shall bear,
He dreams of the magic of her breasts of bliss.
In her illumined script, her fanciful
Translation of God's pure original text,
He thinks to read the Scripture Wonderful,
Hieratic key to unknown beatitudes.
But the Word of Life is hidden in its script,
The chant of Life has lost its divine note.
Unseen, a captive in a house of sound,
The spirit lost in the splendour of a dream
Listens to a thousand-voiced illusion's ode.
A delicate weft of sorcery steals the heart
Or a fiery magic tints her tones and hues,
Yet they but wake a thrill of transient grace;
A vagrant march struck by the wanderer Time,
They call to a brief unsatisfied delight
Or wallow in ravishments of mind and sense,
But miss the luminous answer of the soul.
A blind heart-throb that reaches joy through tears,
A yearning towards peaks for ever unreached,
An ecstasy of unfulfilled desire
Track the last heavenward climbings of her voice.
Transmuted are past suffering's memories

Into an old sadness's sweet escaping trail:
Turned are her tears to gems of diamond pain,
Her sorrow into a magic crown of song.
Brief are her snatches of felicity
That touch the surface, then escape or die:
A lost remembrance echoes in her depths,
A deathless longing is hers, a veiled self's call;
A prisoner in the mortal's limiting world,
A spirit wounded by life sobs in her breast;
A cherished suffering is her deepest cry.
A wanderer on forlorn despairing routes,
Along the roads of sound a frustrate voice
Forsaken cries to a forgotten bliss.
Astray in the echo caverns of Desire,
It guards the phantoms of a soul's dead hopes
And keeps alive the voice of perished things
Or lingers upon sweet and errant notes
Hunting for pleasure in the heart of pain.
A fateful hand has touched the cosmic chords
And the intrusion of a troubled strain
Covers the inner music's hidden key
That guides unheard the surface cadences.
Yet is it joy to live and to create
And joy to love and labour though all fails,
And joy to seek though all we find deceives
And all on which we lean betrays our trust;
Yet something in its depths was worth the pain,
A passionate memory haunts with ecstasy's fire.
Even grief has joy hidden beneath its roots:
For nothing is truly vain the One has made:
In our defeated hearts God's strength survives
And victory's star still lights our desperate road;
Our death is made a passage to new worlds.
This to Life's music gives its anthem swell.
To all she lends the glory of her voice;
Heaven's raptures whisper to her heart and pass,

Earth's transient yearnings cry from her lips and fade.
Alone the God-given hymn escapes her art
That came with her from her spiritual home
But stopped half-way and failed, a silent word
Awake in some deep pause of waiting worlds,
A murmur suspended in eternity's hush:
But no breath comes from the supernal peace:
A sumptuous interlude occupies the ear
And the heart listens and the soul consents;
An evanescent music it repeats
Wasting on transience Time's eternity.
A tremolo of the voices of the hours
Oblivious screens the high intended theme
The self-embodiment spirit came to play
On the vast clavichord of Nature-Force.
Only a mighty murmur here and there
Of the eternal Word, the blissful Voice
Or Beauty's touch transfiguring heart and sense,
A wandering splendour and a mystic cry,
Recalls the strength and sweetness heard no more.

Here is the gap, here stops or sinks life's force;
This deficit paupers the magician's skill:
This want makes all the rest seem thin and bare.
A half-sight draws the horizon of her acts:
Her depths remember what she came to do,
But the mind has forgotten or the heart mistakes:
In Nature's endless lines is lost the God.
In knowledge to sum up omniscience,
In action to erect the Omnipotent,
To create her Creator here was her heart's conceit,
To invade the cosmic scene with utter God.
Toiling to transform the still far Absolute
Into an all-fulfilling epiphany,
Into an utterance of the Ineffable,
She would bring the glory here of the Absolute's force,

Change poise into creation's rhythmic swing,
Marry with a sky of calm a sea of bliss.
A fire to call eternity into Time,
Make body's joy as vivid as the soul's,
Earth she would lift to neighbourhood with heaven,
Labours life to equate with the Supreme
And reconcile the Eternal and the Abyss.
Her pragmatism of the transcendent Truth
Fills silence with the voices of the gods,
But in the cry the single Voice is lost.
For Nature's vision climbs beyond her acts.
A life of gods in heaven she sees above,
A demigod emerging from an ape
Is all she can in our mortal element.
Here the half-god, the half-titan are her peak:
This greater life wavers twixt earth and sky.
A poignant paradox pursues her dreams:
Her hooded energy moves an ignorant world
To look for a joy her own strong clasp puts off:
In her embrace it cannot turn to its source.
Immense her power, endless her act's vast drive,
Astray is its significance and lost.
Although she carries in her secret breast
The law and journeying curve of all things born
Her knowledge partial seems, her purpose small;
On a soil of yearning tread her sumptuous hours.
A leaden Nescience weighs the wings of Thought,
Her power oppresses the being with its garbs,
Her actions prison its immortal gaze.
A sense of limit haunts her masteries
And nowhere is assured content or peace:
For all the depth and beauty of her work
A wisdom lacks that sets the spirit free.
An old and faded charm had now her face
And palled for him her quick and curious lore;
His wide soul asked a deeper joy than hers.

Out of her daedal lines he sought escape;
But neither gate of horn nor ivory
He found nor postern of spiritual sight,
There was no issue from that dreamlike space.
Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure.
Our life's repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk:
Some ancient deep impulsion labours on:
Our souls are dragged as with a hidden leash,
Carried from birth to birth, from world to world,
Our acts prolong after the body's fall
The old perpetual journey without pause.
No silent peak is found where Time can rest.
This was a magic stream that reached no sea.
However far he went, wherever turned,
The wheel of works ran with him and outstripped;
Always a farther task was left to do.
A beat of action and a cry of search
For ever grew in that unquiet world;
A busy murmur filled the heart of Time.
All was contrivance and unceasing stir.
A hundred ways to live were tried in vain:
A sameness that assumed a thousand forms
Strove to escape from its long monotone
And made new things that soon were like the old.
A curious decoration lured the eye
And novel values furbished ancient themes
To cheat the mind with the idea of change.
A different picture that was still the same
Appeared upon the cosmic vague background.
Only another labyrinthine house
Of creatures and their doings and events,
A city of the traffic of bound souls,

A market of creation and her wares,
Was offered to the labouring mind and heart.
A circuit ending where it first began
Is dubbed the forward and eternal march
Of progress on perfection's unknown road.
Each final scheme leads to a sequel plan.
Yet every new departure seems the last,
Inspired evangel, theory's ultimate peak,
Proclaiming a panacea for all Time's ills
Or carrying thought in its ultimate zenith flight
And trumpeting supreme discovery;
Each brief idea, a structure perishable,
Publishes the immortality of its rule,
Its claim to be the perfect form of things,
Truth's last epitome, Time's golden best.
But nothing has been achieved of infinite worth:
A world made ever anew, never complete,
Piled always half-attempts on lost attempts
And saw a fragment as the eternal Whole.
In the aimless mounting total of things done
Existence seemed a vain necessity's act,
A wrestle of eternal opposites
In a clasped antagonism's close-locked embrace,
A play without denouement or idea,
A hunger march of lives without a goal,
Or, written on a bare blackboard of Space,
A futile and recurring sum of souls,
A hope that failed, a light that never shone,
The labour of an unaccomplished Force
Tied to its acts in a dim eternity.
There is no end or none can yet be seen:
Although defeated, life must struggle on;
Always she sees a crown she cannot grasp;
Her eyes are fixed beyond her fallen state.
There quivers still within her breast and ours
A glory that was once and is no more,

Or there calls to us from some unfulfilled beyond
A greatness yet unreached by the halting world.
In a memory behind our mortal sense
A dream persists of larger happier air
Breathing around free hearts of joy and love,
Forgotten by us, immortal in lost Time.
A ghost of bliss pursues her haunted depths;
For she remembers still, though now so far,
Her realm of golden ease and glad desire
And the beauty and strength and happiness that were hers
In the sweetness of her glowing paradise,
In her kingdom of immortal ecstasy
Half-way between God's silence and the Abyss.
This knowledge in our hidden parts we keep;
Awake to a vague mystery's appeal,
We meet a deep unseen Reality
Far truer than the world's face of present truth:
We are chased by a self we cannot now recall
And moved by a Spirit we must still become.
As one who has lost the kingdom of his soul,
We look back to some god-phase of our birth
Other than this imperfect creature here
And hope in this or a diviner world
To recover yet from Heaven's patient guard
What by our mind's forgetfulness we miss,
Our being's natural felicity,
Our heart's delight we have exchanged for grief,
The body's thrill we bartered for mere pain,
The bliss for which our mortal nature yearns
As yearns an obscure moth to blazing Light.
Our life is a march to a victory never won.
This wave of being longing for delight,
This eager turmoil of unsatisfied strengths,
These long far files of forward-striving hopes
Lift worshipping eyes to the blue Void called heaven
Looking for the golden Hand that never came,

The advent for which all creation waits,
The beautiful visage of Eternity
That shall appear upon the roads of Time.
Yet still to ourselves we say rekindling faith,
“Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,
One day he shall create our life anew
And utter the magic formula of peace
And bring perfection to the scheme of things.
One day he shall descend to life and earth,
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors,
Into a world that cries to him for help,
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,
The joy that is the baptism of the soul,
The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love.
One day he shall lift his beauty’s dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world’s beating heart
And bare his secret body of light and bliss.”
But now we strain to reach an unknown goal:
There is no end of seeking and of birth,
There is no end of dying and return;
The life that wins its aim asks greater aims,
The life that fails and dies must live again;
Till it has found itself it cannot cease.
All must be done for which life and death were made.
But who shall say that even then is rest?
Or there repose and action are the same
In the deep breast of God’s supreme delight.
In a high state where ignorance is no more,
Each movement is a wave of peace and bliss,
Repose God’s motionless creative force,
Action a ripple in the Infinite
And birth a gesture of Eternity.
A sun of transfiguration still can shine
And Night can bare its core of mystic light;
The self-cancelling, self-afflicting paradox
Into a self-luminous mystery might change,

The imbroglio into a joyful miracle.
Then God could be visible here, here take a shape;
Disclosed would be the spirit's identity;
Life would reveal her true immortal face.
But now a termless labour is her fate:
In its recurrent decimal of events
Birth, death are a ceaseless iteration's points;
The old question-mark margins each finished page,
Each volume of her effort's history.
A limping Yes through the aeons journeys still
Accompanied by an eternal No.
All seems in vain, yet endless is the game.
Impassive turns the ever-circling Wheel,
Life has no issue, death brings no release.
A prisoner of itself the being lives
And keeps its futile immortality;
Extinction is denied, its sole escape.
An error of the gods has made the world.
Or indifferent the Eternal watches Time.

END OF CANTO SIX

Canto Seven

The Descent into Night

A MIND absolved from life, made calm to know,
A heart divorced from the blindness and the pang,
The seal of tears, the bond of ignorance,
He turned to find that wide world-failure's cause.
Away he looked from Nature's visible face
And sent his gaze into the viewless Vast,
The formidable unknown Infinity,
Asleep behind the endless coil of things,
That carries the universe in its timeless breadths
And the ripples of its being are our lives.
The worlds are built by its unconscious Breath
And Matter and Mind are its figures or its powers,
Our waking thoughts the output of its dreams.
The veil was rent that covers Nature's depths:
He saw the fount of the world's lasting pain
And the mouth of the black pit of Ignorance;
The evil guarded at the roots of life
Raised up its head and looked into his eyes.
On a dim bank where dies subjective Space,
From a stark ridge overlooking all that is,
A tenebrous awakened Nescience,
Her wide blank eyes wondering at Time and Form,
Stared at the inventions of the living Void
And the Abyss whence our beginnings rose.
Behind appeared a grey carved mask of Night
Watching the birth of all created things.
A hidden Puissance conscious of its force,
A vague and lurking Presence everywhere,
A contrary Doom that threatens all things made,
A Death figuring as the dark seed of life,
Seemed to engender and to slay the world.

Then from the sombre mystery of the gulfs
And from the hollow bosom of the Mask
Something crept forth that seemed a shapeless Thought.
A fatal Influence upon creatures stole
Whose lethal touch pursued the immortal spirit,
On life was laid the haunting finger of death
And overcast with error, grief and pain
The soul's native will for truth and joy and light.
A deformation coiled that claimed to be
The being's very turn, Nature's true drive.
A hostile and perverting Mind at work
In every corner ensconced of conscious life
Corrupted Truth with her own formulas;
Interceptor of the listening of the soul,
Afflicting knowledge with the hue of doubt
It captured the oracles of the occult gods,
Effaced the signposts of Life's pilgrimage,
Cancelled the firm rock-edicts graved by Time,
And on the foundations of the cosmic Law
Erected its bronze pylons of misrule.
Even Light and Love by that cloaked danger's spell
Turned from the brilliant nature of the gods
To fallen angels and misleading suns,
Became themselves a danger and a charm,
A perverse sweetness, heaven-born malefice:
Its power could deform divinest things.
A wind of sorrow breathed upon the world;
All thought with falsehood was besieged, all act
Stamped with defect or with frustration's sign,
All high attempt with failure or vain success,
But none could know the reason of his fall.
The grey Mask whispered and, though no sound was heard,
Yet in the ignorant heart a seed was sown
That bore black fruit of suffering, death and bale.
Out of the chill steppes of a bleak Unseen
Invisible, wearing the Night's grey mask,

Arrived the shadowy dreadful messengers,
Invaders from a dangerous world of power,
Ambassadors of evil's absolute.
In silence the inaudible voices spoke,
Hands that none saw planted the fatal grain,
No form was seen, yet a dire work was done,
An iron decree in crooked uncials written
Imposed a law of sin and adverse fate.
Life looked at him with changed and sombre eyes:
Her beauty he saw and the yearning heart in things
That with a little happiness is content,
Answering to a small ray of truth or love;
He saw her gold sunlight and her far blue sky,
Her green of leaves and hue and scent of flowers
And the charm of children and the love of friends
And the beauty of women and kindly hearts of men,
But saw too the dreadful Powers that drive her moods
And the anguish she has strewn upon her ways,
Fate waiting on the unseen steps of men
And her evil and sorrow and last gift of death.
A breath of disillusion and decadence
Corrupting watched for Life's maturity
And made to rot the full grain of the soul:
Progress became a purveyor of Death.
A world that clung to the law of a slain Light
Cherished the putrid corpses of dead truths,
Hailed twisted forms as things free, new and true,
Beauty from ugliness and evil drank
Feeling themselves guests at a banquet of the gods
And tasted corruption like a high-spiced food.
A darkness settled on the heavy air;
It hunted the bright smile from Nature's lips
And slew the native confidence in her heart
And put fear's crooked look into her eyes.
The lust that warps the spirit's natural good
Replaced by a manufactured virtue and vice

The frank spontaneous impulse of the soul:
Afflicting Nature with the dual's lie,
Their twin values whetted a forbidden zest,
Made evil a relief from spurious good,
The ego battened on righteousness and sin
And each became an instrument of Hell.
In rejected heaps by a monotonous road
The old simple delights were left to lie
On the wasteland of life's descent to Night.
All glory of life was dimmed, tarnished with doubt;
All beauty ended in an aging face;
All power was dubbed a tyranny cursed by God
And Truth a fiction needed by the mind:
The chase of joy was now a tired hunt;
All knowledge was left a questioning Ignorance.

As from a womb obscure he saw emerge
The body and visage of a dark Unseen
Hidden behind the fair outsides of life.
Its dangerous commerce is our suffering's cause.
Its breath is a subtle poison in men's hearts;
All evil starts from that ambiguous face.
A peril haunted now the common air;
The world grew full of menacing Energies,
And wherever turned for help or hope his eyes,
In field and house, in street and camp and mart
He met the prowl and stealthy come and go
Of armed disquieting bodied Influences.
A march of goddess figures dark and nude
Alarmed the air with grandiose unease;
Appalling footsteps drew invisibly near,
Shapes that were threats invaded the dream-light,
And ominous beings passed him on the road
Whose very gaze was a calamity:
A charm and sweetness sudden and formidable,
Faces that raised alluring lips and eyes

Approached him armed with beauty like a snare,
But hid a fatal meaning in each line
And could in a moment dangerously change.
But he alone discerned that screened attack.
A veil upon the inner vision lay,
A force was there that hid its dreadful steps;
All was belied, yet thought itself the truth;
All were beset but knew not of the siege:
For none could see the authors of their fall.

Aware of some dark wisdom still withheld
That was the seal and warrant of this strength,
He followed the track of dim tremendous steps
Returning to the night from which they came.
A tract he reached unbuilt and owned by none:
There all could enter but none stay for long.
It was a no man's land of evil air,
A crowded neighbourhood without one home,
A borderland between the world and hell.
There unreality was Nature's lord:
It was a space where nothing could be true,
For nothing was what it had claimed to be:
A high appearance wrapped a specious void.
Yet nothing would confess its own pretence
Even to itself in the ambiguous heart:
A vast deception was the law of things;
Only by that deception they could live.
An unsubstantial Nihil guaranteed
The falsehood of the forms this Nature took
And made them seem awhile to be and live.
A borrowed magic drew them from the Void;
They took a shape and stuff that was not theirs
And showed a colour that they could not keep,
Mirrors to a phantasm of reality.
Each rainbow brilliance was a splendid lie;
A beauty unreal graced a glamour face.
Nothing could be relied on to remain:

Joy nurtured tears and good an evil proved,
But never out of evil one plucked good:
Love ended early in hate, delight killed with pain,
Truth into falsity grew and death ruled life.
A Power that laughed at the mischiefs of the world,
An irony that joined the world's contraries
And flung them into each other's arms to strive,
Put a sardonic rictus on God's face.
Aloof, its influence entered everywhere
And left a cloven hoof-mark on the breast;
A twisted heart and a strange sombre smile
Mocked at the sinister comedy of life.
Announcing the advent of a perilous Form
An ominous tread softened its dire footfall
That none might understand or be on guard;
None heard until a dreadful grasp was close.
Or else all augured a divine approach,
An air of prophecy felt, a heavenly hope,
Listened for a gospel, watched for a new star.
The Fiend was visible but cloaked in light;
He seemed a helping angel from the skies:
He armed untruth with Scripture and the Law;
He deceived with wisdom, with virtue slew the soul
And led to perdition by the heavenward path.
A lavish sense he gave of power and joy,
And, when arose the warning from within,
He reassured the ear with dulcet tones
Or took the mind captive in its own net;
His rigorous logic made the false seem true.
Amazing the elect with holy lore
He spoke as with the very voice of God.
The air was full of treachery and ruse;
Truth-speaking was a stratagem in that place;
Ambush lurked in a smile and peril made
Safety its cover, trust its entry's gate:
Falsehood came laughing with the eyes of truth;

Each friend might turn an enemy or spy,
The hand one clasped ensleaved a dagger's stab
And an embrace could be Doom's iron cage.
Agony and danger stalked their trembling prey
And softly spoke as to a timid friend:
Attack sprang suddenly vehement and unseen;
Fear leaped upon the heart at every turn
And cried out with an anguished dreadful voice;
It called for one to save but none came near.
All warily walked, for death was ever close;
Yet caution seemed a vain expense of care,
For all that guarded proved a deadly net,
And when after long suspense salvation came
And brought a glad relief disarming strength,
It served as a smiling passage to worse fate.
There was no truce and no safe place to rest;
One dared not slumber or put off one's arms:
It was a world of battle and surprise.
All who were there lived for themselves alone;
All warred against all, but with a common hate
Turned on the mind that sought some higher good;
Truth was exiled lest she should dare to speak
And hurt the heart of darkness with her light
Or bring her pride of knowledge to blaspheme
The settled anarchy of established things.

Then the scene changed, but kept its dreadful core:
Altering its form the life remained the same.
A capital was there without a State:
It had no ruler, only groups that strove.
He saw a city of ancient Ignorance
Founded upon a soil that knew not Light.
There each in his own darkness walked alone:
Only they agreed to differ in Evil's paths,
To live in their own way for their own selves
Or to enforce a common lie and wrong;

There Ego was lord upon his peacock seat
And Falsehood sat by him, his mate and queen:
The world turned to them as Heaven to Truth and God.
Injustice justified by firm decrees
The sovereign weights of Error's legalised trade,
But all the weights were false and none the same;
Ever she watched with her balance and a sword,
Lest any sacrilegious word expose
The sanctified formulas of her old misrule.
In high professions wrapped self-will walked wide
And licence stalked prating of order and right:
There was no altar raised to Liberty;
True freedom was abhorred and hunted down:
Harmony and tolerance nowhere could be seen;
Each group proclaimed its dire and naked Law.
A frame of ethics knobbed with scriptural rules
Or a theory passionately believed and praised
A table seemed of high Heaven's sacred code.
A formal practice mailed and iron-shod
Gave to a rude and ruthless warrior kind
Drawn from the savage bowels of the earth
A proud stern poise of harsh nobility,
A civic posture rigid and formidable.
But all their private acts belied the pose:
Power and utility were their Truth and Right,
An eagle rapacity clawed its coveted good,
Beaks pecked and talons tore all weaker prey.
In their sweet secrecy of pleasant sins
Nature they obeyed and not a moralist God.
Inconscient traders in bundles of contraries,
They did what in others they would persecute;
When their eyes looked upon their fellow's vice,
An indignation flamed, a virtuous wrath;
Oblivious of their own deep-hid offence,
Moblike they stoned a neighbour caught in sin.
A pragmatist judge within passed false decrees,

Posed worst iniquities on equity's base,
Reasoned ill actions just, sanctioned the scale
Of the merchant ego's interest and desire.
Thus was a balance kept, the world could live.
A zealot fervour pushed their ruthless cults,
All faith not theirs bled scourged as heresy;
They questioned, captive, tortured, burned or smote
And forced the soul to abandon right or die.
Amid her clashing creeds and warring sects
Religion sat upon a blood-stained throne.
A hundred tyrannies oppressed and slew
And founded unity upon fraud and force.
Only what seemed was prized as real there:
The ideal was a cynic ridicule's butt;
Hooted by the crowd, mocked by enlightened wits,
Spiritual seeking wandered outcasted, —
A dreamer's self-deceiving web of thought
Or mad chimaera deemed or hypocrite's fake,
Its passionate instinct trailed through minds obscure
Lost in the circuits of the Ignorance.
A lie was there the truth and truth a lie.
Here must the traveller of the upward Way —
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route —
Pause or pass slowly through that perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.
If probed not all discernment's keen spear-point,
He might stumble into falsity's endless net.
Over his shoulder often he must look back
Like one who feels on his neck an enemy's breath;
Else stealing up behind a treasonous blow
Might prostrate cast and pin to unholy soil,
Pierced through his back by Evil's poignant stake.
So might one fall on the Eternal's road
Forfeiting the spirit's lonely chance in Time
And no news of him reach the waiting gods,
Marked "missing" in the register of souls,

His name the index of a failing hope,
The position of a dead remembered star.
Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
Casting a javelin regard in front,
Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light.
Hardly even so, the grisly danger past,
Released into a calmer purer air,
They dared at length to breathe and smile once more.
Once more they moved beneath a real sun.
Though Hell claimed rule, the spirit still had power.
This No-man's-land he passed without debate;
Him the heights missioned, him the Abyss desired:
None stood across his way, no voice forbade.
For swift and easy is the downward path,
And now towards the Night was turned his face.

A greater darkness waited, a worse reign,
If worse can be where all is evil's extreme;
Yet to the cloaked the uncloaked is naked worst.
There God and Truth and the supernal Light
Had never been or else had power no more.
As when one slips in a deep moment's trance
Over mind's border into another world,
He crossed a boundary whose stealthy trace
Eye could not see but only the soul feel.
Into an armoured fierce domain he came
And saw himself wandering like a lost soul
Amid grimed walls and savage slums of Night.
Around him crowded grey and squalid huts
Neighbouring proud palaces of perverted Power,
Inhuman quarters and demoniac wards.
A pride in evil hugged its wretchedness;
A misery haunting splendour pressed those fell
Dun suburbs of the cities of dream-life.

There Life displayed to the spectator soul
The shadow depths of her strange miracle.
A strong and fallen goddess without hope,
Obscured, deformed by some dire Gorgon spell,
As might a harlot empress in a bouge,
Nude, unashamed, exulting she upraised
Her evil face of perilous beauty and charm
And, drawing panic to a shuddering kiss
Twixt the magnificence of her fatal breasts,
Allured to their abyss the spirit's fall.
Across his field of sight she multiplied
As on a scenic film or moving plate
The implacable splendour of her nightmare pomps.
On the dark background of a soulless world
She staged between a lurid light and shade
Her dramas of the sorrow of the depths
Written on the agonised nerves of living things:
Epics of horror and grim majesty,
Wry statues spat and stiffened in life's mud,
A glut of hideous forms and hideous deeds
Paralysed pity in the hardened breast.
In booths of sin and night-repairs of vice
Styled infamies of the body's concupiscence
And sordid imaginations etched in flesh,
Turned lust into a decorative art:
Abusing Nature's gift her pervert skill
Immortalised the sown grain of living death,
In a mud goblet poured the bacchic wine,
To a satyr gave the thyrsus of a god.
Impure, sadistic, with grimacing mouths,
Grey foul inventions gruesome and macabre
Came televisioned from the gulfs of Night.
Her craft ingenious in monstrosity,
Impatient of all natural shape and poise,
A gape of nude exaggerated lines,
Gave caricature a stark reality,

And art-parades of weird distorted forms,
And gargoyle masques obscene and terrible
Trampled to tormented postures the torn sense.
An inexorable evil's worshipper,
She made vileness great and sublimated filth;
A dragon power of reptile energies
And strange epiphanies of grovelling Force
And serpent grandeurs couching in the mire
Drew adoration to a gleam of slime.
All Nature pulled out of her frame and base
Was twisted into an unnatural pose:
Repulsion stimulated inert desire;
Agony was made a red-spiced food for bliss,
Hatred was trusted with the work of lust
And torture took the form of an embrace;
A ritual anguish consecrated death;
Worship was offered to the Undivine.
A new aesthesia of Inferno's art
That trained the mind to love what the soul hates,
Imposed allegiance on the quivering nerves
And forced the unwilling body to vibrate.
Too sweet and too harmonious to excite
In this regime that soiled the being's core,
Beauty was banned, the heart's feeling dulled to sleep
And cherished in their place sensation's thrills;
The world was probed for jets of sense-appeal.
Here cold material intellect was the judge
And needed sensual prick and jog and lash
That its hard dryness and dead nerves might feel
Some passion and power and acrid point of life.
A new philosophy theorised evil's rights,
Gloried in the shimmering rot of decadence,
Or gave to a python Force persuasive speech
And armed with knowledge the primaeva brute.
Over life and Matter only brooding bowed,
Mind changed to the image of a rampant beast;

It scrambled into the pit to dig for truth
And lighted its search with the subconscious's flares.
Thence bubbling rose sullying the upper air,
The filth and festering secrets of the Abyss:
This it called positive fact and real life.
This now composed the fetid atmosphere.
A wild-beast passion crept from secret Night
To watch its prey with fascinating eyes:
Around him like a fire with sputtering tongues
There lolled and laughed a bestial ecstasy;
The air was packed with longings brute and fierce;
Crowding and stinging in a monstrous swarm
Pressed with a noxious hum into his mind
Thoughts that could poison Nature's heavenliest breath,
Forcing reluctant lids assailed the sight
Acts that revealed the mystery of Hell.
All that was there was on this pattern made.

A race possessed inhabited those parts.
A force demoniac lurking in man's depths
That heaves suppressed by the heart's human law,
Awed by the calm and sovereign eyes of Thought,
Can in a fire and earthquake of the soul
Arise and, calling to its native night,
Overthrow the reason, occupy the life
And stamp its hoof on Nature's shaking ground:
This was for them their being's flaming core.
A mighty energy, a monster god,
Hard to the strong, implacable to the weak,
It stared at the harsh unpitying world it made
With the stony eyelids of its fixed idea.
Its heart was drunk with a dire hunger's wine,
In others' suffering felt a thrilled delight
And of death and ruin the grandiose music heard.
To have power, to be master, was sole virtue and good:
It claimed the whole world for Evil's living room,

Its party's grim totalitarian reign
The cruel destiny of breathing things.
All on one plan was shaped and standardised
Under a dark dictatorship's breathless weight.
In street and house, in councils and in courts
Beings he met who looked like living men
And climbed in speech upon high wings of thought
But harboured all that is subhuman, vile
And lower than the lowest reptile's crawl.
The reason meant for nearness to the gods
And uplift to heavenly scale by the touch of mind
Only enhanced by its enlightening ray
Their inborn nature's wry monstrosity.
Often, a familiar visage studying
Joyfully encountered at some dangerous turn,
Hoping to recognise a look of light,
His vision warned by the spirit's inward eye
Discovered suddenly Hell's trademark there,
Or saw with the inner sense that cannot err,
In the semblance of a fair or virile form
The demon and the goblin and the ghoul.
An insolence reigned of cold stone-hearted strength
Mighty, obeyed, approved by the Titan's law,
The huge laughter of a giant cruelty
And fierce glad deeds of ogre violence.
In that wide cynic den of thinking beasts
One looked in vain for a trace of pity or love;
There was no touch of sweetness anywhere,
But only Force and its acolytes, greed and hate:
There was no help for suffering, none to save,
None dared resist or speak a noble word.
Armed with the aegis of tyrannic Power,
Signing the edicts of her dreadful rule
And using blood and torture as a seal,
Darkness proclaimed her slogans to the world.
A servile blinkered silence hushed the mind

Or only it repeated lessons taught,
While mitred, holding the good shepherd's staff,
Falsehood enthroned on awed and prostrate hearts
The cults and creeds that organise living death
And slay the soul on the altar of a lie.
All were deceived or served their own deceit;
Truth in that stifling atmosphere could not live.
There wretchedness believed in its own joy
And fear and weakness hugged their abject depths;
All that is low and sordid-thoughted, base,
All that is drab and poor and miserable,
Breathed in a lax content its natural air
And felt no yearning of divine release:
Arrogant, gibing at more luminous states
The people of the gulfs despised the sun.
A barriered autarchy excluded light;
Fixed in its will to be its own grey self,
It vaunted its norm unique and splendid type:
It soothed its hunger with a plunderer's dream;
Flaunting its cross of servitude like a crown,
It clung to its dismal harsh autonomy.
A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue;
Its hard and shameless clamour filling Space
And threatening all who dared to listen to truth
Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;
A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,
And braggart dogmas shouted in the night
Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god
The pride of its abysmal absolute.

A lone discoverer in these menacing realms
Guarded like termite cities from the sun,
Oppressed mid crowd and tramp and noise and flare,
Passing from dusk to deeper dangerous dusk,
He wrestled with powers that snatched from mind its light
And smote from him their clinging influences.

Soon he emerged in a dim wall-less space.
For now the peopled tracts were left behind;
He walked between wide banks of failing eve.
Around him grew a gaunt spiritual blank,
A threatening waste, a sinister loneliness
That left mind bare to an unseen assault,
An empty page on which all that willed could write
Stark monstrous messages without control.
A travelling dot on downward roads of Dusk
Mid barren fields and barns and straggling huts
And a few crooked and phantasmal trees,
He faced a sense of death and conscious void.
But still a hostile Life unseen was there
Whose deathlike poise resisting light and truth
Made living a bleak gap in nullity.
He heard the grisly voices that deny;
Assailed by thoughts that swarmed like spectral hordes,
A prey to the staring phantoms of the gloom
And terror approaching with its lethal mouth,
Driven by a strange will down ever down,
The sky above a communiqué of Doom,
He strove to shield his spirit from despair,
But felt the horror of the growing Night
And the Abyss rising to claim his soul.
Then ceased the abodes of creatures and their forms
And solitude wrapped him in its voiceless folds.
All vanished suddenly like a thought expunged;
His spirit became an empty listening gulf
Void of the dead illusion of a world:
Nothing was left, not even an evil face.
He was alone with the grey python Night.
A dense and nameless Nothing conscious, mute,
Which seemed alive but without body or mind,
Lusted all beings to annihilate
That it might be for ever nude and sole.
As in a shapeless beast's intangible jaws,

Gripped, strangled by that lusting viscous blot,
Attracted to some black and giant mouth
And swallowing throat and a huge belly of doom,
His being from its own vision disappeared
Drawn towards depths that hungered for its fall.
A formless void oppressed his struggling brain,
A darkness grim and cold benumbed his flesh,
A whispered grey suggestion chilled his heart;
Haled by a serpent-force from its warm home
And dragged to extinction in bleak vacancy
Life clung to its seat with cords of gasping breath;
Lapped was his body by a tenebrous tongue.
Existence smothered travailed to survive;
Hope strangled perished in his empty soul,
Belief and memory abolished died
And all that helps the spirit in its course.
There crawled through every tense and aching nerve
Leaving behind its poignant quaking trail
A nameless and unutterable fear.
As a sea nears a victim bound and still,
The approach alarmed his mind for ever dumb
Of an implacable eternity
Of pain inhuman and intolerable.
This he must bear, his hope of heaven estranged;
He must ever exist without extinction's peace
In a slow suffering Time and tortured Space,
An anguished nothingness his endless state.
A lifeless vacancy was now his breast,
And in the place where once was luminous thought,
Only remained like a pale motionless ghost
An incapacity for faith and hope
And the dread conviction of a vanquished soul
Immortal still but with its godhead lost,
Self lost and God and touch of happier worlds.
But he endured, stilled the vain terror, bore
The smothering coils of agony and affright;

Then peace returned and the soul's sovereign gaze.
To the blank horror a calm Light replied:
Immutable, undying and unborn,
Mighty and mute the Godhead in him woke
And faced the pain and danger of the world.
He mastered the tides of Nature with a look:
He met with his bare spirit naked Hell.

END OF CANTO SEVEN

Canto Eight

*The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil
and the Sons of Darkness*

THEN could he see the hidden heart of Night:
The labour of its stark unconsciousness
Revealed the endless terrible Inane.
A spiritless blank Infinity was there;
A Nature that denied the eternal Truth
In the vain braggart freedom of its thought
Hoped to abolish God and reign alone.
There was no sovereign Guest, no witness Light;
Unhelped it would create its own bleak world.
Its large blind eyes looked out on demon acts,
Its deaf ears heard the untruth its dumb lips spoke;
Its huge misguided fancy took vast shapes,
Its mindless sentience quivered with fierce conceits;
Engendering a brute principle of life
Evil and pain begot a monstrous soul.
The Anarchs of the formless depths arose,
Great Titan beings and demoniac powers,
World-egos racked with lust and thought and will,
Vast minds and lives without a spirit within:
Impatient architects of error's house,
Leaders of the cosmic ignorance and unrest
And sponsors of sorrow and mortality
Embodied the dark Ideas of the Abyss.
A shadow substance into emptiness came,
Dim forms were born in the unthinking Void
And eddies met and made an adverse Space
In whose black folds Being imagined Hell.
His eyes piercing the triple-plated gloom
Identified their sight with its blind stare:
Accustomed to the unnatural dark, they saw

Unreality made real and conscious Night.
A violent, fierce and formidable world,
An ancient womb of huge calamitous dreams,
Coiled like a larva in the obscurity
That keeps it from the spear-points of Heaven's stars.
It was the gate of a false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes,
An immense negation of spiritual things.
All once self-luminous in the spirit's sphere
Turned now into their own dark contraries:
Being collapsed into a pointless void
That yet was a zero parent of the worlds;
Inconscience swallowing up the cosmic Mind
Produced a universe from its lethal sleep;
Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible,
Coiled back to itself and God's eternal joy
Through a false poignant figure of grief and pain
Still dolorously nailed upon a cross
Fixed in the soil of a dumb insentient world
Where birth was a pang and death an agony,
Lest all too soon should change again to bliss.
Thought sat, a priestess of Perversity,
On her black tripod of the triune Snake
Reading by opposite signs the eternal script,
A sorceress reversing life's God-frame.
In darkling aisles with evil eyes for lamps
And fatal voices chanting from the apse,
In strange infernal dim basilicas
Intoning the magic of the unholy Word,
The ominous profound Initiate
Performed the ritual of her Mysteries.
There suffering was Nature's daily food
Alluring to the anguished heart and flesh,
And torture was the formula of delight,
Pain mimicked the celestial ecstasy.
There Good, a faithless gardener of God,

Watered with virtue the world's upas-tree
And, careful of the outward word and act,
Engrafted his hypocrite blooms on native ill.
All high things served their nether opposite:
The forms of Gods sustained a demon cult;
Heaven's face became a mask and snare of Hell.
There in the heart of vain phenomenon,
In an enormous action's writhen core
He saw a Shape illimitable and vague
Sitting on Death who swallows all things born.
A chill fixed face with dire and motionless eyes,
Her dreadful trident in her shadowy hand
Outstretched, she pierced all creatures with one fate.

When nothing was save Matter without soul
And a spiritless hollow was the heart of Time,
Then Life first touched the insensible Abyss;
Awaking the stark Void to hope and grief
Her pallid beam smote the unfathomed Night
In which God hid himself from his own view.
In all things she sought their slumbering mystic truth,
The unspoken Word that inspires unconscious forms;
She groped in his deeps for an invisible Law,
Fumbled in the dim subconscious for his mind
And strove to find a way for spirit to be.
But from the Night another answer came.
A seed was in that nether matrix cast,
A dumb unprobed husk of perverted truth,
A cell of an insentient infinite.
A monstrous birth prepared its cosmic form
In Nature's titan embryo, Ignorance.
Then in a fatal and stupendous hour
Something that sprang from the stark Inconscient's sleep
Unwillingly begotten by the mute Void,
Lifted its ominous head against the stars;
Overshadowing earth with its huge body of Doom

It chilled the heavens with the menace of a face.
A nameless Power, a shadowy Will arose
Immense and alien to our universe.
In the inconceivable Purpose none can gauge
A vast Non-Being robed itself with shape,
The boundless Nescience of the unconscious depths
Covered eternity with nothingness.
A seeking Mind replaced the seeing Soul:
Life grew into a huge and hungry death,
The Spirit's bliss was changed to cosmic pain.
Assuring God's self-cowled neutrality
A mighty opposition conquered Space.
A sovereign ruling falsehood, death and grief,
It pressed its fierce hegemony on the earth;
Disharmonising the original style
Of the architecture of her fate's design,
It falsified the primal cosmic Will
And bound to struggle and dread vicissitudes
The long slow process of the patient Power.
Implanting error in the stuff of things
It made an Ignorance of the all-wise Law;
It baffled the sure touch of life's hid sense,
Kept dumb the intuitive guide in Matter's sleep,
Deformed the insect's instinct and the brute's,
Disfigured man's thought-born humanity.
A shadow fell across the simple Ray:
Obscured was the Truth-light in the cavern heart
That burns unwitnessed in the altar crypt
Behind the still velamen's secrecy
Companionship the Godhead of the shrine.
Thus was the dire antagonist Energy born
Who mimes the eternal Mother's mighty shape
And mocks her luminous infinity
With a grey distorted silhouette in the Night.
Arresting the passion of the climbing soul,
She forced on life a slow and faltering pace;

Her hand's deflecting and retarding weight
Is laid on the mystic evolution's curve:
The tortuous line of her deceiving mind
The Gods see not and man is impotent;
Oppressing the God-spark within the soul
She forces back to the beast the human fall.
Yet in her formidable instinctive mind
She feels the One grow in the heart of Time
And sees the Immortal shine through the human mould.
Alarmed for her rule and full of fear and rage
She prowls around each light that gleams through the dark
Casting its ray from the spirit's lonely tent,
Hoping to enter with fierce stealthy tread
And in the cradle slay the divine Child.
Incalculable are her strength and ruse;
Her touch is a fascination and a death;
She kills her victim with his own delight;
Even Good she makes a hook to drag to Hell.
For her the world runs to its agony.
Often the pilgrim on the Eternal's road
Ill-lit from clouds by the pale moon of Mind,
Or in devious byways wandering alone,
Or lost in deserts where no path is seen,
Falls overpowered by her lion leap,
A conquered captive under her dreadful paws.
Intoxicated by a burning breath
And amorous grown of a destroying mouth,
Once a companion of the sacred Fire,
The mortal perishes to God and Light,
An Adversary governs heart and brain,
A Nature hostile to the Mother-Force.
The self of life yields up its instruments
To Titan and demoniac agencies
That aggrandise earth-nature and disframe:
A cowled fifth-columnist is now thought's guide;
His subtle defeatist murmur slays the faith

And, lodged in the breast or whispering from outside,
A lying inspiration fell and dark
A new order substitutes for the divine.
A silence falls upon the spirit's heights,
From the veiled sanctuary the God retires,
Empty and cold is the chamber of the Bride;
The golden Nimbus now is seen no more,
No longer burns the white spiritual ray
And hushed for ever is the secret Voice.
Then by the Angel of the Vigil Tower
A name is struck from the recording book;
A flame that sang in Heaven sinks quenched and mute;
In ruin ends the epic of a soul.
This is the tragedy of the inner death
When forfeited is the divine element
And only a mind and body live to die.

For terrible agencies the Spirit allows
And there are subtle and enormous Powers
That shield themselves with the covering Ignorance.
Offspring of the gulfs, agents of the shadowy Force,
Haters of light, intolerant of peace,
Aping to the thought the shining Friend and Guide,
Opposing in the heart the eternal Will,
They veil the occult uplifting Harmonist.
His wisdom's oracles are made our bonds;
The doors of God they have locked with keys of creed
And shut out by the Law his tireless Grace.
Along all Nature's lines they have set their posts
And intercept the caravans of Light;
Wherever the Gods act, they intervene.
A yoke is laid upon the world's dim heart;
Masked are its beats from the supernal Bliss,
And the closed peripheries of brilliant Mind
Block the fine entries of celestial Fire.
Always the dark Adventurers seem to win;

Nature they fill with evil's institutes,
Turn into defeats the victories of Truth,
Proclaim as falsehoods the eternal laws,
And load the dice of Doom with wizard lies;
The world's shrines they have occupied, usurped its thrones.
In scorn of the dwindling chances of the Gods
They claim creation as their conquered fief
And crown themselves the iron Lords of Time.
Adepts of the illusion and the mask,
The artificers of Nature's fall and pain
Have built their altars of triumphant Night
In the clay temple of terrestrial life.
In the vacant precincts of the sacred Fire,
In front of the reredos in the mystic rite
Facing the dim velamen none can pierce,
Intones his solemn hymn the mitred priest
Invoking their dreadful presence in his breast:
Attributing to them the awful Name
He chants the syllables of the magic text
And summons the unseen communion's act,
While twixt the incense and the muttered prayer
All the fierce bale with which the world is racked
Is mixed in the foaming chalice of man's heart
And poured to them like sacramental wine.
Assuming names divine they guide and rule.
Opponents of the Highest they have come
Out of their world of soulless thought and power
To serve by enmity the cosmic scheme.
Night is their refuge and strategic base.
Against the sword of Flame, the luminous Eye,
Bastioned they live in massive forts of gloom,
Calm and secure in sunless privacy:
No wandering ray of Heaven can enter there.
Armoured, protected by their lethal masks,
As in a studio of creative Death
The giant sons of Darkness sit and plan

The drama of the earth, their tragic stage.
All who would raise the fallen world must come
Under the dangerous arches of their power;
For even the radiant children of the gods
To darken their privilege is and dreadful right.
None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell.

This too the traveller of the worlds must dare.
A warrior in the dateless duel's strife,
He entered into dumb despairing Night
Challenging the darkness with his luminous soul.
Alarming with his steps the threshold gloom
He came into a fierce and dolorous realm
Peopled by souls who never had tasted bliss;
Ignorant like men born blind who know not light,
They could equate worst ill with highest good,
Virtue was to their eyes a face of sin
And evil and misery were their natural state.
A dire administration's penal code
Making of grief and pain the common law,
Decreeing universal joylessness
Had changed life into a stoic sacrament
And torture into a daily festival.
An act was passed to chastise happiness;
Laughter and pleasure were banned as deadly sins:
A questionless mind was ranked as wise content,
A dull heart's silent apathy as peace:
Sleep was not there, torpor was the sole rest,
Death came but neither respite gave nor end;
Always the soul lived on and suffered more.
Ever he deeper probed that kingdom of pain;
Around him grew the terror of a world
Of agony followed by worse agony,
And in the terror a great wicked joy
Glad of one's own and others' calamity.
There thought and life were a long punishment,

The breath a burden and all hope a scourge,
The body a field of torment, a massed unease;
Repose was a waiting between pang and pang.
This was the law of things none dreamed to change:
A hard sombre heart, a harsh unsmiling mind
Rejected happiness like a cloying sweet;
Tranquillity was a tedium and ennui:
Only by suffering life grew colourful;
It needed the spice of pain, the salt of tears.
If one could cease to be, all would be well;
Else only fierce sensations gave some zest:
A fury of jealousy burning the gnawed heart,
The sting of murderous spite and hate and lust,
The whisper that lures to the pit and treachery's stroke
Threw vivid spots on the dull aching hours.
To watch the drama of infelicity,
The writhing of creatures under the harrow of doom
And sorrow's tragic gaze into the night
And horror and the hammering heart of fear
Were the ingredients in Time's heavy cup
That pleased and helped to enjoy its bitter taste.
Of such fierce stuff was made up life's long hell:
These were the threads of the dark spider's-web
In which the soul was caught, quivering and rapt;
This was religion, this was Nature's rule.
In a fell chapel of iniquity
To worship a black pitiless image of Power
Kneeling one must cross hard-hearted stony courts,
A pavement like a floor of evil fate.
Each stone was a keen edge of ruthless force
And glued with the chilled blood from tortured breasts;
The dry gnarled trees stood up like dying men
Stiffened into a pose of agony,
And from each window peered an ominous priest
Chanting Te Deums for slaughter's crowning grace,
Uprooted cities, blasted human homes,
Burned writhen bodies, the bombshell's massacre.

“Our enemies are fallen, are fallen,” they sang,
“All who once stayed our will are smitten and dead;
How great we are, how merciful art Thou.”
Thus thought they to reach God’s impassive throne
And Him command whom all their acts opposed,
Magnifying their deeds to touch his skies,
And make him an accomplice of their crimes.
There no relenting pity could have place,
But ruthless strength and iron moods had sway,
A dateless sovereignty of terror and gloom:
This took the figure of a darkened God
Revered by the racked wretchedness he had made,
Who held in thrall a miserable world,
And helpless hearts nailed to unceasing woe
Adored the feet that trampled them into mire.
It was a world of sorrow and of hate,
Sorrow with hatred for its lonely joy,
Hatred with others’ sorrow as its feast;
A bitter rictus curled the suffering mouth;
A tragic cruelty saw its ominous chance.
Hate was the black archangel of that realm;
It glowed, a sombre jewel in the heart
Burning the soul with its malignant rays,
And wallowed in its fell abyssm of might.
These passions even objects seemed to exude,—
For mind overflowed into the inanimate
That answered with the wickedness it received,—
Against their users used malignant powers,
Hurt without hands and strangely, suddenly slew,
Appointed as instruments of an unseen doom.
Or they made themselves a fateful prison wall
Where men condemned wake through the creeping hours
Counted by the tollings of an ominous bell.
An evil environment worsened evil souls:
All things were conscious there and all perverse.
In this infernal realm he dared to press
Even into its deepest pit and darkest core,

Perturbed its tenebrous base, dared to contest
Its ancient privileged right and absolute force:
In Night he plunged to know her dreadful heart,
In Hell he sought the root and cause of Hell.
Its anguished gulfs opened in his own breast;
He listened to clamours of its crowded pain,
The heart-beats of its fatal loneliness.
Above was a chill deaf eternity.
In vague tremendous passages of Doom
He heard the goblin Voice that guides to slay,
And faced the enchantments of the demon Sign,
And traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake.
In menacing tracts, in tortured solitudes
Companionless he roamed through desolate ways
Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream
And Death's black eagles scream to the precipice,
And met the hounds of bale who hunt men's hearts
Baying across the veldts of Destiny,
In footless battlefields of the Abyss
Fought shadowy combats in mute eyeless depths,
Assaults of Hell endured and Titan strokes
And bore the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal.
A prisoner of a hooded magic Force,
Captured and trailed in Falsehood's lethal net
And often strangled in the noose of grief,
Or cast in the grim morass of swallowing doubt,
Or shut into pits of error and despair,
He drank her poison draughts till none was left.
In a world where neither hope nor joy could come
The ordeal he suffered of evil's absolute reign,
Yet kept intact his spirit's radiant truth.
Incapable of motion or of force,
In Matter's blank denial gaoled and blind,
Pinned to the black inertia of our base
He treasured between his hands his flickering soul.
His being ventured into mindless Void,
Intolerant gulfs that knew not thought nor sense;

Thought ceased, sense failed, his soul still saw and knew.
In atomic parcellings of the Infinite
Near to the dumb beginnings of lost Self,
He felt the curious small futility
Of the creation of material things.
Or, stifled in the Inconscient's hollow dusk,
He sounded the mystery dark and bottomless
Of the enormous and unmeaning deeps
Whence struggling life in a dead universe rose.
There in the stark identity lost by mind
He felt the sealed sense of the insensible world
And a mute wisdom in the unknowing Night.
Into the abysmal secrecy he came
Where darkness peers from her mattress, grey and nude,
And stood on the last locked subconscious's floor
Where Being slept unconscious of its thoughts
And built the world not knowing what it built.
There waiting its hour the future lay unknown,
There is the record of the vanished stars.
There in the slumber of the cosmic Will
He saw the secret key of Nature's change.
A light was with him, an invisible hand
Was laid upon the error and the pain
Till it became a quivering ecstasy,
The shock of sweetness of an arm's embrace.
He saw in Night the Eternal's shadowy veil,
Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,
In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain
And hell as a short cut to heaven's gates.
Then in Illusion's occult factory
And in the Inconscient's magic printing-house
Torn were the formats of the primal Night
And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance.
Alive, breathing a deep spiritual breath,
Nature expunged her stiff mechanical code
And the articles of the bound soul's contract,

Falsehood gave back to Truth her tortured shape.
Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,
And in their place grew luminous characters.
The skilful Penman's unseen finger wrote
His swift intuitive calligraphy;
Earth's forms were made his divine documents,
The wisdom embodied mind could not reveal,
Inconscience chased from the world's voiceless breast;
Transfigured were the fixed schemes of reasoning Thought.
Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,
Inscribed on the dim heart of fallen things
A paean-song of the free Infinite
And the Name, foundation of eternity,
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscious Fire.
Then life beat pure in the corporeal frame;
The infernal Gleam died and could slay no more.
Hell split across its huge abrupt façade
As if a magic building were undone,
Night opened and vanished like a gulf of dream.
Into being's gap scooped out as empty Space
In which she had filled the place of absent God,
There poured a wide intimate and blissful Dawn;
Healed were all things that Time's torn heart had made
And sorrow could live no more in Nature's breast:
Division ceased to be, for God was there.
The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
Matter and spirit mingled and were one.

END OF CANTO EIGHT

Canto Nine

The Paradise of the Life-Gods

AROUND him shone a great felicitous Day.
A lustre of some rapturous Infinite,
It held in the splendour of its golden laugh
Regions of the heart's happiness set free,
Intoxicated with the wine of God,
Immersed in light, perpetually divine.
A favourite and intimate of the Gods
Obeying the divine command to joy,
It was the sovereign of its own delight
And master of the kingdoms of its force.
Assured of the bliss for which all forms were made,
Unmoved by fear and grief and the shocks of Fate
And unalarmed by the breath of fleeting Time
And unbesieged by adverse circumstance,
It breathed in a sweet secure unguarded ease
Free from our body's frailty inviting death,
Far from our danger-zone of stumbling Will.
It needed not to curb its passionate beats;
Thrilled by the clasp of the warm satisfied sense
And the swift wonder-rush and flame and cry
Of the life-impulses' red magnificent race,
It lived in a jewel-rhythm of the laughter of God
And lay on the breast of universal love.
Immune the unfettered Spirit of Delight
Pastured his gleaming sun-herds and moon-flocks
Along the lyric speed of griefless streams
In fragrance of the unearthly asphodel.
A silence of felicity wrapped the heavens,
A careless radiance smiled upon the heights;
A murmur of inarticulate ravishment
Trembled in the winds and touched the enchanted soil;

Incessant in the arms of ecstasy
Repeating its sweet involuntary note
A sob of rapture flowed along the hours.
Advancing under an arch of glory and peace,
Traveller on plateau and on musing ridge,
As one who sees in the World-Magician's glass
A miracled imagery of soul-scapes flee
He traversed scenes of an immortal joy
And gazed into abyssms of beauty and bliss.
Around him was a light of conscious suns
And a brooding gladness of great symbol things;
To meet him crowded plains of brilliant calm,
Mountains and violet valleys of the Blest,
Deep glens of joy and crooning waterfalls
And woods of quivering purple solitude;
Below him lay like gleaming jewelled thoughts
Rapt dreaming cities of Gandharva kings.
Across the vibrant secracies of Space
A dim and happy music sweetly stole,
Smitten by unseen hands he heard heart-close
The harps' cry of the heavenly minstrels pass,
And voices of unearthly melody
Chanted the glory of eternal love
In the white-blue-moonbeam air of Paradise.
A summit and core of all that marvellous world,
Apart stood high Elysian nameless hills,
Burning like sunsets in a trance of eve.
As if to some new unsearched profundity,
Into a joyful stillness plunged their base;
Their slopes through a hurry of laughter and voices sank,
Crossed by a throng of singing rivulets,
Adoring blue heaven with their happy hymn,
Down into woods of shadowy secrecy:
Lifted into wide voiceless mystery
Their peaks climbed towards a greatness beyond life.
The shining Edens of the vital gods

Received him in their deathless harmonies.
All things were perfect there that flower in Time;
Beauty was there creation's native mould,
Peace was a thrilled voluptuous purity.
There Love fulfilled her gold and roseate dreams
And Strength her crowned and mighty reveries;
Desire climbed up, a swift omnipotent flame,
And Pleasure had the stature of the gods;
Dream walked along the highways of the stars;
Sweet common things turned into miracles:
Overtaken by the spirit's sudden spell,
Smitten by a divine passion's alchemy,
Pain's self compelled transformed to potent joy
Curing the antithesis twixt heaven and hell.
All life's high visions are embodied there,
Her wandering hopes achieved, her aureate combs
Caught by the honey-eater's darting tongue,
Her burning guesses changed to ecstasied truths,
Her mighty pantings stilled in deathless calm
And liberated her immense desires.
In that paradise of perfect heart and sense
No lower note could break the endless charm
Of her sweetness ardent and immaculate;
Her steps are sure of their intuitive fall.
After the anguish of the soul's long strife
At length were found calm and celestial rest
And, lapped in a magic flood of sorrowless hours,
Healed were his warrior nature's wounded limbs
In the encircling arms of Energies
That brooked no stain and feared not their own bliss.
In scenes forbidden to our pallid sense
Amid miraculous scents and wonder-hues
He met the forms that divinise the sight,
To music that can immortalise the mind
And make the heart wide as infinity
Listened, and captured the inaudible

Cadences that awake the occult ear:
Out of the ineffable hush it hears them come
Trembling with the beauty of a wordless speech,
And thoughts too great and deep to find a voice,
Thoughts whose desire new-makes the universe.
A scale of sense that climbed with fiery feet
To heights of unimagined happiness,
Recast his being's aura in joy-glow,
His body glimmered like a skiey shell;
His gates to the world were swept with seas of light.
His earth, dowered with celestial competence,
Harboured a power that needed now no more
To cross the closed customs-line of mind and flesh
And smuggle godhead into humanity.
It shrank no more from the supreme demand
Of an untired capacity for bliss,
A might that could explore its own infinite
And beauty and passion and the depths' reply
Nor feared the swoon of glad identity
Where spirit and flesh in inner ecstasy join
Annulling the quarrel between self and shape.
It drew from sight and sound spiritual power,
Made sense a road to reach the intangible:
It thrilled with the supernal influences
That build the substance of life's deeper soul.
Earth-nature stood reborn, comrade of heaven.
A fit companion of the timeless Kings,
Equalled with the godheads of the living Suns,
He mixed in the radiant pastimes of the Unborn,
Heard whispers of the Player never seen
And listened to his voice that steals the heart
And draws it to the breast of God's desire,
And felt its honey of felicity
Flow through his veins like the rivers of Paradise,
Made body a nectar-cup of the Absolute.
In sudden moments of revealing flame,

In passionate responses half-unveiled
He reached the rim of ecstasies unknown;
A touch supreme surprised his hurrying heart,
The clasp was remembered of the Wonderful,
And hints leaped down of white beatitudes.
Eternity drew close disguised as Love
And laid its hand upon the body of Time.
A little gift comes from the Immensitudes,
But measureless to life its gain of joy;
All the untold Beyond is mirrored there.
A giant drop of the Bliss unknowable
Overwhelmed his limbs and round his soul became
A fiery ocean of felicity;
He foundered drowned in sweet and burning vasts:
The dire delight that could shatter mortal flesh,
The rapture that the gods sustain he bore.
Immortal pleasure cleansed him in its waves
And turned his strength into undying power.
Immortality captured Time and carried Life.

END OF CANTO NINE

Canto Ten

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind

THIS too must now be overpassed and left,
As all must be until the Highest is gained
In whom the world and self grow true and one:
Till That is reached our journeying cannot cease.
Always a nameless goal beckons beyond,
Always ascends the zigzag of the gods
And upward points the spirit's climbing Fire.
This breath of hundred-hued felicity
And its pure heightened figure of Time's joy,
Tossed upon waves of flawless happiness,
Hammered into single beats of ecstasy,
This fraction of the spirit's integer
Caught into a passionate greatness of extremes,
This limited being lifted to zenith bliss,
Happy to enjoy one touch of things supreme,
Packed into its sealed small infinity,
Its endless time-made world outfacing Time,
A little output of God's vast delight.
The moments stretched towards the eternal Now,
The hours discovered immortality,
But, satisfied with their sublime contents,
On peaks they ceased whose tops half-way to Heaven
Pointed to an apex they could never mount,
To a grandeur in whose air they could not live.
Inviting to their high and exquisite sphere,
To their secure and fine extremities
This creature who hugs his limits to feel safe,
These heights declined a greater adventure's call.
A glory and sweetness of satisfied desire
Tied up the spirit to golden posts of bliss.
It could not house the wideness of a soul

Which needed all infinity for its home.
A memory soft as grass and faint as sleep,
The beauty and call receding sank behind
Like a sweet song heard fading far away
Upon the long high road to Timelessness.
Above was an ardent white tranquillity.
A musing spirit looked out on the worlds
And like a brilliant clambering of skies
Passing through clarity to an unseen Light
Large lucent realms of Mind from stillness shone.
But first he met a silver-grey expanse
Where Day and Night had wedded and were one:
It was a tract of dim and shifting rays
Parting Life's sentient flow from Thought's self-poise.
A coalition of uncertainties
There exercised uneasy government
On a ground reserved for doubt and reasoned guess,
A rendezvous of Knowledge with Ignorance.
At its low extremity held difficult sway
A mind that hardly saw and slowly found;
Its nature to our earthly nature close
And kin to our precarious mortal thought
That looks from soil to sky and sky to soil
But knows not the below nor the beyond,
It only sensed itself and outward things.
This was the first means of our slow ascent
From the half-consciousness of the animal soul
Living in a crowded press of shape-events
In a realm it cannot understand nor change;
Only it sees and acts in a given scene
And feels and joys and sorrows for a while.
The ideas that drive the obscure embodied spirit
Along the roads of suffering and desire
In a world that struggles to discover Truth,
Found here their power to be and Nature-force.
Here are devised the forms of an ignorant life

That sees the empiric fact as settled law,
Labours for the hour and not for eternity
And trades its gains to meet the moment's call:
The slow process of a material mind
Which serves the body it should rule and use
And needs to lean upon an erring sense,
Was born in that luminous obscurity.
Advancing tardily from a limping start,
Crutching hypothesis on argument,
Throning its theories as certitudes,
It reasons from the half-known to the unknown,
Ever constructing its frail house of thought,
Ever undoing the web that it has spun.
A twilight sage whose shadow seems to him self,
Moving from minute to brief minute lives;
A king dependent on his satellites
Signs the decrees of ignorant ministers,
A judge in half-possession of his proofs,
A voice clamant of uncertainty's postulates,
An architect of knowledge, not its source.
This powerful bondslave of his instruments
Thinks his low station Nature's highest top,
Oblivious of his share in all things made
And haughtily humble in his own conceit
Believes himself a spawn of Matter's mud
And takes his own creations for his cause.
To eternal light and knowledge meant to rise,
Up from man's bare beginning is our climb;
Out of earth's heavy smallness we must break,
We must search our nature with spiritual fire:
An insect crawl preludes our glorious flight;
Our human state cradles the future god,
Our mortal frailty an immortal force.

At the glow-worm top of these pale glimmer-realms
Where dawn-sheen gambolled with the native dusk
And helped the Day to grow and Night to fail,

Escaping over a wide and shimmering bridge,
He came into a realm of early Light
And the regency of a half-risen sun.
Out of its rays our mind's full orb was born.
Appointed by the Spirit of the Worlds
To mediate with the unknowing depths,
A prototypal deft Intelligence
Half-poised on equal wings of thought and doubt
Toiled ceaselessly twixt being's hidden ends.
A Secrecy breathed in life's moving act;
A covert nurse of Nature's miracles,
It shaped life's wonders out of Matter's mud:
It cut the pattern of the shapes of things,
It pitched mind's tent in the vague ignorant Vast.
A master Magician of measure and device
Has made an eternity from recurring forms
And to the wandering spectator thought
Assigned a seat on the inconscient stage.
On earth by the will of this Arch-Intelligence
A bodiless energy put on Matter's robe;
Proton and photon served the imager Eye
To change things subtle into a physical world
And the invisible appeared as shape
And the impalpable was felt as mass:
Magic of percept joined with concept's art
And lent to each object an interpreting name:
Idea was disguised in a body's artistry,
And by a strange atomic law's mystique
A frame was made in which the sense could put
Its symbol picture of the universe.
Even a greater miracle was done.
The mediating light linked body's power,
The sleep and dreaming of the tree and plant,
The animal's vibrant sense, the thought in man,
To the effulgence of a Ray above.
Its skill endorsing Matter's right to think

Cut sentient passages for the mind of flesh
And found a means for Nescience to know.
Offering its little squares and cubes of word
As figured substitutes for reality,
A mummified mnemonic alphabet,
It helped the unseeing Force to read her works.
A buried consciousness arose in her
And now she dreams herself human and awake.
But all was still a mobile Ignorance;
Still Knowledge could not come and firmly grasp
This huge invention seen as a universe.
A specialist of logic's hard machine
Imposed its rigid artifice on the soul;
An aide of the inventor intellect,
It cut Truth into manageable bits
That each might have his ration of thought-food,
Then new-built Truth's slain body by its art:
A robot exact and serviceable and false
Displaced the spirit's finer view of things:
A polished engine did the work of a god.
None the true body found, its soul seemed dead:
None had the inner look which sees Truth's whole;
All glorified the glittering substitute.
Then from the secret heights a wave swept down,
A brilliant chaos of rebel light arose;
It looked above and saw the dazzling peaks,
It looked within and woke the sleeping god.
Imagination called her shining squads
That venture into undiscovered scenes
Where all the marvels lurk none yet has known:
Lifting her beautiful and miraculous head,
She conspired with inspiration's sister brood
To fill thought's skies with glimmering nebulae.
A bright Error fringed the mystery-altar's frieze;
Darkness grew nurse to wisdom's occult sun,
Myth suckled knowledge with her lustrous milk;

The infant passed from dim to radiant breasts.
Thus worked the Power upon the growing world;
Its subtle craft withheld the full-orbed blaze,
Cherished the soul's childhood and on fictions fed
Far richer in their sweet and nectarous sap
Nourishing its immature divinity
Than the staple or dry straw of Reason's tilth,
Its heaped fodder of innumerable facts,
Plebeian fare on which today we thrive.
Thus streamed down from the realm of early Light
Ethereal thinkings into Matter's world;
Its gold-horned herds trooped into earth's cave-heart.
Its morning rays illume our twilight's eyes,
Its young formations move the mind of earth
To labour and to dream and new-create,
To feel beauty's touch and know the world and self:
The Golden Child began to think and see.

In those bright realms are Mind's first forward steps.
Ignorant of all but eager to know all,
Its curious slow enquiry there begins;
Ever its searching grasps at shapes around,
Ever it hopes to find out greater things.
Ardent and golden-gleamed with sunrise fires,
Alert it lives upon invention's verge.
Yet all it does is on an infant's scale,
As if the cosmos were a nursery game,
Mind, life the playthings of a Titan's babe.
As one it works who builds a mimic fort
Miraculously stable for a while,
Made of the sands upon a bank of Time
Mid an occult eternity's shoreless sea.
A small keen instrument the great Puissance chose,
An arduous pastime passionately pursues;
To teach the Ignorance is her difficult charge,
Her thought starts from an original nescient Void

And what she teaches she herself must learn
Arousing knowledge from its sleepy lair.
For knowledge comes not to us as a guest
Called into our chamber from the outer world;
A friend and inmate of our secret self,
It hid behind our minds and fell asleep
And slowly wakes beneath the blows of life;
The mighty daemon lies unshaped within,
To evoke, to give it form is Nature's task.
All was a chaos of the true and false,
Mind sought amid deep mists of Nescience;
It looked within itself but saw not God.
A material interim diplomacy
Denied the Truth that transient truths might live
And hid the Deity in creed and guess
That the World-Ignorance might grow slowly wise.
This was the imbroglio made by sovereign Mind
Looking from a gleam-ridge into the Night
In her first tamperings with Inconscience:
Its alien dusk baffles her luminous eyes;
Her rapid hands must learn a cautious zeal;
Only a slow advance the earth can bear.
Yet was her strength unlike the unseeing earth's
Compelled to handle makeshift instruments
Invented by the life-force and the flesh.
Earth all perceives through doubtful images,
All she conceives in hazardous jets of sight,
Small lights kindled by touches of groping thought.
Incapable of the soul's direct inlook
She sees by spasms and solders knowledge-scrap,
Makes Truth the slave-girl of her indigence,
Expelling Nature's mystic unity
Cuts into quantum and mass the moving All;
She takes for measuring-rod her ignorance.
In her own domain a pontiff and a seer,
That greater Power with her half-risen sun

Wrought within limits but possessed her field;
She knew by a privilege of thinking force
And claimed an infant sovereignty of sight.
In her eyes however darkly fringed was lit
The Archangel's gaze who knows inspired his acts
And shapes a world in its far-seeing flame.
In her own realm she stumbles not nor fails,
But moves in boundaries of subtle power
Across which mind can step towards the sun.
A candidate for a higher suzerainty,
A passage she cut through from Night to Light,
And searched for an ungrasped Omniscience.

A dwarf three-bodied trinity was her serf.
First, smallest of the three, but strong of limb,
A low-brow with a square and heavy jowl,
A pygmy Thought needing to live in bounds
For ever stooped to hammer fact and form.
Absorbed and cabined in external sight,
It takes its stand on Nature's solid base.
A technician admirable, a thinker crude,
A riveter of Life to habit's grooves,
Obedient to gross Matter's tyranny,
A prisoner of the moulds in which it works,
It binds itself by what itself creates.
A slave of a fixed mass of absolute rules,
It sees as Law the habits of the world,
It sees as Truth the habits of the mind.
In its realm of concrete images and events
Turning in a worn circle of ideas
And ever repeating old familiar acts,
It lives content with the common and the known.
It loves the old ground that was its dwelling-place:
Abhorring change as an audacious sin,
Distrustful of each new discovery
Only it advances step by careful step

And fears as if a deadly abyss the unknown.
A prudent treasurer of its ignorance,
It shrinks from adventure, blinks at glorious hope,
Preferring a safe foothold upon things
To the dangerous joy of wideness and of height.
The world's slow impressions on its labouring mind,
Tardy imprints almost indelible,
Increase their value by their poverty;
The old sure memories are its capital stock:
Only what sense can grasp seems absolute:
External fact it figures as sole truth,
Wisdom identifies with the earthward look,
And things long known and actions always done
Are to its clinging hold a balustrade
Of safety on the perilous stair of Time.
Heaven's trust to it are the established ancient ways,
Immutable laws man has no right to change,
A sacred legacy from the great dead past
Or the one road that God has made for life,
A firm shape of Nature never to be changed,
Part of the huge routine of the universe.
A smile from the Preserver of the Worlds
Sent down of old this guardian Mind to earth
That all might stand in their fixed changeless type
And from their secular posture never move.
One sees it circling faithful to its task,
Tireless in an assigned tradition's round;
In decayed and crumbling offices of Time
It keeps close guard in front of custom's wall,
Or in an ancient Night's dim environs
It dozes on a little courtyard's stones
And barks at every unfamiliar light
As at a foe who would break up its home,
A watch-dog of the spirit's sense-railed house
Against intruders from the Invisible,
Nourished on scraps of life and Matter's bones

In its kennel of objective certitude.
And yet behind it stands a cosmic might:
A measured Greatness keeps its vaster plan,
A fathomless sameness rhythms the tread of life;
The stars' changeless orbits furrow inert Space,
A million species follow one mute Law.
A huge inertness is the world's defence,
Even in change is treasured changelessness;
Into inertia revolution sinks,
In a new dress the old resumes its role;
The Energy acts, the stable is its seal:
On Shiva's breast is stayed the enormous dance.

A fiery spirit came, next of the three.
A hunchback rider of the red Wild-Ass,
A rash Intelligence leaped down lion-maned
From the great mystic Flame that rings the worlds
And with its dire edge eats at being's heart.
Thence sprang the burning vision of Desire.
A thousand shapes it wore, took numberless names:
A need of multitude and uncertainty
Pricks it for ever to pursue the One
On countless roads across the vasts of Time
Through circuits of unending difference.
It burns all breasts with an ambiguous fire.
A radiance gleaming on a murky stream,
It flamed towards heaven, then sank, engulfed, towards hell;
It climbed to drag down Truth into the mire
And used for muddy ends its brilliant Force;
A huge chameleon gold and blue and red
Turning to black and grey and lurid brown,
Hungry it stared from a mottled bough of life
To snap up insect joys, its favourite food,
The dingy sustenance of a sumptuous frame
Nursing the splendid passion of its hues.
A snake of flame with a dull cloud for tail,
Followed by a dream-brood of glittering thoughts,

A lifted head with many-tinged flickering crests,
It licked at knowledge with a smoky tongue.
A whirlpool sucking in an empty air,
It based on vacancy stupendous claims,
In Nothingness born to Nothingness returned,
Yet all the time unwittingly it drove
Towards the hidden Something that is All.
Ardent to find, incapable to retain,
A brilliant instability was its mark,
To err its inborn trend, its native cue.
At once to an unreflecting credence prone,
It thought all true that flattered its own hopes;
It cherished golden nothings born of wish,
It snatched at the unreal for provender.
In darkness it discovered luminous shapes;
Peering into a shadow-hung half-light
It saw hued images scrawled on Fancy's cave;
Or it swept in circles through conjecture's night
And caught in imagination's camera
Bright scenes of promise held by transient flares,
Fixed in life's air the feet of hurrying dreams,
Kept prints of passing Forms and hooded Powers
And flash-images of half-seen verities.
An eager spring to seize and to possess
Unguided by reason or the seeing soul
Was its first natural motion and its last,
It squandered life's force to achieve the impossible:
It scorned the straight road and ran on wandering curves
And left what it had won for untried things;
It saw unrealised aims as instant fate
And chose the precipice for its leap to heaven.
Adventure its system in the gamble of life,
It took fortuitous gains as safe results;
Error discouraged not its confident view
Ignorant of the deep law of being's ways
And failure could not slow its fiery clutch;

One chance made true warranted all the rest.
Attempt, not victory, was the charm of life.
An uncertain winner of uncertain stakes,
Instinct its dam and the life-mind its sire,
It ran its race and came in first or last.
Yet were its works nor small and vain nor null;
It nursed a portion of infinity's strength
And could create the high things its fancy willed;
Its passion caught what calm intelligence missed.
Insight of impulse laid its leaping grasp
On heavens high Thought had hidden in dazzling mist,
Caught glimmers that revealed a lurking sun:
It probed the void and found a treasure there.
A half-intuition purpled in its sense;
It threw the lightning's fork and hit the unseen.
It saw in the dark and vaguely blinked in the light,
Ignorance was its field, the unknown its prize.

Of all these Powers the greatest was the last.
Arriving late from a far plane of thought
Into a packed irrational world of Chance
Where all was grossly felt and blindly done,
Yet the haphazard seemed the inevitable,
Came Reason, the squat godhead artisan,
To her narrow house upon a ridge in Time.
Adept of clear contrivance and design,
A pensive face and close and peering eyes,
She took her firm and irremovable seat,
The strongest, wisest of the troll-like Three.
Armed with her lens and measuring-rod and probe,
She looked upon an object universe
And the multitudes that in it live and die
And the body of Space and the fleeing soul of Time,
And took the earth and stars into her hands
To try what she could make of these strange things.
In her strong purposeful laborious mind,
Inventing her scheme-lines of reality

And the geometric curves of her time-plan,
She multiplied her slow half-cuts at Truth:
Impatient of enigma and the unknown,
Intolerant of the lawless and the unique,
Imposing reflection on the march of Force,
Imposing clarity on the unfathomable,
She strove to reduce to rules the mystic world.
Nothing she knew but all things hoped to know.
In dark inconscient realms once void of thought,
Missioned by a supreme Intelligence
To throw its ray upon the obscure Vast,
An imperfect light leading an erring mass
By the power of sense and the idea and word,
She ferrets out Nature's process, substance, cause.
All life to harmonise by thought's control,
She with the huge imbroglio struggles still;
Ignorant of all but her own seeking mind
To save the world from Ignorance she came.
A sovereign worker through the centuries
Observing and remoulding all that is,
Confident she took up her stupendous charge.
There the low bent and mighty figure sits
Bowed under the arc-lamps of her factory home
Amid the clatter and ringing of her tools.
A rigorous stare in her creative eyes
Coercing the plastic stuff of cosmic Mind,
She sets the hard inventions of her brain
In a pattern of eternal fixity:
Indifferent to the cosmic dumb demand,
Unconscious of too close realities,
Of the unspoken thought, the voiceless heart,
She leans to forge her credos and iron codes
And metal structures to imprison life
And mechanic models of all things that are.
For the world seen she weaves a world conceived:
She spins in stiff but unsubstantial lines

Her gossamer word-webs of abstract thought,
Her segment systems of the Infinite,
Her theodicies and cosmogonic charts
And myths by which she explains the inexplicable.
At will she spaces in thin air of mind
Like maps in the school-house of intellect hung,
Forcing wide Truth into a narrow scheme,
Her numberless warring strict philosophies;
Out of Nature's body of phenomenon
She carves with Thought's keen edge in rigid lines,
Like rails for the World-Magician's power to run,
Her sciences precise and absolute.
On the huge bare walls of human nescience
Written round Nature's deep dumb hieroglyphs
She pens in clear demotic characters
The vast encyclopaedia of her thoughts;
An algebra of her mathematics' signs,
Her numbers and unerring formulas
She builds to clinch her summary of things.
On all sides runs as if in a cosmic mosque
Tracing the scriptural verses of her laws
The daedal of her patterned arabesques,
Art of her wisdom, artifice of her lore.
This art, this artifice are her only stock.
In her high works of pure intelligence,
In her withdrawal from the senses' trap,
There comes no breaking of the walls of mind,
There leaps no rending flash of absolute power,
There dawns no light of heavenly certitude.
A million faces wears her knowledge here
And every face is turbaned with a doubt.
All now is questioned, all reduced to nought.
Once monumental in their massive craft
Her old great mythic writings disappear
And into their place start strict ephemeral signs;
This constant change spells progress to her eyes:

Her thought is an endless march without a goal.
There is no summit on which she can stand
And see in a single glance the Infinite's whole.

An inconclusive play is Reason's toil.
Each strong idea can use her as its tool;
Accepting every brief she pleads her case.
Open to every thought, she cannot know.
The eternal Advocate seated as judge
Armours in logic's invulnerable mail
A thousand combatants for Truth's veiled throne
And sets on a high horse-back of argument
To tilt for ever with a wordy lance
In a mock tournament where none can win.
Assaying thought's values with her rigid tests
Balanced she sits on wide and empty air,
Aloof and pure in her impartial poise.
Absolute her judgments seem but none is sure;
Time cancels all her verdicts in appeal.
Although like sunbeams to our glow-worm mind
Her knowledge feigns to fall from a clear heaven,
Its rays are a lantern's lustres in the Night;
She throws a glittering robe on Ignorance.
But now is lost her ancient sovereign claim
To rule mind's high realm in her absolute right,
Bind thought with logic's forged infallible chain
Or see truth nude in a bright abstract haze.
A master and slave of stark phenomenon,
She travels on the roads of erring sight
Or looks upon a set mechanical world
Constructed for her by her instruments.
A bullock yoked in the cart of proven fact,
She drags huge knowledge-bales through Matter's dust
To reach utility's immense bazaar.
Apprentice she has grown to her old drudge;
An aided sense is her seeking's arbiter.
This now she uses as the assayer's stone.

As if she knew not facts are husks of truth,
The husks she keeps, the kernel throws aside.
An ancient wisdom fades into the past,
The ages' faith becomes an idle tale,
God passes out of the awakened thought,
An old discarded dream needed no more:
Only she seeks mechanic Nature's keys.
Interpreting stone-laws inevitable
She digs into Matter's hard concealing soil,
To unearth the processes of all things done.
A loaded huge self-worked machine appears
To her eye's eager and admiring stare,
An intricate and meaningless enginery
Of ordered fateful and unfailing Chance:
Ingenious and meticulous and minute,
Its brute unconscious accurate device
Unrolls an unerring march, maps a sure road;
It plans without thinking, acts without a will,
A million purposes serves with purpose none
And builds a rational world without a mind.
It has no mover, no maker, no idea:
Its vast self-action toils without a cause;
A lifeless Energy irresistibly driven,
Death's head on the body of Necessity,
Engenders life and fathers consciousness,
Then wonders why all was and whence it came.
Our thoughts are parts of the immense machine,
Our ponderings but a freak of Matter's law,
The mystic's lore was a fancy or a blind;
Of soul or spirit we have now no need:
Matter is the admirable Reality,
The patent unescapable miracle,
The hard truth of things, simple, eternal, sole.
A suicidal rash expenditure
Creating the world by a mystery of self-loss
Has poured its scattered works on empty Space;

Late shall the self-disintegrating Force
Contract the immense expansion it has made:
Then ends this mighty and unmeaning toil,
The Void is left bare, vacant as before.
Thus vindicated, crowned, the grand new Thought
Explained the world and mastered all its laws,
Touched the dumb roots, woke veiled tremendous powers;
It bound to service the unconscious djinns
That sleep unused in Matter's ignorant trance.
All was precise, rigid, indubitable.
But when on Matter's rock of ages based
A whole stood up firm and clear-cut and safe,
All staggered back into a sea of doubt;
This solid scheme melted in endless flux:
She had met the formless Power inventor of forms;
Suddenly she stumbled upon things unseen:
A lightning from the undiscovered Truth
Startled her eyes with its perplexing glare
And dug a gulf between the Real and Known
Till all her knowledge seemed an ignorance.
Once more the world was made a wonder-web,
A magic's process in a magical space,
An unintelligible miracle's depths
Whose source is lost in the Ineffable.
Once more we face the blank Unknowable.
In a crash of values, in a huge doom-crack,
In the sputter and scatter of her breaking work
She lost her clear conserved constructed world.
A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance
In Energy's stupendous tripping whirl:
A ceaseless motion in the unbounded Void
Invented forms without a thought or aim:
Necessity and Cause were shapeless ghosts;
Matter was an incident in being's flow,
Law but a clock-work habit of blind force.
Ideals, ethics, systems had no base

And soon collapsed or without sanction lived;
All grew a chaos, a heave and clash and strife.
Ideas warring and fierce leaped upon life;
A hard compression held down anarchy
And liberty was only a phantom's name:
Creation and destruction waltzed inarmed
On the bosom of a torn and quaking earth;
All reeled into a world of Kali's dance.
Thus tumbled, sinking, sprawling in the Void,
Clutching for props, a soil on which to stand,
She only saw a thin atomic Vast,
The rare-point sparse substratum universe
On which floats a solid world's phenomenal face.
Alone a process of events was there
And Nature's plastic and protean change
And, strong by death to slay or to create,
The riven invisible atom's omnipotent force.
One chance remained that here might be a power
To liberate man from the old inadequate means
And leave him sovereign of the earthly scene.
For Reason then might grasp the original Force
To drive her car upon the roads of Time.
All then might serve the need of the thinking race,
An absolute State found order's absolute,
To a standardised perfection cut all things,
In society build a just exact machine.
Then science and reason careless of the soul
Could iron out a tranquil uniform world,
Aeonic seekings glut with outward truths
And a single-patterned thinking force on mind,
Inflicting Matter's logic on Spirit's dreams
A reasonable animal make of man
And a symmetrical fabric of his life.
This would be Nature's peak on an obscure globe,
The grand result of the long ages' toil,
Earth's evolution crowned, her mission done.

So might it be if the spirit fell asleep;
Man then might rest content and live in peace,
Master of Nature who once her bondslave worked,
The world's disorder hardening into Law,—
If Life's dire heart arose not in revolt,
If God within could find no greater plan.
But many-visaged is the cosmic Soul;
A touch can alter the fixed front of Fate.
A sudden turn can come, a road appear.
A greater Mind may see a greater Truth,
Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.
Ascending from the soil where creep our days,
Earth's consciousness may marry with the Sun,
Our mortal life ride on the spirit's wings,
Our finite thoughts commune with the Infinite.

In the bright kingdoms of the rising Sun
All is a birth into a power of light:
All here deformed guards there its happy shape,
Here all is mixed and marred, there pure and whole;
Yet each is a passing step, a moment's phase.
Awake to a greater Truth beyond her acts,
The mediatrix sat and saw her works
And felt the marvel in them and the force
But knew the power behind the face of Time:
She did the task, obeyed the knowledge given,
Her deep heart yearned towards great ideal things
And from the light looked out to wider light:
A brilliant hedge drawn round her narrowed her power;
Faithful to her limited sphere she toiled, but knew
Its highest, widest seeing was a half-search,
Its mightiest acts a passage or a stage.
For not by Reason was creation made
And not by Reason can the Truth be seen
Which through the veils of thought, the screens of sense
Hardly the spirit's vision can descry

Dimmed by the imperfection of its means:
The little Mind is tied to little things:
Its sense is but the spirit's outward touch,
Half-waked in a world of dark Inconscience;
It feels out for its beings and its forms
Like one left fumbling in the ignorant Night.
In this small mould of infant mind and sense
Desire is a child-heart's cry crying for bliss,
Our reason only a toys' artificer,
A rule-maker in a strange stumbling game.
But she her dwarf aides knew whose confident sight
A bounded prospect took for the far goal.
The world she has made is an interim report
Of a traveller towards the half-found truth in things
Moving twixt nescience and nescience.
For nothing is known while aught remains concealed;
The Truth is known only when all is seen.
Attracted by the All that is the One,
She yearns towards a higher light than hers;
Hid by her cults and creeds she has glimpsed God's face:
She knows she has but found a form, a robe,
But ever she hopes to see him in her heart
And feel the body of his reality.
As yet a mask is there and not a brow,
Although sometimes two hidden eyes appear:
Reason cannot tear off that glimmering mask,
Her efforts only make it glimmer more;
In packets she ties up the Indivisible;
Finding her hands too small to hold vast Truth
She breaks up knowledge into alien parts
Or peers through cloud-rack for a vanished sun:
She sees, not understanding what she has seen,
Through the locked visages of finite things
The myriad aspects of infinity.
One day the Face must burn out through the mask.
Our ignorance is Wisdom's chrysalis,

Our error weds new knowledge on its way,
Its darkness is a blackened knot of light;
Thought dances hand in hand with Nescience
On the grey road that winds towards the Sun.
Even while her fingers fumble at the knots
Which bind them to their strange companionship,
Into the moments of their married strife
Sometimes break flashes of the enlightening Fire.
Even now great thoughts are here that walk alone:
Armed they have come with the infallible word
In an investiture of intuitive light
That is a sanction from the eyes of God;
Announcers of a distant Truth they flame
Arriving from the rim of eternity.
A fire shall come out of the infinitudes,
A greater Gnosis shall regard the world
Crossing out of some far omniscience
On lustrous seas from the still rapt Alone
To illumine the deep heart of self and things.
A timeless knowledge it shall bring to Mind,
Its aim to life, to Ignorance its close.

Above in a high breathless stratosphere,
Overshadowing the dwarfish trinity,
Lived, aspirants to a limitless Beyond,
Captives of Space, walled by the limiting heavens,
In the unceasing circuit of the hours
Yearning for the straight paths of eternity,
And from their high station looked down on this world
Two sun-gaze Daemons witnessing all that is.
A power to uplift the laggard world,
Imperious rode a huge high-winged Life-Thought
Unwont to tread the firm unchanging soil:
Accustomed to a blue infinity,
It planed in sunlit sky and starlit air;
It saw afar the unreached Immortal's home

And heard afar the voices of the Gods.
Iconoclast and shatterer of Time's forts,
Overleaping limit and exceeding norm,
It lit the thoughts that glow through the centuries
And moved to acts of superhuman force.
As far as its self-winged air-planes could fly,
Visiting the future in great brilliant raids
It reconnoitred vistas of dream-fate.
Apt to conceive, unable to attain,
It drew its concept-maps and vision-plans
Too large for the architecture of mortal Space.
Beyond in wideness where no footing is,
An imagist of bodiless Ideas,
Impassive to the cry of life and sense,
A pure Thought-Mind surveyed the cosmic act.
Archangel of a white transcending realm,
It saw the world from solitary heights
Luminous in a remote and empty air.

END OF CANTO TEN

Canto Eleven

The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind

THERE ceased the limits of the labouring Power.
But being and creation cease not there.
For Thought transcends the circles of mortal mind,
It is greater than its earthly instrument:
The godhead crammed into mind's narrow space
Escapes on every side into some vast
That is a passage to infinity.
It moves eternal in the spirit's field,
A runner towards the far spiritual light,
A child and servant of the spirit's force.
But mind too falls back from a nameless peak.
His being stretched beyond the sight of Thought.
For the spirit is eternal and unmade
And not by thinking was its greatness born,
And not by thinking can its knowledge come.
It knows itself and in itself it lives,
It moves where no thought is nor any form.
Its feet are steadied upon finite things,
Its wings can dare to cross the Infinite.
Arriving into his ken a wonder space
Of great and marvellous meetings called his steps,
Where Thought leaned on a Vision beyond thought
And shaped a world from the Unthinkable.
On peaks imagination cannot tread,
In the horizons of a tireless sight,
Under a blue veil of eternity
The splendours of ideal Mind were seen
Outstretched across the boundaries of things known.
Origin of the little that we are,
Instinct with the endless more that we must be,
A prop of all that human strength enacts,

Creator of hopes by earth unrealised,
It spreads beyond the expanding universe;
It wings beyond the boundaries of Dream,
It overtops the ceiling of life's soar.
Awake in a luminous sphere unbound by Thought,
Exposed to omniscient immensities,
It casts on our world its great crowned influences,
Its speed that outstrips the ambling of the hours,
Its force that strides invincibly through Time,
Its mights that bridge the gulf twixt man and God,
Its lights that combat Ignorance and Death.
In its vast ambit of ideal Space
Where beauty and mightiness walk hand in hand,
The Spirit's truths take form as living Gods
And each can build a world in its own right.
In an air which doubt and error cannot mark
With the stigmata of their deformity,
In communion with the musing privacy
Of a truth that sees in an unerring light
Where the sight falters not nor wanders thought,
Exempt from our world's exorbitant tax of tears,
Dreaming its luminous creations gaze
On the Ideas that people eternity.
In a sun-blaze of joy and absolute power
Above the Masters of the Ideal throne
In sessions of secure felicity,
In regions of illumined certitude.
Far are those realms from our labour and yearning and call,
Perfection's reign and hallowed sanctuary
Closed to the uncertain thoughts of human mind,
Remote from the turbid tread of mortal life.
But since our secret selves are next of kin,
A breath of unattained divinity
Visits the imperfect earth on which we toil;
Across a gleaming ether's golden laugh
A light falls on our vexed unsatisfied lives,

A thought comes down from the ideal worlds
And moves us to new-model even here
Some image of their greatness and appeal
And wonder beyond the ken of mortal hope.
Amid the heavy sameness of the days
And contradicted by the human law,
A faith in things that are not and must be
Lives comrade of this world's delight and pain,
The child of the secret soul's forbidden desire
Born of its amour with eternity.
Our spirits break free from their environment;
The future brings its face of miracle near,
Its godhead looks at us with present eyes;
Acts deemed impossible grow natural;
We feel the hero's immortality;
The courage and the strength death cannot touch
Awake in limbs that are mortal, hearts that fail;
We move by the rapid impulse of a will
That scorns the tardy trudge of mortal time.
These promptings come not from an alien sphere:
Ourselves are citizens of that mother State,
Adventurers, we have colonised Matter's night.
But now our rights are barred, our passports void;
We live self-exiled from our heavenlier home.
An errant ray from the immortal Mind
Accepted the earth's blindness and became
Our human thought, servant of Ignorance.
An exile, labourer on this unsure globe
Captured and driven in Life's nescient grasp,
Hampered by obscure cell and treacherous nerve,
It dreams of happier states and nobler powers,
The natural privilege of unfallen gods,
Recalling still its old lost sovereignty.
Amidst earth's mist and fog and mud and stone
It still remembers its exalted sphere
And the high city of its splendid birth.

A memory steals in from lost heavens of Truth,
A wide release comes near, a Glory calls,
A might looks out, an estranged felicity.
In glamorous passages of half-veiled light
Wandering, a brilliant shadow of itself,
This quick uncertain leader of blind gods,
This tender of small lamps, this minister serf
Hired by a mind and body for earth-use
Forgets its work mid crude realities;
It recovers its renounced imperial right,
It wears once more a purple robe of thought
And knows itself the Ideal's seer and king,
Communicant and prophet of the Unborn,
Heir to delight and immortality.

All things are real that here are only dreams,
In our unknown depths sleeps their reserve of truth,
On our unreach'd heights they reign and come to us
In thought and muse trailing their robes of light.
But our dwarf will and cold pragmatic sense
Admit not the celestial visitants:
Awaiting us on the Ideal's peaks
Or guarded in our secret self unseen
Yet flashed sometimes across the awakened soul,
Hide from our lives their greatness, beauty, power.
Our present feels sometimes their regal touch,
Our future strives towards their luminous thrones:
Out of spiritual secrecy they gaze,
Immortal footfalls in mind's corridors sound:
Our souls can climb into the shining planes,
The breadths from which they came can be our home.
His privilege regained of shadowless sight
The Thinker entered the immortals' air
And drank again his pure and mighty source.
Immutable in rhythmic calm and joy
He saw, sovereignly free in limitless light,
The unfallen planes, the thought-created worlds

Where Knowledge is the leader of the act
And Matter is of thinking substance made,
Feeling, a heaven-bird poised on dreaming wings,
Answers Truth's call as to a parent's voice,
Form luminous leaps from the all-shaping beam
And Will is a conscious chariot of the Gods,
And Life, a splendour stream of musing Force,
Carries the voices of the mystic Suns.
A happiness it brings of whispered truth;
There runs in its flow honeying the bosom of Space
A laughter from the immortal heart of Bliss,
And the unfathomed Joy of timelessness,
The sound of Wisdom's murmur in the Unknown
And the breath of an unseen Infinity.
In gleaming clarities of amethyst air
The chainless and omnipotent Spirit of Mind
Brooded on the blue lotus of the Idea.
A gold supernal sun of timeless Truth
Poured down the mystery of the eternal Ray
Through a silence quivering with the word of Light
On an endless ocean of discovery.
Far-off he saw the joining hemispheres.
On meditation's mounting edge of trance
Great stairs of thought climbed up to unborn heights
Where Time's last ridges touch eternity's skies
And Nature speaks to the spirit's absolute.

A triple realm of ordered thought came first,
A small beginning of immense ascent:
Above were bright ethereal skies of mind,
A packed and endless soar as if sky pressed sky
Buttressed against the Void on bastioned light;
The highest strove to neighbour eternity,
The largest widened into the infinite.
But though immortal, mighty and divine,
The first realms were close and kin to human mind;

Their deities shape our greater thinking's roads,
A fragment of their puissance can be ours:
These breadths were not too broad for our souls to range,
These heights were not too high for human hope.
A triple flight led to this triple world.
Although abrupt for common strengths to tread,
Its upward slope looks down on our earth-poise:
On a slant not too precipitously steep
One could turn back travelling deep descending lines
To commune with the mortal's universe.
The mighty wardens of the ascending stair
Who intercede with the all-creating Word,
There waited for the pilgrim heaven-bound soul;
Holding the thousand keys of the Beyond
They proffered their knowledge to the climbing mind
And filled the life with Thought's immensities.
The prophet hierophants of the occult Law,
The flame-bright hierarchs of the divine Truth,
Interpreters between man's mind and God's,
They bring the immortal fire to mortal men.
Iridescent, bodying the invisible,
The guardians of the Eternal's bright degrees
Fronted the Sun in radiant phalanxes.
Afar they seemed a symbol imagery,
Illumined originals of the shadowy script
In which our sight transcribes the ideal Ray,
Or icons figuring a mystic Truth,
But, nearer, Gods and living Presences.
A march of friezes marked the lowest steps;
Fantastically ornate and richly small,
They had room for the whole meaning of a world,
Symbols minute of its perfection's joy,
Strange beasts that were Nature's forces made alive
And, wakened to the wonder of his role,
Man grown an image undefaced of God
And objects the fine coin of Beauty's reign;

But wide the terrains were those levels serve.
In front of the ascending epiphany
World-Time's enjoyers, favourites of World-Bliss,
The Masters of things actual, lords of the hours,
Playmates of youthful Nature and child God,
Creators of Matter by hid stress of Mind
Whose subtle thoughts support unconscious Life
And guide the fantasy of brute events,
Stood there, a race of young keen-visioned gods,
King-children born on Wisdom's early plane,
Taught in her school world-making's mystic play.
Archmasons of the eternal Thaumaturge,
Moulders and measurers of fragmented Space,
They have made their plan of the concealed and known
A dwelling-house for the invisible king.
Obeying the Eternal's deep command
They have built in the material front of things
This wide world-kindergarten of young souls
Where the infant spirit learns through mind and sense
To read the letters of the cosmic script
And study the body of the cosmic self
And search for the secret meaning of the whole.
To all that Spirit conceives they give a mould;
Persuading Nature into visible moods
They lend a finite shape to infinite things.
Each power that leaps from the Unmanifest
Leaving the largeness of the Eternal's peace
They seized and held by their precisan eye
And made a figurante in the cosmic dance.
Its free caprice they bound by rhythmic laws
And compelled to accept its posture and its line
In the wizardry of an ordered universe.
The All-containing was contained in form,
Oneness was carved into units measurable,
The limitless built into a cosmic sum:
Unending Space was beaten into a curve,

Indivisible Time into small minutes cut,
The infinitesimal massed to keep secure
The mystery of the Formless cast into form.
Invincibly their craft devised for use
The magic of sequent number and sign's spell,
Design's miraculous potency was caught
Laden with beauty and significance
And by the determining mandate of their gaze
Figure and quality equating joined
In an inextricable identity.
On each event they stamped its curves of law
And its trust and charge of burdened circumstance;
A free and divine incident no more
At each moment willed or adventure of the soul,
It lengthened a fate-bound mysterious chain,
A line foreseen of an immutable plan,
One step more in Necessity's long march.
A term was set for every eager Power
Restraining its will to monopolise the world,
A groove of bronze prescribed for force and act
And shown to each moment its appointed place
Forewilled inalterably in the spiral
Huge Time-loop fugitive from eternity.
Inevitable their thoughts like links of Fate
Imposed on the leap and lightning race of mind
And on the frail fortuitous flux of life
And on the liberty of atomic things
Immutable cause and adamant consequence.
Idea gave up the plastic infinity
To which it was born and now traced out instead
Small separate steps of chain-work in a plot:
Immortal once, now tied to birth and end,
Torn from its immediacy of errorless sight,
Knowledge was rebuilt from cells of inference
Into a fixed body flasque and perishable;
Thus bound it grew, but could not last and broke

And to a new thinking's body left its place.
A cage for the Infinite's great-eyed seraphim Thoughts
Was closed with a criss-cross of world-laws for bars
And hedged into a curt horizon's arc
The irised vision of the Ineffable.
A timeless Spirit was made the slave of the hours;
The Unbound was cast into a prison of birth
To make a world that Mind could grasp and rule.
On an earth which looked towards a thousand suns,
That the created might grow Nature's lord
And Matter's depths be illumined with a soul
They tied to date and norm and finite scope
The million-mysteried movement of the One.

Above stood ranked a subtle archangel race
With larger lids and looks that searched the unseen.
A light of liberating knowledge shone
Across the gulfs of silence in their eyes;
They lived in the mind and knew truth from within;
A sight withdrawn in the concentrated heart
Could pierce behind the screen of Time's results
And the rigid cast and shape of visible things.
All that escaped conception's narrow noose
Vision desried and gripped; their seeing thoughts
Filled in the blanks left by the seeking sense.
High architects of possibility
And engineers of the impossible,
Mathematicians of the infinitudes
And theoricians of unknowable truths,
They formulate enigma's postulates
And join the unknown to the apparent worlds.
Acolytes they wait upon the timeless Power,
The cycle of her works investigate;
Passing her fence of wordless privacy
Their mind could penetrate her occult mind
And draw the diagram of her secret thoughts;
They read the codes and ciphers she had sealed,

Copies they made of all her guarded plans,
For every turn of her mysterious course
Assigned a reason and unchanging rule.
The unseen grew visible to student eyes,
Explained was the immense Inconscient's scheme,
Audacious lines were traced upon the Void;
The Infinite was reduced to square and cube.
Arranging symbol and significance,
Tracing the curve of a transcendent Power,
They framed the cabbala of the cosmic Law,
The balancing line discovered of Life's technique
And structured her magic and her mystery.
Imposing schemes of knowledge on the Vast
They clamped to syllogisms of finite thought
The free logic of an infinite Consciousness,
Grammared the hidden rhythms of Nature's dance,
Critiqued the plot of the drama of the worlds,
Made figure and number a key to all that is:
The psycho-analysis of cosmic Self
Was traced, its secrets hunted down, and read
The unknown pathology of the Unique.
Assessed was the system of the probable,
The hazard of fleeing possibilities,
To account for the Actual's unaccountable sum,
Necessity's logarithmic tables drawn,
Cast into a scheme the triple act of the One.
Unveiled, the abrupt invisible multitude
Of forces whirling from the hands of Chance
Seemed to obey some vast imperative:
Their tangled motives worked out unity.
A wisdom read their mind to themselves unknown,
Their anarchy rammed into a formula
And from their giant randomness of Force,
Following the habit of their million paths,
Distinguishing each faintest line and stroke
Of a concealed unalterable design,

Out of the chaos of the Invisible's moods
Derived the calculus of Destiny.
In its bright pride of universal lore
Mind's knowledge overtopped the Omniscient's power:
The Eternal's winging eagle puissances
Surprised in their untracked empyrean
Stooped from their gyres to obey the beck of Thought:
Each mysteried God forced to revealing form,
Assigned his settled moves in Nature's game,
Zigzagged at the gesture of a chess-player Will
Across the chequerboard of cosmic Fate.
In the wide sequence of Necessity's steps
Predicted, every act and thought of God,
Its values weighed by the accountant Mind,
Checked in his mathematised omnipotence,
Lost its divine aspect of miracle
And was a figure in a cosmic sum.
The mighty Mother's whims and lightning moods
Arisen from her all-wise unruled delight
In the freedom of her sweet and passionate breast,
Robbed of their wonder were chained to a cause and aim;
An idol of bronze replaced her mystic shape
That captures the movements of the cosmic vasts,
In the sketch precise of an ideal face
Forgotten was her eyelashes' dream-print
Carrying on their curve infinity's dreams,
Lost the alluring marvel of her eyes;
The surging wave-throbs of her vast sea-heart
They bound to a theorem of ordered beats:
Her deep designs which from herself she had veiled
Bowed self-revealed in their confessional.
For the birth and death of the worlds they fixed a date,
The diameter of infinity was drawn,
Measured the distant arc of the unseen heights
And visualised the plumbless viewless depths,
Till all seemed known that in all time could be.

All was coerced by number, name and form;
Nothing was left untold, incalculable.
Yet was their wisdom circled with a nought:
Truths they could find and hold but not the one Truth:
The Highest was to them unknowable.
By knowing too much they missed the whole to be known:
The fathomless heart of the world was left unguessed
And the Transcendent kept its secrecy.

In a sublimer and more daring soar
To the wide summit of the triple stairs
Bare steps climbed up like flaming rocks of gold
Burning their way to a pure absolute sky.
August and few the sovereign Kings of Thought
Have made of Space their wide all-seeing gaze
Surveying the enormous work of Time:
A breadth of all-containing Consciousness
Supported Being in a still embrace.
Intercessors with a luminous Unseen,
They capt in the long passage to the world
The imperatives of the creator Self
Obeyed by unknowing earth, by conscious heaven;
Their thoughts are partners in its vast control.
A great all-ruling Consciousness is there
And Mind unwitting serves a higher Power;
It is a channel, not the source of all.
The cosmos is no accident in Time;
There is a meaning in each play of Chance,
There is a freedom in each face of Fate.
A Wisdom knows and guides the mystered world;
A Truth-gaze shapes its beings and events;
A Word self-born upon creation's heights,
Voice of the Eternal in the temporal spheres,
Prophet of the seeings of the Absolute,
Sows the Idea's significance in Form
And from that seed the growths of Time arise.
On peaks beyond our ken the All-Wisdom sits:

A single and infallible look comes down,
A silent touch from the supernal's air
Awakes to ignorant knowledge in its acts
The secret power in the inconscient depths,
Compelling the blinded Godhead to emerge,
Determining Necessity's nude dance
As she passes through the circuit of the hours
And vanishes from the chase of finite eyes
Down circling vistas of aeonic Time.
The unseizable forces of the cosmic whirl
Bear in their bacchant limbs the fixity
Of an original foresight that is Fate.
Even Nature's ignorance is Truth's instrument;
Our struggling ego cannot change her course:
Yet is it a conscious power that moves in us,
A seed-idea is parent of our acts
And destiny the unrecognised child of Will.
Infallibly by Truth's directing gaze
All creatures here their secret self disclose,
Forced to become what in themselves they hide.
For He who Is grows manifest in the years
And the slow Godhead shut within the cell
Climbs from the plasm to immortality.
But hidden, but denied to mortal grasp,
Mystic, ineffable is the spirit's truth,
Unspoken, caught only by the spirit's eye.
When naked of ego and mind it hears the Voice;
It looks through light to ever greater light
And sees Eternity ensphering Life.
This greater Truth is foreign to our thoughts;
Where a free Wisdom works, they seek for a rule;
Or we only see a tripping game of Chance
Or a labour in chains forced by bound Nature's law,
An absolutism of dumb unthinking Power.
Audacious in their sense of God-born strength
These dared to grasp with their thought Truth's absolute;

By an abstract purity of godless sight,
By a percept nude, intolerant of forms,
They brought to Mind what Mind could never reach
And hoped to conquer Truth's supernal base.
A stripped imperative of conceptual phrase
Architectonic and inevitable
Translated the unthinkable into thought:
A silver-winged fire of naked subtle sense,
An ear of mind withdrawn from the outward's rhymes
Discovered the seed-sounds of the eternal Word,
The rhythm and music heard that built the worlds,
And seized in things the bodiless Will to be.
The Illimitable they measured with number's rods
And traced the last formula of limited things,
In transparent systems bodied termless truths,
The Timeless made accountable to Time
And valued the incommensurable Supreme.
To park and hedge the ungrasped infinitudes
They erected absolute walls of thought and speech
And made a vacuum to hold the One.
In their sight they drove towards an empty peak,
A mighty space of cold and sunlit air.
To unify their task, excluding life
Which cannot bear the nakedness of the Vast,
They made a cipher of a multitude,
In negation found the meaning of the All
And in nothingness the absolute positive.
A single law simplessest the cosmic theme,
Compressing Nature into a formula;
Their titan labour made all knowledge one,
A mental algebra of the Spirit's ways,
An abstract of the living Divinity.
Here the mind's wisdom stopped; it felt complete;
For nothing more was left to think or know:
In a spiritual zero it sat throned
And took its vast silence for the Ineffable.

This was the play of the bright gods of Thought.
Attracting into time the timeless Light,
Imprisoning eternity in the hours,
This they have planned, to snare the feet of Truth
In an aureate net of concept and of phrase
And keep her captive for the thinker's joy
In his little world built of immortal dreams:
There must she dwell mured in the human mind,
An empress prisoner in her subject's house,
Adored and pure and still on his heart's throne,
His splendid property cherished and apart
In the wall of silence of his secret muse,
Immaculate in white virginity,
The same for ever and for ever one,
His worshipped changeless Goddess through all time.
Or else, a faithful consort of his mind
Assenting to his nature and his will,
She sanctions and inspires his words and acts
Prolonging their resonance through the listening years,
Companion and recorder of his march
Crossing a brilliant tract of thought and life
Carved out of the eternity of Time.
A witness to his high triumphant star,
Her godhead servitor to a crowned Idea,
He shall dominate by her a prostrate world;
A warrant for his deeds and his beliefs,
She attests his right divine to lead and rule.
Or as a lover clasps his one beloved,
Godhead of his life's worship and desire,
Icon of his heart's sole idolatry,
She now is his and must live for him alone:
She has invaded him with her sudden bliss,
An exhaustless marvel in his happy grasp,
An allurement, a caught ravishing miracle.
Her now he claims after long rapt pursuit,
The one joy of his body and his soul:

Inescapable is her divine appeal,
Her immense possession an undying thrill,
An intoxication and an ecstasy:
The passion of her self-revealing moods,
A heavenly glory and variety,
Makes ever new her body to his eyes,
Or else repeats the first enchantment's touch,
The luminous rapture of her mystic breasts
And beautiful vibrant limbs a living field
Of throbbing new discovery without end.
A new beginning flowers in word and laugh,
A new charm brings back the old extreme delight:
He is lost in her, she is his heaven here.
Truth smiled upon the gracious golden game.
Out of her hushed eternal spaces leaned
The great and boundless Goddess feigned to yield
The sunlit sweetness of her secracies.
Incarnating her beauty in his clasp
She gave for a brief kiss her immortal lips
And drew to her bosom one glorified mortal head:
She made earth her home, for whom heaven was too small.
In a human breast her occult presence lived;
He carved from his own self his figure of her:
She shaped her body to a mind's embrace.
Into thought's narrow limits she has come;
Her greatness she has suffered to be pressed
Into the little cabin of the Idea,
The closed room of a lonely thinker's grasp:
She has lowered her heights to the stature of our souls
And dazzled our lids with her celestial gaze.
Thus each is satisfied with his high gain
And thinks himself beyond mortality blest,
A king of truth upon his separate throne.
To her possessor in the field of Time
A single splendour caught from her glory seems
The one true light, her beauty's glowing whole.

But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth:
The whole world lives in a lonely ray of her sun.
In our thinking's close and narrow lamp-lit house
The vanity of our shut mortal mind
Dreams that the chains of thought have made her ours;
But only we play with our own brilliant bonds;
Tying her down, it is ourselves we tie.
In our hypnosis by one luminous point
We see not what small figure of her we hold;
We feel not her inspiring boundlessness,
We share not her immortal liberty.
Thus is it even with the seer and sage;
For still the human limits the divine:
Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight,
Breathe her divine illimitable air,
Her simple vast supremacy confess,
Dare to surrender to her absolute.
Then the Unmanifest reflects his form
In the still mind as in a living glass;
The timeless Ray descends into our hearts
And we are rapt into eternity.
For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.
A thousand icons they have made of her
And find her in the idols they adore;
But she remains herself and infinite.

END OF CANTO ELEVEN

Canto Twelve

The Heavens of the Ideal

ALWAYS the Ideal beckoned from afar.
Awakened by the touch of the Unseen,
Deserting the boundary of things achieved,
Aspired the strong discoverer, tireless Thought,
Revealing at each step a luminous world.
It left known summits for the unknown peaks:
Impassioned, it sought the lone unrealised Truth,
It longed for the Light that knows not death and birth.
Each stage of the soul's remote ascent was built
Into a constant heaven felt always here.
At each pace of the journey marvellous
A new degree of wonder and of bliss,
A new rung formed in Being's mighty stair,
A great wide step trembling with jewelled fire
As if a burning spirit quivered there
Upholding with his flame the immortal hope,
As if a radiant God had given his soul
That he might feel the tread of pilgrim feet
Mounting in haste to the Eternal's house.
At either end of each effulgent stair
The heavens of the ideal Mind were seen
In a blue lucency of dreaming Space
Like strips of brilliant sky clinging to the moon.
On one side glimmered hue on floating hue,
A glory of sunrise breaking on the soul,
In a tremulous rapture of the heart's insight
And the spontaneous bliss that beauty gives,
The lovely kingdoms of the deathless Rose.
Above the spirit cased in mortal sense
Are superconscious realms of heavenly peace,
Below, the Inconscient's sullen dim abyss,

Between, behind our life, the deathless Rose.
Across the covert air the spirit breathes,
A body of the cosmic beauty and joy
Unseen, unguessed by the blind suffering world,
Climbing from Nature's deep surrendered heart
It blooms for ever at the feet of God,
Fed by life's sacrificial mysteries.

Here too its bud is born in human breasts;
Then by a touch, a presence or a voice
The world is turned into a temple ground
And all discloses the unknown Beloved.

In an outburst of heavenly joy and ease
Life yields to the divinity within
And gives the rapture-offering of its all,
And the soul opens to felicity.

A bliss is felt that never can wholly cease,
A sudden mystery of secret Grace
Flowers goldening our earth of red desire.

All the high gods who hid their visages
From the soiled passionate ritual of our hopes,
Reveal their names and their undying powers.

A fiery stillness wakes the slumbering cells,
A passion of the flesh becoming spirit,
And marvellously is fulfilled at last
The miracle for which our life was made.

A flame in a white voiceless cupola
Is seen and faces of immortal light,
The radiant limbs that know not birth and death,
The breasts that suckle the first-born of the Sun,

The wings that crowd thought's ardent silences,
The eyes that look into spiritual Space.
Our hidden centres of celestial force
Open like flowers to a heavenly atmosphere;

Mind pauses thrilled with the supernal Ray,
And even this transient body then can feel
Ideal love and flawless happiness

And laughter of the heart's sweetness and delight
Freed from the rude and tragic hold of Time,
And beauty and the rhythmic feet of the hours.
This in high realms touches immortal kind;
What here is in the bud has blossomed there.
There is the secrecy of the House of Flame,
The blaze of godlike thought and golden bliss,
The rapt idealism of heavenly sense;
There are the wonderful voices, the sun-laugh,
A gurgling eddy in rivers of God's joy,
And the mysteried vineyards of the gold moon-wine,
All the fire and sweetness of which hardly here
A brilliant shadow visits mortal life.
Although are witnessed there the joys of Time,
Pressed on the bosom the Immortal's touch is felt,
Heard are the flutings of the Infinite.
Here upon earth are early awakenings,
Moments that tremble in an air divine,
And grown upon the yearning of her soil
Time's sun-flowers' gaze at gold Eternity:
There are the imperishable beatitudes.
A million lotuses swaying on one stem,
World after coloured and ecstatic world
Climbs towards some far unseen epiphany.

On the other side of the eternal stairs
The mighty kingdoms of the deathless Flame
Aspired to reach the Being's absolutes.
Out of the sorrow and darkness of the world,
Out of the depths where life and thought are tombed,
Lonely mounts up to heaven the deathless Flame.
In a veiled Nature's hallowed secrecies
It burns for ever on the altar Mind,
Its priests the souls of dedicated gods,
Humanity its house of sacrifice.
Once kindled, never can its flamings cease.
A fire along the mystic paths of earth,

It rises through the mortal's hemisphere,
Till borne by runners of the Day and Dusk
It enters the occult eternal Light
And clambers whitening to the invisible Throne.
Its worlds are steps of an ascending Force:
A dream of giant contours, titan lines,
Homes of unfallen and illumined Might,
Heavens of unchanging Good pure and unborn,
Heights of the grandeur of Truth's ageless ray,
As in a symbol sky they start to view
And call our souls into a vaster air.
On their summits they bear up the sleepless Flame;
Dreaming of a mysterious Beyond,
Transcendent of the paths of Fate and Time,
They point above themselves with index peaks
Through a pale-sapphire ether of god-mind
Towards some gold Infinite's apocalypse.
A thunder rolling mid the hills of God,
Tireless, severe is their tremendous Voice:
Exceeding us, to exceed ourselves they call
And bid us rise incessantly above.
Far from our eager reach those summits live,
Too lofty for our mortal strength and height,
Hardly in a dire ecstasy of toil
Climbed by the spirit's naked athlete will.
Austere, intolerant they claim from us
Efforts too lasting for our mortal nerve
Our hearts cannot cleave to nor our flesh support;
Only the Eternal's strength in us can dare
To attempt the immense adventure of that climb
And the sacrifice of all we cherish here.
Our human knowledge is a candle burnt
On a dim altar to a sun-vast Truth;
Man's virtue, a coarse-spun ill-fitting dress,
Apparels wooden images of Good;
Passionate and blinded, bleeding, stained with mire

His energy stumbles towards a deathless Force.
An imperfection dogs our highest strength;
Portions and pale reflections are our share.
Happy the worlds that have not felt our fall,
Where Will is one with Truth and Good with Power;
Impoverished not by earth-mind's indigence,
They keep God's natural breath of mightiness,
His bare spontaneous swift intensities;
There is his great transparent mirror, Self,
And there his sovereign autarchy of bliss
In which immortal natures have their part,
Heirs and cosharers of divinity.

He through the Ideal's kingdoms moved at will,
Accepted their beauty and their greatness bore,
Partook of the glories of their wonder fields,
But passed nor stayed beneath their splendour's rule.
All there was an intense but partial light.
In each a seraph-winged high-browed Idea
United all knowledge by one master thought,
Persuaded all action to one golden sense,
All powers subjected to a single power
And made a world where it could reign alone,
An absolute ideal's perfect home.
Insignia of their victory and their faith,
They offered to the Traveller at their gates
A quenchless flame or an unfading flower,
Emblem of a high kingdom's privilege.
A glorious shining Angel of the Way
Presented to the seeking of the soul
The sweetness and the might of an idea,
Each deemed Truth's intimate fount and summit force,
The heart of the meaning of the universe,
Perfection's key, passport to Paradise.
Yet were there regions where these absolutes met
And made a circle of bliss with married hands;
Light stood embraced by light, fire wedded fire,

But none in the other would his body lose
To find his soul in the world's single Soul,
A multiplied rapture of infinity.
Onward he passed to a diviner sphere:
There, joined in a common greatness, light and bliss,
All high and beautiful and desirable powers
Forgetting their difference and their separate reign
Become a single multitudinous whole.
Above the parting of the roads of Time,
Above the Silence and its thousandfold Word,
In the immutable and inviolate Truth
For ever united and inseparable,
The radiant children of Eternity dwell
On the wide spirit height where all are one.

END OF CANTO TWELVE

Canto Thirteen

In the Self of Mind

AT LAST there came a bare indifferent sky
Where Silence listened to the cosmic Voice,
But answered nothing to a million calls;
The soul's endless question met with no response.
An abrupt conclusion ended eager hopes,
A deep cessation in a mighty calm,
A finis-line on the last page of thought
And a margin and a blank of wordless peace.
There paused the climbing hierarchy of worlds.
He stood on a wide arc of summit Space
Alone with an enormous Self of Mind
Which held all life in a corner of its vasts.
Omnipotent, immobile and aloof,
In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:
It gave no heed to the paeans of victory,
It was indifferent to its own defeats,
It heard the cry of grief and made no sign;
Impartial fell its gaze on evil and good,
It saw destruction come and did not move.
An equal Cause of things, a lonely Seer
And Master of its multitude of forms,
It acted not but bore all thoughts and deeds,
The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts
Consenting to the movements of her Force.
His mind reflected this vast quietism.
This witness hush is the Thinker's secret base:
Hidden in silent depths the word is formed,
From hidden silences the act is born
Into the voiceful mind, the labouring world;
In secrecy wraps the seed the Eternal sows
Silence, the mystic birthplace of the soul.

In God's supreme withdrawn and timeless hush
A seeing Self and potent Energy met;
The Silence knew itself and thought took form:
Self-made from the dual power creation rose.
In the still self he lived and it in him;
Its mute immemorable listening depths,
Its vastness and its stillness were his own;
One being with it he grew wide, powerful, free.
Apart, unbound, he looked on all things done.
As one who builds his own imagined scenes
And loses not himself in what he sees,
Spectator of a drama self-conceived,
He looked on the world and watched its motive thoughts
With the burden of luminous prophecy in their eyes,
Its forces with their feet of wind and fire
Arisen from the dumbness in his soul.
All now he seemed to understand and know;
Desire came not nor any gust of will,
The great perturbed inquirer lost his task;
Nothing was asked nor wanted any more.
There he could stay, the Self, the Silence won:
His soul had peace, it knew the cosmic Whole.
Then suddenly a luminous finger fell
On all things seen or touched or heard or felt
And showed his mind that nothing could be known;
That must be reached from which all knowledge comes.
The sceptic Ray disrupted all that seems
And smote at the very roots of thought and sense.
In a universe of Nescience they have grown,
Aspiring towards a superconscious Sun,
Playing in shine and rain from heavenlier skies
They never can win however high their reach
Or overpass however keen their probe.
A doubt corroded even the means to think,
Distrust was thrown upon Mind's instruments;
All that it takes for reality's shining coin,

Proved fact, fixed inference, deduction clear,
Firm theory, assured significance,
Appeared as frauds upon Time's credit bank
Or assets valueless in Truth's treasury.
An Ignorance on an uneasy throne
Travestied with a fortuitous sovereignty
A figure of knowledge garbed in dubious words
And tinsel thought-forms brightly inadequate.
A labourer in the dark dazzled by half-light,
What it knew was an image in a broken glass,
What it saw was real but its sight untrue.
All the ideas in its vast repertory
Were like the mutterings of a transient cloud
That spent itself in sound and left no trace.
A frail house hanging in uncertain air,
The thin ingenious web round which it moves,
Put out awhile on the tree of the universe,
And gathered up into itself again,
Was only a trap to catch life's insect food,
Winged thoughts that flutter fragile in brief light
But dead, once captured in fixed forms of mind,
Aims puny but looming large in man's small scale,
Flickers of imagination's brilliant gauze
And cobweb-wrapped beliefs alive no more.
The magic hut of built-up certitudes
Made out of glittering dust and bright moonshine
In which it shrines its image of the Real,
Collapsed into the Nescience whence it rose.
Only a gleam was there of symbol facts
That shroud the mystery lurking in their glow,
And falsehoods based on hidden realities
By which they live until they fall from Time.
Our mind is a house haunted by the slain past,
Ideas soon mummified, ghosts of old truths,
God's spontaneities tied with formal strings
And packed into drawers of reason's trim bureau,

A grave of great lost opportunities,
Or an office for misuse of soul and life
And all the waste man makes of heaven's gifts
And all his squanderings of Nature's store,
A stage for the comedy of Ignorance.
The world seemed a long aeonic failure's scene:
All sterile grew, no base was left secure.
Assailed by the edge of the convicting beam
The builder Reason lost her confidence
In the successful sleight and turn of thought
That makes the soul the prisoner of a phrase.
Its highest wisdom was a brilliant guess,
Its mighty structured science of the worlds
A passing light on being's surfaces.
There was nothing there but a schema drawn by sense,
A substitute for eternal mysteries,
A scrawl figure of reality, a plan
And elevation by the architect Word
Imposed upon the semblances of Time.
Existence' self was shadowed by a doubt;
Almost it seemed a lotus-leaf afloat
On a nude pool of cosmic Nothingness.
This great spectator and creator Mind
Was only some half-seeing's delegate,
A veil that hung between the soul and Light,
An idol, not the living body of God.
Even the still spirit that looks upon its works
Was some pale front of the Unknowable;
A shadow seemed the wide and witness Self,
Its liberation and immobile calm
A void recoil of being from Time-made things,
Not the self-vision of Eternity.
Deep peace was there, but not the nameless Force:
Our sweet and mighty Mother was not there
Who gathers to her bosom her children's lives,
Her clasp that takes the world into her arms

In the fathomless rapture of the Infinite,
The Bliss that is creation's splendid grain
Or the white passion of God-ecstasy
That laughs in the blaze of the boundless heart of Love.
A greater Spirit than the Self of Mind
Must answer to the questioning of his soul.
For here was no firm clue and no sure road;
High-climbing pathways ceased in the unknown;
An artist Sight constructed the Beyond
In contrary patterns and conflicting hues;
A part-experience fragmented the Whole.
He looked above, but all was blank and still:
A sapphire firmament of abstract Thought
Escaped into a formless Vacancy.
He looked below, but all was dark and mute.
A noise was heard, between, of thought and prayer,
A strife, a labour without end or pause;
A vain and ignorant seeking raised its voice.
A rumour and a movement and a call,
A foaming mass, a cry innumerable
Rolled ever upon the ocean surge of Life
Along the coasts of mortal Ignorance.
On its unstable and enormous breast
Beings and forces, forms, ideas like waves
Jostled for figure and supremacy,
And rose and sank and rose again in Time;
And at the bottom of the sleepless stir,
A Nothingness parent of the struggling worlds,
A huge creator Death, a mystic Void,
For ever sustaining the irrational cry,
For ever excluding the supernal Word,
Motionless, refusing question and response,
Reposed beneath the voices and the march
The dim Inconscient's dumb incertitude.
Two firmaments of darkness and of light
Opposed their limits to the spirit's walk;

It moved veiled in from Self's infinity
In a world of beings and momentary events
Where all must die to live and live to die.
Immortal by renewed mortality,
It wandered in the spiral of its acts
Or ran around the cycles of its thought,
Yet was no more than its original self
And knew no more than when it first began.
To be was a prison, extinction the escape.

END OF CANTO THIRTEEN

Canto Fourteen

The World-Soul

A COVERT answer to his seeking came.
In a far shimmering background of Mind-Space
A glowing mouth was seen, a luminous shaft;
A recluse gate it seemed, musing on joy,
A veiled retreat and escape to mystery.
Away from the unsatisfied surface world
It fled into the bosom of the unknown,
A well, a tunnel of the depths of God.
It plunged as if a mystic groove of hope
Through many layers of formless voiceless self
To reach the last profound of the world's heart,
And from that heart there surged a wordless call
Pleading with some still impenetrable Mind,
Voicing some passionate unseen desire.
As if a beckoning finger of secrecy
Outstretched into a crystal mood of air,
Pointing at him from some near hidden depth,
As if a message from the world's deep soul,
An intimation of a lurking joy
That flowed out from a cup of brooding bliss,
There shimmered stealing out into the Mind
A mute and quivering ecstasy of light,
A passion and delicacy of roseate fire.
As one drawn to his lost spiritual home
Feels now the closeness of a waiting love,
Into a passage dim and tremulous
That clasped him in from day and night's pursuit,
He travelled led by a mysterious sound.
A murmur multitudinous and lone,
All sounds it was in turn, yet still the same.
A hidden call to unforeseen delight

In the summoning voice of one long-known, well-loved,
But nameless to the unremembering mind,
It led to rapture back the truant heart.
The immortal cry ravished the captive ear.
Then, lowering its imperious mystery,
It sank to a whisper circling round the soul.
It seemed the yearning of a lonely flute
That roamed along the shores of memory
And filled the eyes with tears of longing joy.
A cricket's rash and fiery single note,
It marked with shrill melody night's moonless hush
And beat upon a nerve of mystic sleep
Its high insistent magical reveille.
A jingling silver laugh of anklet bells
Travelled the roads of a solitary heart;
Its dance solaced an eternal loneliness:
An old forgotten sweetness sobbing came.
Or from a far harmonious distance heard
The tinkling pace of a long caravan
It seemed at times, or a vast forest's hymn,
The solemn reminder of a temple gong,
A bee-croon honey-drunk in summer isles
Ardent with ecstasy in a slumbrous noon,
Or the far anthem of a pilgrim sea.
An incense floated in the quivering air,
A mystic happiness trembled in the breast
As if the invisible Beloved had come
Assuming the sudden loveliness of a face
And close glad hands could seize his fugitive feet
And the world change with the beauty of a smile.
Into a wonderful bodiless realm he came,
The home of a passion without name or voice,
A depth he felt answering to every height,
A nook was found that could embrace all worlds,
A point that was the conscious knot of Space,
An hour eternal in the heart of Time.

The silent Soul of all the world was there:
A Being lived, a Presence and a Power,
A single Person who was himself and all
And cherished Nature's sweet and dangerous throbs
Transfigured into beats divine and pure.
One who could love without return for love,
Meeting and turning to the best the worst,
It healed the bitter cruelties of earth,
Transforming all experience to delight;
Intervening in the sorrowful paths of birth
It rocked the cradle of the cosmic Child
And stilled all weeping with its hand of joy;
It led things evil towards their secret good,
It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;
Its power was to reveal divinity.
Infinite, coeval with the mind of God,
It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
A seed from which the Eternal is new-born,
A flame that cancels death in mortal things.
All grew to all kindred and self and near;
The intimacy of God was everywhere,
No veil was felt, no brute barrier inert,
Distance could not divide, Time could not change.
A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,
A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,
The throb of one adoration's single bliss
In a rapt ether of undying love.
An inner happiness abode in all,
A sense of universal harmonies,
A measureless secure eternity
Of truth and beauty and good and joy made one.
Here was the welling core of finite life;
A formless spirit became the soul of form.

All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff;
A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground.

All here was known by a spiritual sense:
Thought was not there but a knowledge near and one
Seized on all things by a moved identity,
A sympathy of self with other selves,
The touch of consciousness on consciousness
And being's look on being with inmost gaze
And heart laid bare to heart without walls of speech
And the unanimity of seeing minds
In myriad forms luminous with the one God.
Life was not there, but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps,
Felt as a subtle and spiritual power,
A quivering out from soul to answering soul,
A mystic movement, a close influence,
A free and happy and intense approach
Of being to being with no screen or check,
Without which life and love could never have been.
Body was not there, for bodies were needed not,
The soul itself was its own deathless form
And met at once the touch of other souls
Close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true.
As when one walks in sleep through luminous dreams
And, conscious, knows the truth their figures mean,
Here where reality was its own dream,
He knew things by their soul and not their shape:
As those who have lived long made one in love
Need word nor sign for heart's reply to heart,
He met and communed without bar of speech
With beings unveiled by a material frame.
There was a strange spiritual scenery,
A loveliness of lakes and streams and hills,
A flow, a fixity in a soul-space,
And plains and valleys, stretches of soul-joy,
And gardens that were flower-tracts of the spirit,
Its meditations of tinged reverie.
Air was the breath of a pure infinite.

A fragrance wandered in a coloured haze
As if the scent and hue of all sweet flowers
Had mingled to copy heaven's atmosphere.
Appealing to the soul and not the eye
Beauty lived there at home in her own house,
There all was beautiful by its own right
And needed not the splendour of a robe.
All objects were like bodies of the Gods,
A spirit symbol environing a soul,
For world and self were one reality.

Immersed in voiceless internatal trance
The beings that once wore forms on earth sat there
In shining chambers of spiritual sleep.
Passed were the pillar-posts of birth and death,
Passed was their little scene of symbol deeds,
Passed were the heavens and hells of their long road;
They had returned into the world's deep soul.
All now was gathered into pregnant rest:
Person and nature suffered a slumber change.
In trance they gathered back their bygone selves,
In a background memory's foreseeing muse
Prophetic of new personality
Arranged the map of their coming destiny's course:
Heirs of their past, their future's discoverers,
Elected of their own self-chosen lot,
They waited for the adventure of new life.
A Person persistent through the lapse of worlds,
Although the same for ever in many shapes
By the outward mind unrecognisable,
Assuming names unknown in unknown climes
Imprints through Time upon the earth's worn page
A growing figure of its secret self,
And learns by experience what the spirit knew,
Till it can see its truth alive and God.
Once more they must face the problem-game of birth,

The soul's experiment of joy and grief
And thought and impulse lighting the blind act,
And venture on the roads of circumstance,
Through inner movements and external scenes
Travelling to self across the forms of things.
Into creation's centre he had come.
The spirit wandering from state to state
Finds here the silence of its starting-point
In the formless force and the still fixity
And brooding passion of the world of Soul.
All that is made and once again unmade,
The calm persistent vision of the One
Inevitably re-makes, it lives anew:
Forces and lives and beings and ideas
Are taken into the stillness for a while;
There they remould their purpose and their drift,
Recast their nature and re-form their shape.
Ever they change and changing ever grow,
And passing through a fruitful stage of death
And after long reconstituting sleep
Resume their place in the process of the Gods
Until their work in cosmic Time is done.

Here was the fashioning chamber of the worlds.
An interval was left twixt act and act,
Twixt birth and birth, twixt dream and waking dream,
A pause that gave new strength to do and be.
Beyond were regions of delight and peace,
Mute birthplaces of light and hope and love,
And cradles of heavenly rapture and repose.
In a slumber of the voices of the world
He of the eternal moment grew aware;
His knowledge stripped bare of the garbs of sense
Knew by identity without thought or word;
His being saw itself without its veils,
Life's line fell from the spirit's infinity.
Along a road of pure interior light,

Alone between tremendous Presences,
Under the watching eyes of nameless Gods,
His soul passed on, a single conscious power,
Towards the end which ever begins again,
Approaching through a stillness dumb and calm
To the source of all things human and divine.
There he beheld in their mighty union's poise
The figure of the deathless Two-in-One,
A single being in two bodies clasped,
A diarchy of two united souls,
Seated absorbed in deep creative joy;
Their trance of bliss sustained the mobile world.
Behind them in a morning dusk One stood
Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.
Ever disguised she awaits the seeking spirit;
Watcher on the supreme unreachable peaks,
Guide of the traveller of the unseen paths,
She guards the austere approach to the Alone.
At the beginning of each far-spread plane
Pervading with her power the cosmic suns
She reigns, inspirer of its multiple works
And thinker of the symbol of its scene.
Above them all she stands supporting all,
The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
The ages are the footfalls of her tread,
Their happenings the figure of her thoughts,
And all creation is her endless act.
His spirit was made a vessel of her force;
Mute in the fathomless passion of his will
He outstretched to her his folded hands of prayer.
Then in a sovereign answer to his heart
A gesture came as of worlds thrown away,
And from her raiment's lustrous mystery raised
One arm half-parted the eternal veil.
A light appeared still and imperishable.

Attracted to the large and luminous depths
Of the ravishing enigma of her eyes,
He saw the mystic outline of a face.
Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss,
An atom of her illimitable self
Mastered by the honey and lightning of her power,
Tossed towards the shores of her ocean-ecstasy,
Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,
He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
A cry of adoration and desire
And the surrender of his boundless mind
And the self-giving of his silent heart.
He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone.

END OF CANTO FOURTEEN

Canto Fifteen

The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge

AFTER a measureless moment of the soul
Again returning to these surface fields
Out of the timeless depths where he had sunk,
He heard once more the slow tread of the hours.
All once perceived and lived was far away;
Himself was to himself his only scene.
Above the Witness and his universe
He stood in a realm of boundless silences
Awaiting the Voice that spoke and built the worlds.
A light was round him wide and absolute,
A diamond purity of eternal sight;
A consciousness lay still, devoid of forms,
Free, wordless, uncoerced by sign or rule,
For ever content with only being and bliss;
A sheer existence lived in its own peace
On the single spirit's bare and infinite ground.
Out of the sphere of Mind he had arisen,
He had left the reign of Nature's hues and shades;
He dwelt in his self's colourless purity.
It was a plane of undetermined spirit
That could be a zero or round sum of things,
A state in which all ceased and all began.
All it became that figures the absolute,
A high vast peak whence Spirit could see the worlds,
Calm's wide epiphany, wisdom's mute home,
A lonely station of Omniscience,
A diving-board of the Eternal's power,
A white floor in the house of All-Delight.
Here came the thought that passes beyond Thought,
Here the still Voice which our listening cannot hear,
The Knowledge by which the knower is the known,

The Love in which beloved and lover are one.
All stood in an original plenitude,
Hushed and fulfilled before they could create
The glorious dream of their universal acts;
Here was engendered the spiritual birth,
Here closed the finite's crawl to the Infinite.
A thousand roads leaped into Eternity
Or singing ran to meet God's veilless face.
The Known released him from its limiting chain;
He knocked at the doors of the Unknowable.
Thence gazing with an immeasurable outlook
One with self's inlook into its own pure vasts,
He saw the splendour of the spirit's realms,
The greatness and wonder of its boundless works,
The power and passion leaping from its calm,
The rapture of its movement and its rest,
And its fire-sweet miracle of transcendent life,
The million-pointing undivided grasp
Of its vision of one same stupendous All,
Its inexhaustible acts in a timeless Time,
A space that is its own infinity.
A glorious multiple of one radiant Self,
Answering to joy with joy, to love with love,
All there were moving mansions of God-bliss;
Eternal and unique they lived the One.
There forces are great outbursts of God's truth
And objects are its pure spiritual shapes;
Spirit no more is hid from its own view,
All sentience is a sea of happiness
And all creation is an act of light.
Out of the neutral silence of his soul
He passed to its fields of puissance and of calm
And saw the Powers that stand above the world,
Traversed the realms of the supreme Idea
And sought the summit of created things
And the almighty source of cosmic change.

There Knowledge called him to her mystic peaks
Where thought is held in a vast internal sense
And feeling swims across a sea of peace
And vision climbs beyond the reach of Time.
An equal of the first creator seers,
Accompanied by an all-revealing light
He moved through regions of transcendent Truth
Inward, immense, innumerably one.
There distance was his own huge spirit's extent;
Delivered from the fictions of the mind
Time's triple dividing step baffled no more;
Its inevitable and continuous stream,
The long flow of its manifesting course,
Was held in spirit's single wide regard.
A universal beauty showed its face:
The invisible deep-fraught significances,
Here sheltered behind form's insensible screen,
Uncovered to him their deathless harmony
And the key to the wonder-book of common things.
In their uniting law stood up revealed
The multiple measures of the upbuilding force,
The lines of the World-Geometer's technique,
The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web
And the magic underlying simple shapes.
On peaks where Silence listens with still heart
To the rhythmic metres of the rolling worlds,
He served the sessions of the triple Fire.
On the rim of two continents of slumber and trance
He heard the ever unspoken Reality's voice
Awaken revelation's mystic cry,
The birthplace found of the sudden infallible Word
And lived in the rays of an intuitive Sun.
Absolved from the ligaments of death and sleep
He rode the lightning seas of cosmic Mind
And crossed the ocean of original sound;
On the last step to the supernal birth

He trod along extinction's narrow edge
Near the high verges of eternity,
And mounted the gold ridge of the world-dream
Between the slayer and the saviour fires;
The belt he reached of the unchanging Truth,
Met borders of the inexpressible Light
And thrilled with the presence of the Ineffable.
Above him he saw the flaming Hierarchies,
The wings that fold around created Space,
The sun-eyed Guardians and the golden Sphinx
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.
A wisdom waiting on Omniscience
Sat voiceless in a vast passivity;
It judged not, measured not, nor strove to know,
But listened for the veiled all-seeing Thought
And the burden of a calm transcendent Voice.
He had reached the top of all that can be known:
His sight surpassed creation's head and base;
Ablaze the triple heavens revealed their suns,
The obscure Abyss exposed its monstrous rule.
All but the ultimate Mystery was his field,
Almost the Unknowable disclosed its rim.
His self's infinities began to emerge,
The hidden universes cried to him;
Eternities called to eternities
Sending their speechless message still remote.
Arisen from the marvel of the depths
And burning from the superconscious heights
And sweeping in great horizontal gyres
A million energies joined and were the One.
All flowed immeasurably to one sea:
All living forms became its atom homes.
A Panergy that harmonised all life
Held now existence in its vast control;
A portion of that majesty he was made.
At will he lived in the unoblivious Ray.

In that high realm where no untruth can come,
Where all are different and all is one,
In the Impersonal's ocean without shore
The Person in the World-Spirit anchored rode;
It thrilled with the mighty marchings of World-Force,
Its acts were the comrades of God's infinite peace.
An adjunct glory and a symbol self,
The body was delivered to the soul,—
An immortal point of power, a block of poise
In a cosmicity's wide formless surge,
A conscious edge of the Transcendent's might
Carving perfection from a bright world-stuff,
It figured in it a universe's sense.
There consciousness was a close and single weft;
The far and near were one in spirit-space,
The moments there were pregnant with all time.
The superconscious's screen was ripped by thought,
Idea rotated symphonies of sight,
Sight was a flame-throw from identity;
Life was a marvellous journey of the spirit,
Feeling a wave from the universal Bliss.
In the kingdom of the Spirit's power and light,
As if one who arrived out of infinity's womb
He came new-born, infant and limitless
And grew in the wisdom of the timeless Child;
He was a vast that soon became a Sun.
A great luminous silence whispered to his heart;
His knowledge an inview caught unfathomable,
An outview by no brief horizons cut:
He thought and felt in all, his gaze had power.
He communed with the Incommunicable;
Beings of a wider consciousness were his friends,
Forms of a larger subtler make drew near;
The Gods conversed with him behind Life's veil.
Neighbour his being grew to Nature's crests.
The primal Energy took him in its arms;

His brain was wrapped in overwhelming light,
An all-embracing knowledge seized his heart:
Thoughts rose in him no earthly mind can hold,
Mights played that never coursed through mortal nerves:
He scanned the secrets of the Overmind,
He bore the rapture of the Oversoul.
A borderer of the empire of the Sun,
Attuned to the supernal harmonies,
He linked creation to the Eternal's sphere.
His finite parts approached their absolutes,
His actions framed the movements of the Gods,
His will took up the reins of cosmic Force.

END OF CANTO FIFTEEN
END OF BOOK TWO

BOOK THREE

The Book of the Divine Mother

Canto One

The Pursuit of the Unknowable

ALL IS too little that the world can give:
Its power and knowledge are the gifts of Time
And cannot fill the spirit's sacred thirst.
Although of One these forms of greatness are
And by its breath of grace our lives abide,
Although more near to us than nearness' self,
It is some utter truth of what we are;
Hidden by its own works, it seemed far-off,
Impenetrable, occult, voiceless, obscure.
The Presence was lost by which all things have charm,
The Glory lacked of which they are dim signs.
The world lived on made empty of its Cause,
Like love when the beloved's face is gone.
The labour to know seemed a vain strife of Mind;
All knowledge ended in the Unknowable:
The effort to rule seemed a vain pride of Will;
A trivial achievement scorned by Time,
All power retired into the Omnipotent.
A cave of darkness guards the eternal Light.
A silence settled on his striving heart;
Absolved from the voices of the world's desire,
He turned to the Ineffable's timeless call.
A Being intimate and unnameable,
A wide compelling ecstasy and peace
Felt in himself and all and yet ungrasped,
Approached and faded from his soul's pursuit
As if for ever luring him beyond.
Near, it retreated; far, it called him still.
Nothing could satisfy but its delight:
Its absence left the greatest actions dull,
Its presence made the smallest seem divine.

When it was there, the heart's abyss was filled;
But when the uplifting Deity withdrew,
Existence lost its aim in the Inane.
The order of the immemorial planes,
The godlike fullness of the instruments
Were turned to props for an impermanent scene.
But who that mightiness was he knew not yet.
Impalpable, yet filling all that is,
It made and blotted out a million worlds
And took and lost a thousand shapes and names.
It wore the guise of an indiscernible Vast,
Or was a subtle kernel in the soul:
A distant greatness left it huge and dim,
A mystic closeness shut it sweetly in:
It seemed sometimes a figment or a robe
And seemed sometimes his own colossal shade.
A giant doubt overshadowed his advance.
Across a neutral all-supporting Void
Whose blankness nursed his lone immortal spirit,
Allured towards some recondite Supreme,
Aided, coerced by enigmatic Powers,
Aspiring and half-sinking and upborne,
Invincibly he ascended without pause.
Always a signless vague Immensity
Brooded, without approach, beyond response,
Condemning finite things to nothingness,
Fronting him with the incommensurable.
Then to the ascent there came a mighty term.
A height was reached where nothing made could live,
A line where every hope and search must cease
Neared some intolerant bare Reality,
A zero formed pregnant with boundless change.
On a dizzy verge where all disguises fail
And human mind must abdicate in Light
Or die like a moth in the naked blaze of Truth,
He stood compelled to a tremendous choice.

All he had been and all towards which he grew
Must now be left behind or else transform
Into a self of That which has no name.
Alone and fronting an intangible Force
Which offered nothing to the grasp of Thought,
His spirit faced the adventure of the Inane.
Abandoned by the worlds of Form he strove.
A fruitful world-wide Ignorance foundered here;
Thought's long far-circling journey touched its close
And ineffective paused the actor Will.
The symbol modes of being helped no more,
The structures Nescience builds collapsing failed,
And even the spirit that holds the universe
Fainted in luminous insufficiency.
In an abysmal lapse of all things built
Transcending every perishable support
And joining at last its mighty origin,
The separate self must melt or be reborn
Into a Truth beyond the mind's appeal.
All glory of outline, sweetness of harmony,
Rejected like a grace of trivial notes,
Expunged from Being's silence nude, austere,
Died into a fine and blissful Nothingness.
The Demiurges lost their names and forms,
The great schemed worlds that they had planned and wrought
Passed, taken and abolished one by one.
The universe removed its coloured veil,
And at the unimaginable end
Of the huge riddle of created things
Appeared the far-seen Godhead of the whole,
His feet firm-based on Life's stupendous wings,
Omnipotent, a lonely seer of Time,
Inward, inscrutable, with diamond gaze.
Attracted by the unfathomable regard
The unsolved slow cycles to their fount returned
To rise again from that invisible sea.

All from his puissance born was now undone;
Nothing remained the cosmic Mind conceives.
Eternity prepared to fade and seemed
A hue and imposition on the Void,
Space was the fluttering of a dream that sank
Before its ending into Nothing's deeps.
The spirit that dies not and the Godhead's self
Seemed myths projected from the Unknowable;
From It all sprang, in It is called to cease.
But what That was, no thought nor sight could tell.
Only a formless Form of self was left,
A tenuous ghost of something that had been,
The last experience of a lapsing wave
Before it sinks into a bourneless sea,—
As if it kept even on the brink of Nought
Its bare feeling of the ocean whence it came.
A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space,
An Everlastingness cut off from Time;
A strange sublime inalterable Peace
Silent rejected from it world and soul.
A stark companionless Reality
Answered at last to his soul's passionate search:
Passionless, wordless, absorbed in its fathomless hush,
Keeping the mystery none would ever pierce,
It brooded inscrutable and intangible
Facing him with its dumb tremendous calm.
It had no kinship with the universe:
There was no act, no movement in its Vast:
Life's question met by its silence died on her lips,
The world's effort ceased convicted of ignorance
Finding no sanction of supernal Light:
There was no mind there with its need to know,
There was no heart there with its need to love.
All person perished in its namelessness.
There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
Only itself was real to itself.

A pure existence safe from thought and mood,
A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,
It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,
One and unique, unutterably sole.
A Being formless, featureless and mute
That knew itself by its own timeless self,
Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,
The One by whom all live, who lives by none,
An immeasurable luminous secrecy
Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,
Above the changing cosmic interlude
Abode supreme, immutably the same,
A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Adoration of the Divine Mother

A STILLNESS absolute, incommunicable,
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known,
All that the labouring senses still would weave
Prolonging an imaged unreality.
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies Space;
Only the Inconceivable is left,
Only the Nameless without space and time:
Abolished is the burdening need of life:
Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief;
The ego is dead; we are freed from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
But where hast thou thrown Self's mission and Self's power?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?
One was within thee who was self and world,
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?
Escape brings not the victory and the crown!
Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.
Only the everlasting No has neared
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
And immortality in the secret heart,
The voice that chants to the creator Fire,
The symbolled OM, the great assenting Word,

The bridge between the rapture and the calm,
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life.
A black veil has been lifted; we have seen
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;
But who has lifted up the veil of light
And who has seen the body of the King?
The mystery of God's birth and acts remains
Leaving unbroken the last chapter's seal,
Unsolved the riddle of the unfinished Play;
The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,
And still the last inviolate secret hides
Behind the human glory of a Form,
Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.
A large white line has figured as a goal,
But far beyond the ineffable suntracks blaze:
What seemed the source and end was a wide gate,
A last bare step into eternity.
An eye has opened upon timelessness,
Infinity takes back the forms it gave,
And through God's darkness or his naked light
His million rays return into the Sun.
There is a zero sign of the Supreme;
Nature left nude and still uncovers God.
But in her grandiose nothingness all is there:
When her strong garbs are torn away from us,
The soul's ignorance is slain but not the soul:
The zero covers an immortal face.
A high and blank negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God's last word,
Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
The meaning of this great mysterious world.
In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul

And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,
It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.
To free the self is but one radiant pace;
Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.

Even while he stood on being's naked edge
And all the passion and seeking of his soul
Faced their extinction in some featureless Vast,
The Presence he yearned for suddenly drew close.
Across the silence of the ultimate Calm,
Out of a marvellous Transcendence' core,
A body of wonder and translucency
As if a sweet mystic summary of her self
Escaping into the original Bliss
Had come enlarged out of eternity,
Someone came infinite and absolute.
A being of wisdom, power and delight,
Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,
Took to her breast Nature and world and soul.
Abolishing the signless emptiness,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless hush,
Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
Into the liberty of the motionless depths
A beautiful and felicitous lustre stole.
The Power, the Light, the Bliss no word can speak
Imaged itself in a surprising beam
And built a golden passage to his heart
Touching through him all longing sentient things.
A moment's sweetness of the All-Beautiful
Cancelled the vanity of the cosmic whirl.
A Nature throbbing with a Heart divine
Was felt in the unconscious universe;
It made the breath a happy mystery.
A love that bore the cross of pain with joy
Eudaemonised the sorrow of the world,

Made happy the weight of long unending Time,
The secret caught of God's felicity.
Affirming in life a hidden ecstasy
It held the spirit to its miraculous course;
Carrying immortal values to the hours
It justified the labour of the suns.
For one was there supreme behind the God.
A Mother Might brooded upon the world;
A Consciousness revealed its marvellous front
Transcending all that is, denying none:
Imperishable above our fallen heads
He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force.
The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power
Of all that here is made and then destroyed,
The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.
The Enigma ceased that rules our nature's night,
The covering Nescience was unmasksed and slain;
Its mind of error was stripped off from things
And the dull moods of its perverting will.
Illumined by her all-seeing identity
Knowledge and Ignorance could strive no more;
No longer could the titan Opposites,
Antagonist poles of the world's artifice,
Impose the illusion of their twofold screen
Throwing their figures between us and her.
The Wisdom was near, disguised by its own works,
Of which the darkened universe is the robe.
No more existence seemed an aimless fall,
Extinction was no more the sole release.
The hidden Word was found, the long-sought clue,
Revealed was the meaning of our spirit's birth,
Condemned to an imperfect body and mind,
In the inconscience of material things
And the indignity of mortal life.
A Heart was felt in the spaces wide and bare,

A burning Love from white spiritual founts
Annulled the sorrow of the ignorant depths;
Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.
A Life from beyond grew conqueror here of death;
To err no more was natural to mind;
Wrong could not come where all was light and love.
The Formless and the Formed were joined in her:
Immensity was exceeded by a look,
A Face revealed the crowded Infinite.
Incarnating inexpressibly in her limbs
The boundless joy the blind world-forces seek,
Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss.
At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,
In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.
Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;
The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;
She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.
All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.
All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,
All contraries prepare her harmony;
Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes;
In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.
Our self shall be one self with all through her.

In her confirmed because transformed in her,
Our life shall find in its fulfilled response
Above, the boundless hushed beatitudes,
Below, the wonder of the embrace divine.
This known as in a thunder-flash of God,
The rapture of things eternal filled his limbs;
Amazement fell upon his ravished sense;
His spirit was caught in her intolerant flame.
Once seen, his heart acknowledged only her.
Only a hunger of infinite bliss was left.
All aims in her were lost, then found in her;
His base was gathered to one pointing spire.

This was a seed cast into endless Time.
A Word is spoken or a Light is shown,
A moment sees, the ages toil to express.
So flashing out of the Timeless leaped the worlds;
An eternal instant is the cause of the years.
All he had done was to prepare a field;
His small beginnings asked for a mighty end:
For all that he had been must now new-shape
In him her joy to embody, to enshrine
Her beauty and greatness in his house of life.
But now his being was too wide for self;
His heart's demand had grown immeasurable:
His single freedom could not satisfy,
Her light, her bliss he asked for earth and men.
But vain are human power and human love
To break earth's seal of ignorance and death;
His nature's might seemed now an infant's grasp;
Heaven is too high for outstretched hands to seize.
This Light comes not by struggle or by thought;
In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts
And the hushed heart hears the unuttered Word.
A vast surrender was his only strength.
A Power that lives upon the heights must act,

Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air
And fill the finite with the Infinite.
All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.
Now other claims had hushed in him their cry:
Only he longed to draw her presence and power
Into his heart and mind and breathing frame;
Only he yearned to call for ever down
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.
His soul was freed and given to her alone.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

The House of the Spirit and the New Creation

A MIGHTIER task remained than all he had done.
To That he turned from which all being comes,
A sign attending from the Secrecy
Which knows the Truth ungrasped behind our thoughts
And guards the world with its all-seeing gaze.
In the unapproachable stillness of his soul,
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone,
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.
A strength he sought that was not yet on earth,
Help from a Power too great for mortal will,
The light of a Truth now only seen afar,
A sanction from his high omnipotent Source.
But from the appalling heights there stooped no voice;
The timeless lids were closed; no opening came.
A neutral helpless void oppressed the years.
In the texture of our bound humanity
He felt the stark resistance huge and dumb
Of our inconscient and unseeing base,
The stubborn mute rejection in life's depths,
The ignorant No in the origin of things.
A veiled collaboration with the Night
Even in himself survived and hid from his view:
Still something in his earthly being kept
Its kinship with the Inconscient whence it came.
A shadowy unity with a vanished past
Treasured in an old-world frame was lurking there,
Secret, unnoted by the illumined mind,
And in subconscious whispers and in dream
Still murmured at the mind's and spirit's choice.
Its treacherous elements spread like slippery grains

Hoping the incoming Truth might stumble and fall,
And old ideal voices wandering moaned
And pleaded for a heavenly leniency
To the gracious imperfections of our earth
And the sweet weaknesses of our mortal state.
This now he willed to discover and exile,
The element in him betraying God.
All Nature's recondite spaces were stripped bare,
All her dim crypts and corners searched with fire
Where refugee instincts and unshaped revolts
Could shelter find in darkness' sanctuary
Against the white purity of heaven's cleansing flame.
All seemed to have perished that was undivine:
Yet some minutest dissident might escape
And still a centre lurk of the blind force.
For the Inconscient too is infinite;
The more its abysses we insist to sound,
The more it stretches, stretches endlessly.
Then lest a human cry should spoil the Truth
He tore desire up from its bleeding roots
And offered to the gods the vacant place.
Thus could he bear the touch immaculate.
A last and mightiest transformation came.
His soul was all in front like a great sea
Flooding the mind and body with its waves;
His being, spread to embrace the universe,
United the within and the without
To make of life a cosmic harmony,
An empire of the immanent Divine.
In this tremendous universality
Not only his soul-nature and mind-sense
Included every soul and mind in his,
But even the life of flesh and nerve was changed
And grew one flesh and nerve with all that lives;
He felt the joy of others as his joy,
He bore the grief of others as his grief;

His universal sympathy upbore,
Immense like ocean, the creation's load
As earth upbears all beings' sacrifice,
Thrilled with the hidden Transcendent's joy and peace.
There was no more division's endless scroll;
One grew the Spirit's secret unity,
All Nature felt again the single bliss.
There was no cleavage between soul and soul,
There was no barrier between world and God.
Overpowered were form and memory's limiting line;
The covering mind was seized and torn apart;
It was dissolved and now no more could be,
The one Consciousness that made the world was seen;
All now was luminosity and force.
Abolished in its last thin fainting trace
The circle of the little self was gone;
The separate being could no more be felt;
It disappeared and knew itself no more,
Lost in the spirit's wide identity.
His nature grew a movement of the All,
Exploring itself to find that all was He,
His soul was a delegation of the All
That turned from itself to join the one Supreme.
Transcended was the human formula;
Man's heart that had obscured the Inviolable
Assumed the mighty beating of a god's;
His seeking mind ceased in the Truth that knows;
His life was a flow of the universal life.
He stood fulfilled on the world's highest line
Awaiting the ascent beyond the world,
Awaiting the descent the world to save.
A Splendour and a Symbol wrapped the earth,
Serene epiphanies looked and hallowed vasts
Surrounded, wise infinitudes were close
And bright remotenesses leaned near and kin.
Sense failed in that tremendous lucency;

Ephemeral voices from his hearing fell
And Thought potent no more sank large and pale
Like a tired god into mysterious seas.
The robes of mortal thinking were cast down
Leaving his knowledge bare to absolute sight;
Fate's driving ceased and Nature's sleepless spur:
The athlete heavings of the will were stilled
In the Omnipotent's unmoving peace.
Life in his members lay down vast and mute;
Naked, unwalled, unterrified it bore
The immense regard of Immortality.
The last movement died and all at once grew still.
A weight that was the unseen Transcendent's hand
Laid on his limbs the Spirit's measureless seal,
Infinity swallowed him into shoreless trance.

As one who sets his sail towards mysteried shores
Driven through huge oceans by the breath of God,
The fathomless below, the unknown around,
His soul abandoned the blind star-field, Space.
Afar from all that makes the measured world,
Plunging to hidden eternities it withdrew
Back from mind's foaming surface to the Vasts
Voiceless within us in omniscient sleep.
Above the imperfect reach of word and thought,
Beyond the sight that seeks support of form,
Lost in deep tracts of superconscious Light,
Or voyaging in blank featureless Nothingness,
Sole in the trackless Incommensurable,
Or past not-self and self and selflessness,
Transgressing the dream-shores of conscious mind
He reached at last his sempiternal base.
On sorrowless heights no winging cry disturbs,
Pure and untouched above this mortal play
Is spread the spirit's hushed immobile air.
There no beginning is and there no end;

There is the stable force of all that moves;
There the aeonic labourer is at rest.
There turns no keyed creation in the void,
No giant mechanism watched by a soul;
There creaks no fate-turned huge machinery;
The marriage of evil with good within one breast,
The clash of strife in the very clasp of love,
The dangerous pain of life's experiment
In the values of Inconsequence and Chance,
The peril of mind's gamble, throwing our lives
As stake in a wager of indifferent gods
And the shifting lights and shadows of the idea
Falling upon the surface consciousness,
And in the dream of a mute witness soul
Creating the error of a half-seen world
Where knowledge is a seeking ignorance,
Life's steps a stumbling series without suit,
Its aspect of fortuitous design,
Its equal measure of the true and false
In that immobile and immutable realm
Find no access, no cause, no right to live:
There only reigns the spirit's motionless power
Poised in itself through still eternity
And its omniscient and omnipotent peace.
Thought clashes not with thought and truth with truth,
There is no war of right with rival right;
There are no stumbling and half-seeing lives
Passing from chance to unexpected chance,
No suffering of hearts compelled to beat
In bodies of the inert Inconscient's make.
Armed with the immune occult unsinking Fire
The guardians of Eternity keep its law
For ever fixed upon Truth's giant base
In her magnificent and termless home.
There Nature on her dumb spiritual couch
Immutably transcendent knows her source

And to the stir of multitudinous worlds
Assents unmoved in a perpetual calm.
All-causing, all-sustaining and aloof,
The Witness looks from his unshaken poise,
An Eye immense regarding all things done.
Apart, at peace above creation's stir,
Immersed in the eternal altitudes,
He abode defended in his shoreless self,
Companioned only by the all-seeing One.
A Mind too mighty to be bound by Thought,
A Life too boundless for the play in Space,
A Soul without borders unconvinced of Time,
He felt the extinction of the world's long pain,
He became the unborn Self that never dies,
He joined the sessions of Infinity.
On the cosmic murmur primal loneliness fell,
Annulled was the contact formed with time-born things,
Empty grew Nature's wide community.
All things were brought back to their formless seed,
The world was silent for a cyclic hour.
Although the afflicted Nature he had left
Maintained beneath him her broad numberless fields,
Her enormous act, receding, failed remote
As if a soulless dream at last had ceased.
No voice came down from the high Silences,
None answered from her desolate solitudes.
A stillness of cessation reigned, the wide
Immortal hush before the gods are born;
A universal Force awaited, mute,
The veiled Transcendent's ultimate decree.

Then suddenly there came a downward look.
As if a sea exploring its own depths,
A living Oneness widened at its core
And joined him to unnumbered multitudes.
A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love

Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
And each became the self and space of all.
The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self was one.
This knowledge now was made a cosmos' seed:
This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp
And from the throbings of that single Heart
And from the naked Spirit's victory
A new and marvellous creation rose.
Incalculable outflowing infinitudes
Laughing out an unmeasured happiness
Lived their innumerable unity;
Worlds where the being is unbound and wide
Bodied unthinkable the egoless Self;
Rapture of beatific energies
Joined Time to the Timeless, poles of a single joy;
White vasts were seen where all is wrapped in all.
There were no contraries, no sundered parts,
All by spiritual links were joined to all
And bound indissolubly to the One:
Each was unique, but took all lives as his own,
And, following out these tones of the Infinite,
Recognised in himself the universe.
A splendid centre of infinity's whirl
Pushed to its zenith's height, its last expanse,
Felt the divinity of its own self-bliss
Repeated in its numberless other selves:
It took up tirelessly into its scope
Persons and figures of the Impersonal,
As if prolonging in a ceaseless count,

In a rapturous multiplication's sum,
The recurring decimals of eternity.
None was apart, none lived for himself alone,
Each lived for God in him and God in all,
Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole.
There Oneness was not tied to monotone;
It showed a thousand aspects of itself,
Its calm immutable stability
Upbore on a changeless ground for ever safe,
Compelled to a spontaneous servitude,
The ever-changing incalculable steps,
The seeming-reckless dance's subtle plan
Of immense world-forces in their perfect play.
Appearance looked back to its hidden truth
And made of difference oneness' smiling play;
It made all persons fractions of the Unique,
Yet all were being's secret integers.
All struggle was turned to a sweet strife of love
In the harmonised circle of a sure embrace.
Identity's reconciling happiness gave
A rich security to difference.
On a meeting line of hazardous extremes
The game of games was played to its breaking-point,
Where through self-finding by divine self-loss
There leaps out unity's supreme delight
Whose blissful undivided sweetness feels
A communality of the Absolute.
There was no sob of suffering anywhere;
Experience ran from point to point of joy:
Bliss was the pure undying truth of things.
All Nature was a conscious front of God:
A wisdom worked in all, self-moved, self-sure,
A plenitude of illimitable Light,
An authenticity of intuitive Truth,
A glory and passion of creative Force.
Infallible, leaping from eternity,

The moment's thought inspired the passing act.
A word, a laughter, sprang from Silence' breast,
A rhythm of Beauty in the calm of Space,
A knowledge in the fathomless heart of Time.
All turned to all without reserve's recoil:
A single ecstasy without a break,
Love was a close and thrilled identity
In the throbbing heart of all that luminous life.
A universal vision that unites,
A sympathy of nerve replying to nerve,
Hearing that listens to thought's inner sound
And follows the rhythmic meanings of the heart,
A touch that needs not hands to feel, to clasp,
Were there the native means of consciousness
And heightened the intimacy of soul with soul.
A grand orchestra of spiritual powers,
A diapason of soul-interchange
Harmonised a Oneness deep, immeasurable.
In these new worlds projected he became
A portion of the universal gaze,
A station of the all-inhabiting light,
A ripple on a single sea of peace.
His mind answered to countless communing minds,
His words were syllables of the cosmos' speech,
His life a field of the vast cosmic stir.
He felt the footsteps of a million wills
Moving in unison to a single goal.
A stream ever new-born that never dies,
Caught in its thousandfold current's ravishing flow,
With eddies of immortal sweetness thrilled,
He bore coiling through his members as they passed
Calm movements of interminable delight,
The bliss of a myriad myriads who are one.

In this vast outbreak of perfection's law
Imposing its fixity on the flux of things

He saw a hierarchy of lucent planes
Enfeoffed to this highest kingdom of God-state.
Attuning to one Truth their own right rule
Each housed the gladness of a bright degree,
Alone in beauty, perfect in self-kind,
An image cast by one deep truth's absolute,
Married to all in happy difference.
Each gave its powers to help its neighbours' parts,
But suffered no diminution by the gift;
Profiteers of a mystic interchange,
They grew by what they took and what they gave,
All others they felt as their own complements,
One in the might and joy of multitude.
Even in the poise where Oneness draws apart
To feel the rapture of its separate selves,
The Sole in its solitude yearned towards the All
And the Many turned to look back at the One.
An all-revealing all-creating Bliss,
Seeking for forms to manifest truths divine,
Aligned in their significant mystery
The gleams of the symbols of the Ineffable
Blazoned like hues upon a colourless air
On the white purity of the Witness Soul.
These hues were the very prism of the Supreme,
His beauty, power, delight creation's cause.
A vast Truth-Consciousness took up these signs
To pass them on to some divine child Heart
That looked on them with laughter and delight
And joyed in these transcendent images
Living and real as the truths they house.
The Spirit's white neutrality became
A playground of miracles, a rendezvous
For the secret powers of a mystic Timelessness:
It made of Space a marvel house of God,
It poured through Time its works of ageless might,
Unveiled seen as a luring rapturous face

The wonder and beauty of its Love and Force.
The eternal Goddess moved in her cosmic house
Sporting with God as a Mother with her child:
To him the universe was her bosom of love,
His toys were the immortal verities.
All here self-lost had there its divine place.
The Powers that here betray our hearts and err,
Were there sovereign in truth, perfect in joy,
Masters in a creation without flaw,
Possessors of their own infinitude.
There Mind, a splendid sun of vision's rays,
Shaped substance by the glory of its thoughts
And moved amidst the grandeur of its dreams.
Imagination's great ensorcelling rod
Summoned the unknown and gave to it a home,
Outspread luxuriantly in golden air
Truth's iris-coloured wings of fantasy,
Or sang to the intuitive heart of joy
Wonder's dream-notes that bring the Real close.
Its power that makes the unknowable near and true,
In the temple of the ideal shrined the One:
It peopled thought and mind and happy sense
Filled with bright aspects of the might of God
And living persons of the one Supreme,
The speech that voices the ineffable,
The ray revealing unseen Presences,
The virgin forms through which the Formless shines,
The Word that ushers divine experience
And the Ideas that crowd the Infinite.
There was no gulf between the thought and fact,
Ever they replied like bird to calling bird;
The will obeyed the thought, the act the will.
There was a harmony woven twixt soul and soul.
A marriage with eternity divinised Time.
There Life pursued, unwearied of her sport,
Joy in her heart and laughter on her lips,

The bright adventure of God's game of chance.
In her ingenious ardour of caprice,
In her transfiguring mirth she mapped on Time
A fascinating puzzle of events,
Lured at each turn by new vicissitudes
To self-discovery that could never cease.
Ever she framed stark bonds for the will to break,
Brought new creations for the thought's surprise
And passionate ventures for the heart to dare,
Where Truth recurred with an unexpected face
Or else repeated old familiar joy
Like the return of a delightful rhyme.
At hide-and-seek on a Mother-Wisdom's breast,
An artist teeming with her world-idea,
She never could exhaust its numberless thoughts
And vast adventure into thinking shapes
And trial and lure of a new living's dreams.
Untired of sameness and untired of change,
Endlessly she unrolled her moving act,
A mystery drama of divine delight,
A living poem of world-ecstasy,
A kakemono of significant forms,
A coiled perspective of developing scenes,
A brilliant chase of self-revealing shapes,
An ardent hunt of soul looking for soul,
A seeking and a finding as of gods.
There Matter is the Spirit's firm density,
An artistry of glad outwardness of self,
A treasure-house of lasting images
Where sense can build a world of pure delight:
The home of a perpetual happiness,
It lodged the hours as in a pleasant inn.
The senses there were outlets of the soul;
Even the youngest child-thought of the mind
Incarnated some touch of highest things.
There substance was a resonant harp of self,

A net for the constant lightnings of the spirit,
A magnet power of love's intensity
Whose yearning throb and adoration's cry
Drew God's approaches close, sweet, wonderful.
Its solidity was a mass of heavenly make;
Its fixity and sweet permanence of charm
Made a bright pedestal for felicity.
Its bodies woven by a divine sense
Prolonged the nearness of soul's clasp with soul;
Its warm play of external sight and touch
Reflected the glow and thrill of the heart's joy,
Mind's climbing brilliant thoughts, the spirit's bliss;
Life's rapture kept for ever its flame and cry.
All that now passes lived immortal there
In the proud beauty and fine harmony
Of Matter plastic to spiritual light.
Its ordered hours proclaimed the eternal Law;
Vision reposed on a safety of deathless forms;
Time was Eternity's transparent robe.
An architect hewing out self's living rock,
Phenomenon built Reality's summer-house
On the beaches of the sea of Infinity.

Against this glory of spiritual states,
Their parallels and yet their opposites,
Floated and swayed, eclipsed and shadowlike
As if a doubt made substance, flickering, pale,
This other scheme two vast negations found.
A world that knows not its inhabiting Self
Labours to find its cause and need to be;
A spirit ignorant of the world it made,
Obscured by Matter, travestied by Life,
Struggles to emerge, to be free, to know and reign;
These were close-tied in one disharmony,
Yet the divergent lines met not at all.
Three Powers governed its irrational course,

In the beginning an unknowing Force,
In the middle an embodied striving soul,
In its end a silent spirit denying life.
A dull and infelicitous interlude
Unrolls its dubious truth to a questioning Mind
Compelled by the ignorant Power to play its part
And to record her inconclusive tale,
The mystery of her inconscient plan
And the riddle of a being born from Night
By a marriage of Necessity with Chance.
This darkness hides our nobler destiny.
A chrysalis of a great and glorious truth,
It stifles the winged marvel in its sheath
Lest from the prison of Matter it escape
And, wasting its beauty on the formless Vast,
Merged into the Unknowable's mystery,
Leave unfulfilled the world's miraculous fate.
As yet thought only some high spirit's dream
Or a vexed illusion in man's toiling mind,
A new creation from the old shall rise,
A Knowledge inarticulate find speech,
Beauty suppressed burst into paradise bloom,
Pleasure and pain dive into absolute bliss.
A tongueless oracle shall speak at last,
The Superconscious conscious grow on earth,
The Eternal's wonders join the dance of Time.
But now all seemed a vainly teeming vast
Upheld by a deluded Energy
To a spectator self-absorbed and mute,
Careless of the unmeaning show he watched,
Regarding the bizarre procession pass
Like one who waits for an expected end.
He saw a world that is from a world to be.
There he divined rather than saw or felt,
Far off upon the rim of consciousness,
Transient and frail this little whirling globe

And on it left like a lost dream's vain mould,
A fragile copy of the spirit's shell,
His body gathered into mystic sleep.
A foreign shape it seemed, a mythic shade.

Alien now seemed that dim far universe,
Self and eternity alone were true.
Then memory climbed to him from the striving planes
Bringing a cry from once-loved cherished things,
And to the cry as to its own lost call
A ray replied from the occult Supreme.
For even there the boundless Oneness dwells.
To its own sight unrecognisable,
It lived still sunk in its own tenebrous seas,
Upholding the world's inconscient unity
Hidden in Matter's insentient multitude.
This seed-self sown in the Indeterminate
Forfeits its glory of divinity,
Concealing the omnipotence of its Force,
Concealing the omniscience of its Soul;
An agent of its own transcendent Will,
It merges knowledge in the inconscient deep;
Accepting error, sorrow, death and pain,
It pays the ransom of the ignorant Night,
Redeeming by its substance Nature's fall.
Himself he knew and why his soul had gone
Into earth's passionate obscurity
To share the labour of an errant Power
Which by division hopes to find the One.
Two beings he was, one wide and free above,
One struggling, bound, intense, its portion here.
A tie between them still could bridge two worlds;
There was a dim response, a distant breath;
All had not ceased in the unbounded hush.
His heart lay somewhere conscious and alone
Far down below him like a lamp in night;

Abandoned it lay, alone, imperishable,
Immobile with excess of passionate will,
His living, sacrificed and offered heart
Absorbed in adoration mystical,
Turned to its far-off fount of light and love.
In the luminous stillness of its mute appeal
It looked up to the heights it could not see;
It yearned from the longing depths it could not leave.
In the centre of his vast and fateful trance
Half-way between his free and fallen selves,
Interceding twixt God's day and the mortal's night,
Accepting worship as its single law,
Accepting bliss as the sole cause of things,
Refusing the austere joy which none can share,
Refusing the calm that lives for calm alone,
To her it turned for whom it willed to be.
In the passion of its solitary dream
It lay like a closed soundless oratory
Where sleeps a consecrated argent floor
Lit by a single and untrembling ray
And an invisible Presence kneels in prayer.
On some deep breast of liberating peace
All else was satisfied with quietude;
This only knew there was a truth beyond.
All other parts were dumb in centred sleep
Consenting to the slow deliberate Power
Which tolerates the world's error and its grief,
Consenting to the cosmic long delay,
Timelessly waiting through the patient years
Her coming they had asked for earth and men;
This was the fiery point that called her now.
Extinction could not quench that lonely fire;
Its seeing filled the blank of mind and will;
Thought dead, its changeless force abode and grew.
Armed with the intuition of a bliss
To which some moved tranquillity was the key,

It persevered through life's huge emptiness
Amid the blank denials of the world.
It sent its voiceless prayer to the Unknown;
It listened for the footsteps of its hopes
Returning through the void immensities,
It waited for the fiat of the Word
That comes through the still self from the Supreme.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Vision and the Boon

THEN suddenly there rose a sacred stir.
Amid the lifeless silence of the Void
In a solitude and an immensity
A sound came quivering like a loved footfall
Heard in the listening spaces of the soul;
A touch perturbed his fibres with delight.
An Influence had approached the mortal range,
A boundless Heart was near his longing heart,
A mystic Form enveloped his earthly shape.
All at her contact broke from silence' seal;
Spirit and body thrilled identified,
Linked in the grasp of an unspoken joy;
Mind, members, life were merged in ecstasy.
Intoxicated as with nectarous rain
His nature's passioning stretches flowed to her,
Flashing with lightnings, mad with luminous wine.
All was a limitless sea that heaved to the moon.
A divinising stream possessed his veins,
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy:
Tissue and flesh partook beatitude.
Alight, the dun unplumbed subconscious caves
Thrilled with the prescience of her longed-for tread
And filled with flickering crests and praying tongues.
Even lost in slumber, mute, inanimate
His very body answered to her power.
The One he worshipped was within him now:
Flame-pure, ethereal-tressed, a mighty Face
Appeared and lips moved by immortal words;
Lids, Wisdom's leaves, drooped over rapture's orbs.
A marble monument of ponderings, shone

A forehead, sight's crypt, and large like ocean's gaze
Towards Heaven, two tranquil eyes of boundless thought
Looked into man's and saw the god to come.
A Shape was seen on threshold Mind, a Voice
Absolute and wise in the heart's chambers spoke:
"O Son of Strength who climbst creation's peaks,
No soul is thy companion in the light;
Alone thou standest at the eternal doors.
What thou hast won is thine, but ask no more.
O Spirit aspiring in an ignorant frame,
O Voice arisen from the Inconscient's world,
How shalt thou speak for men whose hearts are dumb,
Make purblind earth the soul's seer-vision's home
Or lighten the burden of the senseless globe?
I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind,
I am the goal of the travail of the suns;
My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
Awake not the immeasurable descent,
Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:
In thy single vast achievement reign apart
Helping the world with thy great lonely days.
I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss,
Turned from the fruitless motion of the years,
Deserting the fierce labour of the worlds,
Aloof from beings, lost in the Alone.
How shall thy mighty spirit brook repose
While Death is still unconquered on the earth
And Time a field of suffering and pain?
Thy soul was born to share the laden Force;
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,

For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live.
The Enigma's knot is tied in humankind.
A lightning from the heights that think and plan,
Ploughing the air of life with vanishing trails,
Man, sole awake in an unconscious world,
Aspires in vain to change the cosmic dream.
Arrived from some half-luminous Beyond
He is a stranger in the mindless vasts;
A traveller in his oft-shifting home
Amid the tread of many infinities,
He has pitched a tent of life in desert Space.
Heaven's fixed regard beholds him from above,
In the house of Nature a perturbing guest,
A voyager twixt Thought's inconstant shores,
A hunter of unknown and beautiful Powers,
A nomad of the far mysterious Light,
In the wide ways a little spark of God.
Against his spirit all is in dire league,
A Titan influence stops his Godward gaze.
Around him hungers the unpitying Void,
The eternal Darkness seeks him with her hands,
Inscrutable Energies drive him and deceive,
Immense implacable deities oppose.
An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
Have made a world estranged from life and thought;
The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps
Unalterable the law of Chance and Death;
On his long way through Time and Circumstance
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word:
Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.
His day is a moment in perpetual Time;
He is the prey of the minutes and the hours.
Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven,
Descended here unhappy and sublime,

A link between the demigod and the beast,
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;
He has forgotten why he has come and whence.
His spirit and his members are at war;
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,
His mass is buried in the animal mire.
A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.
A riddle of opposites is made his field:
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,
He has need of darkness to perceive some light
And need of grief to feel a little bliss;
He has need of death to find a greater life.
All sides he sees and turns to every call;
He has no certain light by which to walk;
His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide-and-seek;
He seeks himself and from himself he runs;
Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.
Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;
He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide;
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.
The light his soul had brought his mind has lost;
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,
Then all is shadow again and nothing true:
Unknowing what he does or whither he tends
He fabricates signs of the Real in Ignorance.
He has hitched his mortal error to Truth's star.
Wisdom attracts him with her luminous masks,
But never has he seen the face behind:
A giant Ignorance surrounds his lore.
Assigned to meet the cosmic mystery
In the dumb figure of a material world,
His passport of entry false and his personage,
He is compelled to be what he is not;
He obeys the Inconscience he had come to rule

And sinks in Matter to fulfil his soul.
Awakened from her lower driven forms
The Earth-Mother gave her forces to his hands
And painfully he guards the heavy trust;
His mind is a lost torch-bearer on her roads.
Illumining breath to think and plasm to feel,
He labours with his slow and sceptic brain
Helped by the reason's vacillating fires,
To make his thought and will a magic door
For knowledge to enter the darkness of the world
And love to rule a realm of strife and hate.
A mind impotent to reconcile heaven and earth
And tied to Matter with a thousand bonds,
He lifts himself to be a conscious god.
Even when a glory of wisdom crowns his brow,
When mind and spirit shed a grandiose ray
To exalt this product of the sperm and gene,
This alchemist's miracle from plasm and gas,
And he who shared the animal's run and crawl
Lifts his thought-stature to the Immortal's heights,
His life still keeps the human middle way;
His body he resigns to death and pain,
Abandoning Matter, his too heavy charge.
A thaumaturge sceptic of miracles,
A spirit left sterile of its occult power
By an unbelieving brain and credulous heart,
He leaves the world to end where it began:
His work unfinished he claims a heavenly prize.
Thus has he missed creation's absolute.
Half-way he stops his star of destiny:
A vast and vain long-tried experiment,
An ill-served high conception doubtfully done,
The world's life falters on not seeing its goal,—
A zigzag towards unknown dangerous ground
Ever repeating its habitual walk,
Ever retreating after marches long

And hardiest victories without sure result,
Drawn endlessly an inconclusive game.
In an ill-fitting and voluminous robe
A radiant purpose still conceals its face,
A mighty blindness stumbles hoping on,
Feeding its strength on gifts of luminous Chance.
Because the human instrument has failed,
The Godhead frustrate sleeps within its seed,
A spirit entangled in the forms it made.
His failure is not failure whom God leads;
Through all the slow mysterious march goes on:
An immutable Power has made this mutable world;
A self-fulfilling transcendence treads man's road;
The driver of the soul upon its path,
It knows its steps, its way is inevitable,
And how shall the end be vain when God is guide?
However man's mind may tire or fail his flesh,
A will prevails cancelling his conscious choice:
The goal recedes, a bournelless vastness calls
Retreating into an immense Unknown;
There is no end to the world's stupendous march,
There is no rest for the embodied soul.
It must live on, describe all Time's huge curve.
An Influx presses from the closed Beyond
Forbidding to him rest and earthly ease,
Till he has found himself he cannot pause.
A Light there is that leads, a Power that aids;
Unmarked, unfeet it sees in him and acts:
Ignorant, he forms the All-Conscient in his depths,
Human, looks up to superhuman peaks:
A borrower of Supernature's gold,
He paves his road to Immortality.
The high gods look on man and watch and choose
Today's impossibles for the future's base.
His transience trembles with the Eternal's touch,
His barriers cede beneath the Infinite's tread;

The Immortals have their entries in his life:
The Ambassadors of the Unseen draw near.
A splendour sullied by the mortal air,
Love passes through his heart, a wandering guest.
Beauty surrounds him for a magic hour,
He has visits of a large revealing joy,
Brief widenesses release him from himself,
Enticing towards a glory ever in front
Hopes of a deathless sweetness lure and leave.
His mind is crossed by strange discovering fires,
Rare intimations lift his stumbling speech
To a moment's kinship with the eternal Word;
A masque of Wisdom circles through his brain
Perturbing him with glimpses half divine.
He lays his hands sometimes on the Unknown;
He communes sometimes with Eternity.
A strange and grandiose symbol was his birth
And immortality and spirit-room
And pure perfection and a shadowless bliss
Are this afflicted creature's mighty fate.
In him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change
Foreshadowed in her dumb and fiery depths,
A godhead drawn from her transmuted limbs,
An alchemy of Heaven on Nature's base.
Adept of the self-born unfailing line,
Leave not the light to die the ages bore,
Help still humanity's blind and suffering life:
Obey thy spirit's wide omnipotent urge.
A witness to God's parley with the Night,
It leaned compassionate from immortal calm
And housed desire, the troubled seed of things.
Assent to thy high self, create, endure.
Cease not from knowledge, let thy toil be vast.
No more can earthly limits pen thy force;
Equal thy work with long unending Time's.
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights,

Tread still the difficult and dateless path
Joining the cycles with its austere curve
Measured for man by the initiate Gods.
My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour."

August and sweet sank hushed that mighty Voice.
Nothing now moved in the vast brooding space:
A stillness came upon the listening world,
A mute immensity of the Eternal's peace.
But Aswapati's heart replied to her,
A cry amid the silence of the Vasts:
"How shall I rest content with mortal days
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
The glory and the beauty of thy face?
Hard is the doom to which thou bindst thy sons!
How long shall our spirits battle with the Night
And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
We who are vessels of a deathless Force
And builders of the godhead of the race?
Or if it is thy work I do below
Amid the error and waste of human life
In the vague light of man's half-conscious mind,
Why breaks not in some distant gleam of thee?
Ever the centuries and millenniums pass.
Where in the greyness is thy coming's ray?
Where is the thunder of thy victory's wings?
Only we hear the feet of passing gods.

A plan in the occult eternal Mind
Mapped out to backward and prophetic sight,
The aeons ever repeat their changeless round,
The cycles all rebuild and ever aspire.
All we have done is ever still to do.
All breaks and all renewes and is the same.
Huge revolutions of life's fruitless gyre,
The new-born ages perish like the old,
As if the sad Enigma kept its right
Till all is done for which this scene was made.
Too little the strength that now with us is born,
Too faint the light that steals through Nature's lids,
Too scant the joy with which she buys our pain.
In a brute world that knows not its own sense,
Thought-racked upon the wheel of birth we live,
The instruments of an impulse not our own
Moved to achieve with our heart's blood for price
Half-knowledge, half-creations that soon tire.
A foiled immortal soul in perishing limbs,
Baffled and beaten back we labour still;
Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive.
In anguish we labour that from us may rise
A larger-seeing man with nobler heart,
A golden vessel of the incarnate Truth,
The executor of the divine attempt
Equipped to wear the earthly body of God,
Communicant and prophet and lover and king.
I know that thy creation cannot fail:
For even through the mists of mortal thought
Infallible are thy mysterious steps,
And, though Necessity dons the garb of Chance,
Hidden in the blind shifts of Fate she keeps
The slow calm logic of Infinity's pace
And the inviolate sequence of its will.
All life is fixed in an ascending scale
And adamantine is the evolving Law;

In the beginning is prepared the close.
This strange irrational product of the mire,
This compromise between the beast and god,
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,
A spirit vast as the containing sky
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,
A god come down and greater by the fall.
A Power arose out of my slumber's cell.
Abandoning the tardy limp of the hours
And the inconstant blink of mortal sight,
There where the Thinker sleeps in too much light
And intolerant flames the lone all-witnessing Eye
Hearing the word of Fate from Silence' heart
In the endless moment of Eternity,
It saw from timelessness the works of Time.
Overpassed were the leaden formulas of the Mind,
Overpowered the obstacle of mortal Space:
The unfolding Image showed the things to come.
A giant dance of Shiva tore the past;
There was a thunder as of worlds that fall;
Earth was o'errun with fire and the roar of Death
Clamouring to slay a world his hunger had made;
There was a clangour of Destruction's wings:
The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,
Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.
I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,

The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.
Although Fate lingers in the high Beyond
And the work seems vain on which our heart's force was spent,
All shall be done for which our pain was borne.
Even as of old man came behind the beast
This high divine successor surely shall come
Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,
Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears:
He shall know what mortal mind barely durst think,
He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not dare.
Inheritor of the toil of human time,
He shall take on him the burden of the gods;
All heavenly light shall visit the earth's thoughts,
The might of heaven shall fortify earthly hearts;
Earth's deeds shall touch the superhuman's height,
Earth's seeing widen into the infinite.
Heavy unchanged weighs still the imperfect world;

The splendid youth of Time has passed and failed;
Heavy and long are the years our labour counts
And still the seals are firm upon man's soul
And weary is the ancient Mother's heart.
O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to God.
O radiant fountain of the world's delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwellst deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find,
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee.
One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart.
Immortal, treading the earth with mortal feet
All heaven's beauty crowd in earthly limbs!
Omnipotence, girdle with the power of God
Movements and moments of a mortal will,
Pack with the eternal might one human hour
And with one gesture change all future time.
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."

His prayer sank down in the resisting Night
Oppressed by the thousand forces that deny,
As if too weak to climb to the Supreme.
But there arose a wide consenting Voice;

The spirit of beauty was revealed in sound:
Light floated round the marvellous Vision's brow
And on her lips the Immortal's joy took shape.
“O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power.
A limitless Mind that can contain the world,
A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
Moved by the passions of the gods shall come.
All mighty and greatnesses shall join in her;
Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair,
And in her body as on his homing tree
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.
A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;
The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,
The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,
Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.
She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,
Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword
And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.”

As a flame disappears in endless Light
Immortally extinguished in its source,
Vanished the splendour and was stilled the word.
An echo of delight that once was close,
The harmony journeyed towards some distant hush,
A music failing in the ear of trance,
A cadence called by distant cadences,
A voice that trembled into strains withdrawn.

Her form retreated from the longing earth
Forsaking nearness to the abandoned sense,
Ascending to her unattainable home.
Lone, brilliant, vacant lay the inner fields;
All was unfilled inordinate spirit space,
Indifferent, waste, a desert of bright peace.
Then a line moved on the far edge of calm:
The warm-lipped sentient soft terrestrial wave,
A quick and many-murmured moan and laugh,
Came gliding in upon white feet of sound.
Unlocked was the deep glory of Silence' heart;
The absolute unmoving stillnesses
Surrendered to the breath of mortal air,
Dissolving boundlessly the heavens of trance
Collapsed to waking mind. Eternity
Cast down its incommunicable lids
Over its solitudes remote from ken
Behind the voiceless mystery of sleep.
The grandiose respite failed, the wide release.
Across the light of fast-receding planes
That fled from him as from a falling star,
Compelled to fill its human house in Time
His soul drew back into the speed and noise
Of the vast business of created things.
A chariot of the marvels of the heavens
Broad-based to bear the gods on fiery wheels,
Flaming he swept through the spiritual gates.
The mortal stir received him in its midst.
Once more he moved amid material scenes,
Lifted by intimations from the heights
And in the pauses of the building brain
Touched by the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.
The eternal seeker in the aeonic field
Besieged by the intolerant press of hours
Again was strong for great swift-footed deeds.

Awake beneath the ignorant vault of Night,
He saw the unnumbered people of the stars
And heard the questioning of the unsatisfied flood
And toiled with the form-maker, measuring Mind.
A wanderer from the occult invisible suns
Accomplishing the fate of transient things,
A god in the figure of the arisen beast,
He raised his brow of conquest to the heavens
Establishing the empire of the soul
On Matter and its bounded universe
As on a solid rock in infinite seas.
The Lord of Life resumed his mighty rounds
In the scant field of the ambiguous globe.

END OF BOOK THREE, CANTO FOUR
END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

BOOKS IV–VIII

BOOK FOUR

The Book of Birth and Quest

Canto One

The Birth and Childhood of the Flame

A MAENAD of the cycles of desire
Around a Light she must not dare to touch,
Hastening towards a far-off unknown goal
Earth followed the endless journey of the Sun.
A mind but half-awake in the swing of the void
On the bosom of Inconscience dreamed out life
And bore this finite world of thought and deed
Across the immobile trance of the Infinite.
A vast immutable silence with her ran:
Prisoner of speed upon a jewelled wheel,
She communed with the mystic heart in Space.
Amid the ambiguous stillness of the stars
She moved towards some undisclosed event
And her rhythm measured the long whirl of Time.
In ceaseless motion round the purple rim
Day after day sped by like coloured spokes,
And through a glamour of shifting hues of air
The seasons drew in linked significant dance
The symbol pageant of the changing year.
Across the burning languor of the soil
Paced Summer with his pomp of violent noons
And stamped his tyranny of torrid light
And the blue seal of a great burnished sky.
Next through its fiery swoon or clotted knot
Rain-tide burst in upon torn wings of heat,
Startled with lightnings air's unquiet drowse,
Lashed with life-giving streams the torpid soil,
Overcast with flare and sound and storm-winged dark
The star-defended doors of heaven's dim sleep,
Or from the gold eye of her paramour
Covered with packed cloud-veils the earth's brown face.

Armies of revolution crossed the time-field,
The clouds' unending march besieged the world,
Tempests' pronunciamentos claimed the sky
And thunder drums announced the embattled gods.
A traveller from unquiet neighbouring seas,
The dense-maned monsoon rode neighing through earth's hours:
Thick now the emissary javelins:
Enormous lightnings split the horizon's rim
And, hurled from the quarters as from contending camps,
Married heaven's edges steep and bare and blind:
A surge and hiss and onset of huge rain,
The long straight sleet-drift, clamours of winged storm-charge,
Throngs of wind-faces, rushing of wind-feet
Hurrying swept through the prone afflicted plains:
Heaven's waters trailed and dribbled through the drowned land.
Then all was a swift stride, a sibilant race,
Or all was tempest's shout and water's fall.
A dimness sagged on the grey floor of day,
Its dingy sprawling length joined morn to eve,
Wallowing in sludge and shower it reached black dark.
Day a half darkness wore as its dull dress.
Light looked into dawn's tarnished glass and met
Its own face there, twin to a half-lit night's:
Downpour and drip and seeping mist swayed all
And turned dry soil to bog and reeking mud:
Earth was a quagmire, heaven a dismal block.
None saw through dank drenched weeks the dungeon sun.
Even when no turmoil vexed air's sombre rest,
Or a faint ray glimmered through weeping clouds
As a sad smile gleams veiled by returning tears,
All promised brightness failed at once denied
Or, soon condemned, died like a brief-lived hope.
Then a last massive deluge thrashed dead mire
And a subsiding mutter left all still,
Or only the muddy creep of sinking floods
Or only a whisper and green toss of trees.

Earth's mood now changed; she lay in lulled repose,
The hours went by with slow contented tread:
A wide and tranquil air remembered peace,
Earth was the comrade of a happy sun.
A calmness neared as of the approach of God,
A light of musing trance lit soil and sky
And an identity and ecstasy
Filled meditation's solitary heart.
A dream loitered in the dumb mind of Space,
Time opened its chambers of felicity,
An exaltation entered and a hope:
An inmost self looked up to a heavenlier height,
An inmost thought kindled a hidden flame
And the inner sight adored an unseen sun.
Three thoughtful seasons passed with shining tread
And scanning one by one the pregnant hours
Watched for a flame that lurked in luminous depths,
The vigil of some mighty birth to come.
Autumn led in the glory of her moons
And dreamed in the splendour of her lotus pools
And Winter and Dew-time laid their calm cool hands
On Nature's bosom still in a half sleep
And deepened with hues of lax and mellow ease
The tranquil beauty of the waning year.
Then Spring, an ardent lover, leaped through leaves
And caught the earth-bride in his eager clasp;
His advent was a fire of irised hues,
His arms were a circle of the arrival of joy.
His voice was a call to the Transcendent's sphere
Whose secret touch upon our mortal lives
Keeps ever new the thrill that made the world,
Remoulds an ancient sweetness to new shapes
And guards intact unchanged by death and Time
The answer of our hearts to Nature's charm
And keeps for ever new, yet still the same,
The throb that ever wakes to the old delight

And beauty and rapture and the joy to live.
His coming brought the magic and the spell;
At his touch life's tired heart grew glad and young;
He made joy a willing prisoner in her breast.
His grasp was a young god's upon earth's limbs:
Changed by the passion of his divine outbreak
He made her body beautiful with his kiss.
Impatient for felicity he came,
High-fluting with the coil's happy voice,
His peacock turban trailing on the trees;
His breath was a warm summons to delight,
The dense voluptuous azure was his gaze.
A soft celestial urge surprised the blood
Rich with the instinct of God's sensuous joys;
Revealed in beauty, a cadence was abroad
Insistent on the rapture-thrill in life:
Immortal movements touched the fleeting hours.
A godlike packed intensity of sense
Made it a passionate pleasure even to breathe;
All sights and voices wove a single charm.
The life of the enchanted globe became
A storm of sweetness and of light and song,
A revel of colour and of ecstasy,
A hymn of rays, a litany of cries:
A strain of choral priestly music sang
And, swung on the swaying censer of the trees,
A sacrifice of perfume filled the hours.
Asocas burned in crimson spots of flame,
Pure like the breath of an unstained desire
White jasmines haunted the enamoured air,
Pale mango-blossoms fed the liquid voice
Of the love-maddened coil, and the brown bee
Muttered in fragrance mid the honey-buds.
The sunlight was a great god's golden smile.
All Nature was at beauty's festival.

In this high signal moment of the gods
Answering earth's yearning and her cry for bliss,
A greatness from our other countries came.
A silence in the noise of earthly things
Immutably revealed the secret Word,
A mightier influx filled the oblivious clay:
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.
A mediating ray had touched the earth
Bridging the gulf between man's mind and God's;
Its brightness linked our transience to the Unknown.
A spirit of its celestial source aware
Translating heaven into a human shape
Descended into earth's imperfect mould
And wept not fallen to mortality,
But looked on all with large and tranquil eyes.
One had returned from the transcendent planes
And bore anew the load of mortal breath,
Who had striven of old with our darkness and our pain;
She took again her divine unfinished task:
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,
Once more with her fathomless heart she fronted Time.
Again there was renewed, again revealed
The ancient closeness by earth-vision veiled,
The secret contact broken off in Time,
A consanguinity of earth and heaven,
Between the human portion toiling here
And an as yet unborn and limitless Force.
Again the mystic deep attempt began,
The daring wager of the cosmic game.
For since upon this blind and whirling globe
Earth-plasm first quivered with the illumining mind
And life invaded the material sheath
Afflicting Inconscience with the need to feel,
Since in Infinity's silence woke a word,
A Mother-wisdom works in Nature's breast
To pour delight on the heart of toil and want

And press perfection on life's stumbling powers,
Impose heaven-sentience on the obscure abyss
And make dumb Matter conscious of its God.
Although our fallen minds forget to climb,
Although our human stuff resists or breaks,
She keeps her will that hopes to divinise clay;
Failure cannot repress, defeat o'erthrow;
Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue,
The ages have not made her passion less;
No victory she admits of Death or Fate.
Always she drives the soul to new attempt;
Always her magical infinitude
Forces to aspire the inert brute elements;
As one who has all infinity to waste,
She scatters the seed of the Eternal's strength
On a half-animate and crumbling mould,
Plants heaven's delight in the heart's passionate mire,
Pours godhead's seekings into a bare beast frame,
Hides immortality in a mask of death.
Once more that Will put on an earthly shape.
A Mind empowered from Truth's immutable seat
Was framed for vision and interpreting act
And instruments were sovereignly designed
To express divinity in terrestrial signs.
Outlined by the pressure of this new descent
A lovelier body formed than earth had known.
As yet a prophecy only and a hint,
The glowing arc of a charmed unseen whole,
It came into the sky of mortal life
Bright like the crescent horn of a gold moon
Returning in a faint illumined eve.
At first glimmering like an unshaped idea
Passive she lay sheltered in wordless sleep,
Involved and drowned in Matter's giant trance,
An infant heart of the deep-caved world-plan
In cradle of divine conscience rocked

By the universal ecstasy of the suns.
Some missioned Power in the half-wakened frame
Nursed a transcendent birth's dumb glorious seed
For which this vivid tenement was made.
But soon the link of soul with form grew sure;
Flooded was the dim cave with slow conscient light,
The seed grew into a delicate marvellous bud,
The bud disclosed a great and heavenly bloom.
At once she seemed to found a mightier race.
Arrived upon the strange and dubious globe
The child remembering only a far home
Lived guarded in her spirit's luminous cell,
Alone mid men in her diviner kind.
Even in her childish movements could be felt
The nearness of a light still kept from earth,
Feelings that only eternity could share,
Thoughts natural and native to the gods.
As needing nothing but its own rapt flight
Her nature dwelt in a strong separate air
Like a strange bird with large rich-coloured breast
That sojourns on a secret fruited bough,
Lost in the emerald glory of the woods
Or flies above divine unreachable tops.
Harmoniously she impressed the earth with heaven.
Aligned to a swift rhythm of sheer delight
And singing to themselves her days went by;
Each minute was a throb of beauty's heart;
The hours were tuned to a sweet-toned content
Which asked for nothing, but took all life gave
Sovereignly as her nature's inborn right.
Near was her spirit to its parent Sun,
The Breath within to the eternal joy.
The first fair life that breaks from Nature's swoon,
Mounts in a line of rapture to the skies;
Absorbed in its own happy urge it lives,
Sufficient to itself, yet turned to all:

It has no seen communion with its world,
No open converse with surrounding things.
There is a oneness native and occult
That needs no instruments and erects no form;
In unison it grows with all that is.
All contacts it assumes into its trance,
Laugh-tossed consents to the wind's kiss and takes
Transmutingly the shocks of sun and breeze:
A blissful yearning riots in its leaves,
A magic passion trembles in its blooms,
Its boughs aspire in hushed felicity.
An occult godhead of this beauty is cause,
The spirit and intimate guest of all this charm,
This sweetness's priestess and this reverie's muse.
Invisibly protected from our sense
The Dryad lives drenched in a deeper ray
And feels another air of storms and calms
And quivers inwardly with mystic rain.
This at a heavenlier height was shown in her.
Even when she bent to meet earth's intimacies
Her spirit kept the stature of the gods;
It stooped but was not lost in Matter's reign.
A world translated was her gleaming mind,
And marvel-mooned bright crowding fantasies
Fed with spiritual sustenance of dreams
The ideal goddess in her house of gold.
Aware of forms to which our eyes are closed,
Conscious of nearnesses we cannot feel,
The Power within her shaped her moulding sense
In deeper figures than our surface types.
An invisible sunlight ran within her veins
And flooded her brain with heavenly brilliances
That woke a wider sight than earth could know.
Outlined in the sincerity of that ray
Her springing childlike thoughts were richly turned
Into luminous patterns of her soul's deep truth,

And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view.
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things.
Each was a symbol power, a vivid flash
In the circuit of infinities half-known;
Nothing was alien or inanimate,
Nothing without its meaning or its call.
For with a greater Nature she was one.
As from the soil sprang glory of branch and flower,
As from the animal's life rose thinking man,
A new epiphany appeared in her.
A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god;
And when the slow rhyme of the expanding years
And the rich murmurous swarm-work of the days
Had honey-packed her sense and filled her limbs,
Accomplishing the moon-orb of her grace,
Self-guarded in the silence of her strength
Her solitary greatness was not less.
Nearer the godhead to the surface pressed,
A sun replacing childhood's nebula
Sovereign in a blue and lonely sky.
Upward it rose to grasp the human scene:
The strong Inhabitant turned to watch her field.
A lovelier light assumed her spirit brow
And sweet and solemn grew her musing gaze;
Celestial-human deep warm slumbrous fires
Woke in the long fringed glory of her eyes
Like altar-burnings in a mysteried shrine.
Out of those crystal windows gleamed a will
That brought a large significance to life.
Holding her forehead's candid stainless space
Behind the student arch a noble power

Of wisdom looked from light on transient things.
A scout of victory in a vigil tower,
Her aspiration called high destiny down;
A silent warrior paced in her city of strength
Inviolate, guarding Truth's diamond throne.
A nectarous haloed moon her passionate heart
Loved all and spoke no word and made no sign,
But kept her bosom's rapturous secrecy
A blissful ardent moved and voiceless world.
Proud, swift and joyful ran the wave of life
Within her like a stream in Paradise.
Many high gods dwelt in one beautiful home;
Yet was her nature's orb a perfect whole,
Harmonious like a chant with many tones,
Immense and various like a universe.
The body that held this greatness seemed almost
An image made of heaven's transparent light.
Its charm recalled things seen in vision's hours,
A golden bridge spanning a faery flood,
A moon-touched palm-tree single by a lake
Companion of the wide and glimmering peace,
A murmur as of leaves in Paradise
Moving when feet of the Immortals pass,
A fiery halo over sleeping hills,
A strange and starry head alone in Night.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Growth of the Flame

A LAND of mountains and wide sun-beat plains
And giant rivers pacing to vast seas,
A field of creation and spiritual hush,
Silence swallowing life's acts into the deeps,
Of thought's transcendent climb and heavenward leap,
A brooding world of reverie and trance,
Filled with the mightiest works of God and man,
Where Nature seemed a dream of the Divine
And beauty and grace and grandeur had their home,
Harboured the childhood of the incarnate Flame.
Over her watched millennial influences
And the deep godheads of a grandiose past
Looked on her and saw the future's godheads come
As if this magnet drew their powers unseen.
Earth's brooding wisdom spoke to her still breast;
Mounting from mind's last peaks to mate with gods,
Making earth's brilliant thoughts a springing-board
To dive into the cosmic vastnesses,
The knowledge of the thinker and the seer
Saw the unseen and thought the unthinkable,
Opened the enormous doors of the unknown,
Rent man's horizons into infinity.
A shoreless sweep was lent to the mortal's acts,
And art and beauty sprang from the human depths;
Nature and soul vied in nobility.
Ethics the human keyed to imitate heaven;
The harmony of a rich culture's tones
Refined the sense and magnified its reach
To hear the unheard and glimpse the invisible
And taught the soul to soar beyond things known,
Inspiring life to greater and break its bounds,

Aspiring to the Immortals' unseen world.
Leaving earth's safety daring wings of Mind
Bore her above the trodden fields of thought
Crossing the mystic seas of the Beyond
To live on eagle heights near to the Sun.
There Wisdom sits on her eternal throne.
All her life's turns led her to symbol doors
Admitting to secret Powers that were her kin;
Adept of truth, initiate of bliss,
A mystic acolyte trained in Nature's school,
Aware of the marvel of created things
She laid the secracies of her heart's deep muse
Upon the altar of the Wonderful;
Her hours were a ritual in a timeless fane;
Her acts became gestures of sacrifice.
Invested with a rhythm of higher spheres
The word was used as a hieratic means
For the release of the imprisoned spirit
Into communion with its comrade gods.
Or it helped to beat out new expressive forms
Of that which labours in the heart of life,
Some immemorial Soul in men and things,
Seeker of the unknown and the unborn
Carrying a light from the Ineffable
To rend the veil of the last mysteries.
Intense philosophies pointed earth to heaven
Or on foundations broad as cosmic Space
Uptraised the earth-mind to superhuman heights.
Overpassing lines that please the outward eyes
But hide the sight of that which lives within
Sculpture and painting concentrated sense
Upon an inner vision's motionless verge,
Revealed a figure of the invisible,
Unveiled all Nature's meaning in a form,
Or caught into a body the Divine.
The architecture of the Infinite

Discovered here its inward-musing shapes
Captured into wide breadths of soaring stone:
Music brought down celestial yearnings, song
Held the merged heart absorbed in rapturous depths,
Linking the human with the cosmic cry;
The world-interpreting movements of the dance
Moulded idea and mood to a rhythmic sway
And posture; crafts minute in subtle lines
Eternised a swift moment's memory
Or showed in a carving's sweep, a cup's design
The underlying patterns of the unseen:
Poems in largeness cast like moving worlds
And metres surging with the ocean's voice
Translated by grandeurs locked in Nature's heart
But thrown now into a crowded glory of speech
The beauty and sublimity of her forms,
The passion of her moments and her moods
Lifting the human word nearer to the god's.
Man's eyes could look into the inner realms;
His scrutiny discovered number's law
And organised the motions of the stars,
Mapped out the visible fashioning of the world,
Questioned the process of his thoughts or made
A theorised diagram of mind and life.
These things she took in as her nature's food,
But these alone could fill not her wide Self:
A human seeking limited by its gains,
To her they seemed the great and early steps
Hazardous of a young discovering spirit
Which saw not yet by its own native light;
It tapped the universe with testing knocks
Or stretched to find truth mind's divining rod;
There was a growing out to numberless sides,
But not the widest seeing of the soul,
Not yet the vast direct immediate touch,
Nor yet the art and wisdom of the Gods.

A boundless knowledge greater than man's thought,
A happiness too high for heart and sense
Locked in the world and yearning for release
She felt in her; waiting as yet for form,
It asked for objects around which to grow
And natures strong to bear without recoil
The splendour of her native royalty,
Her greatness and her sweetness and her bliss,
Her might to possess and her vast power to love:
Earth made a stepping-stone to conquer heaven,
The soul saw beyond heaven's limiting boundaries,
Met a great light from the Unknowable
And dreamed of a transcendent action's sphere.
Aware of the universal Self in all
She turned to living hearts and human forms,
Her soul's reflections, complements, counterparts,
The close outlying portions of her being
Divided from her by walls of body and mind
Yet to her spirit bound by ties divine.
Overcoming invisible hedge and masked defence
And the loneliness that separates soul from soul,
She wished to make all one immense embrace
That she might house in it all living things
Raised into a splendid point of seeing light
Out of division's dense inconscient cleft,
And make them one with God and world and her.
Only a few responded to her call:
Still fewer felt the screened divinity
And strove to mate its godhead with their own,
Approaching with some kinship to her heights.
Uplifted towards luminous secracies
Or conscious of some splendour hidden above
They leaped to find her in a moment's flash,
Glimpsing a light in a celestial vast,
But could not keep the vision and the power
And fell back to life's dull ordinary tone.

A mind daring heavenly experiment,
Growing towards some largeness they felt near,
Testing the unknown's bound with eager touch
They still were prisoned by their human grain:
They could not keep up with her tireless step;
Too small and eager for her large-paced will,
Too narrow to look with the unborn Infinite's gaze
Their nature weary grew of things too great.
For even the close partners of her thoughts
Who could have walked the nearest to her ray,
Worshipped the power and light they felt in her
But could not match the measure of her soul.
A friend and yet too great wholly to know,
She walked in their front towards a greater light,
Their leader and queen over their hearts and souls,
One close to their bosoms, yet divine and far.
Admiring and amazed they saw her stride
Attempting with a godlike rush and leap
Heights for their human stature too remote
Or with a slow great many-sided toil
Pushing towards aims they hardly could conceive;
Yet forced to be the satellites of her sun
They moved unable to forego her light,
Desiring they clutched at her with outstretched hands
Or followed stumbling in the paths she made.
Or longing with their self of life and flesh
They clung to her for heart's nourishment and support:
The rest they could not see in visible light;
Vaguely they bore her inner mightiness.
Or bound by the senses and the longing heart,
Adoring with a turbid human love,
They could not grasp the mighty spirit she was
Or change by closeness to be even as she.
Some felt her with their souls and thrilled with her,
A greatness felt near yet beyond mind's grasp;
To see her was a summons to adore,

To be near her drew a high communion's force.
So men worship a god too great to know,
Too high, too vast to wear a limiting shape;
They feel a Presence and obey a might,
Adore a love whose rapture invades their breasts;
To a divine ardour quickening the heart-beats,
A law they follow greatening heart and life.
Opened to the breath is a new diviner air,
Opened to man is a freer, happier world:
He sees high steps climbing to Self and Light.
Her divine parts the soul's allegiance called:
It saw, it felt, it knew the deity.
Her will was puissant on their nature's acts,
Her heart's inexhaustible sweetness lured their hearts,
A being they loved whose bounds exceeded theirs;
Her measure they could not reach but bore her touch,
Answering with the flower's answer to the sun
They gave themselves to her and asked no more.
One greater than themselves, too wide for their ken,
Their minds could not understand nor wholly know,
Their lives replied to hers, moved at her words:
They felt a godhead and obeyed a call,
Answered to her lead and did her work in the world;
Their lives, their natures moved compelled by hers
As if the truth of their own larger selves
Put on an aspect of divinity
To exalt them to a pitch beyond their earth's.
They felt a larger future meet their walk;
She held their hands, she chose for them their paths:
They were moved by her towards great unknown things,
Faith drew them and the joy to feel themselves hers;
They lived in her, they saw the world with her eyes.
Some turned to her against their nature's bent;
Divided between wonder and revolt,
Drawn by her charm and mastered by her will,
Possessed by her, her striving to possess,

Impatient subjects, their tied longing hearts
Hugging the bonds close of which they most complained,
Murmured at a yoke they would have wept to lose,
The splendid yoke of her beauty and her love:
Others pursued her with life's blind desires
And claiming all of her as their lonely own,
Hastened to engross her sweetness meant for all.
As earth claims light for its lone separate need
Demanding her for their sole jealous clasp,
They asked from her movements bounded like their own
And to their smallness craved a like response.
Or they repined that she surpassed their grip,
And hoped to bind her close with longing's cords.
Or finding her touch desired too strong to bear
They blamed her for a tyranny they loved,
Shrank into themselves as from too bright a sun,
Yet hankered for the splendour they refused.
Angrily enamoured of her sweet passionate ray
The weakness of their earth could hardly bear,
They longed but cried out at the touch desired
Inapt to meet divinity so close,
Intolerant of a Force they could not house.
Some drawn unwillingly by her divine sway
Endured it like a sweet but alien spell;
Unable to mount to levels too sublime,
They yearned to draw her down to their own earth.
Or forced to centre round her their passionate lives,
They hoped to bind to their heart's human needs
Her glory and grace that had enslaved their souls.

But mid this world, these hearts that answered her call,
None could stand up her equal and her mate.
In vain she stooped to equal them with her heights,
Too pure that air was for small souls to breathe.
These comrade selves to raise to her own wide breadths
Her heart desired and fill with her own power

That a diviner Force might enter life,
A breath of Godhead greateren human time.
Although she leaned down to their littleness
Covering their lives with her strong passionate hands
And knew by sympathy their needs and wants
And dived in the shallow wave-depths of their lives
And met and shared their heart-beats of grief and joy
And bent to heal their sorrow and their pride,
Lavishing the might that was hers on her lone peak
To lift to it their aspiration's cry,
And though she drew their souls into her vast
And surrounded with the silence of her deeps
And held as the great Mother holds her own,
Only her earthly surface bore their charge
And mixed its fire with their mortality:
Her greater self lived sole, unclaimed, within.
Oftener in dumb Nature's stir and peace
A nearness she could feel serenely one;
The Force in her drew earth's subhuman broods;
And to her spirit's large and free delight
She joined the ardent-hued magnificent lives
Of animal and bird and flower and tree.
They answered to her with the simple heart.
In man a dim disturbing somewhat lives;
It knows but turns away from divine Light
Preferring the dark ignorance of the fall.
Among the many who came drawn to her
Nowhere she found her partner of high tasks,
The comrade of her soul, her other self
Who was made with her, like God and Nature, one.
Some near approached, were touched, caught fire, then failed,
Too great was her demand, too pure her force.
Thus lighting earth around her like a sun,
Yet in her inmost sky an orb aloof,
A distance severed her from those most close.
Puissant, apart her soul as the gods live.

As yet unlinked with the broad human scene,
In a small circle of young eager hearts,
Her being's early school and closed domain,
Apprentice in the business of earth-life,
She schooled her heavenly strain to bear its touch,
Content in her little garden of the gods
As blooms a flower in an unvisited place.
Earth nursed, unconscious still, the inhabiting flame,
Yet something deeply stirred and dimly knew;
There was a movement and a passionate call,
A rainbow dream, a hope of golden change;
Some secret wing of expectation beat,
A growing sense of something new and rare
And beautiful stole across the heart of Time.
Then a faint whisper of her touched the soil,
Breathed like a hidden need the soul divines;
The eye of the great world discovered her
And wonder lifted up its bardic voice.
A key to a Light still kept in being's cave,
The sun-word of an ancient mystery's sense,
Her name ran murmuring on the lips of men
Exalted and sweet like an inspired verse
Struck from the epic lyre of rumour's winds
Or sung like a chanted thought by the poet Fame.
But like a sacred symbol's was that cult.
Admired, unsought, intangible to the grasp
Her beauty and flaming strength were seen afar
Like lightning playing with the fallen day,
A glory unapproachably divine.
No equal heart came close to join her heart,
No transient earthly love assailed her calm,
No hero passion had the strength to seize;
No eyes demanded her replying eyes.
A Power within her awed the imperfect flesh;
The self-protecting genius in our clay
Divined the goddess in the woman's shape

And drew back from a touch beyond its kind
The earth-nature bound in sense-life's narrow make.
The hearts of men are amorous of clay-kin
And bear not spirits lone and high who bring
Fire-intimations from the deathless planes
Too vast for souls not born to mate with heaven.
Whoever is too great must lonely live.
Adored he walks in mighty solitude;
Vain is his labour to create his kind,
His only comrade is the Strength within.
Thus was it for a while with Savitri.
All worshipped marvellingly, none dared to claim.
Her mind sat high pouring its golden beams,
Her heart was a crowded temple of delight.
A single lamp lit in perfection's house,
A bright pure image in a priestless shrine,
Midst those encircling lives her spirit dwelt,
Apart in herself until her hour of fate.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

The Call to the Quest

A MORN that seemed a new creation's front,
Bringing a greater sunlight, happier skies,
Came burdened with a beauty moved and strange
Out of the changeless origin of things.
An ancient longing struck again new roots:
The air drank deep of unfulfilled desire;
The high trees trembled with a wandering wind
Like souls that quiver at the approach of joy,
And in a bosom of green secrecy
For ever of its one love-note untired
A lyric coil cried among the leaves.
Away from the terrestrial murmur turned
Where transient calls and answers mix their flood,
King Aswapati listened through the ray
To other sounds than meet the sense-formed ear.
On a subtle interspace which rings our life,
Unlocked were the inner spirit's trance-closed doors:
The inaudible strain in Nature could be caught;
Across this cyclic tramp of eager lives,
Across the deep urgency of present cares,
Earth's wordless hymn to the Ineffable
Arose from the silent heart of the cosmic Void;
He heard the voice repressed of unborn Powers
Murmuring behind the luminous bars of Time.
Again the mighty yearning raised its flame
That asks a perfect life on earth for men
And prays for certainty in the uncertain mind
And shadowless bliss for suffering human hearts
And Truth embodied in an ignorant world
And godhead divinising mortal forms.
A word that leaped from some far sky of thought,

Admitted by the cowled receiving scribe
Traversed the echoing passages of his brain
And left its stamp on the recording cells.
“O Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race,
O petty adventurers in an infinite world
And prisoners of a dwarf humanity,
How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
Around your little self and petty things?
But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,
Not for vain repetition were you built;
Out of the Immortal’s substance you were made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature’s cells.
A greater destiny waits you in your front:
This transient earthly being if he wills
Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme.
He who now stares at the world with ignorant eyes
Hardly from the Inconscient’s night aroused,
That look at images and not at Truth,
Can fill those orbs with an immortal’s sight.
Yet shall the godhead grow within your hearts,
You shall awake into the spirit’s air
And feel the breaking walls of mortal mind
And hear the message which left life’s heart dumb
And look through Nature with sun-gazing lids
And blow your conch-shells at the Eternal’s gate.
Authors of earth’s high change, to you it is given
To cross the dangerous spaces of the soul
And touch the mighty Mother stark awake
And meet the Omnipotent in this house of flesh
And make of life the million-bodied One.
The earth you tread is a border screened from heaven;
The life you lead conceals the light you are.

Immortal Powers sweep flaming past your doors;
Far-off upon your tops the god-chant sounds
While to exceed yourselves thought's trumpets call,
Heard by a few, but fewer dare aspire,
The nympholepts of the ecstasy and the blaze.
An epic of hope and failure breaks earth's heart;
Her force and will exceed her form and fate.
A goddess in a net of transience caught,
Self-bound in the pastures of death she dreams of life,
Self-racked with the pains of hell aspires to joy,
And builds to hope her altars of despair,
Knows that one high step might enfranchise all
And, suffering, looks for greatness in her sons.
But dim in human hearts the ascending fire,
The invisible Grandeur sits unworshipped there;
Man sees the Highest in a limiting form
Or looks upon a Person, hears a Name.
He turns for little gains to ignorant Powers
Or kindles his altar lights to a demon face.
He loves the Ignorance fathering his pain.
A spell is laid upon his glorious strengths;
He has lost the inner Voice that led his thoughts,
And masking the oracular tripod seat
A specious Idol fills the marvel shrine.
The great Illusion wraps him in its veils,
The soul's deep intimations come in vain,
In vain is the unending line of seers,
The sages ponder in unsubstantial light,
The poets lend their voice to outward dreams,
A homeless fire inspires the prophet tongues.
Heaven's flaming lights descend and back return,
The luminous Eye approaches and retires;
Eternity speaks, none understands its word;
Fate is unwilling and the Abyss denies;
The Inconscient's mindless waters block all done.
Only a little lifted is Mind's screen;

The Wise who know see but one half of Truth,
The strong climb hardly to a low-peaked height,
The hearts that yearn are given one hour to love.
His tale half told, falters the secret Bard;
The gods are still too few in mortal forms.”
The Voice withdrew into its hidden skies.
But like a shining answer from the gods
Approached through sun-bright spaces Savitri.
Advancing amid tall heaven-pillaring trees,
Apparelled in her flickering-coloured robe
She seemed, burning towards the eternal realms,
A bright moved torch of incense and of flame
That from the sky-roofed temple-soil of earth
A pilgrim hand lifts in an invisible shrine.
There came the gift of a revealing hour:
He saw through depths that reinterpret all,
Limited not now by the dull body’s eyes,
New-found through an arch of clear discovery,
This intimation of the world’s delight,
This wonder of the divine Artist’s make
Carved like a nectar-cup for thirsty gods,
This breathing Scripture of the Eternal’s joy,
This net of sweetness woven of aureate fire.
Transformed the delicate image-face became
A deeper Nature’s self-revealing sign,
A gold-leaf palimpsest of sacred births,
A grave world-symbol chiselled out of life.
Her brow, a copy of clear unstained heavens,
Was meditation’s pedestal and defence,
The very room and smile of musing Space,
Its brooding line infinity’s symbol curve.
Amid her tresses’ cloudy multitude
Her long eyes shadowed as by wings of Night
Under that moon-gold forehead’s dreaming breadth
Were seas of love and thought that held the world;
Marvelling at life and earth they saw truths far.

A deathless meaning filled her mortal limbs;
As in a golden vase's poignant line
They seemed to carry the rhythmic sob of bliss
Of earth's mute adoration towards heaven
Released in beauty's cry of living form
Towards the perfection of eternal things.
Transparent grown the ephemeral living dress
Bared the expressive deity to his view.
Escaped from surface sight and mortal sense
The seizing harmony of its shapes became
The strange significant icon of a Power
Renewing its inscrutable descent
Into a human figure of its works
That stood out in life's bold abrupt relief
On the soil of the evolving universe,
A godhead sculptured on a wall of thought,
Mirrored in the flowing hours and dimly shrined
In Matter as in a cathedral cave.
Annulled were the transient values of the mind,
The body's sense renounced its earthly look;
Immortal met immortal in their gaze.
Awaked from the close spell of daily use
That hides soul-truth with the outward form's disguise,
He saw through the familiar cherished limbs
The great and unknown spirit born his child.
An impromptu from the deeper sight within,
Thoughts rose in him that knew not their own scope.
Then to those large and brooding depths whence Love
Regarded him across the straits of mind,
He spoke in sentences from the unseen Heights.
For the hidden prompters of our speech sometimes
Can use the formulas of a moment's mood
To weigh unconscious lips with words from Fate:
A casual passing phrase can change our life.
“O spirit, traveller of eternity,
Who cam'st from the immortal spaces here

Armed for the splendid hazard of thy life
To set thy conquering foot on Chance and Time,
The moon shut in her halo dreams like thee.
A mighty Presence still defends thy frame.
Perhaps the heavens guard thee for some great soul,
Thy fate, thy work are kept somewhere afar.
Thy spirit came not down a star alone.
O living inscription of the beauty of love
Missalled in aureate virginity,
What message of heavenly strength and bliss in thee
Is written with the Eternal's sun-white script,
One shall discover and greateren with it his life
To whom thou loosenest thy heart's jewelled strings.
O rubies of silence, lips from which there stole
Low laughter, music of tranquillity,
Star-lustrous eyes awake in sweet large night
And limbs like fine-linked poems made of gold
Stanzaed to glimmering curves by artist gods,
Depart where love and destiny call your charm.
Venture through the deep world to find thy mate.
For somewhere on the longing breast of earth,
Thy unknown lover waits for thee the unknown.
Thy soul has strength and needs no other guide
Than One who burns within thy bosom's powers.
There shall draw near to meet thy approaching steps
The second self for whom thy nature asks,
He who shall walk until thy body's end
A close-bound traveller pacing with thy pace,
The lyrist of thy soul's most intimate chords
Who shall give voice to what in thee is mute.
Then shall you grow like vibrant kindred harps,
One in the beats of difference and delight,
Responsive in divine and equal strains,
Discovering new notes of the eternal theme.
One force shall be your mover and your guide,
One light shall be around you and within;

Hand in strong hand confront Heaven's question, life:
Challenge the ordeal of the immense disguise.
Ascend from Nature to divinity's heights;
Face the high gods, crowned with felicity,
Then meet a greater god, thy self beyond Time."

This word was seed of all the thing to be:
A hand from some Greatness opened her heart's locked doors
And showed the work for which her strength was born.
As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;
He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech:
An equal greatness in her life was sown.
Accustomed scenes were now an ended play:
Moving in muse amid familiar powers,
Touched by new magnitudes and fiery signs,
She turned to vastnesses not yet her own;
Allured her heart throbbed to unknown sweetesses;
The secrets of an unseen world were close.
The morn went up into a smiling sky;
Cast from its sapphire pinnacle of trance
Day sank into the burning gold of eve;

The moon floated, a luminous waif through heaven
And sank below the oblivious edge of dream;
Night lit the watch-fires of eternity.
Then all went back into mind's secret caves;
A darkness stooping on the heaven-bird's wings
Sealed in her senses from external sight
And opened the stupendous depths of sleep.
When the pale dawn slipped through Night's shadowy guard,
Vainly the new-born light desired her face;
The palace woke to its own emptiness;
The sovereign of its daily joys was far;
Her moonbeam feet tinged not the lucent floors:
The beauty and divinity were gone.
Delight had fled to search the spacious world.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Quest

THE WORLD-WAYS opened before Savitri.
At first a strangeness of new brilliant scenes
Peopled her mind and kept her body's gaze.
But as she moved across the changing earth
A deeper consciousness welled up in her:
A citizen of many scenes and climes,
Each soil and country it had made its home;
It took all clans and peoples for her own,
Till the whole destiny of mankind was hers.
These unfamiliar spaces on her way
Were known and neighbours to a sense within,
Landscapes recurred like lost forgotten fields,
Cities and rivers and plains her vision claimed
Like slow-recurring memories in front,
The stars at night were her past's brilliant friends,
The winds murmured to her of ancient things
And she met nameless comrades loved by her once.
All was a part of old forgotten selves:
Vaguely or with a flash of sudden hints
Her acts recalled a line of bygone power,
Even her motion's purpose was not new:
Traveller to a prefigured high event,
She seemed to her remembering witness soul
To trace again a journey often made.
A guidance turned the dumb revolving wheels
And in the eager body of their speed
The dim-masked hooded godheads rode who move
Assigned to man immutably from his birth,
Receivers of the inner and outer law,
At once the agents of his spirit's will
And witnesses and executors of his fate.

Inexorably faithful to their task,
They hold his nature's sequence in their guard
Carrying the unbroken thread old lives have spun.
Attendants on his destiny's measured walk
Leading to joys he has won and pains he has called,
Even in his casual steps they intervene.
Nothing we think or do is void or vain;
Each is an energy loosed and holds its course.
The shadowy keepers of our deathless past
Have made our fate the child of our own acts,
And from the furrows laboured by our will
We reap the fruit of our forgotten deeds.
But since unseen the tree that bore this fruit
And we live in a present born from an unknown past,
They seem but parts of a mechanic Force
To a mechanic mind tied by earth's laws;
Yet are they instruments of a Will supreme,
Watched by a still all-seeing Eye above.
A prescient architect of Fate and Chance
Who builds our lives on a foreseen design
The meaning knows and consequence of each step
And watches the inferior stumbling powers.
Upon her silent heights she was aware
Of a calm Presence throned above her brows
Who saw the goal and chose each fateful curve;
It used the body for its pedestal;
The eyes that wandered were its searchlight fires,
The hands that held the reins its living tools;
All was the working of an ancient plan,
A way proposed by an unerring Guide.
Across wide noons and glowing afternoons,
She met with Nature and with human forms
And listened to the voices of the world;
Driven from within she followed her long road,
Mute in the luminous cavern of her heart,
Like a bright cloud through the resplendent day.

At first her path ran far through peopled tracts:
Admitted to the lion eye of States
And theatres of the loud act of man,
Her carven chariot with its fretted wheels
Threaded through clamorous marts and sentinel towers
Past figured gates and high dream-sculptured fronts
And gardens hung in the sapphire of the skies,
Pillared assembly halls with armoured guards,
Small fanes where one calm Image watched man's life
And temples hewn as if by exiled gods
To imitate their lost eternity.
Often from gilded dusk to argent dawn,
Where jewel-lamps flickered on frescoed walls
And the stone lattice stared at moonlit boughs,
Half-conscious of the tardy listening night
Dimly she glided between banks of sleep
At rest in the slumbering palaces of kings.
Hamlet and village saw the fate-wain pass,
Homes of a life bent to the soil it ploughs
For sustenance of its short and passing days
That, transient, keep their old repeated course,
Unchanging in the circle of a sky
Which alters not above our mortal toil.
Away from this thinking creature's burdened hours
To free and griefless spaces now she turned
Not yet perturbed by human joys and fears.
Here was the childhood of primaeval earth,
Here timeless musings large and glad and still,
Men had forborne as yet to fill with cares,
Imperial acres of the eternal sower
And wind-stirred grass-lands winking in the sun:
Or mid green musing of woods and rough-browed hills,
In the grove's murmurous bee-air humming wild
Or past the long lapsing voice of silver floods
Like a swift hope journeying among its dreams
Hastened the chariot of the golden bride.

Out of the world's immense unhuman past
Tract-memories and ageless remnants came,
Domains of light enfeoffed to antique calm
Listened to the unaccustomed sound of hooves
And large immune entangled silences
Absorbed her into emerald secrecy
And slow hushed wizard nets of fiery bloom
Environed with their coloured snare her wheels.
The strong importunate feet of Time fell soft
Along these lonely ways, his titan pace
Forgotten and his stark and ruinous rounds.
The inner ear that listens to solitude,
Leaning self-rapt unboundedly could hear
The rhythm of the intenser wordless Thought
That gathers in the silence behind life,
And the low sweet inarticulate voice of earth
In the great passion of her sun-kissed trance
Ascended with its yearning undertone.
Afar from the brute noise of clamorous needs
The quieted all-seeking mind could feel,
At rest from its blind outwardness of will,
The unwearied clasp of her mute patient love
And know for a soul the mother of our forms.
This spirit stumbling in the fields of sense,
This creature bruised in the mortar of the days
Could find in her broad spaces of release.
Not yet was a world all occupied by care.
The bosom of our mother kept for us still
Her austere regions and her musing depths,
Her impersonal reaches lonely and inspired
And the mightinesses of her rapture haunts.
Muse-lipped she nursed her symbol mysteries
And guarded for her pure-eyed sacraments
The valley clefts between her breasts of joy,
Her mountain altars for the fires of dawn
And nuptial beaches where the ocean couched

And the huge chanting of her prophet woods.
Fields had she of her solitary mirth,
Plains hushed and happy in the embrace of light,
Alone with the cry of birds and hue of flowers,
And wildernesses of wonder lit by her moons
And grey seer-evenings kindling with the stars
And dim movement in the night's infinitude.
August, exulting in her Maker's eye,
She felt her nearness to him in earth's breast,
Conversed still with a Light behind the veil,
Still communed with Eternity beyond.
A few and fit inhabitants she called
To share the glad communion of her peace;
The breadth, the summit were their natural home.
The strong king-sages from their labour done,
Freed from the warrior tension of their task,
Came to her serene sessions in these wilds;
The strife was over, the respite lay in front.
Happy they lived with birds and beasts and flowers
And sunlight and the rustle of the leaves,
And heard the wild winds wandering in the night,
Mused with the stars in their mute constant ranks,
And lodged in the mornings as in azure tents,
And with the glory of the noons were one.
Some deeper plunged; from life's external clasp
Beckoned into a fiery privacy
In the soul's unprofaned star-white recess
They sojourned with an everliving Bliss;
A Voice profound in the ecstasy and the hush
They heard, beheld an all-revealing Light.
All time-made difference they overcame;
The world was fibred with their own heart-strings;
Close drawn to the heart that beats in every breast,
They reached the one self in all through boundless love.
Attuned to Silence and to the world-rhyme,
They loosened the knot of the imprisoning mind;

Achieved was the wide untroubled witness gaze,
Unsealed was Nature's great spiritual eye;
To the height of heights rose now their daily climb:
Truth leaned to them from her supernal realm;
Above them blazed eternity's mystic suns.
Nameless the austere ascetics without home
Abandoning speech and motion and desire
Aloof from creatures sat absorbed, alone,
Immaculate in tranquil heights of self
On concentration's luminous voiceless peaks,
World-naked hermits with their matted hair
Immobile as the passionless great hills
Around them grouped like thoughts of some vast mood
Awaiting the Infinite's behest to end.
The seers attuned to the universal Will,
Content in Him who smiles behind earth's forms,
Abode ungrieved by the insistent days.
About them like green trees girdling a hill
Young grave disciples fashioned by their touch,
Trained to the simple act and conscious word,
Greatened within and grew to meet their heights.
Far-wandering seekers on the Eternal's path
Brought to these quiet founts their spirit's thirst
And spent the treasure of a silent hour
Bathed in the purity of the mild gaze
That, uninsistent, ruled them from its peace,
And by its influence found the ways of calm.
The Infants of the monarchy of the worlds,
The heroic leaders of a coming time,
King-children nurtured in that spacious air
Like lions gambolling in sky and sun
Received half-consciously their godlike stamp:
Formed in the type of the high thoughts they sang
They learned the wide magnificence of mood
That makes us comrades of the cosmic urge,
No longer chained to their small separate selves,

Plastic and firm beneath the eternal hand,
Met Nature with a bold and friendly clasp
And served in her the Power that shapes her works.
One-souled to all and free from narrowing bonds,
Large like a continent of warm sunshine
In wide equality's impartial joy,
These sages breathed for God's delight in things.
Assisting the slow entries of the gods,
Sowing in young minds immortal thoughts they lived,
Taught the great Truth to which man's race must rise
Or opened the gates of freedom to a few.
Imparting to our struggling world the Light
They breathed like spirits from Time's dull yoke released,
Comrades and vessels of the cosmic Force,
Using a natural mastery like the sun's:
Their speech, their silence was a help to earth.
A magic happiness flowed from their touch;
Oneness was sovereign in that sylvan peace,
The wild beast joined in friendship with its prey;
Persuading the hatred and the strife to cease
The love that flows from the one Mother's breast
Healed with their hearts the hard and wounded world.
Others escaped from the confines of thought
To where Mind motionless sleeps waiting Light's birth,
And came back quivering with a nameless Force,
Drunk with a wine of lightning in their cells;
Intuitive knowledge leaping into speech,
Seized, vibrant, kindling with the inspired word,
Hearing the subtle voice that clothes the heavens,
Carrying the splendour that has lit the suns,
They sang Infinity's names and deathless powers
In metres that reflect the moving worlds,
Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps.
Some lost to the person and his strip of thought
In a motionless ocean of impersonal Power,
Sat mighty, visioned with the Infinite's light,

Or, comrades of the everlasting Will,
Surveyed the plan of past and future Time.
Some winged like birds out of the cosmic sea
And vanished into a bright and featureless Vast:
Some silent watched the universal dance,
Or helped the world by world-indifference.
Some watched no more merged in a lonely Self,
Absorbed in the trance from which no soul returns,
All the occult world-lines for ever closed,
The chains of birth and person cast away:
Some unaccompanied reached the Ineffable.

As floats a sunbeam through a shady place,
The golden virgin in her carven car
Came gliding among meditation's seats.
Often in twilight mid returning troops
Of cattle thickening with their dust the shades
When the loud day had slipped below the verge,
Arriving in a peaceful hermit grove
She rested drawing round her like a cloak
Its spirit of patient muse and potent prayer.
Or near to a lion river's tawny mane
And trees that worshipped on a praying shore,
A domed and templed air's serene repose
Beckoned to her hurrying wheels to stay their speed.
In the solemnity of a space that seemed
A mind remembering ancient silences,
Where to the heart great bygone voices called
And the large liberty of brooding seers
Had left the long impress of their soul's scene,
Awake in candid dawn or darkness mooned,
To the still touch inclined the daughter of Flame
Drank in hushed splendour between tranquil lids
And felt the kinship of eternal calm.
But morn broke in reminding her of her quest
And from low rustic couch or mat she rose

And went impelled on her unfinished way
And followed the fateful orbit of her life
Like a desire that questions silent gods
Then passes starlike to some bright Beyond.
Thence to great solitary tracts she came,
Where man was a passer-by towards human scenes
Or sole in Nature's vastness strove to live
And called for help to ensouled invisible Powers,
Overwhelmed by the immensity of his world
And unaware of his own infinity.
The earth multiplied to her a changing brow
And called her with a far and nameless voice.
The mountains in their anchorite solitude,
The forests with their multitudinous chant
Disclosed to her the masked divinity's doors.
On dreaming plains, an indolent expanse,
The death-bed of a pale enchanted eve
Under the glamour of a sunken sky,
Impassive she lay as at an age's end,
Or crossed an eager pack of huddled hills
Lifting their heads to hunt a lairlike sky,
Or travelled in a strange and empty land
Where desolate summits camped in a weird heaven,
Mute sentinels beneath a drifting moon,
Or wandered in some lone tremendous wood
Ringing for ever with the crickets' cry
Or followed a long glistening serpent road
Through fields and pastures lapped in moveless light
Or reached the wild beauty of a desert space
Where never plough was driven nor herd had grazed
And slumbered upon stripped and thirsty sands
Amid the savage wild-beast night's appeal.
Still unaccomplished was the fateful quest;
Still she found not the one predestined face
For which she sought amid the sons of men.
A grandiose silence wrapped the regal day:

The months had fed the passion of the sun
And now his burning breath assailed the soil.
The tiger heats prowled through the fainting earth;
All was licked up as by a lolling tongue.
The spring winds failed; the sky was set like bronze.

END OF CANTO FOUR

END OF BOOK FOUR

BOOK FIVE
The Book of Love

Canto One

The Destined Meeting-Place

BUT NOW the destined spot and hour were close;
Unknowing she had neared her nameless goal.
For though a dress of blind and devious chance
Is laid upon the work of all-wise Fate,
Our acts interpret an omniscient Force
That dwells in the compelling stuff of things,
And nothing happens in the cosmic play
But at its time and in its foreseen place.
To a space she came of soft and delicate air
That seemed a sanctuary of youth and joy,
A highland world of free and green delight
Where spring and summer lay together and strove
In indolent and amicable debate,
Inarmed, disputing with laughter who should rule.
There expectation beat wide sudden wings
As if a soul had looked out from earth's face,
And all that was in her felt a coming change
And forgetting obvious joys and common dreams,
Obedient to Time's call, to the spirit's fate,
Was lifted to a beauty calm and pure
That lived under the eyes of Eternity.
A crowd of mountainous heads assailed the sky
Pushing towards rival shoulders nearer heaven,
The armoured leaders of an iron line;
Earth prostrate lay beneath their feet of stone.
Below them crouched a dream of emerald woods
And gleaming borders solitary as sleep:
Pale waters ran like glimmering threads of pearl.
A sigh was straying among happy leaves;
Cool-perfumed with slow pleasure-burdened feet
Faint stumbling breezes faltered among flowers.

The white crane stood, a vivid motionless streak,
Peacock and parrot jewelled soil and tree,
The dove's soft moan enriched the enamoured air
And fire-winged wild-drakes swam in silvery pools.
Earth couched alone with her great lover Heaven,
Uncovered to her consort's azure eye.

In a luxurious ecstasy of joy
She squandered the love-music of her notes,
Wasting the passionate pattern of her blooms
And festival riot of her scents and hues.

A cry and leap and hurry was around,
The stealthy footfalls of her chasing things,
The shaggy emerald of her centaur mane,
The gold and sapphire of her warmth and blaze.

Magician of her rapt felicities,
Blithe, sensuous-hearted, careless and divine,
Life ran or hid in her delightful rooms;
Behind all brooded Nature's grandiose calm.

Primaeval peace was there and in its bosom
Held undisturbed the strife of bird and beast.

Man the deep-browed artificer had not come
To lay his hand on happy inconscient things,
Thought was not there nor the measurer, strong-eyed toil,
Life had not learned its discord with its aim.

The Mighty Mother lay outstretched at ease.
All was in line with her first satisfied plan;
Moved by a universal will of joy
The trees bloomed in their green felicity
And the wild children brooded not on pain.

At the end reclined a stern and giant tract
Of tangled depths and solemn questioning hills,
Peaks like a bare austerity of the soul,
Armoured, remote and desolately grand
Like the thought-screened infinities that lie
Behind the rapt smile of the Almighty's dance.

A matted forest-head invaded heaven

As if a blue-throated ascetic peered
From the stone fastness of his mountain cell
Regarding the brief gladness of the days;
His vast extended spirit couched behind.
A mighty murmur of immense retreat
Besieged the ear, a sad and limitless call
As of a soul retiring from the world.
This was the scene which the ambiguous Mother
Had chosen for her brief felicitous hour;
Here in this solitude far from the world
Her part she began in the world's joy and strife.
Here were disclosed to her the mystic courts,
The lurking doors of beauty and surprise,
The wings that murmur in the golden house,
The temple of sweetness and the fiery aisle.
A stranger on the sorrowful roads of Time,
Immortal under the yoke of death and fate,
A sacrificant of the bliss and pain of the spheres,
Love in the wilderness met Savitri.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

Satyavan

ALL SHE remembered on this day of Fate,
The road that hazarded not the solemn depths
But turned away to flee to human homes,
The wilderness with its mighty monotone,
The morning like a lustrous seer above,
The passion of the summits lost in heaven,
The titan murmur of the endless woods.
As if a wicket gate to joy were there
Ringed in with voiceless hint and magic sign,
Upon the margin of an unknown world
Reclined the curve of a sun-held recess;
Groves with strange flowers like eyes of gazing nymphs
Peered from their secrecy into open space,
Boughs whispering to a constancy of light
Sheltered a dim and screened felicity,
And slowly a supine inconstant breeze
Ran like a fleeting sigh of happiness
Over slumbrous grasses pranked with green and gold.
Hidden in the forest's bosom of loneliness
Amid the leaves the inmate voices called,
Sweet like desires enamoured and unseen,
Cry answering to low insistent cry.
Behind slept emerald dumb remotenesses,
Haunt of a Nature passionate, veiled, denied
To all but her own vision lost and wild.
Earth in this beautiful refuge free from cares
Murmured to the soul a song of strength and peace.
Only one sign was there of a human tread:
A single path, shot thin and arrowlike
Into this bosom of vast and secret life,
Pierced its enormous dream of solitude.

Here first she met on the uncertain earth
The one for whom her heart had come so far.
As might a soul on Nature's background limned
Stand out for a moment in a house of dream
Created by the ardent breath of life,
So he appeared against the forest verge
Inset twixt green relief and golden ray.
As if a weapon of the living Light,
Erect and lofty like a spear of God
His figure led the splendour of the morn.
Noble and clear as the broad peaceful heavens
A tablet of young wisdom was his brow;
Freedom's imperious beauty curved his limbs,
The joy of life was on his open face.
His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,
His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,
His body was a lover's and a king's.
In the magnificent dawning of his force
Built like a moving statue of delight
He illumined the border of the forest page.
Out of the ignorant eager toil of the years
Abandoning man's loud drama he had come
Led by the wisdom of an adverse Fate
To meet the ancient Mother in her groves.
In her divine communion he had grown
A foster-child of beauty and solitude,
Heir to the centuries of the lonely wise,
A brother of the sunshine and the sky,
A wanderer communing with depth and marge.
A Veda-knower of the unwritten book
Perusing the mystic scripture of her forms,
He had caught her hierophant significances,
Her sphered immense imaginations learned,
Taught by sublimities of stream and wood
And voices of the sun and star and flame
And chant of the magic singers on the boughs

And the dumb teaching of four-footed things.
Helping with confident steps her slow great hands
He leaned to her influence like a flower to rain
And, like the flower and tree a natural growth,
Widened with the touches of her shaping hours.
The mastery free natures have was his
And their assent to joy and spacious calm;
One with the single Spirit inhabiting all,
He laid experience at the Godhead's feet;
His mind was open to her infinite mind,
His acts were rhythmic with her primal force;
He had subdued his mortal thought to hers.
That day he had turned from his accustomed paths;
For One who, knowing every moment's load,
Can move in all our studied or careless steps,
Had laid the spell of destiny on his feet
And drawn him to the forest's flowering verge.

At first her glance that took life's million shapes
Impartially to people its treasure-house
Along with sky and flower and hill and star,
Dwelt rather on the bright harmonious scene.
It saw the green-gold of the slumbrous sward,
The grasses quivering with the slow wind's tread,
The branches haunted by the wild bird's call.
Awake to Nature, vague as yet to life,
The eager prisoner from the Infinite,
The immortal wrestler in its mortal house,
Its pride, power, passion of a striving God,
It saw this image of veiled deity,
This thinking master creature of the earth,
This last result of the beauty of the stars,
But only saw like fair and common forms
The artist spirit needs not for its work
And puts aside in memory's shadowy rooms.
A look, a turn decides our ill-poised fate.
Thus in the hour that most concerned her all,

Wandering unwarned by the slow surface mind,
The heedless scout beneath her tenting lids
Admired indifferent beauty and cared not
To wake her body's spirit to its king.
So might she have passed by on chance ignorant roads
Missing the call of Heaven, losing life's aim,
But the god touched in time her conscious soul.
Her vision settled, caught and all was changed.
Her mind at first dwelt in ideal dreams,
Those intimate transmuters of earth's signs
That make known things a hint of unseen spheres,
And saw in him the genius of the spot,
A symbol figure standing mid earth's scenes,
A king of life outlined in delicate air.
Yet this was but a moment's reverie;
For suddenly her heart looked out at him,
The passionate seeing used thought cannot match,
And knew one nearer than its own close strings.
All in a moment was surprised and seized,
All in inconscient ecstasy lain wrapped
Or under imagination's coloured lids
Held up in a large mirror-air of dream,
Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,
And in that flame to new things she was born.
A mystic tumult from her depths arose;
Haled, smitten erect like one who dreamed at ease,
Life ran to gaze from every gate of sense:
Thoughts indistinct and glad in moon-mist heavens,
Feelings as when a universe takes birth,
Swept through the turmoil of her bosom's space
Invaded by a swarm of golden gods:
Arising to a hymn of wonder's priests
Her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun.
An alchemy worked, the transmutation came;
The missioned face had wrought the Master's spell.
In the nameless light of two approaching eyes

A swift and fated turning of her days
Appeared and stretched to a gleam of unknown worlds.
Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart
Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird
Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough.
Hooves trampling fast, wheels largely stumbling ceased;
The chariot stood like an arrested wind.
And Satyavan looked out from his soul's doors
And felt the enchantment of her liquid voice
Fill his youth's purple ambience and endured
The haunting miracle of a perfect face.
Mastered by the honey of a strange flower-mouth,
Drawn to soul-spaces opening round a brow,
He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon
And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,
Discovered the aureole round a mortal's head,
Adored a new divinity in things.
His self-bound nature foundered as in fire;
His life was taken into another's life.
The splendid lonely idols of his brain
Fell prostrate from their bright sufficiencies,
As at the touch of a new infinite,
To worship a godhead greater than their own.
An unknown imperious force drew him to her.
Marvelling he came across the golden sward:
Gaze met close gaze and clung in sight's embrace.
A visage was there, noble and great and calm,
As if encircled by a halo of thought,
A span, an arch of meditating light,
As though some secret nimbus half was seen;
Her inner vision still remembering knew
A forehead that wore the crown of all her past,
Two eyes her constant and eternal stars,
Comrade and sovereign eyes that claimed her soul,
Lids known through many lives, large frames of love.
He met in her regard his future's gaze,

A promise and a presence and a fire,
Saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams,
A mystery of the rapture for which all
Yearns in this world of brief mortality
Made in material shape his very own.
This golden figure given to his grasp
Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,
A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth,
To mate with heaven's truth our mortal thought,
To lift earth-hearts nearer the Eternal's sun.
In these great spirits now incarnate here
Love brought down power out of eternity
To make of life his new undying base.
His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps;
It leaped to earth from far forgotten heights,
But kept its nature of infinity.
On the dumb bosom of this oblivious globe
Although as unknown beings we seem to meet,
Our lives are not aliens nor as strangers join,
Moved to each other by a causeless force.
The soul can recognise its answering soul
Across dividing Time and, on life's roads
Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning it recovers
Familiar splendours in an unknown face
And touched by the warning finger of swift love
It thrills again to an immortal joy
Wearing a mortal body for delight.
There is a Power within that knows beyond
Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts,
And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.
To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser mights
That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
He is still the godhead by which all can change.
A mystery wakes in our inconscient stuff,

A bliss is born that can remake our life.
Love dwells in us like an unopened flower
Awaiting a rapid moment of the soul,
Or he roams in his charmed sleep mid thoughts and things;
The child-god is at play, he seeks himself
In many hearts and minds and living forms:
He lingers for a sign that he can know
And, when it comes, wakes blindly to a voice,
A look, a touch, the meaning of a face.
His instrument the dim corporeal mind,
Of celestial insight now forgetful grown,
He seizes on some sign of outward charm
To guide him mid the throng of Nature's hints,
Reads heavenly truths into earth's semblances,
Desires the image for the godhead's sake,
Divines the immortalities of form
And takes the body for the sculptured soul.
Love's adoration like a mystic seer
Through vision looks at the invisible,
In earth's alphabet finds a godlike sense;
But the mind only thinks, "Behold the one
For whom my life has waited long unfilled,
Behold the sudden sovereign of my days."
Heart feels for heart, limb cries for answering limb;
All strives to enforce the unity all is.
Too far from the Divine, Love seeks his truth
And Life is blind and the instruments deceive
And Powers are there that labour to debase.
Still can the vision come, the joy arrive.
Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth;
A soul made ready through a thousand years
Is the living mould of a supreme Descent.
These knew each other though in forms thus strange.
Although to sight unknown, though life and mind
Had altered to hold a new significance,

These bodies summed the drift of numberless births,
And the spirit to the spirit was the same.
Amazed by a joy for which they had waited long,
The lovers met upon their different paths,
Travellers across the limitless plains of Time
Together drawn from fate-led journeyings
In the self-closed solitude of their human past,
To a swift rapturous dream of future joy
And the unexpected present of these eyes.
By the revealing greatness of a look,
Form-smitten the spirit's memory woke in sense.
The mist was torn that lay between two lives;
Her heart unveiled and his to find her turned;
Attracted as in heaven star by star,
They wondered at each other and rejoiced
And wove affinity in a silent gaze.
A moment passed that was eternity's ray,
An hour began, the matrix of new Time.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

Satyavan and Savitri

OUT OF the voiceless mystery of the past
In a present ignorant of forgotten bonds
These spirits met upon the roads of Time.
Yet in the heart their secret conscious selves
At once aware grew of each other warned
By the first call of a delightful voice
And a first vision of the destined face.
As when being cries to being from its depths
Behind the screen of the external sense
And strives to find the heart-disclosing word,
The passionate speech revealing the soul's need,
But the mind's ignorance veils the inner sight,
Only a little breaks through our earth-made bounds,
So now they met in that momentous hour,
So utter the recognition in the deeps,
The remembrance lost, the oneness felt and missed.
Thus Satyavan spoke first to Savitri:
“O thou who com’st to me out of Time’s silences,
Yet thy voice has wakened my heart to an unknown bliss,
Immortal or mortal only in thy frame,
For more than earth speaks to me from thy soul
And more than earth surrounds me in thy gaze,
How art thou named among the sons of men?
Whence hast thou dawned filling my spirit’s days,
Brighter than summer, brighter than my flowers,
Into the lonely borders of my life,
O sunlight moulded like a golden maid?
I know that mighty gods are friends of earth.
Amid the pageantries of day and dusk,
Long have I travelled with my pilgrim soul
Moved by the marvel of familiar things.

Earth could not hide from me the powers she veils:
Even though moving mid an earthly scene
And the common surfaces of terrestrial things,
My vision saw unblinded by her forms;
The Godhead looked at me from familiar scenes.
I witnessed the virgin bridals of the dawn
Behind the glowing curtains of the sky
Or vying in joy with the bright morning's steps
I paced along the slumbrous coasts of noon,
Or the gold desert of the sunlight crossed
Traversing great wastes of splendour and of fire,
Or met the moon gliding amazed through heaven
In the uncertain wideness of the night,
Or the stars marched on their long sentinel routes
Pointing their spears through the infinitudes:
The day and dusk revealed to me hidden shapes;
Figures have come to me from secret shores
And happy faces looked from ray and flame.
I have heard strange voices cross the ether's waves,
The Centaur's wizard song has thrilled my ear;
I have glimpsed the Apsaras bathing in the pools,
I have seen the wood-nymphs peering through the leaves;
The winds have shown to me their trampling lords,
I have beheld the princes of the Sun
Burning in thousand-pillared homes of light.
So now my mind could dream and my heart fear
That from some wonder-couch beyond our air
Risen in a wide morning of the gods
Thou drov'st thy horses from the Thunderer's worlds.
Although to heaven thy beauty seems allied,
Much rather would my thoughts rejoice to know
That mortal sweetness smiles between thy lids
And thy heart can beat beneath a human gaze
And thy aureate bosom quiver with a look
And its tumult answer to an earth-born voice.
If our time-vexed affections thou canst feel,

Earth's ease of simple things can satisfy,
If thy glance can dwell content on earthly soil,
And this celestial summary of delight,
Thy golden body, dally with fatigue
Oppressing with its grace our terrain, while
The frail sweet passing taste of earthly food
Delays thee and the torrent's leaping wine,
Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us.
Close is my father's creepered hermitage
Screened by the tall ranks of these silent kings,
Sung to by voices of the hue-robed choirs
Whose chants repeat transcribed in music's notes
The passionate coloured lettering of the boughs
And fill the hours with their melodious cry.
Amid the welcome-hum of many bees
Invade our honied kingdom of the woods;
There let me lead thee into an opulent life.
Bare, simple is the sylvan hermit-life;
Yet is it clad with the jewelry of earth.
Wild winds run — visitors midst the swaying tops,
Through the calm days heaven's sentinels of peace
Couched on a purple robe of sky above
Look down on a rich secrecy and hush
And the chambered nuptial waters chant within.
Enormous, whispering, many-formed around
High forest gods have taken in their arms
The human hour, a guest of their centuried pomps.
Apparelled are the morns in gold and green,
Sunlight and shadow tapestry the walls
To make a resting chamber fit for thee.”
Awhile she paused as if hearing still his voice,
Unwilling to break the charm, then slowly spoke.
Musing she answered, “I am Savitri,
Princess of Madra. Who art thou? What name
Musical on earth expresses thee to men?
What trunk of kings watered by fortunate streams

Has flowered at last upon one happy branch?
Why is thy dwelling in the pathless wood
Far from the deeds thy glorious youth demands,
Haunt of the anchorites and earth's wilder broods,
Where only with thy witness self thou roamst
In Nature's green unhuman loneliness
Surrounded by enormous silences
And the blind murmur of primaeval calms?"
And Satyavan replied to Savitri:
"In days when yet his sight looked clear on life,
King Dyumatsena once, the Shalwa, reigned
Through all the tract which from behind these tops
Passing its days of emerald delight
In trusting converse with the traveller winds
Turns, looking back towards the southern heavens,
And leans its flank upon the musing hills.
But equal Fate removed her covering hand.
A living night enclosed the strong man's paths,
Heaven's brilliant gods recalled their careless gifts,
Took from blank eyes their glad and helping ray
And led the uncertain goddess from his side.
Outcast from empire of the outer light,
Lost to the comradeship of seeing men,
He sojourns in two solitudes, within
And in the solemn rustle of the woods.
Son of that king, I, Satyavan, have lived
Contented, for not yet of thee aware,
In my high-peopled loneliness of spirit
And this huge vital murmur kin to me,
Nursed by the vastness, pupil of solitude.
Great Nature came to her recovered child;
I reigned in a kingdom of a nobler kind
Than men can build upon dull Matter's soil;
I met the frankness of the primal earth,
I enjoyed the intimacy of infant God.
In the great tapestried chambers of her state,

Free in her boundless palace I have dwelt
Indulged by the warm mother of us all,
Reared with my natural brothers in her house.
I lay in the wide bare embrace of heaven,
The sunlight's radiant blessing clasped my brow,
The moonbeams' silver ecstasy at night
Kissed my dim lids to sleep. Earth's morns were mine;
Lured by faint murmurings with the green-robed hours
I wandered lost in woods, prone to the voice
Of winds and waters, partner of the sun's joy,
A listener to the universal speech:
My spirit satisfied within me knew
Godlike our birthright, luxuried our life
Whose close belongings are the earth and skies.
Before Fate led me into this emerald world,
Aroused by some foreshadowing touch within,
An early prescience in my mind approached
The great dumb animal consciousness of earth
Now grown so close to me who have left old pomps
To live in this grandiose murmur dim and vast.
Already I met her in my spirit's dream.
As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense a wakening came.
A visioned spell pursued my boyhood's hours,
All things the eye had caught in coloured lines
Were seen anew through the interpreting mind
And in the shape it sought to seize the soul.
An early child-god took my hand that held,
Moved, guided by the seeking of his touch,
Bright forms and hues which fled across his sight;
Limned upon page and stone they spoke to men.
High beauty's visitants my intimates were.
The neighing pride of rapid life that roams
Wind-maned through our pastures, on my seeing mood
Cast shapes of swiftness; trooping spotted deer

Against the vesper sky became a song
Of evening to the silence of my soul.
I caught for some eternal eye the sudden
King-fisher flashing to a darkling pool;
A slow swan silvering the azure lake,
A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream;
Leaves trembling with the passion of the wind,
Pranked butterflies, the conscious flowers of air,
And wandering wings in blue infinity
Lived on the tablets of my inner sight;
Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God.
The brilliant long-bills in their vivid dress,
The peacock scattering on the breeze his moons
Painted my memory like a frescoed wall.
I carved my vision out of wood and stone;
I caught the echoes of a word supreme
And metred the rhythm-beats of infinity
And listened through music for the eternal Voice.
I felt a covert touch, I heard a call,
But could not clasp the body of my God
Or hold between my hands the World-Mother's feet.
In men I met strange portions of a Self
That sought for fragments and in fragments lived:
Each lived in himself and for himself alone
And with the rest joined only fleeting ties;
Each passioned over his surface joy and grief,
Nor saw the Eternal in his secret house.
I conversed with Nature, mused with the changeless stars,
God's watch-fires burning in the ignorant Night,
And saw upon her mighty visage fall
A ray prophetic of the Eternal's sun.
I sat with the forest sages in their trance:
There poured awakening streams of diamond light,
I glimpsed the presence of the One in all.
But still there lacked the last transcendent power
And Matter still slept empty of its Lord.

The Spirit was saved, the body lost and mute
Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance;
The Inconscient was its base, the Void its fate.
But thou hast come and all will surely change:
I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.
The child of the Void shall be reborn in God,
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance.
My body like my spirit shall be free.
It shall escape from Death and Ignorance.”
And Savitri, musing still, replied to him:
“Speak more to me, speak more, O Satyavan,
Speak of thyself and all thou art within;
I would know thee as if we had ever lived
Together in the chamber of our souls.
Speak till a light shall come into my heart
And my moved mortal mind shall understand
What all the deathless being in me feels.
It knows that thou art he my spirit has sought
Amidst earth’s thronging visages and forms
Across the golden spaces of my life.”
And Satyavan like a replying harp
To the insistent calling of a flute
Answered her questioning and let stream to her
His heart in many-coloured waves of speech:
“O golden princess, perfect Savitri,
More I would tell than failing words can speak,
Of all that thou hast meant to me, unknown,
All that the lightning-flash of love reveals
In one great hour of the unveiling gods.
Even a brief nearness has reshaped my life.
For now I know that all I lived and was
Moved towards this moment of my heart’s rebirth;
I look back on the meaning of myself,
A soul made ready on earth’s soil for thee.
Once were my days like days of other men:

To think and act was all, to enjoy and breathe;
This was the width and height of mortal hope:
Yet there came glimpses of a deeper self
That lives behind Life and makes her act its scene.
A truth was felt that screened its shape from mind,
A Greatness working towards a hidden end,
And vaguely through the forms of earth there looked
Something that life is not and yet must be.
I groped for the Mystery with the lantern, Thought.
Its glimmerings lighted with the abstract word
A half-visible ground and travelling yard by yard
It mapped a system of the Self and God.
I could not live the truth it spoke and thought.
I turned to seize its form in visible things,
Hoping to fix its rule by mortal mind,
Imposed a narrow structure of world-law
Upon the freedom of the Infinite,
A hard firm skeleton of outward Truth,
A mental scheme of a mechanic Power.
This light showed more the darknesses unsearched;
It made the original Secrecy more occult;
It could not analyse its cosmic Veil
Or glimpse the Wonder-worker's hidden hand
And trace the pattern of his magic plans.
I plunged into an inner seeing Mind
And knew the secret laws and sorceries
That make of Matter mind's bewildered slave:
The mystery was not solved but deepened more.
I strove to find its hints through Beauty and Art,
But Form cannot unveil the indwelling Power;
Only it throws its symbols at our hearts.
It evoked a mood of self, invoked a sign
Of all the brooding glory hidden in sense:
I lived in the ray but faced not to the sun.
I looked upon the world and missed the Self,
And when I found the Self, I lost the world,

My other selves I lost and the body of God,
The link of the finite with the Infinite,
The bridge between the appearance and the Truth,
The mystic aim for which the world was made,
The human sense of Immortality.
But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet
And His gold sun has shone on me from thy face.
For now another realm draws near with thee
And now diviner voices fill my ear,
A strange new world swims to me in thy gaze
Approaching like a star from unknown heavens;
A cry of spheres comes with thee and a song
Of flaming gods. I draw a wealthier breath
And in a fierier march of moments move.
My mind transfigures to a rapturous seer.
A foam-leap travelling from the waves of bliss
Has changed my heart and changed the earth around:
All with thy coming fills. Air, soil and stream
Wear bridal raiment to be fit for thee
And sunlight grows a shadow of thy hue
Because of change within me by thy look.
Come nearer to me from thy car of light
On this green sward disdaining not our soil.
For here are secret spaces made for thee
Whose caves of emerald long to screen thy form.
Wilt thou not make this mortal bliss thy sphere?
Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.
O my bright beauty's princess Savitri,
By my delight and thy own joy compelled
Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine.
In the great quietness where spirits meet,
Led by my hushed desire into my woods
Let the dim rustling arches over thee lean;
One with the breath of things eternal live,
Thy heart-beats near to mine, till there shall leap

Enchanted from the fragrance of the flowers
A moment which all murmurs shall recall
And every bird remember in its cry."

Allured to her lashes by his passionate words
Her fathomless soul looked out at him from her eyes;
Passing her lips in liquid sounds it spoke.
This word alone she uttered and said all:
"O Satyavan, I have heard thee and I know;
I know that thou and only thou art he."
Then down she came from her high carven car
Descending with a soft and faltering haste;
Her many-hued raiment glistening in the light
Hovered a moment over the wind-stirred grass,
Mixed with a glimmer of her body's ray
Like lovely plumage of a settling bird.
Her gleaming feet upon the green-gold sward
Scattered a memory of wandering beams
And lightly pressed the unspoken desire of earth
Cherished in her too brief passing by the soil.
Then flitting like pale-brilliant moths her hands
Took from the sylvan verge's sunlit arms
A load of their jewel-faces' clustering swarms,
Companions of the spring-time and the breeze.
A candid garland set with simple forms
Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,
The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn.
Profound in perfume and immersed in hue
They mixed their yearning's coloured signs and made
The bloom of their purity and passion one.
A sacrament of joy in treasuring palms
She brought, flower-symbol of her offered life,
Then with raised hands that trembled a little now
At the very closeness that her soul desired,
This bond of sweetness, their bright union's sign,
She laid on the bosom coveted by her love.

As if inclined before some gracious god
Who has out of his mist of greatness shone
To fill with beauty his adorer's hours,
She bowed and touched his feet with worshipping hands;
She made her life his world for him to tread
And made her body the room of his delight,
Her beating heart a remembrancer of bliss.
He bent to her and took into his own
Their married yearning joined like folded hopes;
As if a whole rich world suddenly possessed,
Wedded to all he had been, became himself,
An inexhaustible joy made his alone,
He gathered all Savitri into his clasp.
Around her his embrace became the sign
Of a locked closeness through slow intimate years,
A first sweet summary of delight to come,
One brevity intense of all long life.
In a wide moment of two souls that meet
She felt her being flow into him as in waves
A river pours into a mighty sea.
As when a soul is merging into God
To live in Him for ever and know His joy,
Her consciousness grew aware of him alone
And all her separate self was lost in his.
As a starry heaven encircles happy earth,
He shut her into himself in a circle of bliss
And shut the world into himself and her.
A boundless isolation made them one;
He was aware of her enveloping him
And let her penetrate his very soul
As is a world by the world's spirit filled,
As the mortal wakes into Eternity,
As the finite opens to the Infinite.
Thus were they in each other lost awhile,
Then drawing back from their long ecstasy's trance
Came into a new self and a new world.

Each now was a part of the other's unity,
The world was but their twin self-finding's scene
Or their own wedded being's vaster frame.
On the high glowing cupola of the day
Fate tied a knot with morning's halo threads
While by the ministry of an auspice-hour
Heart-bound before the sun, their marriage fire,
The wedding of the eternal Lord and Spouse
Took place again on earth in human forms:
In a new act of the drama of the world
The united Two began a greater age.
In the silence and murmur of that emerald world
And the mutter of the priest-wind's sacred verse,
Amid the choral whispering of the leaves
Love's twain had joined together and grew one.
The natural miracle was wrought once more:
In the immutable ideal world
One human moment was eternal made.

Then down the narrow path where their lives had met
He led and showed to her her future world,
Love's refuge and corner of happy solitude.
At the path's end through a green cleft in the trees
She saw a clustering line of hermit-roofs
And looked now first on her heart's future home,
The thatch that covered the life of Satyavan.
Adorned with creepers and red climbing flowers
It seemed a sylvan beauty in her dreams
Slumbering with brown body and tumbled hair
In her chamber inviolate of emerald peace.
Around it stretched the forest's anchorite mood
Lost in the depths of its own solitude.
Then moved by the deep joy she could not speak,
A little depth of it quivering in her words,
Her happy voice cried out to Satyavan:
“My heart will stay here on this forest verge

And close to this thatched roof while I am far:
Now of more wandering it has no need.
But I must haste back to my father's house
Which soon will lose one loved accustomed tread
And listen in vain for a once cherished voice.
For soon I shall return nor ever again
Oneness must sever its recovered bliss
Or fate sunder our lives while life is ours.”
Once more she mounted on the carven car
And under the ardour of a fiery noon
Less bright than the splendour of her thoughts and dreams
She sped swift-reined, swift-hearted but still saw
In still lucidities of sight’s inner world
Through the cool-scented wood’s luxurious gloom
On shadowy paths between great rugged trunks
Pace towards a tranquil clearing Satyavan.
A nave of trees enshrined the hermit thatch,
The new deep covert of her felicity,
Preferred to heaven her soul’s temple and home.
This now remained with her, her heart’s constant scene.

END OF CANTO THREE
END OF BOOK FIVE

BOOK SIX
The Book of Fate

Canto One

The Word of Fate

IN SILENT bounds bordering the mortal's plane
Crossing a wide expanse of brilliant peace
Narad the heavenly sage from Paradise
Came chanting through the large and lustrous air.
Attracted by the golden summer-earth
That lay beneath him like a glowing bowl
Tilted upon a table of the Gods,
Turning as if moved round by an unseen hand
To catch the warmth and blaze of a small sun,
He passed from the immortals' happy paths
To a world of toil and quest and grief and hope,
To these rooms of the see-saw game of death with life.
Across an intangible border of soul-space
He passed from Mind into material things
Amid the inventions of the inconscient Self
And the workings of a blind somnambulist Force.
Below him circling burned the myriad suns:
He bore the ripples of the etheric sea;
A primal Air brought the first joy of touch;
A secret Spirit drew its mighty breath
Contracting and expanding this huge world
In its formidable circuit through the Void;
The secret might of the creative Fire
Displayed its triple power to build and form,
Its infinitesimal wave-sparks' weaving dance,
Its nebulous units grounding shape and mass,
Magic foundation and pattern of a world,
Its radiance bursting into the light of stars;
He felt a sap of life, a sap of death;
Into solid Matter's dense communion
Plunging and its obscure oneness of forms

He shared with a dumb Spirit identity.
He beheld the cosmic Being at his task,
His eyes measured the spaces, gauged the depths,
His inner gaze the movements of the soul,
He saw the eternal labour of the Gods,
And looked upon the life of beasts and men.
A change now fell upon the singer's mood,
A rapture and a pathos moved his voice;
He sang no more of Light that never wanes,
And oneness and pure everlasting bliss,
He sang no more the deathless heart of Love,
His chant was a hymn of Ignorance and Fate.
He sang the name of Vishnu and the birth
And joy and passion of the mystic world,
And how the stars were made and life began
And the mute regions stirred with the throb of a Soul.
He sang the Inconscient and its secret self,
Its power omnipotent knowing not what it does,
All-shaping without will or thought or sense,
Its blind unerring occult mystery,
And darkness yearning towards the eternal Light,
And Love that broods within the dim abyss
And waits the answer of the human heart,
And death that climbs to immortality.
He sang of the Truth that cries from Night's blind deeps,
And the Mother-Wisdom hid in Nature's breast
And the Idea that through her dumbness works
And the miracle of her transforming hands,
Of life that slumbers in the stone and sun
And Mind subliminal in mindless life,
And the Consciousness that wakes in beasts and men.
He sang of the glory and marvel still to be born,
Of Godhead throwing off at last its veil,
Of bodies made divine and life made bliss,
Immortal sweetness clasping immortal might,
Heart sensing heart, thought looking straight at thought,

And the delight when every barrier falls,
And the transfiguration and the ecstasy.
And as he sang the demons wept with joy
Foreseeing the end of their long dreadful task
And the defeat for which they hoped in vain,
And glad release from their self-chosen doom
And return into the One from whom they came.
He who has conquered the Immortals' seats,
Came down to men on earth the Man divine.
As darts a lightning streak, a glory fell
Nearing until the rapt eyes of the sage
Looked out from luminous cloud and, strangely limned,
His face, a beautiful mask of antique joy,
Appearing in light descended where arose
King Aswapati's palace to the winds
In Madra, flowering up in delicate stone.
There welcomed him the sage and thoughtful king,
At his side a creature beautiful, passionate, wise,
Aspiring like a sacrificial flame
Skyward from its earth-seat through luminous air,
Queen-browed, the human mother of Savitri.
There for an hour untouched by the earth's sieve
They ceased from common life and care and sat
Inclining to the high and rhythmic voice,
While in his measured chant the heavenly seer
Spoke of the toils of men and what the gods
Strive for on earth, and joy that throbs behind
The marvel and the mystery of pain.
He sang to them of the lotus-heart of love
With all its thousand luminous buds of truth,
Which quivering sleeps veiled by apparent things.
It trembles at each touch, it strives to wake
And one day it shall hear a blissful voice
And in the garden of the Spouse shall bloom
When she is seized by her discovered lord.
A mighty shuddering coil of ecstasy

Crept through the deep heart of the universe.
Out of her Matter's stupor, her mind's dreams,
She woke, she looked upon God's unveiled face.

Even as he sang and rapture stole through earth-time
And caught the heavens, came with a call of hooves,
As of her swift heart hastening, Savitri;
Her radiant tread glimmered across the floor.
A happy wonder in her fathomless gaze,
Changed by the halo of her love she came;
Her eyes rich with a shining mist of joy
As one who comes from a heavenly embassy
Discharging the proud mission of her heart,
One carrying the sanction of the gods
To her love and its luminous eternity,
She stood before her mighty father's throne
And, eager for beauty on discovered earth
Transformed and new in her heart's miracle-light,
Saw like a rose of marvel, worshipping,
The fire-tinged sweetness of the son of Heaven.
He flung on her his vast immortal look;
His inner gaze surrounded her with its light
And reining back knowledge from his immortal lips
He cried to her, "Who is this that comes, the bride,
The flame-born, and round her illumined head
Pouring their lights her hymeneal pomps
Move flashing about her? From what green glimmer of glades
Retreating into dewy silences
Or half-seen verge of waters moon-betrayed
Bringst thou this glory of enchanted eyes?
Earth has gold-hued expanses, shadowy hills
That cowl their dreaming phantom heads in night,
And, guarded in a clostral joy of woods,
Screened banks sink down into felicity
Seized by the curved incessant yearning hands
And ripple-passion of the upgazing stream:

Amid cool-lipped murmurs of its pure embrace
They lose their souls on beds of trembling reeds.
And all these are mysterious presences
In which some spirit's immortal bliss is felt,
And they betray the earth-born heart to joy.
There hast thou paused, and marvelling borne eyes
Unknown, or heard a voice that forced thy life
To strain its rapture through thy listening soul?
Or, if my thought could trust this shimmering gaze,
It would say thou hast not drunk from an earthly cup,
But stepping through azure curtains of the noon
Thou wast surrounded on a magic verge
In brighter countries than man's eyes can bear.
Assailed by trooping voices of delight
And seized mid a sunlit glamour of the boughs
In faery woods, led down the gleaming slopes
Of Gandhamadan where the Apsaras roam,
Thy limbs have shared the sports which none has seen,
And in god-haunts thy human footsteps strayed,
Thy mortal bosom quivered with god-speech
And thy soul answered to a Word unknown.
What feet of gods, what ravishing flutes of heaven
Have thrilled high melodies round, from near and far
Approaching through the soft and revelling air,
Which still surprised thou hearest? They have fed
Thy silence on some red strange-ecstasied fruit
And thou hast trod the dim moon-peaks of bliss.
Reveal, O winged with light, whence thou hast flown
Hastening bright-hued through the green tangled earth,
Thy body rhythmical with the spring-bird's call.
The empty roses of thy hands are filled
Only with their own beauty and the thrill
Of a remembered clasp, and in thee glows
A heavenly jar, thy firm deep-honied heart,
New-brimming with a sweet and nectarous wine.
Thou hast not spoken with the kings of pain.

Life's perilous music rings yet to thy ear
Far-melodied, rapid and grand, a Centaur's song,
Or soft as water plashing mid the hills,
Or mighty as a great chant of many winds.
Moon-bright thou livest in thy inner bliss.
Thou comest like a silver deer through groves
Of coral flowers and buds of glowing dreams,
Or fleest like a wind-goddess through leaves,
Or roamst, O ruby-eyed and snow-winged dove,
Flitting through thickets of thy pure desires
In the unwounded beauty of thy soul.
These things are only images to thy earth,
But truest truth of that which in thee sleeps.
For such is thy spirit, a sister of the gods,
Thy earthly body lovely to the eyes
And thou art kin in joy to heaven's sons.
O thou who hast come to this great perilous world
Now only seen through the splendour of thy dreams,
Where hardly love and beauty can live safe,
Thysel a being dangerously great,
A soul alone in a golden house of thought
Has lived walled in by the safety of thy dreams.
On heights of happiness leaving doom asleep
Who hunts unseen the unconscious lives of men,
If thy heart could live locked in the ideal's gold,
As high, as happy might thy waking be!
If for all time doom could be left to sleep!"

He spoke but held his knowledge back from words.
As a cloud plays with lightnings' vivid laugh,
But still holds back the thunder in its heart,
Only he let bright images escape.
His speech like glimmering music veiled his thoughts;
As a wind flatters the bright summer air,
Pitiful to mortals, only to them it spoke
Of living beauty and of present bliss:
He hid in his all-knowing mind the rest.

To those who hearkened to his celestial voice,
The veil heaven's pity throws on future pain
The Immortals' sanction seemed of endless joy.
But Aswapati answered to the seer;—
His listening mind had marked the dubious close,
An ominous shadow felt behind the words,
But calm like one who ever sits facing Fate
Here mid the dangerous contours of earth's life,
He answered covert thought with guarded speech:
“O deathless sage who knowest all things here,
If I could read by the ray of my own wish
Through the carved shield of symbol images
Which thou hast thrown before thy heavenly mind
I might see the steps of a young godlike life
Happily beginning luminous-eyed on earth;
Between the Unknowable and the Unseen
Born on the borders of two wonder-worlds,
It flames out symbols of the infinite
And lives in a great light of inner suns.
For it has read and broken the wizard seals;
It has drunk of the Immortal's wells of joy,
It has looked across the jewel bars of heaven,
It has entered the aspiring Secrecy,
It sees beyond terrestrial common things
And communes with the Powers that build the worlds,
Till through the shining gates and mystic streets
Of the city of lapis lazuli and pearl
Proud deeds step forth, a rank and march of gods.
Although in pauses of our human lives
Earth keeps for man some short and perfect hours
When the inconstant tread of Time can seem
The eternal moment which the deathless live,
Yet rare that touch upon the mortal's world:
Hardly a soul and body here are born
In the fierce difficult movement of the stars,
Whose life can keep the paradisal note,

Its rhythm repeat the many-toned melody
Tirelessly throbbing through the rapturous air
Caught in the song that sways the Apsara's limbs
When she floats gleaming like a cloud of light,
A wave of joy on heaven's moonstone floor.
Behold this image cast by light and love,
A stanza of the ardour of the gods
Perfectly rhymed, a pillared ripple of gold!
Her body like a brimmed pitcher of delight
Shaped in a splendour of gold-coloured bronze
As if to seize earth's truth of hidden bliss.
Dream-made illumined mirrors are her eyes
Draped subtly in a slumbrous fringe of jet,
Retaining heaven's reflections in their depths.
Even as her body, such is she within.
Heaven's lustrous mornings gloriously recur,
Like drops of fire upon a silver page,
In her young spirit yet untouched with tears.
All beautiful things eternal seem and new
To virgin wonder in her crystal soul.
The unchanging blue reveals its spacious thought;
Marvellous the moon floats on through wondering skies;
Earth's flowers spring up and laugh at time and death;
The charmed mutations of the enchanter life
Race like bright children past the smiling hours.
If but this joy of life could last, nor pain
Throw its bronze note into her rhythmed days!
Behold her, singer with the prescient gaze,
And let thy blessing chant that this fair child
Shall pour the nectar of a sorrowless life
Around her from her lucid heart of love,
Heal with her bliss the tired breast of earth
And cast like a happy snare felicity.
As grows the great and golden bounteous tree
Flowering by Alakananda's murmuring waves,
Where with enamoured speed the waters run

Lisping and babbling to the splendour of morn
And cling with lyric laughter round the knees
Of heaven's daughters dripping magic rain
Pearl-bright from moon-gold limbs and cloudy hair,
So are her dawns like jewelled leaves of light,
So casts she her felicity on men.
A flame of radiant happiness she was born
And surely will that flame set earth alight:
Doom surely will see her pass and say no word!
But too often here the careless Mother leaves
Her chosen in the envious hands of Fate:
The harp of God falls mute, its call to bliss
Discouraged fails mid earth's unhappy sounds;
The strings of the siren Ecstasy cry not here
Or soon are silenced in the human heart.
Of sorrow's songs we have enough: bid once
Her glad and griefless days bring heaven here.
Or must fire always test the great of soul?
Along the dreadful causeway of the Gods,
Armoured with love and faith and sacred joy,
A traveller to the Eternal's house,
Once let unwounded pass a mortal life.”
But Narad answered not; silent he sat,
Knowing that words are vain and Fate is lord.
He looked into the unseen with seeing eyes,
Then, dallying with the mortal's ignorance
Like one who knows not, questioning, he cried:
“On what high mission went her hastening wheels?
Whence came she with this glory in her heart
And Paradise made visible in her eyes?
What sudden God has met, what face supreme?”
To whom the king, “The red asoca watched
Her going forth which now sees her return.
Arisen into an air of flaming dawn
Like a bright bird tired of her lonely branch,
To find her own lord, since to her on earth

He came not yet, this sweetness wandered forth
Cleaving her way with the beat of her rapid wings.
Led by a distant call her vague swift flight
Threaded the summer morns and sunlit lands.
The happy rest her burdened lashes keep
And these charmed guardian lips hold treasured still.
Virgin who comest perfected by joy,
Reveal the name thy sudden heart-beats learned.
Whom hast thou chosen, kingliest among men?"
And Savitri answered with her still calm voice
As one who speaks beneath the eyes of Fate:
"Father and king, I have carried out thy will.
One whom I sought I found in distant lands;
I have obeyed my heart, I have heard its call.
On the borders of a dreaming wilderness
Mid Shalwa's giant hills and brooding woods
In his thatched hermitage Dyumatsena dwells,
Blind, exiled, outcast, once a mighty king.
The son of Dyumatsena, Satyavan,
I have met on the wild forest's lonely verge.
My father, I have chosen. This is done."
Astonished, all sat silent for a space.
Then Aswapati looked within and saw
A heavy shadow float above the name
Chased by a sudden and stupendous light;
He looked into his daughter's eyes and spoke:
"Well hast thou done and I approve thy choice.
If this is all, then all is surely well;
If there is more, then all can still be well.
Whether it seem good or evil to men's eyes,
Only for good the secret Will can work.
Our destiny is written in double terms:
Through Nature's contraries we draw nearer God;
Out of the darkness we still grow to light.
Death is our road to immortality.
'Cry woe, cry woe,' the world's lost voices wail,

Yet conquers the eternal Good at last.”
Then might the sage have spoken, but the king
In haste broke out and stayed the dangerous word:
“O singer of the ultimate ecstasy,
Lend not a dangerous vision to the blind
Because by native right thou hast seen clear.
Impose not on the mortal’s tremulous breast
The dire ordeal that foreknowledge brings;
Demand not now the Godhead in our acts.
Here are not happy peaks the heaven-nymphs roam
Or Coilas or Vaicountha’s starry stair:
Abrupt, jagged hills only the mighty climb
Are here where few dare even think to rise;
Far voices call down from the dizzy rocks,
Chill, slippery, precipitous are the paths.
Too hard the gods are with man’s fragile race;
In their large heavens they dwell exempt from Fate
And they forget the wounded feet of man,
His limbs that faint beneath the whips of grief,
His heart that hears the tread of time and death.
The future’s road is hid from mortal sight:
He moves towards a veiled and secret face.
To light one step in front is all his hope
And only for a little strength he asks
To meet the riddle of his shrouded fate.
Awaited by a vague and half-seen force,
Aware of danger to his uncertain hours
He guards his flickering yearnings from her breath;
He feels not when the dreadful fingers close
Around him with the grasp none can elude.
If thou canst loose her grip, then only speak.
Perhaps from the iron snare there is escape:
Our mind perhaps deceives us with its words
And gives the name of doom to our own choice;
Perhaps the blindness of our will is Fate.”
He said and Narad answered not the king.

But now the queen alarmed lifted her voice:
“O seer, thy bright arrival has been timed
To this high moment of a happy life;
Then let the speech benign of griefless spheres
Confirm this blithe conjunction of two stars
And sanction joy with thy celestial voice.
Here drag not in the peril of our thoughts,
Let not our words create the doom they fear.
Here is no cause for dread, no chance for grief
To raise her ominous head and stare at love.
A single spirit in a multitude,
Happy is Satyavan mid earthly men
Whom Savitri has chosen for her mate,
And fortunate the forest hermitage
Where leaving her palace and riches and a throne
My Savitri will dwell and bring in heaven.
Then let thy blessing put the immortals’ seal
On these bright lives’ unstained felicity
Pushing the ominous Shadow from their days.
Too heavy falls a Shadow on man’s heart;
It dares not be too happy upon earth.
It dreads the blow dogging too vivid joys,
A lash unseen in Fate’s extended hand,
The danger lurking in fortune’s proud extremes,
An irony in life’s indulgent smile,
And trembles at the laughter of the gods.
Or if crouches unseen a panther doom,
If wings of Evil brood above that house,
Then also speak, that we may turn aside
And rescue our lives from hazard of wayside doom
And chance entanglement of an alien fate.”
And Narad slowly answered to the queen:
“What help is in prevision to the driven?
Safe doors cry opening near, the doomed pass on.
A future knowledge is an added pain,
A torturing burden and a fruitless light

On the enormous scene that Fate has built.
The eternal poet, universal Mind,
Has paged each line of his imperial act;
Invisible the giant actors tread
And man lives like some secret player's mask.
He knows not even what his lips shall speak.
For a mysterious Power compels his steps
And life is stronger than his trembling soul.
None can refuse what the stark Force demands:
Her eyes are fixed upon her mighty aim;
No cry or prayer can turn her from her path.
She has leaped an arrow from the bow of God."

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve
And help by calm the swaying wheels of life
And the long restlessness of transient things
And the trouble and passion of the unquiet world.
As though her own bosom were pierced the mother saw
The ancient human sentence strike her child,
Her sweetness that deserved another fate
Only a larger measure given of tears.
Aspiring to the nature of the gods,
A mind proof-armoured mailed in mighty thoughts,
A will entire couchant behind wisdom's shield,
Though to still heavens of knowledge she had risen,
Though calm and wise and Aswapati's queen,
Human was she still and opened her doors to grief;
The stony-eyed injustice she accused
Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law,
Nor sought the strength extreme adversity brings
To lives that stand erect and front the World-Power:
Her heart appealed against the impartial judge,
Taxed with perversity the impersonal One.
Her tranquil spirit she called not to her aid,
But as a common man beneath his load
Grows faint and breathes his pain in ignorant words,
So now she arraigned the world's impassive will:

“What stealthy doom has crept across her path
Emerging from the dark forest’s sullen heart,
What evil thing stood smiling by the way
And wore the beauty of the Shalwa boy?
Perhaps he came an enemy from her past
Armed with a hidden force of ancient wrongs,
Himself unknowing, and seized her unknown.
Here dreadfully entangled love and hate
Meet us blind wanderers mid the perils of Time.
Our days are links of a disastrous chain,
Necessity avenges casual steps;
Old cruelties come back unrecognised,
The gods make use of our forgotten deeds.
Yet all in vain the bitter law was made.
Our own minds are the justicers of doom.
For nothing have we learned, but still repeat
Our stark misuse of self and others’ souls.
There are dire alchemies of the human heart
And fallen from his ethereal element
Love darkens to the spirit of nether gods.
The dreadful angel, angry with his joys
Woundingly sweet he cannot yet forego,
Is pitiless to the soul his gaze disarmed,
He visits with his own pangs his quivering prey
Forcing us to cling enamoured to his grip
As if in love with our own agony.
This is one poignant misery in the world,
And grief has other lassoes for our life.
Our sympathies become our torturers.
Strength have I my own punishment to bear,
Knowing it just, but on this earth perplexed,
Smitten in the sorrow of scourged and helpless things,
Often it faints to meet other suffering eyes.
We are not as the gods who know not grief
And look impassive on a suffering world,
Calm they gaze down on the little human scene

And the short-lived passion crossing mortal hearts.
An ancient tale of woe can move us still,
We keep the ache of breasts that breathe no more,
We are shaken by the sight of human pain,
And share the miseries that others feel.
Ours not the passionless lids that cannot age.
Too hard for us is heaven's indifference:
Our own tragedies are not enough for us,
All pathos and all sufferings we make ours;
We have sorrow for a greatness passed away
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things.
Even a stranger's anguish rends my heart,
And this, O Narad, is my well-loved child.
Hide not from us our doom, if doom is ours.
This is the worst, an unknown face of Fate,
A terror ominous, mute, felt more than seen
Behind our seat by day, our couch by night,
A Fate lurking in the shadow of our hearts,
The anguish of the unseen that waits to strike.
To know is best, however hard to bear."
Then cried the sage piercing the mother's heart,
Forcing to steel the will of Savitri,
His words set free the spring of cosmic Fate.
The great Gods use the pain of human hearts
As a sharp axe to hew their cosmic road:
They squander lavishly men's blood and tears
For a moment's purpose in their fateful work.
This cosmic Nature's balance is not ours
Nor the mystic measure of her need and use.
A single word lets loose vast agencies;
A casual act determines the world's fate.
So now he set free destiny in that hour.
"The truth thou hast claimed; I give to thee the truth.
A marvel of the meeting earth and heavens
Is he whom Savitri has chosen mid men,
His figure is the front of Nature's march,

His single being excels the works of Time.
A sapphire cutting from the sleep of heaven,
Delightful is the soul of Satyavan,
A ray out of the rapturous Infinite,
A silence waking to a hymn of joy.
A divinity and kingliness gird his brow;
His eyes keep a memory from a world of bliss.
As brilliant as a lonely moon in heaven,
Gentle like the sweet bud that spring desires,
Pure like a stream that kisses silent banks,
He takes with bright surprise spirit and sense.
A living knot of golden Paradise,
A blue Immense he leans to the longing world,
Time's joy borrowed out of eternity,
A star of splendour or a rose of bliss.
In him soul and Nature, equal Presences,
Balance and fuse in a wide harmony.
The Happy in their bright ether have not hearts
More sweet and true than this of mortal make
That takes all joy as the world's native gift
And to all gives joy as the world's natural right.
His speech carries a light of inner truth,
And a large-eyed communion with the Power
In common things has made veilless his mind,
A seer in earth-shapes of garbless deity.
A tranquil breadth of sky windless and still
Watching the world like a mind of unplumbed thought,
A silent space musing and luminous
Uncovered by the morning to delight,
A green tangle of trees upon a happy hill
Made into a murmuring nest by southern winds,
These are his images and parallels,
His kin in beauty and in depth his peers.
A will to climb lifts a delight to live,
Heaven's height companion of earth-beauty's charm,
An aspiration to the immortals' air

Lain on the lap of mortal ecstasy.
His sweetness and his joy attract all hearts
To live with his own in a glad tenancy,
His strength is like a tower built to reach heaven,
A godhead quarried from the stones of life.
O loss, if death into its elements
Of which his gracious envelope was built,
Shatter this vase before it breathes its sweets,
As if earth could not keep too long from heaven
A treasure thus unique loaned by the gods,
A being so rare, of so divine a make!
In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
And perches careless on a branch of Time,
This sovereign glory ends heaven lent to earth,
This splendour vanishes from the mortal's sky:
Heaven's greatness came, but was too great to stay.
Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
This day returning Satyavan must die."
A lightning bright and nude the sentence fell.
But the queen cried: "Vain then can be heaven's grace!
Heaven mocks us with the brilliance of its gifts,
For Death is a cupbearer of the wine
Of too brief joy held up to mortal lips
For a passionate moment by the careless gods.
But I reject the grace and the mockery.
Mounting thy car go forth, O Savitri,
And travel once more through the peopled lands.
Alas, in the green gladness of the woods
Thy heart has stooped to a misleading call.
Choose once again and leave this fated head,
Death is the gardener of this wonder-tree;
Love's sweetness sleeps in his pale marble hand.
Advancing in a honeyed line but closed,
A little joy would buy too bitter an end.
Plead not thy choice, for death has made it vain.
Thy youth and radiance were not born to lie

A casket void dropped on a careless soil;
A choice less rare may call a happier fate.”
But Savitri answered from her violent heart,—
Her voice was calm, her face was fixed like steel:
“Once my heart chose and chooses not again.
The word I have spoken can never be erased,
It is written in the record book of God.
The truth once uttered, from the earth’s air effaced,
By mind forgotten, sounds immortally
For ever in the memory of Time.
Once the dice fall thrown by the hand of Fate
In an eternal moment of the gods.
My heart has sealed its troth to Satyavan:
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve.
Those who shall part who have grown one being within?
Death’s grip can break our bodies, not our souls;
If death take him, I too know how to die.
Let Fate do with me what she will or can;
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality.
Fate’s law may change, but not my spirit’s will.”
An adamant will, she cast her speech like bronze.
But in the queen’s mind listening her words
Rang like the voice of a self-chosen Doom
Denying every issue of escape.
To her own despair answer the mother made;
As one she cried who in her heavy heart
Labours amid the sobbing of her hopes
To wake a note of help from sadder strings:
“O child, in the magnificence of thy soul
Dwelling on the border of a greater world
And dazzled by thy superhuman thoughts,
Thou lendst eternity to a mortal hope.
Here on this mutable and ignorant earth

Who is the lover and who is the friend?
All passes here, nothing remains the same.
None is for any on this transient globe.
He whom thou lovest now, a stranger came
And into a far strangeness shall depart:
His moment's part once done upon life's stage
Which for a time was given him from within,
To other scenes he moves and other players
And laughs and weeps mid faces new, unknown.
The body thou hast loved is cast away
Amidst the brute unchanging stuff of worlds
To indifferent mighty Nature and becomes
Crude matter for the joy of others' lives.
But for our souls, upon the wheel of God
For ever turning, they arrive and go,
Married and sundered in the magic round
Of the great Dancer of the boundless dance.
Our emotions are but high and dying notes
Of his wild music changed compellingly
By the passionate movements of a seeking Heart
In the inconstant links of hour with hour.
To call down heaven's distant answering song,
To cry to an unseized bliss is all we dare;
Once seized, we lose the heavenly music's sense;
Too near, the rhythmic cry has fled or failed;
All sweetesses are baffling symbols here.
Love dies before the lover in our breast:
Our joys are perfumes in a brittle vase.
O then what wreck is this upon Time's sea
To spread life's sails to the hurricane desire
And call for pilot the unseeing heart!
O child, wilt thou proclaim, wilt thou then follow
Against the Law that is the eternal will
The autarchy of the rash Titan's mood
To whom his own fierce will is the one law
In a world where Truth is not, nor Light nor God?

Only the gods can speak what now thou speakst.
Thou who art human, think not like a god.
For man, below the god, above the brute,
Is given the calm reason as his guide;
He is not driven by an unthinking will
As are the actions of the bird and beast;
He is not moved by stark Necessity
Like the senseless motion of inconscient things.
The giant's and the Titan's furious march
Climbs to usurp the kingdom of the gods
Or skirts the demon magnitudes of Hell;
In the unreflecting passion of their hearts
They dash their lives against the eternal Law
And fall and break by their own violent mass:
The middle path is made for thinking man.
To choose his steps by reason's vigilant light,
To choose his path among the many paths
Is given him, for each his difficult goal
Hewn out of infinite possibility.
Leave not thy goal to follow a beautiful face.
Only when thou hast climbed above thy mind
And liv'st in the calm vastness of the One
Can love be eternal in the eternal Bliss
And love divine replace the human tie.
There is a shrouded law, an austere force:
It bids thee strengthen thy undying spirit;
It offers its severe benignancies
Of work and thought and measured grave delight
As steps to climb to God's far secret heights.
Then is our life a tranquil pilgrimage,
Each year a mile upon the heavenly Way,
Each dawn opens into a larger Light.
Thy acts are thy helpers, all events are signs,
Waking and sleep are opportunities
Given to thee by an immortal Power.
So canst thou raise thy pure unvanquished spirit,

Till spread to heaven in a wide vesper calm,
Indifferent and gentle as the sky,
It greatens slowly into timeless peace.”
But Savitri replied with steadfast eyes:
“My will is part of the eternal Will,
My fate is what my spirit’s strength can make,
My fate is what my spirit’s strength can bear;
My strength is not the Titan’s; it is God’s.
I have discovered my glad reality
Beyond my body in another’s being:
I have found the deep unchanging soul of love.
Then how shall I desire a lonely good,
Or slay, aspiring to white vacant peace,
The endless hope that made my soul spring forth
Out of its infinite solitude and sleep?
My spirit has glimpsed the glory for which it came,
The beating of one vast heart in the flame of things,
My eternity clasped by his eternity
And, tireless of the sweet abysses of Time,
Deep possibility always to love.
This, this is first, last joy and to its throb
The riches of a thousand fortunate years
Are poverty. Nothing to me are death and grief
Or ordinary lives and happy days.
And what to me are common souls of men
Or eyes and lips that are not Satyavan’s?
I have no need to draw back from his arms
And the discovered paradise of his love
And journey into a still infinity.
Only now for my soul in Satyavan
I treasure the rich occasion of my birth:
In sunlight and a dream of emerald ways
I shall walk with him like gods in Paradise.
If for a year, that year is all my life.
And yet I know this is not all my fate
Only to live and love awhile and die.

For I know now why my spirit came on earth
And who I am and who he is I love.
I have looked at him from my immortal Self,
I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan;
I have seen the Eternal in a human face.”
Then none could answer to her words. Silent
They sat and looked into the eyes of Fate.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain

A SILENCE sealed the irrevocable decree,
The word of Fate that fell from heavenly lips
Fixing a doom no power could ever reverse
Unless heaven's will itself could change its course.
Or so it seemed: yet from the silence rose
One voice that questioned changeless destiny,
A will that strove against the immutable Will.
A mother's heart had heard the fateful speech
That rang like a sanction to the call of death
And came like a chill close to life and hope.
Yet hope sank down like an extinguished fire.
She felt the leaden inevitable hand
Invade the secrecy of her guarded soul
And smite with sudden pain its still content
And the empire of her hard-won quietude.
Awhile she fell to the level of human mind,
A field of mortal grief and Nature's law;
She shared, she bore the common lot of men
And felt what common hearts endure in Time.
Voicing earth's question to the inscrutable power
The queen now turned to the still immobile seer:
Assailed by the discontent in Nature's depths,
Partner in the agony of dumb driven things
And all the misery, all the ignorant cry,
Passionate like sorrow questioning heaven she spoke.
Lending her speech to the surface soul on earth
She uttered the suffering in the world's dumb heart
And man's revolt against his ignorant fate.
“O seer, in the earth's strange twi-natured life
By what pitiless adverse Necessity
Or what cold freak of a Creator's will,

By what random accident or governed Chance
That shaped a rule out of fortuitous steps,
Made destiny from an hour's emotion, came
Into the unreadable mystery of Time
The direr mystery of grief and pain?
Is it thy God who made this cruel law?
Or some disastrous Power has marred his work
And he stands helpless to defend or save?
A fatal seed was sown in life's false start
When evil twinned with good on earthly soil.
Then first appeared the malady of mind,
Its pang of thought, its quest for the aim of life.
It twisted into forms of good and ill
The frank simplicity of the animal's acts;
It turned the straight path hewn by the body's gods,
Followed the zigzag of the uncertain course
Of life that wanders seeking for its aim
In the pale starlight falling from thought's skies,
Its guides the unsure idea, the wavering will.
Lost was the instinct's safe identity
With the arrow-point of being's inmost sight,
Marred the sure steps of Nature's simple walk
And truth and freedom in the growing soul.
Out of some ageless innocence and peace,
Privilege of souls not yet betrayed to birth,
Cast down to suffer on this hard dangerous earth
Our life was born in pain and with a cry.
Although earth-nature welcomes heaven's breath
Inspiring Matter with the will to live,
A thousand ills assail the mortal's hours
And wear away the natural joy of life;
Our bodies are an engine cunningly made,
But for all its parts as cunningly are planned,
Contrived ingeniously with demon skill,
Its apt inevitable heritage
Of mortal danger and peculiar pain,

Its payment of the tax of Time and Fate,
Its way to suffer and its way to die.
This is the ransom of our high estate,
The sign and stamp of our humanity.
A grisly company of maladies
Come, licensed lodgers, into man's bodily house,
Purveyors of death and torturers of life.
In the malignant hollows of the world,
In its subconscious cavern-passages
Ambushed they lie waiting their hour to leap,
Surrounding with danger the sieged city of life:
Admitted into the citadel of man's days
They mine his force and maim or suddenly kill.
Ourselves within us lethal forces nurse;
We make of our own enemies our guests:
Out of their holes like beasts they creep and gnaw
The chords of the divine musician's lyre
Till frayed and thin the music dies away
Or crashing snaps with a last tragic note.
All that we are is like a fort beset:
All that we strive to be alters like a dream
In the grey sleep of Matter's ignorance.
Mind suffers lamed by the world's disharmony
And the unloveliness of human things.
A treasure misspent or cheaply, fruitlessly sold
In the bazaar of a blind destiny,
A gift of priceless value from Time's gods
Lost or mislaid in an uncaring world,
Life is a marvel missed, an art gone wry;
A seeker in a dark and obscure place,
An ill-armed warrior facing dreadful odds,
An imperfect worker given a baffling task,
An ignorant judge of problems Ignorance made,
Its heavenward flights reach closed and keyless gates,
Its glorious outbursts peter out in mire.
On Nature's gifts to man a curse was laid:

All walks inarmed by its own opposites,
Error is the comrade of our mortal thought
And falsehood lurks in the deep bosom of truth,
Sin poisons with its vivid flowers of joy
Or leaves a red scar burnt across the soul;
Virtue is a grey bondage and a gaol.
At every step is laid for us a snare.
Alien to reason and the spirit's light,
Our fount of action from a darkness wells;
In ignorance and nescience are our roots.
A growing register of calamities
Is the past's account, the future's book of Fate:
The centuries pile man's follies and man's crimes
Upon the countless crowd of Nature's ills;
As if the world's stone load was not enough,
A crop of miseries obstinately is sown
By his own hand in the furrows of the gods,
The vast increasing tragic harvest reaped
From old misdeeds buried by oblivious Time.
He walks by his own choice into Hell's trap;
This mortal creature is his own worst foe.
His science is an artificer of doom;
He ransacks earth for means to harm his kind;
He slays his happiness and others' good.
Nothing has he learned from Time and its history;
Even as of old in the raw youth of Time,
When Earth ignorant ran on the highways of Fate,
Old forms of evil cling to the world's soul:
War making nought the sweet smiling calm of life,
Battle and rapine, ruin and massacre
Are still the fierce pastimes of man's warring tribes;
An idiot hour destroys what centuries made,
His wanton rage or frenzied hate lays low
The beauty and greatness by his genius wrought
And the mighty output of a nation's toil.
All he has achieved he drags to the precipice.

His grandeur he turns to an epic of doom and fall;
His littleness crawls content through squalor and mud,
He calls heaven's retribution on his head
And wallows in his self-made misery.
A part author of the cosmic tragedy,
His will conspires with death and time and fate.
His brief appearance on the enigmaed earth
Ever recurs but brings no high result
To this wanderer through the aeon-rings of God
That shut his life in their vast longevity.
His soul's wide search and ever returning hopes
Pursue the useless orbit of their course
In a vain repetition of lost toils
Across a track of soon forgotten lives.
All is an episode in a meaningless tale.
Why is it all and wherefore are we here?
If to some being of eternal bliss
It is our spirit's destiny to return
Or some still impersonal height of endless calm,
Since That we are and out of That we came,
Whence rose the strange and sterile interlude
Lasting in vain through interminable Time?
Who willed to form or feign a universe
In the cold and endless emptiness of Space?
Or if these beings must be and their brief lives,
What need had the soul of ignorance and tears?
Whence rose the call for sorrow and for pain?
Or all came helplessly without a cause?
What power forced the immortal spirit to birth?
The eternal witness once of eternity,
A deathless sojourner mid transient scenes,
He camps in life's half-lit obscurity
Amid the debris of his thoughts and dreams.
Or who persuaded it to fall from bliss
And forfeit its immortal privilege?
Who laid on it the ceaseless will to live

A wanderer in this beautiful, sorrowful world,
And bear its load of joy and grief and love?
Or if no being watches the works of Time,
What hard impersonal Necessity
Compels the vain toil of brief living things?
A great Illusion then has built the stars.
But where then is the soul's security,
Its poise in this circling of unreal suns?
Or else it is a wanderer from its home
Who strayed into a blind alley of Time and chance
And finds no issue from a meaningless world.
Or where begins and ends Illusion's reign?
Perhaps the soul we feel is only a dream,
Eternal self a fiction sensed in trance.”

Then after a silence Narad made reply:
Tuning his lips to earthly sound he spoke,
And something now of the deep sense of fate
Weighted the fragile hints of mortal speech.
His forehead shone with vision solemnised,
Turned to a tablet of supernal thoughts
As if characters of an unwritten tongue
Had left in its breadth the inscriptions of the gods.
Bare in that light Time toiled, his unseen works
Detected; the broad-flung far-seeing schemes
Unfinished which his aeoned flight unrolls
Were mapped already in that world-wide look.
“Was then the sun a dream because there is night?
Hidden in the mortal's heart the Eternal lives:
He lives secret in the chamber of thy soul,
A Light shines there nor pain nor grief can cross.
A darkness stands between thyself and him,
Thou canst not hear or feel the marvellous Guest,
Thou canst not see the beatific sun.
O queen, thy thought is a light of the Ignorance,
Its brilliant curtain hides from thee God's face.

It illumes a world born from the Inconscience
But hides the Immortal's meaning in the world.
Thy mind's light hides from thee the Eternal's thought,
Thy heart's hopes hide from thee the Eternal's will,
Earth's joys shut from thee the Immortal's bliss.
Thence rose the need of a dark intruding god,
The world's dread teacher, the creator, pain.
Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come;
Thy grief is a cry of darkness to the Light;
Pain was the first-born of the Inconscience
Which was thy body's dumb original base;
Already slept there pain's subconscious shape:
A shadow in a shadowy tenebrous womb,
Till life shall move, it waits to wake and be.
In one caul with joy came forth the dreadful Power.
In life's breast it was born hiding its twin;
But pain came first, then only joy could be.
Pain ploughed the first hard ground of the world-drowse.
By pain a spirit started from the clod,
By pain Life stirred in the subliminal deep.
Interned, submerged, hidden in Matter's trance
Awoke to itself the dreamer, sleeping Mind;
It made a visible realm out of its dreams,
It drew its shapes from the subconscious depths,
Then turned to look upon the world it had made.
By pain and joy, the bright and tenebrous twins,
The inanimate world perceived its sentient soul,
Else had the Inconscient never suffered change.
Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break
A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
And never thought to exceed the human start
And never learned to climb towards the Sun.
This earth is full of labour, packed with pain;

Throes of an endless birth coerce her still;
The centuries end, the ages vainly pass
And yet the Godhead in her is not born.
The ancient Mother faces all with joy,
Calls for the ardent pang, the grandiose thrill;
For with pain and labour all creation comes.
This earth is full of the anguish of the gods;
Ever they travail driven by Time's goad,
And strive to work out the eternal Will
And shape the life divine in mortal forms.
His will must be worked out in human breasts
Against the Evil that rises from the gulfs,
Against the world's Ignorance and its obstinate strength,
Against the stumbling of man's pervert will,
Against the deep folly of his human mind,
Against the blind reluctance of his heart.
The spirit is doomed to pain till man is free.
There is a clamour of battle, a tramp, a march:
A cry arises like a moaning sea,
A desperate laughter under the blows of death,
A doom of blood and sweat and toil and tears.
Men die that man may live and God be born.
An awful Silence watches tragic Time.
Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men
To greatness: an inspired labour chisels
With heavenly cruelty an unwilling mould.
Implacable in the passion of their will,
Lifting the hammers of titanic toil
The demiurges of the universe work;
They shape with giant strokes their own; their sons
Are marked with their enormous stamp of fire.
Although the shaping god's tremendous touch
Is torture unbearable to mortal nerves,
The fiery spirit grows in strength within
And feels a joy in every titan pang.
He who would save himself lives bare and calm;

He who would save the race must share its pain:
This he shall know who obeys that grandiose urge.
The Great who came to save this suffering world
And rescue out of Time's shadow and the Law,
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain;
They are caught by the Wheel that they had hoped to break,
On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate.
Heaven's riches they bring, their sufferings count the price
Or they pay the gift of knowledge with their lives.

The Son of God born as the Son of man
Has drunk the bitter cup, owned Godhead's debt,
The debt the Eternal owes to the fallen kind
His will has bound to death and struggling life
That yearns in vain for rest and endless peace.
Now is the debt paid, wiped off the original score.
The Eternal suffers in a human form,
He has signed salvation's testament with his blood.
He has opened the doors of his undying peace.
The Deity compensates the creature's claim,
The Creator bears the law of pain and death;
A retribution smites the incarnate God.
His love has paved the mortal's road to Heaven:
He has given his life and light to balance here
The dark account of mortal ignorance.
It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,
Offered by God's martyred body for the world;
Gethsemane and Calvary are his lot,
He carries the cross on which man's soul is nailed;
His escort is the curses of the crowd;
Insult and jeer are his right's acknowledgment;
Two thieves slain with him mock his mighty death.
He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way.
He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.
Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls,

His crucified voice proclaims, 'I, I am God;'
'Yes, all is God,' peals back Heaven's deathless call.
The seed of Godhead sleeps in mortal hearts,
The flower of Godhead grows on the world-tree:
All shall discover God in self and things.
But when God's messenger comes to help the world
And lead the soul of earth to higher things,
He too must carry the yoke he came to unloose;
He too must bear the pang that he would heal:
Exempt and unafflicted by earth's fate,
How shall he cure the ills he never felt?
He covers the world's agony with his calm;
But though to the outward eye no sign appears
And peace is given to our torn human hearts,
The struggle is there and paid the unseen price;
The fire, the strife, the wrestle are within.
He carries the suffering world in his own breast;
Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his:
Earth's ancient load lies heavy on his soul;
Night and its powers beleaguer his tardy steps,
The Titan adversary's clutch he bears;
His march is a battle and a pilgrimage.
Life's evil smites, he is stricken with the world's pain:
A million wounds gape in his secret heart.
He journeys sleepless through an unending night;
Antagonist forces crowd across his path;
A siege, a combat is his inner life.
Even worse may be the cost, direr the pain:
His large identity and all-harbouring love
Shall bring the cosmic anguish into his depths,
The sorrow of all living things shall come
And knock at his doors and live within his house;
A dreadful cord of sympathy can tie
All suffering into his single grief and make
All agony in all the worlds his own.
He meets an ancient adversary Force,

He is lashed with the whips that tear the world's worn heart;
The weeping of the centuries visits his eyes:
He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt,
The poison of the world has stained his throat.
In the market-place of Matter's capital
Amidst the chafferings of the affair called life
He is tied to the stake of a perennial Fire;
He burns on an unseen original verge
That Matter may be turned to spirit stuff:
He is the victim in his own sacrifice.
The Immortal bound to earth's mortality
Appearing and perishing on the roads of Time
Creates God's moment by eternity's beats.
He dies that the world may be new-born and live.
Even if he escapes the fiercest fires,
Even if the world breaks not in, a drowning sea,
Only by hard sacrifice is high heaven earned:
He must face the fight, the pang who would conquer Hell.
A dark concealed hostility is lodged
In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time
That claims the right to change and mar God's work.
A secret enmity ambushes the world's march;
It leaves a mark on thought and speech and act:
It stamps stain and defect on all things done;
Till it is slain peace is forbidden on earth.
There is no visible foe, but the unseen
Is round us, forces intangible besiege,
Touches from alien realms, thoughts not our own
Overtake us and compel the erring heart;
Our lives are caught in an ambiguous net.
An adversary Force was born of old:
Invader of the life of mortal man,
It hides from him the straight immortal path.
A power came in to veil the eternal Light,
A power opposed to the eternal will
Diverts the messages of the infallible Word,

Contorts the contours of the cosmic plan:
A whisper lures to evil the human heart,
It seals up wisdom's eyes, the soul's regard,
It is the origin of our suffering here,
It binds earth to calamity and pain.
This all must conquer who would bring down God's peace.
This hidden foe lodged in the human breast
Man must overcome or miss his higher fate.
This is the inner war without escape.

“Hard is the world-redeemer’s heavy task;
The world itself becomes his adversary,
Those he would save are his antagonists:
This world is in love with its own ignorance,
Its darkness turns away from the saviour light,
It gives the cross in payment for the crown.
His work is a trickle of splendour in a long night;
He sees the long march of Time, the little won;
A few are saved, the rest strive on and fail:
A Sun has passed, on earth Night’s shadow falls.
Yes, there are happy ways near to God’s sun;
But few are they who tread the sunlit path;
Only the pure in soul can walk in light.
An exit is shown, a road of hard escape
From the sorrow and the darkness and the chain;
But how shall a few escaped release the world?
The human mass lingers beneath the yoke.
Escape, however high, redeems not life,
Life that is left behind on a fallen earth.
Escape cannot uplift the abandoned race
Or bring to it victory and the reign of God.
A greater power must come, a larger light.
Although Light grows on earth and Night recedes,
Yet till the evil is slain in its own home
And Light invades the world’s inconscient base
And perished has the adversary Force,

He still must labour on, his work half done.
One yet may come armoured, invincible;
His will immobile meets the mobile hour;
The world's blows cannot bend that victor head;
Calm and sure are his steps in the growing Night;
The goal recedes, he hurries not his pace,
He turns not to high voices in the night;
He asks no aid from the inferior gods;
His eyes are fixed on his immutable aim.
Man turns aside or chooses easier paths;
He keeps to the one high and difficult road
That sole can climb to the Eternal's peaks;
The ineffable planes already have felt his tread;
He has made heaven and earth his instruments,
But the limits fall from him of earth and heaven;
Their law he transcends but uses as his means.
He has seized life's hands, he has mastered his own heart.
The feints of Nature mislead not his sight,
Inflexible his look towards Truth's far end;
Fate's deaf resistance cannot break his will.
In the dreadful passages, the fatal paths,
Invulnerable his soul, his heart unslain,
He lives through the opposition of earth's Powers
And Nature's ambushes and the world's attacks.
His spirit's stature transcending pain and bliss,
He fronts evil and good with calm and equal eyes.
He too must grapple with the riddling Sphinx
And plunge into her long obscurity.
He has broken into the Inconscient's depths
That veil themselves even from their own regard:
He has seen God's slumber shape these magic worlds.
He has watched the dumb God fashioning Matter's frame,
Dreaming the dreams of its unknowing sleep,
And watched the unconscious Force that built the stars.
He has learned the Inconscient's workings and its law,
Its incoherent thoughts and rigid acts,

Its hazard wastes of impulse and idea,
The chaos of its mechanic frequencies,
Its random calls, its whispers falsely true,
Misleaders of the hooded listening soul.
All things come to its ear but nothing abides;
All rose from the silence, all goes back to its hush.
Its somnolence founded the universe,
Its obscure waking makes the world seem vain.
Arisen from Nothingness and towards Nothingness turned,
Its dark and potent nescience was earth's start;
It is the waste stuff from which all was made;
Into its deeps creation can collapse.
Its opposition clogs the march of the soul,
It is the mother of our ignorance.
He must call light into its dark abysms,
Else never can Truth conquer Matter's sleep
And all earth look into the eyes of God.
All things obscure his knowledge must relume,
All things perverse his power must unknot:
He must pass to the other shore of falsehood's sea,
He must enter the world's dark to bring there light.
The heart of evil must be bared to his eyes,
He must learn its cosmic dark necessity,
Its right and its dire roots in Nature's soil.
He must know the thought that moves the demon act
And justifies the Titan's erring pride
And the falsehood lurking in earth's crooked dreams:
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
Imperishable and wise and infinite,
He still must travel Hell the world to save.
Into the eternal Light he shall emerge
On borders of the meeting of all worlds;
There on the verge of Nature's summit steps

The secret Law of each thing is fulfilled,
All contraries heal their long dissidence.
There meet and clasp the eternal opposites,
There pain becomes a violent fiery joy;
Evil turns back to its original good,
And sorrow lies upon the breasts of Bliss:
She has learned to weep glad tears of happiness;
Her gaze is charged with a wistful ecstasy.
Then shall be ended here the Law of Pain.
Earth shall be made a home of Heaven's light,
A seer heaven-born shall lodge in human breasts;
The superconscious beam shall touch men's eyes
And the truth-conscious world come down to earth
Invading Matter with the Spirit's ray,
Awaking its silence to immortal thoughts,
Awaking the dumb heart to the living Word.
This mortal life shall house Eternity's bliss,
The body's self taste immortality.
Then shall the world-redeemer's task be done.

“Till then must life carry its seed of death
And sorrow's plaint be heard in the slow Night.
O mortal, bear this great world's law of pain,
In thy hard passage through a suffering world
Lean for thy soul's support on Heaven's strength,
Turn towards high Truth, aspire to love and peace.
A little bliss is lent thee from above,
A touch divine upon thy human days.
Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God.
Haste not towards Godhead on a dangerous road,
Open not thy doorways to a nameless Power,
Climb not to Godhead by the Titan's road.
Against the Law he pits his single will,
Across its way he throws his pride of might.
Heavenward he clammers on a stair of storms

Aspiring to live near the deathless sun.
He strives with a giant strength to wrest by force
From life and Nature the immortals' right;
He takes by storm the world and fate and heaven.
He comes not to the high World-maker's seat,
He waits not for the outstretched hand of God
To raise him out of his mortality.
All he would make his own, leave nothing free,
Stretching his small self to cope with the infinite.
Obstructing the gods' open ways he makes
His own estate of the earth's air and light;
A monopolist of the world-energy,
He dominates the life of common men.
His pain and others' pain he makes his means:
On death and suffering he builds his throne.
In the hurry and clangour of his acts of might,
In a riot and excess of fame and shame,
By his magnitudes of hate and violence,
By the quaking of the world beneath his tread
He matches himself against the Eternal's calm
And feels in himself the greatness of a god:
Power is his image of celestial self.
The Titan's heart is a sea of fire and force;
He exults in the death of things and ruin and fall,
He feeds his strength with his own and others' pain;
In the world's pathos and passion he takes delight,
His pride, his might call for the struggle and pang.
He glories in the sufferings of the flesh
And covers the stigmata with the Stoic's name.
His eyes blinded and visionless stare at the sun,
The seeker's Sight receding from his heart
Can find no more the light of eternity;
He sees the beyond as an emptiness void of soul
And takes his night for a dark infinite.
His nature magnifies the unreal's blank
And sees in Nought the sole reality:

He would stamp his single figure on the world,
Obsess the world's rumours with his single name.
His moments centre the vast universe.
He sees his little self as very God.
His little 'I' has swallowed the whole world,
His ego has stretched into infinity.
His mind, a beat in original Nothingness,
Ciphers his thought on a slate of hourless Time.
He builds on a mighty vacancy of soul
A huge philosophy of Nothingness.
In him Nirvana lives and speaks and acts
Impossibly creating a universe.
An eternal zero is his formless self,
His spirit the void impersonal absolute.
Take not that stride, O growing soul of man;
Cast not thy self into that night of God.
The soul suffering is not eternity's key,
Or ransom by sorrow heaven's demand on life.
O mortal, bear, but ask not for the stroke,
Too soon will grief and anguish find thee out.
Too enormous is that venture for thy will;
Only in limits can man's strength be safe;
Yet is infinity thy spirit's goal;
Its bliss is there behind the world's face of tears.
A power is in thee that thou knowest not;
Thou art a vessel of the imprisoned spark.
It seeks relief from Time's envelopment,
And while thou shutst it in, the seal is pain:
Bliss is the Godhead's crown, eternal, free,
Unburdened by life's blind mystery of pain:
Pain is the signature of the Ignorance
Attesting the secret god denied by life:
Until life finds him pain can never end.
Calm is self's victory overcoming fate.
Bear; thou shalt find at last thy road to bliss.
Bliss is the secret stuff of all that lives,

Even pain and grief are garbs of world-delight,
It hides behind thy sorrow and thy cry.
Because thy strength is a part and not God's whole,
Because afflicted by the little self
Thy consciousness forgets to be divine
As it walks in the vague penumbra of the flesh
And cannot bear the world's tremendous touch,
Thou criest out and sayst that there is pain.
Indifference, pain and joy, a triple disguise,
Attire of the rapturous Dancer in the ways,
Withhold from thee the body of God's bliss.
Thy spirit's strength shall make thee one with God,
Thy agony shall change to ecstasy,
Indifference deepen into infinity's calm
And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute.

“O mortal who complainst of death and fate,
Accuse none of the harms thyself hast called;
This troubled world thou hast chosen for thy home,
Thou art thyself the author of thy pain.
Once in the immortal boundlessness of Self,
In a vast of Truth and Consciousness and Light
The soul looked out from its felicity.
It felt the Spirit's interminable bliss,
It knew itself deathless, timeless, spaceless, one,
It saw the Eternal, lived in the Infinite.
Then, curious of a shadow thrown by Truth,
It strained towards some otherness of self,
It was drawn to an unknown Face peering through night.
It sensed a negative infinity,
A void supernal whose immense excess
Imitating God and everlasting Time
Offered a ground for Nature's adverse birth
And Matter's rigid hard unconsciousness
Harbouring the brilliance of a transient soul
That lights up birth and death and ignorant life.

A Mind arose that stared at Nothingness
Till figures formed of what could never be;
It housed the contrary of all that is.
A Nought appeared as Being's huge sealed cause,
Its dumb support in a blank infinite,
In whose abysm spirit must disappear:
A darkened Nature lived and held the seed
Of Spirit hidden and feigning not to be.
Eternal Consciousness became a freak
Of an unsouled almighty Inconscient
And, breathed no more as spirit's native air,
Bliss was an incident of a mortal hour,
A stranger in the insentient universe.
As one drawn by the grandeur of the Void
The soul attracted leaned to the Abyss:
It longed for the adventure of Ignorance
And the marvel and surprise of the Unknown
And the endless possibility that lurked
In the womb of Chaos and in Nothing's gulf
Or looked from the unfathomed eyes of Chance.
It tired of its unchanging happiness,
It turned away from immortality:
It was drawn to hazard's call and danger's charm,
It yearned to the pathos of grief, the drama of pain,
Perdition's peril, the wounded bare escape,
The music of ruin and its glamour and crash,
The savour of pity and the gamble of love
And passion and the ambiguous face of Fate.
A world of hard endeavour and difficult toil,
And battle on extinction's perilous verge,
A clash of forces, a vast incertitude,
The joy of creation out of Nothingness,
Strange meetings on the roads of Ignorance
And the companionship of half-known souls
Or the solitary greatness and lonely force
Of a separate being conquering its world,

Called it from its too safe eternity.
A huge descent began, a giant fall:
For what the spirit sees, creates a truth
And what the soul imagines is made a world.
A Thought that leaped from the Timeless can become,
Indicator of cosmic consequence
And the itinerary of the gods,
A cyclic movement in eternal Time.
Thus came, born from a blind tremendous choice,
This great perplexed and discontented world,
This haunt of Ignorance, this home of Pain:
There are pitched desire's tents, grief's headquarters.
A vast disguise conceals the Eternal's bliss."

Then Aswapati answered to the seer:
"Is then the spirit ruled by an outward world?
O seer, is there no remedy within?
But what is Fate if not the spirit's will
After long time fulfilled by cosmic Force?
I deemed a mighty Power had come with her;
Is not that Power the high compeer of Fate?"
But Narad answered covering truth with truth:
"O Aswapati, random seem the ways
Along whose banks your footsteps stray or run
In casual hours or moments of the gods,
Yet your least stumblings are foreseen above.
Infallibly the curves of life are drawn
Following the stream of Time through the unknown;
They are led by a clue the calm immortals keep.
This blazoned hieroglyph of prophet morns
A meaning more sublime in symbols writes
Than sealed Thought wakes to, but of this high script
How shall my voice convince the mind of earth?
Heaven's wiser love rejects the mortal's prayer;
Unblinded by the breath of his desire,
Unclouded by the mists of fear and hope,

It bends above the strife of love with death;
It keeps for her her privilege of pain.
A greatness in thy daughter's soul resides
That can transform herself and all around
But must cross on stones of suffering to its goal.
Although designed like a nectar cup of heaven,
Of heavenly ether made she sought this air,
She too must share the human need of grief
And all her cause of joy transmute to pain.
The mind of mortal man is led by words,
His sight retires behind the walls of Thought
And looks out only through half-opened doors.
He cuts the boundless Truth into sky-strips
And every strip he takes for all the heavens.
He stares at infinite possibility
And gives to the plastic Vast the name of Chance;
He sees the long results of an all-wise Force
Planning a sequence of steps in endless Time
But in its links imagines a senseless chain
Or the dead hand of cold Necessity;
He answers not to the mystic Mother's heart,
Misses the ardent heavings of her breast
And feels cold rigid limbs of lifeless Law.
The will of the Timeless working out in Time
In the free absolute steps of cosmic Truth
He thinks a dead machine or unconscious Fate.
A Magician's formulas have made Matter's laws
And while they last, all things by them are bound;
But the spirit's consent is needed for each act
And Freedom walks in the same pace with Law.
All here can change if the Magician choose.
If human will could be made one with God's,
If human thought could echo the thoughts of God,
Man might be all-knowing and omnipotent;
But now he walks in Nature's doubtful ray.
Yet can the mind of man receive God's light,

The force of man can be driven by God's force,
Then is he a miracle doing miracles.
For only so can he be Nature's king.
It is decreed and Satyavan must die;
The hour is fixed, chosen the fatal stroke.
What else shall be is written in her soul
But till the hour reveals the fateful script,
The writing waits illegible and mute.
Fate is Truth working out in Ignorance.
O King, thy fate is a transaction done
At every hour between Nature and thy soul
With God for its foreseeing arbiter.
Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny's book.
Man can accept his fate, he can refuse.
Even if the One maintains the unseen decree
He writes thy refusal in thy credit page:
For doom is not a close, a mystic seal.
Arisen from the tragic crash of life,
Arisen from the body's torture and death,
The spirit rises mightier by defeat;
Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall.
Its splendid failures sum to victory.
O man, the events that meet thee on thy road,
Though they smite thy body and soul with joy and grief,
Are not thy fate,— they touch thee awhile and pass;
Even death can cut not short thy spirit's walk:
Thy goal, the road thou choosest are thy fate.
On the altar throwing thy thoughts, thy heart, thy works,
Thy fate is a long sacrifice to the gods
Till they have opened to thee thy secret self
And made thee one with the indwelling God.
O soul, intruder in Nature's ignorance,
Armed traveller to the unseen supernal heights,
Thy spirit's fate is a battle and ceaseless march
Against invisible opponent Powers,
A passage from Matter into timeless self.

Adventurer through blind unforeseeing Time,
A forced advance through a long line of lives,
It pushes its spearhead through the centuries.
Across the dust and mire of the earthly plain,
On many guarded lines and dangerous fronts,
In dire assaults, in wounded slow retreats,
Holding the ideal's ringed and battered fort
Or fighting against odds in lonely posts,
Or camped in night around the bivouac's fires
Awaiting the tardy trumpets of the dawn,
In hunger and in plenty and in pain,
Through peril and through triumph and through fall,
Through life's green lanes and over her desert sands,
Up the bald moor, along the sunlit ridge,
In serried columns with a straggling rear
Led by its nomad vanguard's signal fires,
Marches the army of the waylost god.
Then late the joy ineffable is felt,
Then he remembers his forgotten self;
He has refound the skies from which he fell.
At length his front's indomitable line
Forces the last passes of the Ignorance:
Advancing beyond Nature's last known bounds,
Reconnoitring the formidable unknown,
Beyond the landmarks of things visible,
It mounts through a miraculous upper air
Till climbing the mute summit of the world
He stands upon the splendour-peaks of God.
In vain thou mournst that Satyavan must die;
His death is a beginning of greater life,
Death is the spirit's opportunity.
A vast intention has brought two souls close
And love and death conspire towards one great end.
For out of danger and pain heaven-bliss shall come,
Time's unforeseen event, God's secret plan.
This world was not built with random bricks of Chance,

A blind god is not destiny's architect;
A conscious power has drawn the plan of life,
There is a meaning in each curve and line.
It is an architecture high and grand
By many named and nameless masons built
In which unseeing hands obey the Unseen,
And of its master-builders she is one.

“Queen, strive no more to change the secret will;
Time’s accidents are steps in its vast scheme.
Bring not thy brief and helpless human tears
Across the fathomless moments of a heart
That knows its single will and God’s as one:
It can embrace its hostile destiny;
It sits apart with grief and facing death,
Affronting adverse fate armed and alone.
In this enormous world standing apart
In the mightiness of her silent spirit’s will,
In the passion of her soul of sacrifice
Her lonely strength facing the universe,
Affronting fate, asks not man’s help nor god’s:
Sometimes one life is charged with earth’s destiny,
It cries not for succour from the time-bound powers.
Alone she is equal to her mighty task.
Intervene not in a strife too great for thee,
A struggle too deep for mortal thought to sound,
Its question to this Nature’s rigid bounds
When the soul fronts nude of garbs the infinite,
Its too vast theme of a lonely mortal will
Pacing the silence of eternity.
As a star, uncompanioned, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of Space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone.
A God-given might of being is their force,
A ray from self’s solitude of light the guide;
The soul that can live alone with itself meets God;

Its lonely universe is their rendezvous.
A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge,
Alone with death and close to extinction's edge.
Her single greatness in that last dire scene
Must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man.
In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
Alone with her self and death and destiny
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.
No human aid can reach her in that hour,
No armoured god stand shining at her side.
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
For this the silent Force came missioned down;
In her the conscious Will took human shape:
She only can save herself and save the world.
O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene,
Come not between her and her hour of Fate.
Her hour must come and none can intervene:
Think not to turn her from her heaven-sent task,
Strive not to save her from her own high will.
Thou hast no place in that tremendous strife;
Thy love and longing are not arbiters there;
Leave the world's fate and her to God's sole guard.
Even if he seems to leave her to her lone strength,
Even though all falters and falls and sees an end

And the heart fails and only are death and night,
God-given her strength can battle against doom
Even on a brink where Death alone seems close
And no human strength can hinder or can help.
Think not to intercede with the hidden Will,
Intrude not twixt her spirit and its force
But leave her to her mighty self and Fate.”

He spoke and ceased and left the earthly scene.
Away from the strife and suffering on our globe,
He turned towards his far-off blissful home.
A brilliant arrow pointing straight to heaven,
The luminous body of the ethereal seer
Assailed the purple glory of the noon
And disappeared like a receding star
Vanishing into the light of the Unseen.
But still a cry was heard in the infinite,
And still to the listening soul on mortal earth
A high and far imperishable voice
Chanted the anthem of eternal love.

END OF CANTO TWO
END OF BOOK SIX

BOOK SEVEN

The Book of Yoga

Canto One

*The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge
of Death and the Heart's Grief and Pain*

FATE followed her foreseen immutable road.
Man's hopes and longings build the journeying wheels
That bear the body of his destiny
And lead his blind will towards an unknown goal.
His fate within him shapes his acts and rules;
Its face and form already are born in him,
Its parentage is in his secret soul:
Here Matter seems to mould the body's life
And the soul follows where its nature drives.
Nature and Fate compel his free-will's choice.
But greater spirits this balance can reverse
And make the soul the artist of its fate.
This is the mystic truth our ignorance hides:
Doom is a passage for our inborn force,
Our ordeal is the hidden spirit's choice,
Ananke is our being's own decree.
All was fulfilled the heart of Savitri
Flower-sweet and adamant, passionate and calm,
Had chosen and on her strength's unbending road
Forced to its issue the long cosmic curve.
Once more she sat behind loud hastening hooves;
A speed of armoured squadrons and a voice
Far-heard of chariots bore her from her home.
A couchant earth wakened in its dumb muse
Looked up at her from a vast indolence:
Hills wallowing in a bright haze, large lands
That lolled at ease beneath the summer heavens,
Region on region spacious in the sun,
Cities like chrysolites in the wide blaze
And yellow rivers pacing lion-maned

Led to the Shalwa marches' emerald line,
A happy front to iron vastnesses
And austere peaks and titan solitudes.
Once more was near the fair and fated place,
The borders gleaming with the groves' delight
Where first she met the face of Satyavan
And he saw like one waking into a dream
Some timeless beauty and reality,
The moon-gold sweetness of heaven's earth-born child.
The past receded and the future neared:
Far now behind lay Madra's spacious halls,
The white carved pillars, the cool dim alcoves,
The tinged mosaic of the crystal floors,
The towered pavilions, the wind-rippled pools
And gardens humming with the murmur of bees,
Forgotten soon or a pale memory
The fountain'splash in the white stone-bound pool,
The thoughtful noontide's brooding solemn trance,
The colonnade's dream grey in the quiet eve,
The slow moonrise gliding in front of Night.
Left far behind were now the faces known,
The happy silken babble on laughter's lips
And the close-clinging clasp of intimate hands
And adoration's light in cherished eyes
Offered to the one sovereign of their life.
Nature's primaeval loneliness was here:
Here only was the voice of bird and beast,—
The ascetic's exile in the dim-souled huge
Inhuman forest far from cheerful sound
Of man's blithe converse and his crowded days.
In a broad eve with one red eye of cloud,
Through a narrow opening, a green flowered cleft,
Out of the stare of sky and soil they came
Into a mighty home of emerald dusk.
There onward led by a faint brooding path
Which toiled through the shadow of enormous trunks

And under arches misers of sunshine,
They saw low thatched roofs of a hermitage
Huddled beneath a patch of azure hue
In a sunlit clearing that seemed the outbreak
Of a glad smile in the forest's monstrous heart,
A rude refuge of the thought and will of man
Watched by the crowding giants of the wood.
Arrived in that rough-hewn homestead they gave,
Questioning no more the strangeness of her fate,
Their pride and loved one to the great blind king,
A regal pillar of fallen mightiness
And the stately care-worn woman once a queen
Who now hoped nothing for herself from life,
But all things only hoped for her one child,
Calling on that single head from partial Fate
All joy of earth, all heaven's beatitude.
Adoring wisdom and beauty like a young god's,
She saw him loved by heaven as by herself,
She rejoiced in his brightness and believed in his fate
And knew not of the evil drawing near.
Lingered some days upon the forest verge
Like men who lengthen out departure's pain,
Unwilling to separate sorrowful clinging hands,
Unwilling to see for the last time a face,
Heavy with the sorrow of a coming day
And wondering at the carelessness of Fate
Who breaks with idle hands her supreme works,
They parted from her with pain-fraught burdened hearts
As forced by inescapable fate we part
From one whom we shall never see again;
Driven by the singularity of her fate,
Helpless against the choice of Savitri's heart
They left her to her rapture and her doom
In the tremendous forest's savage charge.
All put behind her that was once her life,
All welcomed that henceforth was his and hers,

She abode with Satyavan in the wild woods:
Priceless she deemed her joy so close to death;
Apart with love she lived for love alone.
As if self-poised above the march of days,
Her immobile spirit watched the haste of Time,
A statue of passion and invincible force,
An absolutism of sweet imperious will,
A tranquillity and a violence of the gods
Indomitable and immutable.

At first to her beneath the sapphire heavens
The sylvan solitude was a gorgeous dream,
An altar of the summer's splendour and fire,
A sky-topped flower-hung palace of the gods
And all its scenes a smile on rapture's lips
And all its voices bards of happiness.
There was a chanting in the casual wind,
There was a glory in the least sunbeam;
Night was a chrysoprase on velvet cloth,
A nestling darkness or a moonlit deep;
Day was a purple pageant and a hymn,
A wave of the laughter of light from morn to eve.
His absence was a dream of memory,
His presence was the empire of a god.
A fusing of the joys of earth and heaven,
A tremulous blaze of nuptial rapture passed,
A rushing of two spirits to be one,
A burning of two bodies in one flame.
Opened were gates of unforgettable bliss:
Two lives were locked within an earthly heaven
And fate and grief fled from that fiery hour.
But soon now failed the summer's ardent breath
And throngs of blue-black clouds crept through the sky
And rain fled sobbing over the dripping leaves
And storm became the forest's titan voice.
Then listening to the thunder's fatal crash

And the fugitive pattering footsteps of the showers
And the long unsatisfied panting of the wind
And sorrow muttering in the sound-vexed night,
The grief of all the world came near to her.
Night's darkness seemed her future's ominous face.
The shadow of her lover's doom arose
And fear laid hands upon her mortal heart.
The moments swift and ruthless raced; alarmed
Her thoughts, her mind remembered Narad's date.
A trembling moved accountant of her riches,
She reckoned the insufficient days between:
A dire expectancy knocked at her breast;
Dreadful to her were the footsteps of the hours:
Grief came, a passionate stranger to her gate:
Banished when in his arms, out of her sleep
It rose at morn to look into her face.
Vainly she fled into abyssms of bliss
From her pursuing foresight of the end.
The more she plunged into love that anguish grew;
Her deepest grief from sweetest gulfs arose.
Remembrance was a poignant pang, she felt
Each day a golden leaf torn cruelly out
From her too slender book of love and joy.
Thus swaying in strong gusts of happiness
And swimming in foreboding's sombre waves
And feeding sorrow and terror with her heart,—
For now they sat among her bosom's guests
Or in her inner chamber paced apart,—
Her eyes stared blind into the future's night.
Out of her separate self she looked and saw,
Moving amid the unconscious faces loved,
In mind a stranger though in heart so near,
The ignorant smiling world go happily by
Upon its way towards an unknown doom
And wondered at the careless lives of men.
As if in different worlds they walked, though close,

They confident of the returning sun,
They wrapped in little hourly hopes and tasks,—
She in her dreadful knowledge was alone.
The rich and happy secrecy that once
Enshrined her as if in a silver bower
Apart in a bright nest of thoughts and dreams
Made room for tragic hours of solitude
And lonely grief that none could share or know,
A body seeing the end too soon of joy
And the fragile happiness of its mortal love.
Her quiet visage still and sweet and calm,
Her graceful daily acts were now a mask;
In vain she looked upon her depths to find
A ground of stillness and the spirit's peace.
Still veiled from her was the silent Being within
Who sees life's drama pass with unmoved eyes,
Supports the sorrow of the mind and heart
And bears in human breasts the world and fate.
A glimpse or flashes came, the Presence was hid.
Only her violent heart and passionate will
Were pushed in front to meet the immutable doom;
Defenceless, nude, bound to her human lot
They had no means to act, no way to save.
These she controlled, nothing was shown outside:
She was still to them the child they knew and loved;
The sorrowing woman they saw not within.
No change was in her beautiful motions seen:
A worshipped empress all once vied to serve,
She made herself the diligent serf of all,
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,
Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed
To others that her woman's strength might do.
In all her acts a strange divinity shone:
Into a simplest movement she could bring
A oneness with earth's glowing robe of light,
A lifting up of common acts by love.

All-love was hers and its one heavenly cord
Bound all to all with her as golden tie.
But when her grief to the surface pressed too close,
These things, once gracious adjuncts of her joy,
Seemed meaningless to her, a gleaming shell,
Or were a round mechanical and void,
Her body's actions shared not by her will.
Always behind this strange divided life
Her spirit like a sea of living fire
Possessed her lover and to his body clung,
One locked embrace to guard its threatened mate.
At night she woke through the slow silent hours
Brooding on the treasure of his bosom and face,
Hung o'er the sleep-bound beauty of his brow
Or laid her burning cheek upon his feet.
Waking at morn her lips endlessly clung to his,
Unwilling ever to separate again
Or lose that honeyed drain of lingering joy,
Unwilling to loose his body from her breast,
The warm inadequate signs that love must use.
Intolerant of the poverty of Time
Her passion catching at the fugitive hours
Willed the expense of centuries in one day
Of prodigal love and the surf of ecstasy;
Or else she strove even in mortal time
To build a little room for timelessness
By the deep union of two human lives,
Her soul secluded shut into his soul.
After all was given she demanded still;
Even by his strong embrace unsatisfied,
She longed to cry, "O tender Satyavan,
O lover of my soul, give more, give more
Of love while yet thou canst, to her thou lov'st.
Imprint thyself for every nerve to keep
That thrills to thee the message of my heart.
For soon we part and who shall know how long
Before the great wheel in its monstrous round

Restore us to each other and our love?"
Too well she loved to speak a fateful word
And lay her burden on his happy head;
She pressed the outsurging grief back into her breast
To dwell within silent, unhelped, alone.
But Satyavan sometimes half understood,
Or felt at least with the uncertain answer
Of our thought-blinded hearts the unuttered need,
The unplumbed abyss of her deep passionate want.
All of his speeding days that he could spare
From labour in the forest hewing wood
And hunting food in the wild sylvan glades
And service to his father's sightless life
He gave to her and helped to increase the hours
By the nearness of his presence and his clasp,
And lavish softness of heart-seeking words
And the close beating felt of heart on heart.
All was too little for her bottomless need.
If in his presence she forgot awhile,
Grief filled his absence with its aching touch;
She saw the desert of her coming days
Imaged in every solitary hour.
Although with a vain imaginary bliss
Of fiery union through death's door of escape
She dreamed of her body robed in funeral flame,
She knew she must not clutch that happiness
To die with him and follow, seizing his robe
Across our other countries, travellers glad
Into the sweet or terrible Beyond.
For those sad parents still would need her here
To help the empty remnant of their day.
Often it seemed to her the ages' pain
Had pressed their quintessence into her single woe,
Concentrating in her a tortured world.
Thus in the silent chamber of her soul
Cloistering her love to live with secret grief
She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods

Unappeased by the wordless offering of her days,
Lifting to them her sorrow like frankincense,
Her life the altar, herself the sacrifice.
Yet ever they grew into each other more
Until it seemed no power could rend apart,
Since even the body's walls could not divide.
For when he wandered in the forest, oft
Her conscious spirit walked with him and knew
His actions as if in herself he moved;
He, less aware, thrilled with her from afar.
Always the stature of her passion grew;
Grief, fear became the food of mighty love.
Increased by its torment it filled the whole world;
It was all her life, became her whole earth and heaven.
Although life-born, an infant of the hours,
Immortal it walked unslayable as the gods:
Her spirit stretched measureless in strength divine,
An anvil for the blows of Fate and Time:
Or tired of sorrow's passionate luxury,
Grief's self became calm, dull-eyed, resolute,
Awaiting some issue of its fiery struggle,
Some deed in which it might for ever cease,
Victorious over itself and death and tears.

The year now paused upon the brink of change.
No more the storms sailed with stupendous wings
And thunder strode in wrath across the world,
But still was heard a muttering in the sky
And rain dripped wearily through the mournful air
And grey slow-drifting clouds shut in the earth.
So her grief's heavy sky shut in her heart.
A still self hid behind but gave no light:
No voice came down from the forgotten heights;
Only in the privacy of its brooding pain
Her human heart spoke to the body's fate.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Parable of the Search for the Soul

AS IN the vigilance of the sleepless night
Through the slow heavy-footed silent hours,
Repressing in her bosom its load of grief,
She sat staring at the dumb tread of Time
And the approach of ever-nearing Fate,
A summons from her being's summit came,
A sound, a call that broke the seals of Night.
Above her brows where will and knowledge meet
A mighty Voice invaded mortal space.
It seemed to come from inaccessible heights
And yet was intimate with all the world
And knew the meaning of the steps of Time
And saw eternal destiny's changeless scene
Filling the far prospect of the cosmic gaze.
As the Voice touched, her body became a stark
And rigid golden statue of motionless trance,
A stone of God lit by an amethyst soul.
Around her body's stillness all grew still:
Her heart listened to its slow measured beats,
Her mind renouncing thought heard and was mute:
“Why camest thou to this dumb deathbound earth,
This ignorant life beneath indifferent skies
Tied like a sacrifice on the altar of Time,
O spirit, O immortal energy,
If 'twas to nurse grief in a helpless heart
Or with hard tearless eyes await thy doom?
Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death.”
But Savitri's heart replied in the dim night:
“My strength is taken from me and given to Death.
Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens
Or struggle with mute inevitable Fate

Or hope in vain to uplift an ignorant race
Who hug their lot and mock the saviour Light
And see in Mind wisdom's sole tabernacle,
In its harsh peak and its inconscient base
A rock of safety and an anchor of sleep?
Is there a God whom any cry can move?
He sits in peace and leaves the mortal's strength
Impotent against his calm omnipotent Law
And Inconscience and the almighty hands of Death.
What need have I, what need has Satyavan
To avoid the black-meshed net, the dismal door,
Or call a mightier Light into life's closed room,
A greater Law into man's little world?
Why should I strive with earth's unyielding laws
Or stave off death's inevitable hour?
This surely is best to practise with my fate
And follow close behind my lover's steps
And pass through night from twilight to the sun
Across the tenebrous river that divides
The adjoining parishes of earth and heaven.
Then could we lie inarmed breast upon breast,
Untroubled by thought, untroubled by our hearts,
Forgetting man and life and time and its hours,
Forgetting eternity's call, forgetting God."

The Voice replied: "Is this enough, O spirit?
And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it came?
Or is this all for thy being born on earth
Charged with a mandate from eternity,
A listener to the voices of the years,
A follower of the footprints of the gods,
To pass and leave unchanged the old dusty laws?
Shall there be no new tables, no new Word,
No greater light come down upon the earth
Delivering her from her unconsciousness,
Man's spirit from unalterable Fate?

Cam'st thou not down to open the doors of Fate,
The iron doors that seemed for ever closed,
And lead man to Truth's wide and golden road
That runs through finite things to eternity?
Is this then the report that I must make,
My head bowed with shame before the Eternal's seat,—
His power he kindled in thy body has failed,
His labourer returns, her task undone?"

Then Savitri's heart fell mute, it spoke no word.
But holding back her troubled rebel heart,
Abrupt, erect and strong, calm like a hill,
Surmounting the seas of mortal ignorance,
Its peak immutable above mind's air,
A Power within her answered the still Voice:
"I am thy portion here charged with thy work,
As thou myself seated for ever above,
Speak to my depths, O great and deathless Voice,
Command, for I am here to do thy will."

The Voice replied: "Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see.
Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight:
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.
Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God:
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death."

Then Savitri by her doomed husband sat,
Still rigid in her golden motionless pose,
A statue of the fire of the inner sun.
In the black night the wrath of storm swept by,
The thunder crashed above her, the rain hissed,
Its million footsteps pattered on the roof.
Impassive mid the movement and the cry,
Witness of the thoughts of mind, the moods of life,
She looked into herself and sought for her soul.

A dream disclosed to her the cosmic past,
The crypt-seed and the mystic origins,
The shadowy beginnings of world-fate:
A lamp of symbol lighting hidden truth
Imaged to her the world's significance.
In the indeterminate formlessness of Self
Creation took its first mysterious steps,
It made the body's shape a house of soul
And Matter learned to think and person grew;
She saw Space peopled with the seeds of life
And saw the human creature born in Time.
At first appeared a dim half-neutral tide
Of being emerging out of infinite Nought:
A consciousness looked at the inconscient Vast
And pleasure and pain stirred in the insensible Void.
All was the deed of a blind World-Energy:
Unconscious of her own exploits she worked,
Shaping a universe out of the Inane.
In fragmentary beings she grew aware:
A chaos of little sensibilities
Gathered round a small ego's pin-point head;
In it a sentient creature found its poise,
It moved and lived a breathing, thinking whole.
On a dim ocean of subconscious life
A formless surface consciousness awoke:
A stream of thoughts and feelings came and went,

A foam of memories hardened and became
A bright crust of habitual sense and thought,
A seat of living personality
And recurrent habits mimicked permanence.
Mind nascent laboured out a mutable form,
It built a mobile house on shifting sands,
A floating isle upon a bottomless sea.
A conscious being was by this labour made;
It looked around it on its difficult field
In the green wonderful and perilous earth;
It hoped in a brief body to survive,
Relying on Matter's false eternity.
It felt a godhead in its fragile house;
It saw blue heavens, dreamed immortality.

A conscious soul in the Inconscient's world,
Hidden behind our thoughts and hopes and dreams,
An indifferent Master signing Nature's acts
Leaves the vicegerent mind a seeming king.
In his floating house upon the sea of Time
The regent sits at work and never rests:
He is a puppet of the dance of Time;
He is driven by the hours, the moment's call
Compels him with the thronging of life's need
And the babel of the voices of the world.
This mind no silence knows nor dreamless sleep,
In the incessant circling of its steps
Thoughts tread for ever through the listening brain;
It toils like a machine and cannot stop.
Into the body's many-storeyed rooms
Endless crowd down the dream-god's messages.
All is a hundred-toned murmur and babble and stir,
There is a tireless running to and fro,
A haste of movement and a ceaseless cry.
The hurried servant senses answer apace
To every knock upon the outer doors,
Bring in time's visitors, report each call,

Admit the thousand queries and the calls
And the messages of communicating minds
And the heavy business of unnumbered lives
And all the thousandfold commerce of the world.
Even in the tracts of sleep is scant repose;
He mocks life's steps in strange subconscious dreams,
He strays in a subtle realm of symbol scenes,
His night with thin-air visions and dim forms
He packs or peoples with slight drifting shapes
And only a moment spends in silent Self.
Adventuring into infinite mind-space
He unfolds his wings of thought in inner air,
Or travelling in imagination's car
Crosses the globe, journeys beneath the stars,
To subtle worlds takes his ethereal course,
Visits the Gods on Life's miraculous peaks,
Communicates with Heaven, tampers with Hell.
This is the little surface of man's life.
He is this and he is all the universe;
He scales the Unseen, his depths dare the Abyss;
A whole mysterious world is locked within.
Unknown to himself he lives a hidden king
Behind rich tapestries in great secret rooms;
An epicure of the spirit's unseen joys,
He lives on the sweet honey of solitude:
A nameless god in an unapproachable fane,
In the secret adytum of his inmost soul
He guards the being's covered mysteries
Beneath the threshold, behind shadowy gates
Or shut in vast cellars of inconscient sleep.
The immaculate Divine All-Wonderful
Casts into the argent purity of his soul
His splendour and his greatness and the light
Of self-creation in Time's infinity
As into a sublimely mirroring glass.
Man in the world's life works out the dreams of God.

But all is there, even God's opposites;
He is a little front of Nature's works,
A thinking outline of a cryptic Force.
All she reveals in him that is in her,
Her glories walk in him and her darknesses.
Man's house of life holds not the gods alone:
There are occult Shadows, there are tenebrous Powers,
Inhabitants of life's ominous nether rooms,
A shadowy world's stupendous denizens.
A careless guardian of his nature's powers,
Man harbours dangerous forces in his house.
The Titan and the Fury and the Djinn
Lie bound in the subconscious's cavern pit
And the Beast grovels in his antre den:
Dire mutterings rise and murmur in their drowse.
Insurgent sometimes raises its huge head
A monstrous mystery lurking in life's deeps,
The mystery of dark and fallen worlds,
The dread visages of the adversary Kings.
The dreadful powers held down within his depths
Become his masters or his ministers;
Enormous they invade his bodily house,
Can act in his acts, infest his thought and life.
Inferno surges into the human air
And touches all with a perverting breath.
Grey forces like a thin miasma creep,
Stealing through chinks in his closed mansion's doors,
Discolouring the walls of upper mind
In which he lives his fair and specious life,
And leave behind a stench of sin and death:
Not only rise in him perverse drifts of thought
And formidable formless influences,
But there come presences and awful shapes:
Tremendous forms and faces mount dim steps
And stare at times into his living-rooms,
Or called up for a moment's passionate work

Lay a dire custom's claim upon his heart:
Aroused from sleep, they can be bound no more.
Afflicting the daylight and alarming night,
Invading at will his outer tenement,
The stark gloom's grisly dire inhabitants
Mounting into God's light all light perturb.
All they have touched or seen they make their own,
In Nature's basement lodge, mind's passages fill,
Disrupt thought's links and musing sequences,
Break through the soul's stillness with a noise and cry
Or they call the inhabitants of the abyss,
Invite the instincts to forbidden joys,
A laughter wake of dread demoniac mirth
And with nether riot and revel shake life's floor.
Impotent to quell his terrible prisoners,
Appalled the householder helpless sits above,
Taken from him his house is his no more.
He is bound and forced, a victim of the play,
Or, allured, joys in the mad and mighty din.
His nature's dangerous forces have arisen
And hold at will a rebel's holiday.
Aroused from the darkness where they crouched in the depths,
Prisoned from the sight, they can be held no more;
His nature's impulses are now his lords.
Once quelled or wearing specious names and vests
Infernal elements, demon powers are there.
Man's lower nature hides these awful guests.
Their vast contagion grips sometimes man's world.
An awful insurgence overpowers man's soul.
In house and house the huge uprising grows:
Hell's companies are loosed to do their work,
Into the earth-ways they break out from all doors,
Invade with blood-lust and the will to slay
And fill with horror and carnage God's fair world.
Death and his hunters stalk a victim earth;
The terrible Angel smites at every door:

An awful laughter mocks at the world's pain
And massacre and torture grin at Heaven:
All is the prey of the destroying force;
Creation rocks and tremble top and base.
This evil Nature housed in human hearts,
A foreign inhabitant, a dangerous guest:
The soul that harbours it it can dislodge,
Expel the householder, possess the house.
An opposite potency contradicting God,
A momentary Evil's almighty ness
Has straddled the straight path of Nature's acts.
It imitates the Godhead it denies,
Puts on his figure and assumes his face.
A Manichean creator and destroyer,
This can abolish man, annul his world.
But there is a guardian power, there are Hands that save,
Calm eyes divine regard the human scene.

All the world's possibilities in man
Are waiting as the tree waits in its seed:
His past lives in him; it drives his future's pace;
His present's acts fashion his coming fate.
The unborn gods hide in his house of Life.
The daemons of the unknown overshadow his mind
Casting their dreams into live moulds of thought,
The moulds in which his mind builds out its world.
His mind creates around him its universe.
All that has been renewes in him its birth;
All that can be is figured in his soul.
Issuing in deeds it scores on the roads of the world,
Obscure to the interpreting reason's guess,
Lines of the secret purpose of the gods.
In strange directions runs the intricate plan;
Held back from human foresight is their end
And the far intention of some ordering Will
Or the order of life's arbitrary Chance

Finds out its settled poise and fated hour.
Our surface watched in vain by reason's gaze,
Invaded by the impromptus of the unseen,
Helpless records the accidents of Time,
The involuntary turns and leaps of life.
Only a little of us foresees its steps,
Only a little has will and purposed pace.
A vast subliminal is man's measureless part.
The dim subconscious is his cavern base.
Abolished vainly in the walks of Time
Our past lives still in our unconscious selves
And by the weight of its hidden influences
Is shaped our future's self-discovery.
Thus all is an inevitable chain
And yet a series seems of accidents.
The unremembering hours repeat the old acts,
Our dead past round our future's ankles clings
And drags back the new nature's glorious stride,
Or from its buried corpse old ghosts arise,
Old thoughts, old longings, dead passions live again,
Recur in sleep or move the waking man
To words that force the barrier of the lips,
To deeds that suddenly start and o'erleap
His head of reason and his guardian will.
An old self lurks in the new self we are;
Hardly we escape from what we once had been:
In the dim gleam of habit's passages,
In the subconscious's darkling corridors
All things are carried by the porter nerves
And nothing checked by subterranean mind,
Unstudied by the guardians of the doors
And passed by a blind instinctive memory,
The old gang dismissed, old cancelled passports serve.
Nothing is wholly dead that once had lived;
In dim tunnels of the world's being and in ours
The old rejected nature still survives;

The corpses of its slain thoughts raise their heads
And visit mind's nocturnal walks in sleep,
Its stifled impulses breathe and move and rise;
All keeps a phantom immortality.
Irresistible are Nature's sequences:
The seeds of sins renounced sprout from hid soil;
The evil cast from our hearts once more we face;
Our dead selves come to slay our living soul.
A portion of us lives in present Time,
A secret mass in dim unconscious gropes;
Out of the inconscient and subliminal
Arisen, we live in mind's uncertain light
And strive to know and master a dubious world
Whose purpose and meaning are hidden from our sight.
Above us dwells a superconscious God
Hidden in the mystery of his own light:
Around us is a vast of ignorance
Lit by the uncertain ray of human mind,
Below us sleeps the Inconscient dark and mute.

But this is only Matter's first self-view,
A scale and series in the Ignorance.
This is not all we are or all our world.
Our greater self of knowledge waits for us,
A supreme light in the truth-conscious Vast:
It sees from summits beyond thinking mind,
It moves in a splendid air transcending life.
It shall descend and make earth's life divine.
Truth made the world, not a blind Nature-Force.
For here are not our large diviner heights;
Our summits in the superconscious's blaze
Are glorious with the very face of God:
There is our aspect of eternity,
There is the figure of the god we are,
His young unaging look on deathless things,
His joy in our escape from death and Time,
His immortality and light and bliss.

Our larger being sits behind cryptic walls:
There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts
That wait their hour to step into life's front:
We feel an aid from deep indwelling Gods;
One speaks within, Light comes to us from above.
Our soul from its mysterious chamber acts;
Its influence pressing on our heart and mind
Pushes them to exceed their mortal selves.
It seeks for Good and Beauty and for God;
We see beyond self's walls our limitless self,
We gaze through our world's glass at half-seen vasts,
We hunt for the Truth behind apparent things.
Our inner Mind dwells in a larger light,
Its brightness looks at us through hidden doors;
Our members luminous grow and Wisdom's face
Appears in the doorway of the mystic ward:
When she enters into our house of outward sense,
Then we look up and see, above, her sun.
A mighty life-self with its inner powers
Supports the dwarfish modicum we call life;
It can graft upon our crawl two puissant wings.
Our body's subtle self is throned within
In its viewless palace of veridical dreams
That are bright shadows of the thoughts of God.
In the prone obscure beginnings of the race
The human grew in the bowed apelike man.
He stood erect, a godlike form and force,
And a soul's thoughts looked out from earth-born eyes;
Man stood erect, he wore the thinker's brow:
He looked at heaven and saw his comrade stars;
A vision came of beauty and greater birth
Slowly emerging from the heart's chapel of light
And moved in a white lucent air of dreams.
He saw his being's unrealised vastnesses,
He aspired and housed the nascent demigod.
Out of the dim recesses of the self

The occult seeker into the open came:
He heard the far and touched the intangible,
He gazed into the future and the unseen;
He used the powers earth-instruments cannot use,
A pastime made of the impossible;
He caught up fragments of the Omniscient's thought,
He scattered formulas of omnipotence.
Thus man in his little house made of earth's dust
Grew towards an unseen heaven of thought and dream
Looking into the vast vistas of his mind
On a small globe dotting infinity.
At last climbing a long and narrow stair
He stood alone on the high roof of things
And saw the light of a spiritual sun.
Aspiring he transcends his earthly self;
He stands in the largeness of his soul new-born,
Redeemed from encirclement by mortal things
And moves in a pure free spiritual realm
As in the rare breath of a stratosphere;
A last end of far lines of divinity,
He mounts by a frail thread to his high source;
He reaches his fount of immortality,
He calls the Godhead into his mortal life.
All this the spirit concealed had done in her:
A portion of the mighty Mother came
Into her as into its own human part:
Amid the cosmic workings of the Gods
It marked her the centre of a wide-drawn scheme,
Dreamed in the passion of her far-seeing spirit
To mould humanity into God's own shape
And lead this great blind struggling world to light
Or a new world discover or create.
Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven
Or Heaven descend into earth's mortal state.
But for such vast spiritual change to be,
Out of the mystic cavern in man's heart

The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil
And step into common nature's crowded rooms
And stand uncovered in that nature's front
And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.
Obedient to a high command she sat:
Time, life and death were passing incidents
Obstructing with their transient view her sight,
Her sight that must break through and liberate the god
Imprisoned in the visionless mortal man.
The inferior nature born into ignorance
Still took too large a place, it veiled her self
And must be pushed aside to find her soul.

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

The Entry into the Inner Countries

AT FIRST out of the busy hum of mind
As if from a loud thronged market into a cave
By an inward moment's magic she had come.
A stark hushed emptiness became her self:
Her mind unvisited by the voice of thought
Stared at a void deep's dumb infinity.
Her heights receded, her depths behind her closed;
All fled away from her and left her blank.
But when she came back to her self of thought,
Once more she was a human thing on earth,
A lump of Matter, a house of closed sight,
A mind compelled to think out ignorance,
A life-force pressed into a camp of works
And the material world her limiting field.
Amazed like one unknowing she sought her way
Out of the tangle of man's ignorant past
That took the surface person for the soul.
Then a Voice spoke that dwelt on secret heights:
"For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate
And opens the Immortal's golden door.
Man, human, follows in God's human steps.
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,
Accepting his sorrow thou must bring to him bliss.
In Matter's body find thy heaven-born soul."
Then Savitri surged out of her body's wall

And stood a little span outside herself
And looked into her subtle being's depths
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud
Divined her secret and mysterious soul.
At the dim portal of the inner life
That bars out from our depths the body's mind
And all that lives but by the body's breath,
She knocked and pressed against the ebony gate.
The living portal groaned with sullen hinge:
Heavily reluctant it complained inert
Against the tyranny of the spirit's touch.
A formidable voice cried from within:
"Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die."
A dreadful murmur rose like a dim sea;
The Serpent of the threshold hissing rose,
A fatal guardian hood with monstrous coils,
The hounds of darkness growled with jaws agape,
And trolls and gnomes and goblins scowled and stared
And wild beast roarings thrilled the blood with fear
And menace muttered in a dangerous tongue.
Unshaken her will pressed on the rigid bars:
The gate swung wide with a protesting jar,
The opponent Powers withdrew their dreadful guard;
Her being entered into the inner worlds.
In a narrow passage, the subconscious's gate,
She breathed with difficulty and pain and strove
To find the inner self concealed in sense.
Into a dense of subtle Matter packed,
A cavity filled with a blind mass of power,
An opposition of misleading gleams,
A heavy barrier of unseeing sight,
She forced her way through body to the soul.
Across a perilous border line she passed
Where Life dips into the subconscious dusk
Or struggles from Matter into chaos of mind,
Aswarm with elemental entities

And fluttering shapes of vague half-bodied thought
And crude beginnings of incontinent force.
At first a difficult narrowness was there,
A press of uncertain powers and drifting wills;
For all was there but nothing in its place.
At times an opening came, a door was forced;
She crossed through spaces of a secret self
And trod in passages of inner Time.
At last she broke into a form of things,
A start of finiteness, a world of sense:
But all was still confused, nothing self-found.
Soul was not there but only cries of life.
A thronged and clamorous air environed her.
A horde of sounds defied significance,
A dissonant clash of cries and contrary calls;
A mob of visions broke across the sight,
A jostled sequence lacking sense and suite,
Feelings pushed through a packed and burdened heart,
Each forced its separate inconsequent way
But cared for nothing but its ego's drive.
A rally without key of common will,
Thought stared at thought and pulled at the taut brain
As if to pluck the reason from its seat
And cast its corpse into life's wayside drain;
So might forgotten lie in Nature's mud
Abandoned the slain sentinel of the soul.
So could life's power shake from it mind's rule,
Nature renounce the spirit's government
And the bare elemental energies
Make of the sense a glory of boundless joy,
A splendour of ecstatic anarchy,
A revel mighty and mad of utter bliss.
This was the sense's instinct void of soul
Or when the soul sleeps hidden void of power,
But now the vital godhead wakes within
And lifts the life with the Supernal's touch.

But how shall come the glory and the flame
If mind is cast away into the abyss?
For body without mind has not the light,
The rapture of spirit sense, the joy of life;
All then becomes subconscious, tenebrous,
Inconscience puts its seal on Nature's page
Or else a mad disorder whirls the brain
Posting along a ravaged nature's roads,
A chaos of disordered impulses
In which no light can come, no joy, no peace.
This state now threatened, this she pushed from her.
As if in a long endless tossing street
One driven mid a trampling hurrying crowd
Hour after hour she trod without release
Holding by her will the senseless meute at bay;
Out of the dreadful press she dragged her will
And fixed her thought upon the saviour Name;
Then all grew still and empty; she was free.
A large deliverance came, a vast calm space.
Awhile she moved through a blank tranquillity
Of naked Light from an invisible sun,
A void that was a bodiless happiness,
A blissful vacuum of nameless peace.
But now a mightier danger's front drew near:
The press of bodily mind, the Inconscient's brood
Of aimless thought and will had fallen from her.
Approaching loomed a giant head of Life
Ungoverned by mind or soul, subconscious, vast.
It tossed all power into a single drive,
It made its power a might of dangerous seas.
Into the stillness of her silent self,
Into the whiteness of its muse of Space
A spate, a torrent of the speed of Life
Broke like a wind-lashed driven mob of waves
Racing on a pale floor of summer sand;
It drowned its banks, a mountain of climbing waves.

Enormous was its vast and passionate voice.
It cried to her listening spirit as it ran,
Demanding God's submission to chainless Force.
A deaf force calling to a status dumb,
A thousand voices in a muted Vast,
It claimed the heart's support for its clutch at joy,
For its need to act the witness Soul's consent,
For its lust of power her neutral being's seal.
Into the wideness of her watching self
It brought a grandiose gust of the Breath of Life;
Its torrent carried the world's hopes and fears,
All life's, all Nature's dissatisfied hungry cry,
And the longing all eternity cannot fill.
It called to the mountain secracies of the soul
And the miracle of the never-dying fire,
It spoke to some first inexpressible ecstasy
Hidden in the creative beat of Life;
Out of the nether unseen deeps it tore
Its lure and magic of disordered bliss,
Into earth-light poured its maze of tangled charm
And heady draught of Nature's primitive joy
And the fire and mystery of forbidden delight
Drunk from the world-libido's bottomless well,
And the honey-sweet poison-wine of lust and death,
But dreamed a vintage of glory of life's gods,
And felt as celestial rapture's golden sting.
The cycles of the infinity of desire
And the mystique that made an unrealised world
Wider than the known and closer than the unknown
In which hunt for ever the hounds of mind and life,
Tempted a deep dissatisfied urge within
To long for the unfulfilled and ever far
And make this life upon a limiting earth
A climb towards summits vanishing in the void,
A search for the glory of the impossible.
It dreamed of that which never has been known,

It grasped at that which never has been won,
It chased into an Elysian memory
The charms that flee from the heart's soon lost delight;
It dared the force that slays, the joys that hurt,
The imaged shape of unaccomplished things
And the summons to a Circean transmuting dance
And passion's tenancy of the courts of love
And the wild Beast's ramp and romp with Beauty and Life.
It brought its cry and surge of opposite powers,
Its moments of the touch of luminous planes,
Its flame-ascensions and sky-pitched vast attempts,
Its fiery towers of dream built on the winds,
Its sinkings towards the darkness and the abyss,
Its honey of tenderness, its sharp wine of hate,
Its changes of sun and cloud, of laughter and tears,
Its bottomless danger-pits and swallowing gulfs,
Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,
Its occult wizardries, its simple lines
And great communions and uplifting moves,
Its faith in heaven, its intercourse with hell.
These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,
They gave ambrosia's taste and poison's sting.
There was an ardour in the gaze of Life
That saw heaven blue in the grey air of Night:
The impulses godward soared on passion's wings.
Mind's quick-paced thoughts floated from their high necks,
A glowing splendour as of an irised mane,
A parure of pure intuition's light;
Its flame-foot gallop they could imitate:
Mind's voices mimicked inspiration's stress,
Its ictus of infallibility,
Its speed and lightning heaven-leap of the Gods.
A trenchant blade that shore the nets of doubt,
Its sword of discernment seemed almost divine.
Yet all that knowledge was a borrowed sun's;
The forms that came were not heaven's native births:

An inner voice could speak the unreal's Word;
Its puissance dangerous and absolute
Could mingle poison with the wine of God.
On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;
Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms
Gliding downstream in a blithe gilded barge:
She edged her ray with a magnificent lie.
Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;
Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes
And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here:
Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed
Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone
Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.
Or they enter the valley of the wandering Gleam
Whence, captives or victims of the specious Ray,
Souls trapped in that region never can escape.
Agents, not masters, they serve Life's desires
Toiling for ever in the snare of Time.
Their bodies born out of some Nihil's womb
Ensnare the spirit in the moment's dreams,
Then perish vomiting the immortal soul
Out of Matter's belly into the sink of Nought.
Yet some uncaught, unslain, can warily pass
Carrying Truth's image in the sheltered heart,
Pluck Knowledge out of error's screening grip,
Break paths through the blind walls of little self,
Then travel on to reach a greater life.
All this streamed past her and seemed to her vision's sight
As if around a high and voiceless isle
A clamour of waters from far unknown hills
Swallowed its narrow banks in crowding waves
And made a hungry world of white wild foam:
Hastening, a dragon with a million feet,
Its foam and cry a drunken giant's din,
Tossing a mane of Darkness into God's sky,
It ebbed receding into a distant roar.

Then smiled again a large and tranquil air:
Blue heaven, green earth, partners of Beauty's reign,
Lived as of old, companions in happiness;
And in the world's heart laughed the joy of life.
All now was still, the soil shone dry and pure.
Through it all she moved not, plunged not in the vain waves.
Out of the vastness of the silent self
Life's clamour fled; her spirit was mute and free.

Then journeying forward through the self's wide hush
She came into a brilliant ordered Space.
There Life dwelt parked in an armed tranquillity;
A chain was on her strong insurgent heart.
Tamed to the modesty of a measured pace,
She kept no more her vehement stride and rush;
She had lost the careless majesty of her muse
And the ample grandeur of her regal force;
Curbed were her mighty pomps, her splendid waste,
Sobered the revels of her bacchant play,
Cut down were her squanderings in desire's bazaar,
Coerced her despot will, her fancy's dance,
A cold stolidity bound the riot of sense.
A royalty without freedom was her lot;
The sovereign throned obeyed her ministers:
Her servants mind and sense governed her house:
Her spirit's bounds they cast in rigid lines
And guarding with a phalanx of armoured rules
The reason's balanced reign, kept order and peace.
Her will lived closed in adamant walls of law,
Coerced was her force by chains that feigned to adorn,
Imagination was imprisoned in a fort,
Her wanton and licentious favourite;
Reality's poise and reason's symmetry
Were set in its place sentinelled by marshalled facts,
They gave to the soul for throne a bench of Law,
For kingdom a small world of rule and line:

The ages' wisdom, shrivelled to scholiast lines,
Shrank patterned into a copy-book device.
The Spirit's almighty freedom was not here:
A schoolman mind had captured life's large space,
But chose to live in bare and paltry rooms
Parked off from the too vast dangerous universe,
Fearing to lose its soul in the infinite.
Even the Idea's ample sweep was cut
Into a system, chained to fixed pillars of thought
Or riveted to Matter's solid ground:
Or else the soul was lost in its own heights:
Obeying the Ideal's high-browed law
Thought based a throne on unsubstantial air
Disdaining earth's flat triviality:
It barred reality out to live in its dreams.
Or all stepped into a systemed universe:
Life's empire was a managed continent,
Its thoughts an army ranked and disciplined;
Uniformed they kept the logic of their fixed place
At the bidding of the trained centurion mind.
Or each stepped into its station like a star
Or marched through fixed and constellated heavens
Or kept its feudal rank among its peers
In the sky's unchanging cosmic hierarchy.
Or like a high-bred maiden with chaste eyes
Forbidden to walk unveiled the public ways,
She must in close secluded chambers move,
Her feeling in cloisters live or gardened paths.
Life was consigned to a safe level path,
It dared not tempt the great and difficult heights
Or climb to be neighbour to a lonely star
Or skirt the danger of the precipice
Or tempt the foam-curled breakers' perilous laugh,
Adventure's lyrist, danger's amateur,
Or into her chamber call some flaming god,
Or leave the world's bounds and where no limits are

Meet with the heart's passion the Adorable
Or set the world ablaze with the inner Fire.
A chastened epithet in the prose of life,
She must fill with colour just her sanctioned space,
Not break out of the cabin of the idea
Nor trespass into rhythms too high or vast.
Even when it soared into ideal air,
Thought's flight lost not itself in heaven's blue:
It drew upon the skies a patterned flower
Of disciplined beauty and harmonic light.
A temperate vigilant spirit governed life:
Its acts were tools of the considering thought,
Too cold to take fire and set the world ablaze,
Or the careful reason's diplomatic moves
Testing the means to a prefigured end,
Or at the highest pitch some calm Will's plan
Or a strategy of some High Command within
To conquer the secret treasures of the gods
Or win for a masked king some glorious world,
Not a reflex of the spontaneous self,
An index of the being and its moods,
A winging of conscious spirit, a sacrament
Of life's communion with the still Supreme
Or its pure movement on the Eternal's road.
Or else for the body of some high Idea
A house was built with too close-fitting bricks;
Action and thought cemented made a wall
Of small ideals limiting the soul.
Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;
And worship turned to an exclusive God,
To the Universal in a chapel prayed
Whose doors were shut against the universe;
Or kneeled to the bodiless Impersonal
A mind shut to the cry and fire of love:
A rational religion dried the heart.
It planned a smooth life's acts with ethics' rule

Or offered a cold and flameless sacrifice.
The sacred Book lay on its sanctified desk
Wrapped in interpretation's silken strings:
A credo sealed up its spiritual sense.

Here was a quiet country of fixed mind,
Here life no more was all nor passion's voice;
The cry of sense had sunk into a hush.
Soul was not there nor spirit but mind alone;
Mind claimed to be the spirit and the soul.
The spirit saw itself as form of mind,
Lost itself in the glory of the thought,
A light that made invisible the sun.
Into a firm and settled space she came
Where all was still and all things kept their place.
Each found what it had sought and knew its aim.
All had a final last stability.
There one stood forth who bore authority
On an important brow and held a rod;
Command was incarnate in his gesture and tone;
Tradition's petrified wisdom carved his speech,
His sentences savoured the oracle.
“Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air
Flaming with thought's supreme finality.
O aspirant to the perfect way of life,
Here find it; rest from search and live at peace.
Ours is the home of cosmic certainty.
Here is the truth, God's harmony is here.
Register thy name in the book of the elite,
Admitted by the sanction of the few,
Adopt thy station of knowledge, thy post in mind,
Thy ticket of order draw in Life's bureau
And praise thy fate that made thee one of ours.
All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,
All schemed by law that God permits to life.

This is the end and there is no beyond.
Here is the safety of the ultimate wall,
Here is the clarity of the sword of Light,
Here is the victory of a single Truth,
Here burns the diamond of flawless bliss.
A favourite of Heaven and Nature live.”
But to the too satisfied and confident sage
Savitri replied casting into his world
Sight’s deep release, the heart’s questioning inner voice:
For here the heart spoke not, only clear daylight
Of intellect reigned here, limiting, cold, precise.
“Happy are they who in this chaos of things,
This coming and going of the feet of Time,
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law:
Untouched they live by hope and doubt and fear.
Happy are men anchored on fixed belief
In this uncertain and ambiguous world,
Or who have planted in the heart’s rich soil
One small grain of spiritual certitude.
Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock.
But I must pass leaving the ended search,
Truth’s rounded outcome firm, immutable
And this harmonic building of world-fact,
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.
Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul.”
None answered in that bright contented world,
Or only turned on their accustomed way
Astonished to hear questioning in that air
Or thoughts that could still turn to the Beyond.
But some murmured, passers-by from kindred spheres:
Each by his credo judged the thought she spoke.
“Who then is this who knows not that the soul
Is a least gland or a secretion’s fault
Disquieting the sane government of the mind,
Disordering the function of the brain,
Or a yearning lodged in Nature’s mortal house

Or dream whispered in man's cave of hollow thought
Who would prolong his brief unhappy term
Or cling to living in a sea of death?"
But others, "Nay, it is her spirit she seeks.
A splendid shadow of the name of God,
A formless lustre from the Ideal's realm,
The Spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind;
But none has touched its limbs or seen its face.
Each soul is the great Father's crucified Son,
Mind is that soul's one parent, its conscious cause,
The ground on which trembles a brief passing light,
Mind, sole creator of the apparent world.
All that is here is part of our own self;
Our minds have made the world in which we live."
Another with mystic and unsatisfied eyes
Who loved his slain belief and mourned its death,
"Is there one left who seeks for a Beyond?
Can still the path be found, opened the gate?"

So she fared on across her silent self.
To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd
Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed,
Pressing to reach the world's mysterious wall,
And pass through masked doorways into outer mind
Where the Light comes not nor the mystic voice,
Messengers from our subliminal greatnesses,
Guests from the cavern of the secret soul.
Into dim spiritual somnolence they break
Or shed wide wonder on our waking self,
Ideas that haunt us with their radiant tread,
Dreams that are hints of unborn Reality,
Strange goddesses with deep-pooled magical eyes,
Strong wind-haired gods carrying the harps of hope,
Great moon-hued visions gliding through gold air,
Aspiration's sun-dream head and star-carved limbs,
Emotions making common hearts sublime.

And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,
Yearning to the spiritual light they bore,
Longed once to hasten like them to save God's world;
But she reined back the high passion in her heart;
She knew that first she must discover her soul.
Only who save themselves can others save.
In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth:
They carrying the light to suffering men
Hurried with eager feet to the outer world;
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source.
Outstretching her hands to stay the throng she cried:
"O happy company of luminous gods,
Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread,—
For surely that bright quarter is your home,—
To find the birthplace of the occult Fire
And the deep mansion of my secret soul."
One answered pointing to a silence dim
On a remote extremity of sleep
In some far background of the inner world.
"O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come.
We are the messengers, the occult gods
Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives
To wake to beauty and the wonder of things
Touching them with glory and divinity;
In evil we light the deathless flame of good
And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads;
We are thy will and all men's will towards Light.
O human copy and disguise of God
Who seekst the deity thou keepest hid
And livest by the Truth thou hast not known,
Follow the world's winding highway to its source.
There in the silence few have ever reached,
Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul."
Then Savitri following the great winding road
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path

Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim feet.
A few bright forms emerged from unknown depths
And looked at her with calm immortal eyes.
There was no sound to break the brooding hush;
One felt the silent nearness of the soul.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Triple Soul-Forces

HERE from a low and prone and listless ground
The passion of the first ascent began;
A moon-bright face in a sombre cloud of hair,
A Woman sat in a pale lustrous robe.
A rugged and ragged soil was her bare seat,
Beneath her feet a sharp and wounding stone.
A divine pity on the peaks of the world,
A spirit touched by the grief of all that lives,
She looked out far and saw from inner mind
This questionable world of outward things,
Of false appearances and plausible shapes,
This dubious cosmos stretched in the ignorant Void,
The pangs of earth, the toil and speed of the stars
And the difficult birth and dolorous end of life.
Accepting the universe as her body of woe,
The Mother of the seven sorrows bore
The seven stabs that pierced her bleeding heart:
The beauty of sadness lingered on her face,
Her eyes were dim with the ancient stain of tears.
Her heart was riven with the world's agony
And burdened with the sorrow and struggle in Time,
An anguished music trailed in her rapt voice.
Absorbed in a deep compassion's ecstasy,
Lifting the mild ray of her patient gaze,
In soft sweet training words slowly she spoke:
“O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
To share the suffering of the world I came,
I draw my children's pangs into my breast.
I am the nurse of the dolour beneath the stars;
I am the soul of all who wailing writhe
Under the ruthless harrow of the Gods.

I am woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast;
I tend the hands that gave me cruel blows.
The hearts that spurned my love and zeal I serve;
I am the courted queen, the pampered doll,
I am the giver of the bowl of rice,
I am the worshipped Angel of the House.
I am in all that suffers and that cries.
Mine is the prayer that climbs in vain from earth,
I am traversed by my creatures' agonies,
I am the spirit in a world of pain.
The scream of tortured flesh and tortured hearts
Fall'n back on heart and flesh unheard by Heaven
Has rent with helpless grief and wrath my soul.
I have seen the peasant burning in his hut,
I have seen the slashed corpse of the slaughtered child,
Heard woman's cry ravished and stripped and haled
Amid the bayings of the hell-hound mob,
I have looked on, I had no power to save.
I have brought no arm of strength to aid or slay;
God gave me love, he gave me not his force.
I have shared the toil of the yoked animal drudge
Pushed by the goad, encouraged by the whip;
I have shared the fear-filled life of bird and beast,
Its long hunt for the day's precarious food,
Its covert slink and crouch and hungry prowl,
Its pain and terror seized by beak and claw.
I have shared the daily life of common men,
Its petty pleasures and its petty cares,
Its press of troubles and haggard horde of ills,
Earth's trail of sorrow hopeless of relief,
The unwanted tedious labour without joy,
And the burden of misery and the strokes of fate.
I have been pity, leaning over pain
And the tender smile that heals the wounded heart
And sympathy making life less hard to bear.
Man has felt near my unseen face and hands;

I have become the sufferer and his moan,
I have lain down with the mangled and the slain,
I have lived with the prisoner in his dungeon cell.
Heavy on my shoulders weighs the yoke of Time:
Nothing refusing of creation's load,
I have borne all and know I still must bear:
Perhaps when the world sinks into a last sleep,
I too may sleep in dumb eternal peace.
I have borne the calm indifference of Heaven,
Watched Nature's cruelty to suffering things
While God passed silent by nor turned to help.
Yet have I cried not out against his will,
Yet have I not accused his cosmic Law.
Only to change this great hard world of pain
A patient prayer has risen from my breast;
A pallid resignation lights my brow,
Within me a blind faith and mercy dwell;
I carry the fire that never can be quenched
And the compassion that supports the suns.
I am the hope that looks towards my God,
My God who never came to me till now;
His voice I hear that ever says 'I come':
I know that one day he shall come at last."
She ceased, and like an echo from below
Answering her pathos of divine complaint
A voice of wrath took up the dire refrain,
A growl of thunder or roar of angry beast,
The beast that crouching growls within man's depths,—
Voice of a tortured Titan once a God.
"I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he
Who is nailed on the wide cross of the universe;
To enjoy my agony God built the earth,
My passion he has made his drama's theme.
He has sent me naked into his bitter world
And beaten me with his rods of grief and pain
That I might cry and grovel at his feet

And offer him worship with my blood and tears.
I am Prometheus under the vulture's beak,
Man the discoverer of the undying fire,
In the flame he kindled burning like a moth;
I am the seeker who can never find,
I am the fighter who can never win,
I am the runner who never touched his goal:
Hell tortures me with the edges of my thought,
Heaven tortures me with the splendour of my dreams.
What profit have I of my animal birth;
What profit have I of my human soul?
I toil like the animal, like the animal die.
I am man the rebel, man the helpless serf;
Fate and my fellows cheat me of my wage.
I loosen with my blood my servitude's seal
And shake from my aching neck the oppressor's knees
Only to seat new tyrants on my back:
My teachers lesson me in slavery,
I am shown God's stamp and my own signature
Upon the sorry contract of my fate.
I have loved, but none has loved me since my birth;
My fruit of works is given to other hands.
All that is left me is my evil thoughts,
My sordid quarrel against God and man,
Envy of the riches that I cannot share,
Hate of a happiness that is not mine.
I know my fate will ever be the same,
It is my nature's work that cannot change:
I have loved for mine, not for the beloved's sake,
I have lived for myself and not for others' lives.
Each in himself is sole by Nature's law.
So God has made his harsh and dreadful world,
So has he built the petty heart of man.
Only by force and ruse can man survive:
For pity is a weakness in his breast,
His goodness is a laxity in the nerves,

His kindness an investment for return,
His altruism is ego's other face:
He serves the world that him the world may serve.
If once the Titan's strength could wake in me,
If Enceladus from Etna could arise,
I then would reign the master of the world
And like a god enjoy man's bliss and pain.
But God has taken from me the ancient Force.
There is a dull consent in my sluggish heart,
A fierce satisfaction with my special pangs
As if they made me taller than my kind;
Only by suffering can I excel.
I am the victim of titanic ills,
I am the doer of demoniac deeds;
I was made for evil, evil is my lot;
Evil I must be and by evil live;
Nought other can I do but be myself;
What Nature made me, that I must remain.
I suffer and toil and weep; I moan and hate.”
And Savitri heard the voice, the echo heard
And turning to her being of pity spoke:
“Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.
Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,
But ask for happiness and strive with fate;
Because thou art, the wretched still can hope.
But thine is the power to solace, not to save.
One day I will return, a bringer of strength,
And make thee drink from the Eternal's cup;
His streams of force shall triumph in thy limbs
And Wisdom's calm control thy passionate heart.
Thy love shall be the bond of humankind,
Compassion the bright key of Nature's acts:
Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;
The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast,

From the cruelty of the Titan and his pain.
There shall be peace and joy for ever more."

On passed she in her spirit's upward route.
An ardent grandeur climbed mid ferns and rocks,
A quiet wind flattered the heart to warmth,
A finer perfume breathed from slender trees.
All beautiful grew, subtle and high and strange.
Here on a boulder carved like a huge throne
A Woman sat in gold and purple sheen,
Armed with the trident and the thunderbolt,
Her feet upon a couchant lion's back.
A formidable smile curved round her lips,
Heaven-fire laughed in the corners of her eyes;
Her body a mass of courage and heavenly strength,
She menaced the triumph of the nether gods.
A halo of lightnings flamed around her head
And sovereignty, a great cestus, zoned her robe
And majesty and victory sat with her
Guarding in the wide cosmic battlefield
Against the flat equality of Death
And the all-levelling insurgent Night
The hierarchy of the ordered Powers,
The high changeless values, the peaked eminences,
The privileged aristocracy of Truth,
And in the governing Ideal's sun
The triumvirate of wisdom, love and bliss
And the sole autocracy of the absolute Light.
August on her seat in the inner world of Mind,
The Mother of Might looked down on passing things,
Listened to the advancing tread of Time,
Saw the irresistible wheeling of the suns
And heard the thunder of the march of God.
Amid the swaying Forces in their strife
Sovereign was her word of luminous command,
Her speech like a war-cry rang or a pilgrim chant.

A charm restoring hope in failing hearts
Aspired the harmony of her puissant voice:
“O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
I have come down into the human world
And the movement watched by an unsleeping Eye
And the dark contrariety of earth’s fate
And the battle of the bright and sombre Powers.
I stand upon earth’s paths of danger and grief
And help the unfortunate and save the doomed.
To the strong I bring the guerdon of their strength,
To the weak I bring the armour of my force;
To men who long I carry their coveted joy:
I am fortune justifying the great and wise
By the sanction of the plaudits of the crowd,
Then trampling them with the armed heel of fate.
My ear is leaned to the cry of the oppressed,
I topple down the thrones of tyrant kings:
A cry comes from proscribed and hunted lives
Appealing to me against a pitiless world,
A voice of the forsaken and desolate
And the lone prisoner in his dungeon cell.
Men hail in my coming the Almighty’s force
Or praise with thankful tears his saviour Grace.
I smite the Titan who bestrides the world
And slay the ogre in his blood-stained den.
I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,
And Lakshmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;
I wear the face of Kali when I kill,
I trample the corpses of the demon hordes.
I am charged by God to do his mighty work,
Uncaring I serve his will who sent me forth,
Reckless of peril and earthly consequence.
I reason not of virtue and of sin
But do the deed he has put into my heart.
I fear not for the angry frown of Heaven,
I flinch not from the red assault of Hell;

I crush the opposition of the gods,
Tread down a million goblin obstacles.
I guide man to the path of the Divine
And guard him from the red Wolf and the Snake.
I set in his mortal hand my heavenly sword
And put on him the breastplate of the gods.
I break the ignorant pride of human mind
And lead the thought to the wideness of the Truth;
I rend man's narrow and successful life
And force his sorrowful eyes to gaze at the sun
That he may die to earth and live in his soul.
I know the goal, I know the secret route;
I have studied the map of the invisible worlds;
I am the battle's head, the journey's star.
But the great obstinate world resists my Word,
And the crookedness and evil in man's heart
Is stronger than Reason, profounder than the Pit,
And the malignancy of hostile Powers
Puts craftily back the clock of destiny
And mightier seems than the eternal Will.
The cosmic evil is too deep to unroot,
The cosmic suffering is too vast to heal.
A few I guide who pass me towards the Light;
A few I save, the mass falls back unsaved;
A few I help, the many strive and fail.
But my heart I have hardened and I do my work:
Slowly the light grows greater in the East,
Slowly the world progresses on God's road.
His seal is on my task, it cannot fail:
I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
When God comes out to meet the soul of the world."
She spoke and from the lower human world
An answer, a warped echo met her speech;
The voice came through the spaces of the mind
Of the dwarf-Titan, the deformed chained god
Who strives to master his nature's rebel stuff

And make the universe his instrument.
The Ego of this great world of desire
Claimed earth and the wide heavens for the use
Of man, head of the life it shapes on earth,
Its representative and conscious soul,
And symbol of evolving light and force
And vessel of the godhead that must be.
A thinking animal, Nature's struggling lord,
Has made of her his nurse and tool and slave
And pays to her as wage and emolument
Inescapably by a deep law in things
His heart's grief and his body's death and pain:
His pains are her means to grow, to see and feel;
His death assists her immortality.
A tool and slave of his own slave and tool,
He praises his free will and his master mind
And is pushed by her upon her chosen paths;
Possessor he is possessed and, ruler, ruled,
Her conscious automaton, her desire's dupe.
His soul is her guest, a sovereign mute, inert,
His body her robot, his life her way to live,
His conscious mind her strong revolted serf.
The voice rose up and smote some inner sun.
"I am the heir of the forces of the earth,
Slowly I make good my right to my estate;
A growing godhead in her divinised mud,
I climb, a claimant to the throne of heaven.
The last-born of the earth I stand the first;
Her slow millenniums waited for my birth.
Although I live in Time besieged by Death,
Precarious owner of my body and soul
Housed on a little speck amid the stars,
For me and my use the universe was made.
Immortal spirit in the perishing clay,
I am God still unevolved in human form;
Even if he is not, he becomes in me.

The sun and moon are lights upon my path;
Air was invented for my lungs to breathe,
Conditioned as a wide and wall-less space
For my winged chariot's wheels to cleave a road,
The sea was made for me to swim and sail
And bear my golden commerce on its back:
It laughs cloven by my pleasure's gliding keel,
I laugh at its black stare of fate and death.
The earth is my floor, the sky my living's roof.
All was prepared through many a silent age,
God made experiments with animal shapes,
Then only when all was ready I was born.
I was born weak and small and ignorant,
A helpless creature in a difficult world
Travelling through my brief years with death at my side;
I have grown greater than Nature, wiser than God.
I have made real what she never dreamed,
I have seized her powers and harnessed for my work,
I have shaped her metals and new metals made;
I will make glass and raiment out of milk,
Make iron velvet, water unbreakable stone,
Like God in his astuce of artist skill,
Mould from one primal plasm protean forms,
In single Nature multitudinous lives,
All that imagination can conceive
In mind intangible, remould anew
In Matter's plastic solid and concrete.
No magic can surpass my magic's skill.
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.
What God imperfect left, I will complete,
Out of a tangled mind and half-made soul
His sin and error I will eliminate;
What he invented not, I shall invent:
He was the first creator, I am the last.
I have found the atoms from which he built the worlds:
The first tremendous cosmic energy

Missioned shall leap to slay my enemy kin,
Expunge a nation or abolish a race,
Death's silence leave where there was laughter and joy.
Or the fissured invisible shall spend God's force
To extend my comforts and expand my wealth,
To speed my car which now the lightnings drive
And turn the engines of my miracles.
I will take his means of sorcery from his hands
And do with them greater wonders than his best.
Yet through it all I have kept my balanced thought;
I have studied my being, I have examined the world,
I have grown a master of the arts of life.
I have tamed the wild beast, trained to be my friend;
He guards my house, looks up waiting my will.
I have taught my kind to serve and to obey.
I have used the mystery of the cosmic waves
To see far distance and to hear far words;
I have conquered Space and knitted close all earth.
Soon I shall know the secrets of the Mind;
I play with knowledge and with ignorance
And sin and virtue my inventions are
I can transcend or sovereignly use.
I shall know mystic truths, seize occult powers.
I shall slay my enemies with a look or thought,
I shall sense the unspoken feelings of all hearts
And see and hear the hidden thoughts of men.
When earth is mastered, I shall conquer heaven;
The gods shall be my aides or menial folk,
No wish I harbour unfulfilled shall die:
Omnipotence and omniscience shall be mine.”
And Savitri heard the voice, the warped echo heard
And turning to her being of power she spoke:
“Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To help mankind and help the travail of Time.
Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;

Because thou art, men's souls can climb the heavens
And walk like gods in the presence of the Supreme.
But without wisdom power is like a wind,
It can breathe upon the heights and kiss the sky,
It cannot build the extreme eternal things.
Thou hast given men strength, wisdom thou couldst not give.
One day I will return, a bringer of light;
Then will I give to thee the mirror of God;
Thou shalt see self and world as by him they are seen
Reflected in the bright pool of thy soul.
Thy wisdom shall be vast as vast thy power.
Then hate shall dwell no more in human hearts,
And fear and weakness shall desert men's lives,
The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,
Its lion roar that claims the world as food,
All shall be might and bliss and happy force."

Ascending still her spirit's upward route
She came into a high and happy space,
A wide tower of vision whence all could be seen
And all was centred in a single view
As when by distance separate scenes grow one
And a harmony is made of hues at war.
The wind was still and fragrance packed the air.
There was a carol of birds and murmur of bees,
And all that is common and natural and sweet,
Yet intimately divine to heart and soul.
A nearness thrilled of the spirit to its source
And deepest things seemed obvious, close and true.
Here, living centre of that vision of peace,
A Woman sat in clear and crystal light:
Heaven had unveiled its lustre in her eyes,
Her feet were moonbeams, her face was a bright sun,
Her smile could persuade a dead lacerated heart
To live again and feel the hands of calm.
A low music heard became her floating voice:

“O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
I have come down to the wounded desolate earth
To heal her pangs and lull her heart to rest
And lay her head upon the Mother’s lap
That she may dream of God and know his peace
And draw the harmony of higher spheres
Into the rhythm of earth’s rude troubled days.
I show to her the figures of bright gods
And bring strength and solace to her struggling life;
High things that now are only words and forms
I reveal to her in the body of their power.
I am peace that steals into man’s war-worn breast,
Amid the reign of Hell his acts create
A hostel where Heaven’s messengers can lodge;
I am charity with the kindly hands that bless,
I am silence mid the noisy tramp of life;
I am Knowledge poring on her cosmic map.
In the anomalies of the human heart
Where Good and Evil are close bedfellows
And Light is by Darkness dogged at every step,
Where his largest knowledge is an ignorance,
I am the Power that labours towards the best
And works for God and looks up towards the heights.
I make even sin and error stepping-stones
And all experience a long march towards Light.
Out of the Inconscient I build consciousness,
And lead through death to reach immortal Life.
Many are God’s forms by which he grows in man;
They stamp his thoughts and deeds with divinity,
Uplift the stature of the human clay
Or slowly transmute it into heaven’s gold.
He is the Good for which men fight and die,
He is the war of Right with Titan wrong;
He is Freedom rising deathless from her pyre;
He is Valour guarding still the desperate pass
Or lone and erect on the shattered barricade

Or a sentinel in the dangerous echoing Night.
He is the crown of the martyr burned in flame
And the glad resignation of the saint
And courage indifferent to the wounds of Time
And the hero's might wrestling with death and fate.
He is Wisdom incarnate on a glorious throne
And the calm autocracy of the sage's rule.
He is the high and solitary Thought
Aloof above the ignorant multitude:
He is the prophet's voice, the sight of the seer.
He is Beauty, nectar of the passionate soul,
He is the Truth by which the spirit lives.
He is the riches of the spiritual Vast
Poured out in healing streams on indigent Life;
He is Eternity lured from hour to hour,
He is infinity in a little space:
He is immortality in the arms of death.
These powers I am and at my call they come.
Thus slowly I lift man's soul nearer the Light.
But human mind clings to its ignorance
And to its littleness the human heart
And to its right to grief the earthly life.
Only when Eternity takes Time by the hand,
Only when infinity weds the finite's thought,
Can man be free from himself and live with God.
I bring meanwhile the gods upon the earth;
I bring back hope to the despairing heart;
I give peace to the humble and the great,
And shed my grace on the foolish and the wise.
I shall save earth, if earth consents to be saved.
Then Love shall at last unwounded tread earth's soil;
Man's mind shall admit the sovereignty of Truth
And body bear the immense descent of God.”
She spoke and from the ignorant nether plane
A cry, a warped echo naked and shuddering came.
A voice of the sense-shackled human mind

Carried its proud complaint of godlike power
Hedged by the limits of a mortal's thoughts,
Bound in the chains of earthly ignorance.
Imprisoned in his body and his brain
The mortal cannot see God's mighty whole,
Or share in his vast and deep identity
Who stands unguessed within our ignorant hearts
And knows all things because he is one with all.
Man only sees the cosmic surfaces.
Then wondering what may lie hid from the sense
A little way he delves to depths below:
But soon he stops, he cannot reach life's core
Or commune with the throbbing heart of things.
He sees the naked body of the Truth
Though often baffled by her endless garbs,
But cannot look upon her soul within.
Then, furious for a knowledge absolute,
He tears all details out and stabs and digs:
Only the shape's contents he holds for use;
The spirit escapes or dies beneath his knife.
He sees as a blank stretch, a giant waste
The crowding riches of infinity.
The finite he has made his central field,
Its plan dissects, masters its processes,
That which moves all is hidden from his gaze,
His poring eyes miss the unseen behind.
He has the blind man's subtle unerring touch
Or the slow traveller's sight of distant scenes;
The soul's revealing contacts are not his.
Yet is he visited by intuitive light
And inspiration comes from the Unknown;
But only reason and sense he feels as sure,
They only are his trusted witnesses.
Thus is he baulked, his splendid effort vain;
His knowledge scans bright pebbles on the shore
Of the huge ocean of his ignorance.

Yet grandiose were the accents of that cry,
A cosmic pathos trembled in its tone.
“I am the mind of God’s great ignorant world
Ascending to knowledge by the steps he made;
I am the all-discovering Thought of man.
I am a god fettered by Matter and sense,
An animal imprisoned in a fence of thorns,
A beast of labour asking for his food,
A smith tied to his anvil and his forge.
Yet have I loosened the cord, enlarged my room.
I have mapped the heavens and analysed the stars,
Described their orbits through the grooves of Space,
Measured the miles that separate the suns,
Computed their longevity in Time.
I have delved into earth’s bowels and torn out
The riches guarded by her dull brown soil.
I have classed the changes of her stony crust
And of her biography discovered the dates,
Rescued the pages of all Nature’s plan.
The tree of evolution I have sketched,
Each branch and twig and leaf in its own place,
In the embryo tracked the history of forms,
And the genealogy framed of all that lives.
I have detected plasm and cell and gene,
The protozoa traced, man’s ancestors,
The humble originals from whom he rose;
I know how he was born and how he dies:
Only what end he serves I know not yet
Or if there is aim at all or any end
Or push of rich creative purposeful joy
In the wide works of the terrestrial power.
I have caught her intricate processes, none is left:
Her huge machinery is in my hands;
I have seized the cosmic energies for my use.
I have pored on her infinitesimal elements
And her invisible atoms have unmasked:

All Matter is a book I have perused;
Only some pages now are left to read.
I have seen the ways of life, the paths of mind;
I have studied the methods of the ant and ape
And the behaviour learned of man and worm.
If God is at work, his secrets I have found.
But still the Cause of things is left in doubt,
Their truth flees from pursuit into a void;
When all has been explained nothing is known.
What chose the process, whence the Power sprang
I know not and perhaps shall never know.
A mystery is this mighty Nature's birth;
A mystery is the elusive stream of mind,
A mystery the protean freak of life.
What I have learned, Chance leaps to contradict;
What I have built is seized and torn by Fate.
I can foresee the acts of Matter's force,
But not the march of the destiny of man:
He is driven upon paths he did not choose,
He falls trampled underneath the rolling wheels.
My great philosophies are a reasoned guess;
The mystic heavens that claim the human soul
Are a charlatanism of the imagining brain:
All is a speculation or a dream.
In the end the world itself becomes a doubt:
The infinitesimal's jest mocks mass and shape,
A laugh peals from the infinite's finite mask.
Perhaps the world is an error of our sight,
A trick repeated in each flash of sense,
An unreal mind hallucinates the soul
With a stress-vision of false reality,
Or a dance of Maya veils the void Unborn.
Even if a greater consciousness I could reach,
What profit is it then for Thought to win
A Real which is for ever ineffable
Or hunt to its lair the bodiless Self or make

The Unknowable the target of the soul?
Nay, let me work within my mortal bounds,
Not live beyond life nor think beyond the mind;
Our smallness saves us from the Infinite.
In a frozen grandeur lone and desolate
Call me not to die the great eternal death,
Left naked of my own humanity
In the chill vast of the spirit's boundlessness.
Each creature by its nature's limits lives,
And how can one evade his native fate?
Human I am, human let me remain
Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep.
A high insanity, a chimaera is this,
To think that God lives hidden in the clay
And that eternal Truth can dwell in Time,
And call to her to save our self and world.
How can man grow immortal and divine
Transmuting the very stuff of which he is made?
This wizard gods may dream, not thinking men."

And Savitri heard the voice, the warped answer heard
And turning to her being of light she spoke:
"Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace,
Thou art a portion of my self put forth
To raise the spirit to its forgotten heights
And wake the soul by touches of the heavens.
Because thou art, the soul draws near to God;
Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate
And knowledge walks unslain in the pit of Night.
But not by showering heaven's golden rain
Upon the intellect's hard and rocky soil
Can the tree of Paradise flower on earthly ground
And the Bird of Paradise sit upon life's boughs
And the winds of Paradise visit mortal air.
Even if thou rain down intuition's rays,
The mind of man will think it earth's own gleam,
His spirit by spiritual ego sink,

Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell
Where only a bright shadow of God can come.
His hunger for the eternal thou must nurse
And fill his yearning heart with heaven's fire
And bring God down into his body and life.
One day I will return, His hand in mine,
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds.”

END OF CANTO FOUR

Canto Five

The Finding of the Soul

ONWARD she passed seeking the soul's mystic cave.
At first she stepped into a night of God.
The light was quenched that helps the labouring world,
The power that struggles and stumbles in our life;
This inefficient mind gave up its thoughts,
The striving heart its unavailing hopes.
All knowledge failed and the Idea's forms
And Wisdom screened in awe her lowly head
Feeling a Truth too great for thought or speech,
Formless, ineffable, for ever the same.
An innocent and holy Ignorance
Adored like one who worships formless God
The unseen Light she could not claim nor own.
In a simple purity of emptiness
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.
All was abolished save her naked self
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart:
There was no strength in her, no pride of force;
The lofty burning of desire had sunk
Ashamed, a vanity of separate self,
The hope of spiritual greatness fled,
Salvation she asked not nor a heavenly crown:
Humility seemed now too proud a state.
Her self was nothing, God alone was all,
Yet God she knew not but only knew he was.
A sacred darkness brooded now within,
The world was a deep darkness great and nude.
This void held more than all the teeming worlds,
This blank felt more than all that Time has borne,
This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown.
But all was formless, voiceless, infinite.

As might a shadow walk in a shadowy scene,
A small nought passing through a mightier Nought,
A night of person in a bare outline
Crossing a fathomless impersonal Night,
Silent she moved, empty and absolute.
In endless Time her soul reached a wide end,
The spaceless Vast became her spirit's place.
At last a change approached, the emptiness broke;
A wave rippled within, the world had stirred;
Once more her inner self became her space.
There was felt a blissful nearness to the goal;
Heaven leaned low to kiss the sacred hill,
The air trembled with passion and delight.
A rose of splendour on a tree of dreams,
The face of Dawn out of mooned twilight grew.
Day came, priest of a sacrifice of joy
Into the worshipping silence of her world;
He carried immortal lustre as his robe,
Trailed heaven like a purple scarf and wore
As his vermillion caste-mark a red sun.
As if an old remembered dream come true,
She recognised in her prophetic mind
The imperishable lustre of that sky,
The tremulous sweetness of that happy air
And, covered from mind's view and life's approach,
The mystic cavern in the sacred hill
And knew the dwelling of her secret soul.
As if in some Elysian occult depth,
Truth's last retreat from thought's profaning touch,
As if in a rock-temple's solitude hid,
God's refuge from an ignorant worshipping world,
It lay withdrawn even from life's inner sense,
Receding from the entangled heart's desire.
A marvellous brooding twilight met the eyes
And a holy stillness held that voiceless space.
An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors

Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength,
Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes.
An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings:
Flames of self-lost immobile reverie,
Doves crowded the grey musing cornices
Like sculptured postures of white-bosomed peace.
Across the threshold's sleep she entered in
And found herself amid great figures of gods
Conscious in stone and living without breath,
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,
Executive figures of the cosmic self,
World-symbols of immutable potency.
On the walls covered with significant shapes
Looked at her the life-scene of man and beast
And the high meaning of the life of gods,
The power and necessity of these numberless worlds,
And faces of beings and stretches of world-space
Spoke the succinct and inexhaustible
Hieratic message of the climbing planes.
In their immensitude signing infinity
They were the extension of the self of God
And housed, impassively receiving all,
His figures and his small and mighty acts
And his passion and his birth and life and death
And his return to immortality.
To the abiding and eternal is their climb,
To the pure existence everywhere the same,
To the sheer consciousness and the absolute force
And the unimaginable and formless bliss,
To the mirth in Time and the timeless mystery
Of the triune being who is all and one
And yet is no one but himself apart.
There was no step of breathing men, no sound,
Only the living nearness of the soul.

Yet all the worlds and God himself were there,
For every symbol was a reality
And brought the presence which had given it life.
All this she saw and inly felt and knew
Not by some thought of mind but by the self.
A light not born of sun or moon or fire,
A light that dwelt within and saw within
Shedding an intimate visibility
Made secrecy more revealing than the word:
Our sight and sense are a fallible gaze and touch
And only the spirit's vision is wholly true.
As thus she passed in that mysterious place
Through room and room, through door and rock-hewn door,
She felt herself made one with all she saw.
A sealed identity within her woke;
She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:
These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:
The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,
The Word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,
The World-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap,—
The Master and the Mother of all lives
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,
And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,
The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one.
In the last chamber on a golden seat
One sat whose shape no vision could define;
Only one felt the world's unattainable fount,
A Power of which she was a straying Force,
An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,
A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
A Greatness without whom no life could be.
Thence all departed into silent self,
And all became formless and pure and bare.
Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.
A house was there all made of flame and light

And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul.

A being stood immortal in transience,
Deathless dallying with momentary things,
In whose wide eyes of tranquil happiness
Which pity and sorrow could not abrogate
Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes:
Observer of the silent steps of the hours,
Eternity upheld the minute's acts
And the passing scenes of the Everlasting's play.
In the mystery of its selecting will,
In the Divine Comedy a participant,
The Spirit's conscious representative,
God's delegate in our humanity,
Comrade of the universe, the Transcendent's ray,
She had come into the mortal body's room
To play at ball with Time and Circumstance.
A joy in the world her master movement here,
The passion of the game lighted her eyes:
A smile on her lips welcomed earth's bliss and grief,
A laugh was her return to pleasure and pain.
All things she saw as a masquerade of Truth
Disguised in the costumes of Ignorance,
Crossing the years to immortality;
All she could front with the strong spirit's peace.
But since she knows the toil of mind and life
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;

Identified with the mind and body and life,
It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,
Yet is the unwounded and immortal self
Supporting the actor in the human scene.
Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,
Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;
She gives us strength to do our daily task
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief
And the little strength we have to help our race,
We who must fill the role of the universe
Acting itself out in a slight human shape
And on our shoulders carry the struggling world.
This is in us the godhead small and marred;
In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.
In body weak, in its heart an invincible might,
It climbs stumbling, held up by an unseen hand,
A toiling spirit in a mortal shape.
Here in this chamber of flame and light they met;
They looked upon each other, knew themselves,
The secret deity and its human part,
The calm immortal and the struggling soul.
Then with a magic transformation's speed
They rushed into each other and grew one.

Once more she was human upon earthly soil
In the muttering night amid the rain-swept woods
And the rude cottage where she sat in trance:
That subtle world withdrew deeply within
Behind the sun-veil of the inner sight.
But now the half-opened lotus bud of her heart
Had bloomed and stood disclosed to the earthly ray;
In an image shone revealed her secret soul.

There was no wall severing the soul and mind,
No mystic fence guarding from the claims of life.
In its deep lotus home her being sat
As if on concentration's marble seat,
Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds
To make this earthly tenement her house.
As in a flash from a supernal light,
A living image of the original Power,
A face, a form came down into her heart
And made of it its temple and pure abode.
But when its feet had touched the quivering bloom,
A mighty movement rocked the inner space
As if a world were shaken and found its soul:
Out of the Inconscient's soulless mindless night
A flaming Serpent rose released from sleep.
It rose billowing its coils and stood erect
And climbing mightily, stormily on its way
It touched her centres with its flaming mouth;
As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,
They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss.
Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.
In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,
In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
It held together the mystic stream which joins
The viewless summits with the unseen depths,
The string of forts that make the frail defence
Safeguarding us against the enormous world,
Our lines of self-expression in its Vast.
An image sat of the original Power
Wearing the mighty Mother's form and face.
Armed, bearer of the weapon and the sign
Whose occult might no magic can imitate,
Manifold yet one she sat, a guardian force:
A saviour gesture stretched her lifted arm,
And symbol of some native cosmic strength,
A sacred beast lay prone below her feet,

A silent flame-eyed mass of living force.
All underwent a high celestial change:
Breaking the black Inconscient's blind mute wall,
Effacing the circles of the Ignorance,
Powers and divinities burst flaming forth;
Each part of the being trembling with delight
Lay overwhelmed with tides of happiness
And saw her hand in every circumstance
And felt her touch in every limb and cell.
In the country of the lotus of the head
Which thinking mind has made its busy space,
In the castle of the lotus twixt the brows
Whence it shoots the arrows of its sight and will,
In the passage of the lotus of the throat
Where speech must rise and the expressing mind
And the heart's impulse run towards word and act,
A glad uplift and a new working came.
The immortal's thoughts displaced our bounded view,
The immortal's thoughts earth's drab idea and sense;
All things now bore a deeper heavenlier sense.
A glad clear harmony marked their truth's outline,
Reset the balance and measures of the world.
Each shape showed its occult design, unveiled
God's meaning in it for which it was made
And the vivid splendour of his artist thought.
A channel of the mighty Mother's choice,
The immortal's will took into its calm control
Our blind or erring government of life;
A loose republic once of wants and needs,
Then bowed to the uncertain sovereign mind,
Life now obeyed to a diviner rule
And every act became an act of God.
In the kingdom of the lotus of the heart
Love chanting its pure hymeneal hymn
Made life and body mirrors of sacred joy
And all the emotions gave themselves to God.

In the navel lotus' broad imperial range
Its proud ambitions and its master lusts
Were tamed into instruments of a great calm sway
To do a work of God on earthly soil.
In the narrow nether centre's petty parts
Its childish game of daily dwarf desires
Was changed into a sweet and boisterous play,
A romp of little gods with life in Time.
In the deep place where once the Serpent slept,
There came a grip on Matter's giant powers
For large utilities in life's little space;
A firm ground was made for Heaven's descending might.
Behind all reigned her sovereign deathless soul:
Casting aside its veil of Ignorance,
Allied to gods and cosmic beings and powers
It built the harmony of its human state;
Surrendered into the great World-Mother's hands
Only she obeyed her sole supreme behest
In the enigma of the Inconscient's world.
A secret soul behind supporting all
Is master and witness of our ignorant life,
Admits the Person's look and Nature's role.
But once the hidden doors are flung apart
Then the veiled king steps out in Nature's front;
A Light comes down into the Ignorance,
Its heavy painful knot loosens its grasp:
The mind becomes a mastered instrument
And life a hue and figure of the soul.
All happily grows towards knowledge and towards bliss.
A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place
And pushes the movements of our body and mind;
Possessor of our passionate hopes and dreams,
The beloved despot of our thoughts and acts,
She streams into us with her unbound force,
Into mortal limbs the Immortal's rapture and power.
An inner law of beauty shapes our lives;

Our words become the natural speech of Truth,
Each thought is a ripple on a sea of Light.
Then sin and virtue leave the cosmic lists;
They struggle no more in our delivered hearts:
Our acts chime with God's simple natural good
Or serve the rule of a supernal Right.
All moods unlovely, evil and untrue
Forsake their stations in fierce disarray
And hide their shame in the subconscious's dusk.
Then lifts the mind a cry of victory:
"O soul, my soul, we have created Heaven,
Within we have found the kingdom here of God,
His fortress built in a loud ignorant world.
Our life is entrenched between two rivers of Light,
We have turned space into a gulf of peace
And made the body a Capitol of bliss.
What more, what more, if more must still be done?"
In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
In the brief stade between a death and birth
A first perfection's stage is reached at last;
Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live.
Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man's perfection still can save the world.
There is won a new proximity to the skies,
A first betrothal of the Earth to Heaven,
A deep concordat between Truth and Life:
A camp of God is pitched in human time.

END OF CANTO FIVE

Canto Six

*Nirvana and the Discovery of the
All-Negating Absolute*

A CALM slow sun looked down from tranquil heavens.
A routed sullen rearguard of retreat,
The last rains had fled murmuring across the woods
Or failed, a sibilant whisper mid the leaves,
And the great blue enchantment of the sky
Recovered the deep rapture of its smile.
Its mellow splendour unstressed by storm-licked heats
Found room for a luxury of warm mild days,
The night's gold treasure of autumnal moons
Came floating shipped through ripples of faery air.
And Savitri's life was glad, fulfilled like earth's;
She had found herself, she knew her being's aim.
Although her kingdom of marvellous change within
Remained unspoken in her secret breast,
All that lived round her felt its magic's charm:
The trees' rustling voices told it to the winds,
Flowers spoke in ardent hues an unknown joy,
The birds' carolling became a canticle,
The beasts forgot their strife and lived at ease.
Absorbed in wide communion with the Unseen
The mild ascetics of the wood received
A sudden greatening of their lonely muse.
This bright perfection of her inner state
Poured overflowing into her outward scene,
Made beautiful dull common natural things
And action wonderful and time divine.
Even the smallest meanest work became
A sweet or glad and glorious sacrament,
An offering to the self of the great world
Or a service to the One in each and all.

A light invaded all from her being's light;
Her heart-beats' dance communicated bliss:
Happiness grew happier, shared with her, by her touch
And grief some solace found when she drew near.
Above the cherished head of Satyavan
She saw not now Fate's dark and lethal orb;
A golden circle round a mystic sun
Disclosed to her new-born predicting sight
The cyclic rondure of a sovereign life.
In her visions and deep-etched veridical dreams,
In brief shiftings of the future's heavy screen,
He lay not by a dolorous decree
A victim in the dismal antre of death
Or borne to blissful regions far from her
Forgetting the sweetness of earth's warm delight,
Forgetting the passionate oneness of love's clasp,
Absolved in the self-rapt immortal's bliss.
Always he was with her, a living soul
That met her eyes with close enamoured eyes,
A living body near to her body's joy.
But now no longer in these great wild woods
In kinship with the days of bird and beast
And levelled to the bareness of earth's brown breast,
But mid the thinking high-built lives of men
In tapestried chambers and on crystal floors,
In armoured town or gardened pleasure-walks,
Even in distance closer than her thoughts,
Body to body near, soul near to soul,
Moving as if by a common breath and will
They were tied in the single circling of their days
Together by love's unseen atmosphere,
Inseparable like the earth and sky.
Thus for a while she trod the Golden Path;
This was the sun before abysmal Night.
Once as she sat in deep felicitous muse,
Still quivering from her lover's strong embrace,

And made her joy a bridge twixt earth and heaven,
An abyss yawned suddenly beneath her heart.
A vast and nameless fear dragged at her nerves
As drags a wild beast its half-slaughtered prey;
It seemed to have no den from which it sprang:
It was not hers, but hid its unseen cause.
Then rushing came its vast and fearful Fount.
A formless Dread with shapeless endless wings
Filling the universe with its dangerous breath,
A denser darkness than the Night could bear,
Enveloped the heavens and possessed the earth.
A rolling surge of silent death, it came
Curving round the far edge of the quaking globe;
Effacing heaven with its enormous stride
It willed to expunge the choked and anguished air
And end the fable of the joy of life.
It seemed her very being to forbid,
Abolishing all by which her nature lived,
And laboured to blot out her body and soul,
A clutch of some half-seen Invisible,
An ocean of terror and of sovereign might,
A person and a black infinity.
It seemed to cry to her without thought or word
The message of its dark eternity
And the awful meaning of its silences:
Out of some sullen monstrous vast arisen,
Out of an abysmal deep of grief and fear
Imagined by some blind regardless self,
A consciousness of being without its joy,
Empty of thought, incapable of bliss,
That felt life blank and nowhere found a soul,
A voice to the dumb anguish of the heart
Conveyed a stark sense of unspoken words;
In her own depths she heard the unuttered thought
That made unreal the world and all life meant.
“Who art thou who claimst thy crown of separate birth,

The illusion of thy soul's reality
And personal godhead on an ignorant globe
In the animal body of imperfect man?
Hope not to be happy in a world of pain
And dream not, listening to the unspoken Word
And dazzled by the inexpressible Ray,
Transcending the mute Superconscious's realm,
To give a body to the Unknowable,
Or for a sanction to thy heart's delight
To burden with bliss the silent still Supreme
Profaning its bare and formless sanctity,
Or call into thy chamber the Divine
And sit with God tasting a human joy.
I have created all, all I devour;
I am Death and the dark terrible Mother of life,
I am Kali black and naked in the world,
I am Maya and the universe is my cheat.
I lay waste human happiness with my breath
And slay the will to live, the joy to be
That all may pass back into nothingness
And only abide the eternal and absolute.
For only the blank Eternal can be true.
All else is shadow and flash in Mind's bright glass,
Mind, hollow mirror in which Ignorance sees
A splendid figure of its own false self
And dreams it sees a glorious solid world.
O soul, inventor of man's thoughts and hopes,
Thysel the invention of the moments' stream,
Illusion's centre or subtle apex point,
At last know thyself, from vain existence cease.”
A shadow of the negating Absolute,
The intolerant Darkness travelled surging past
And ebbed in her the formidable Voice.
It left behind her inner world laid waste:
A barren silence weighed upon her heart,
Her kingdom of delight was there no more;

Only her soul remained, its emptied stage,
Awaiting the unknown eternal Will.
Then from the heights a greater Voice came down,
The Word that touches the heart and finds the soul,
The voice of Light after the voice of Night:
The cry of the Abyss drew Heaven's reply,
A might of storm chased by the might of the Sun.
"O soul, bare not thy kingdom to the foe;
Consent to hide thy royalty of bliss
Lest Time and Fate find out its avenues
And beat with thunderous knock upon thy gates.
Hide whilst thou canst thy treasure of separate self
Behind the luminous rampart of thy depths
Till of a vaster empire it grows part.
But not for self alone the Self is won:
Content abide not with one conquered realm;
Adventure all to make the whole world thine,
To break into greater kingdoms turn thy force.
Fear not to be nothing that thou mayst be all;
Assent to the emptiness of the Supreme
That all in thee may reach its absolute.
Accept to be small and human on the earth,
Interrupting thy new-born divinity,
That man may find his utter self in God.
If for thy own sake only thou hast come,
An immortal spirit into the mortal's world,
To found thy luminous kingdom in God's dark,
In the Inconscient's realm one shining star,
One door in the Ignorance opened upon light,
Why hadst thou any need to come at all?
Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief,
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven;
If thou wouldst save the toiling universe,

The vast universal suffering feel as thine:
Thou must bear the sorrow that thou claimst to heal;
The day-bringer must walk in darkest night.
He who would save the world must share its pain.
If he knows not grief, how shall he find grief's cure?
If far he walks above mortality's head,
How shall the mortal reach that too high path?
If one of theirs they see scale heaven's peaks,
Men then can hope to learn that titan climb.
God must be born on earth and be as man
That man being human may grow even as God.
He who would save the world must be one with the world,
All suffering things contain in his heart's space
And bear the grief and joy of all that lives.
His soul must be wider than the universe
And feel eternity as its very stuff,
Rejecting the moment's personality
Know itself older than the birth of Time,
Creation an incident in its consciousness,
Arcturus and Belphegor grains of fire
Circling in a corner of its boundless self,
The world's destruction a small transient storm
In the calm infinity it has become.
If thou wouldest a little loosen the vast chain,
Draw back from the world that the Idea has made,
Thy mind's selection from the Infinite,
Thy senses' gloss on the Infinitesimal's dance,
Then shalt thou know how the great bondage came.
Banish all thought from thee and be God's void.
Then shalt thou uncover the Unknowable
And the Superconscious conscious grow on thy tops;
Infinity's vision through thy gaze shall pierce;
Thou shalt look into the eyes of the Unknown,
Find the hid Truth in things seen null and false,
Behind things known discover Mystery's rear.
Thou shalt be one with God's bare reality

And the miraculous world he has become
And the diviner miracle still to be
When Nature who is now unconscious God
Translucent grows to the Eternal's light,
Her seeing his sight, her walk his steps of power
And life is filled with a spiritual joy
And Matter is the Spirit's willing bride.
Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work,
Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.
Annul thyself that only God may be."

Thus spoke the mighty and uplifting Voice,
And Savitri heard; she bowed her head and mused
Plunging her deep regard into herself
In her soul's privacy in the silent Night.
Aloof and standing back detached and calm,
A witness of the drama of herself,
A student of her own interior scene,
She watched the passion and the toil of life
And heard in the crowded thoroughfares of mind
The unceasing tread and passage of her thoughts.
All she allowed to rise that chose to stir;
Calling, compelling nought, forbidding nought,
She left all to the process formed in Time
And the free initiative of Nature's will.
Thus following the complex human play
She heard the prompter's voice behind the scenes,
Perceived the original libretto's set
And the organ theme of the composer Force.
All she beheld that surges from man's depths,
The animal instincts prowling mid life's trees,
The impulses that whisper to the heart
And passion's thunder-chase sweeping the nerves;
She saw the Powers that stare from the Abyss
And the wordless Light that liberates the soul.
But most her gaze pursued the birth of thought.

Affranchised from the look of surface mind
She paused not to survey the official case,
The issue of forms from the office of the brain,
Its factory of thought-sounds and soundless words
And voices stored within unheard by men,
Its mint and treasury of shining coin.
These were but counters in mind's symbol game,
A gramophone's discs, a reproduction's film,
A list of signs, a cipher and a code.
In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field.
Oft from her soul stepped out a naked thought
Luminous with mysteried lips and wonderful eyes;
Or from her heart emerged some burning face
And looked for life and love and passionate truth,
Aspired to heaven or embraced the world
Or led the fancy like a fleeting moon
Across the dull sky of man's common days,
Amidst the doubtful certitudes of earth's lore,
To the celestial beauty of faith gave form,
As if at flower-prints in a dingy room
Laughed in a golden vase one living rose.
A thaumaturgist sat in her heart's deep,
Compelled the forward stride, the upward look,
Till wonder leaped into the illumined breast
And life grew marvellous with transfiguring hope.
A seeing will pondered between the brows;
Thoughts, glistening Angels, stood behind the brain
In flashing armour, folding hands of prayer,
And poured heaven's rays into the earthly form.
Imaginations flamed up from her breast,
Unearthly beauty, touches of surpassing joy
And plans of miracle, dreams of delight:
Around her navel lotus clustering close
Her large sensations of the teeming worlds
Streamed their dumb movements of the unformed Idea;

Invading the small sensitive flower of the throat
They brought their mute unuttered resonances
To kindle the figures of a heavenly speech.
Below, desires formed their wordless wish,
And longings of physical sweetness and ecstasy
Translated into the accents of a cry
Their grasp on objects and their clasp on souls.
Her body's thoughts climbed from her conscious limbs
And carried their yearnings to its mystic crown
Where Nature's murmurs meet the Ineffable.
But for the mortal imprisoned in outward mind
All must present their passports at its door;
Disguised they must don the official cap and mask
Or pass as manufactures of the brain,
Unknown their secret truth and hidden source.
Only to the inner mind they speak direct,
Put on a body and assume a voice,
Their passage seen, their message heard and known,
Their birthplace and their natal mark revealed,
And stand confessed to an immortal's sight,
Our nature's messengers to the witness soul.
Impenetrable, withheld from mortal sense,
The inner chambers of the spirit's house
Disclosed to her their happenings and their guests;
Eyes looked through crevices in the invisible wall
And through the secrecy of unseen doors
There came into mind's little frontal room
Thoughts that enlarged our limited human range,
Lifted the ideal's half-quenched or sinking torch
Or peered through the finite at the infinite.
A sight opened upon the invisible
And sensed the shapes that mortal eyes see not,
The sounds that mortal listening cannot hear,
The blissful sweetness of the intangible's touch;
The objects that to us are empty air,
Are there the stuff of daily experience

And the common pabulum of sense and thought.
The beings of the subtle realms appeared
And scenes concealed behind our earthly scene;
She saw the life of remote continents
And distance deafened not to voices far;
She felt the movements crossing unknown minds;
The past's events occurred before her eyes.
The great world's thoughts were part of her own thought,
The feelings dumb for ever and unshared,
The ideas that never found an utterance.
The dim subconscious's incoherent hints
Laid bare a meaning twisted, deep and strange,
The bizarre secret of their fumbling speech,
Their links with underlying reality.
The unseen grew visible and audible:
Thoughts leaped down from a superconscious field
Like eagles swooping from a viewless peak,
Thoughts gleamed up from the screened subliminal depths
Like golden fishes from a hidden sea.
This world is a vast unbroken totality,
A deep solidarity joins its contrary powers;
God's summits look back on the mute Abyss.
So man evolving to divinest heights
Colloques still with the animal and the Djinn;
The human godhead with star-gazer eyes
Lives still in one house with the primal beast.
The high meets the low, all is a single plan.
So she beheld the many births of thought,
If births can be of what eternal is;
For the Eternal's powers are like himself,
Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever born.
This too she saw that all in outer mind
Is made, not born, a product perishable,
Forged in the body's factory by earth-force.
This mind is a dynamic small machine
Producing ceaselessly, till it wears out,

With raw material drawn from the outside world,
The patterns sketched out by an artist God.
Often our thoughts are finished cosmic wares
Admitted by a silent office gate
And passed through the subconscious's galleries,
Then issued in Time's mart as private make.
For now they bear the living person's stamp;
A trick, a special hue claims them his own.
All else is Nature's craft and this too hers.
Our tasks are given, we are but instruments;
Nothing is all our own that we create:
The Power that acts in us is not our force.
The genius too receives from some high fount
Concealed in a supernal secrecy
The work that gives him an immortal name.
The word, the form, the charm, the glory and grace
Are missioned sparks from a stupendous Fire;
A sample from the laboratory of God
Of which he holds the patent upon earth,
Comes to him wrapped in golden coverings;
He listens for Inspiration's postman knock
And takes delivery of the priceless gift
A little spoilt by the receiver mind
Or mixed with the manufacture of his brain;
When least defaced, then is it most divine.
Although his ego claims the world for its use,
Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul's acceptance is his own.
This independent, once a power supreme,
Self-born before the universe was made,
Accepting cosmos, binds himself Nature's serf
Till he becomes her freedman — or God's slave.
This is the appearance in our mortal front;
Our greater truth of being lies behind:
Our consciousness is cosmic and immense,

But only when we break through Matter's wall
In that spiritual vastness can we stand
Where we can live the masters of our world
And mind is only a means and body a tool.
For above the birth of body and of thought
Our spirit's truth lives in the naked self
And from that height, unbound, surveys the world.
Out of the mind she rose to escape its law
That it might sleep in some deep shadow of self
Or fall silent in the silence of the Unseen.
High she attained and stood from Nature free
And saw creation's life from far above,
Thence upon all she laid her sovereign will
To dedicate it to God's timeless calm:
Then all grew tranquil in her being's space,
Only sometimes small thoughts arose and fell
Like quiet waves upon a silent sea
Or ripples passing over a lonely pool
When a stray stone disturbs its dreaming rest.
Yet the mind's factory had ceased to work,
There was no sound of the dynamo's throb,
There came no call from the still fields of life.
Then even those stirrings rose in her no more;
Her mind now seemed like a vast empty room
Or like a peaceful landscape without sound.
This men call quietude and prize as peace.
But to her deeper sight all yet was there,
Effervescing like a chaos under a lid;
Feelings and thoughts cried out for word and act
But found no response in the silenced brain:
All was suppressed but nothing yet expunged;
At every moment might explosion come.
Then this too paused; the body seemed a stone.
All now was a wide mighty vacancy,
But still excluded from eternity's hush;
For still was far the repose of the Absolute

And the ocean silence of Infinity.
Even now some thoughts could cross her solitude;
These surged not from the depths or from within
Cast up from formlessness to seek a form,
Spoke not the body's need nor voiced life's call.
These seemed not born nor made in human Time:
Children of cosmic Nature from a far world,
Idea's shapes in complete armour of words
Posted like travellers in an alien space.
Out of some far expanse they seemed to come
As if carried on vast wings like large white sails,
And with easy access reached the inner ear
As though they used a natural privileged right
To the high royal entries of the soul.
As yet their path lay deep-concealed in light.
Then looking to know whence the intruders came
She saw a spiritual immensity
Pervading and encompassing the world-space
As ether our transparent tangible air,
And through it sailing tranquilly a thought.
As smoothly glides a ship nearing its port,
Ignorant of embargo and blockade,
Confident of entrance and the visa's seal,
It came to the silent city of the brain
Towards its accustomed and expectant quay,
But met a barring will, a blow of Force
And sank vanishing in the immensity.
After a long vacant pause another appeared
And others one by one suddenly emerged,
Mind's unexpected visitors from the Unseen
Like far-off sails upon a lonely sea.
But soon that commerce failed, none reached mind's coast.
Then all grew still, nothing moved any more:
Immobile, self-rapt, timeless, solitary
A silent spirit pervaded silent Space.

In that absolute stillness bare and formidable
There was glimpsed an all-negating Void Supreme
That claimed its mystic Nihil's sovereign right
To cancel Nature and deny the soul.
Even the nude sense of self grew pale and thin:
Impersonal, signless, featureless, void of forms
A blank pure consciousness had replaced the mind.
Her spirit seemed the substance of a name,
The world a pictured symbol drawn on self,
A dream of images, a dream of sounds
Built up the semblance of a universe
Or lent to spirit the appearance of a world.
This was self-seeing; in that intolerant hush
No notion and no concept could take shape,
There was no sense to frame the figure of things,
A sheer self-sight was there, no thought arose.
Emotion slept deep down in the still heart
Or lay buried in a cemetery of peace:
All feelings seemed quiescent, calm or dead,
As if the heart-strings rent could work no more
And joy and grief could never rise again.
The heart beat on with an unconscious rhythm
But no response came from it and no cry.
Vain was the provocation of events;
Nothing within answered an outside touch,
No nerve was stirred and no reaction rose.
Yet still her body saw and moved and spoke;
It understood without the aid of thought,
It said whatever needed to be said,
It did whatever needed to be done.
There was no person there behind the act,
No mind that chose or passed the fitting word:
All wrought like an unerring apt machine.
As if continuing old habitual turns,
And pushed by an old unexhausted force
The engine did the work for which it was made:

Her consciousness looked on and took no part;
All it upheld, in nothing had a share.
There was no strong initiator will;
An incoherence crossing a firm void
Slipped into an order of related chance.
A pure perception was the only power
That stood behind her action and her sight.
If that retired, all objects would be extinct,
Her private universe would cease to be,
The house she had built with bricks of thought and sense
In the beginning after the birth of Space.
This seeing was identical with the seen;
It knew without knowledge all that could be known,
It saw impartially the world go by,
But in the same supine unmoving glance
Saw too its abysmal unreality.
It watched the figure of the cosmic game,
But the thought and inner life in forms seemed dead,
Abolished by her own collapse of thought:
A hollow physical shell persisted still.
All seemed a brilliant shadow of itself,
A cosmic film of scenes and images:
The enduring mass and outline of the hills
Was a design sketched on a silent mind
And held to a tremulous false solidity
By constant beats of visionary sight.
The forest with its emerald multitudes
Clothed with its show of hues vague empty Space,
A painting's colours hiding a surface void
That flickered upon dissolution's edge;
The blue heavens, an illusion of the eyes,
Roofed in the mind's illusion of a world.
The men who walked beneath an unreal sky
Seemed mobile puppets out of cardboard cut
And pushed by unseen hands across the soil
Or moving pictures upon Fancy's film:

There was no soul within, no power of life.
The brain's vibrations that appear like thought,
The nerve's brief answer to each contact's knock,
The heart's quiverings felt as joy and grief and love
Were twitchings of the body, their seeming self,
That body forged from atoms and from gas
A manufactured lie of Maya's make,
Its life a dream seen by the sleeping Void.
The animals lone or trooping through the glades
Fled like a passing vision of beauty and grace
Imagined by some all-creating Eye.
Yet something was there behind the fading scene;
Wherever she turned, at whatsoever she looked,
It was perceived, yet hid from mind and sight.
The One only real shut itself from Space
And stood aloof from the idea of Time.
Its truth escaped from shape and line and hue.
All else grew unsubstantial, self-annulled,
This only everlasting seemed and true,
Yet nowhere dwelt, it was outside the hours.
This only could justify the labour of sight,
But sight could not define for it a form;
This only could appease the unsatisfied ear
But hearing listened in vain for a missing sound;
This answered not the sense, called not to Mind.
It met her as the uncaught inaudible Voice
That speaks for ever from the Unknowable.
It met her like an omnipresent point
Pure of dimensions, unfixed, invisible,
The single oneness of its multiplied beat
Accentuating its sole eternity.
It faced her as some vast Nought's immensity,
An endless No to all that seems to be,
An endless Yes to things ever unconceived
And all that is unimagined and unthought,
An eternal zero or untotalled Aught,

A spaceless and a placeless Infinite.
Yet eternity and infinity seemed but words
Vainly affixed by mind's incompetence
To its stupendous lone reality.
The world is but a spark-burst from its light,
All moments flashes from its Timelessness,
All objects glimmerings of the Bodiless
That disappear from Mind when That is seen.
It held, as if a shield before its face,
A consciousness that saw without a seer,
The Truth where knowledge is not nor knower nor known,
The Love enamoured of its own delight
In which the Lover is not nor the Beloved
Bringing their personal passion into the Vast,
The Force omnipotent in quietude,
The Bliss that none can ever hope to taste.
It cancelled the convincing cheat of self;
A truth in nothingness was its mighty clue.
If all existence could renounce to be
And Being take refuge in Non-being's arms
And Non-being could strike out its ciphered round,
Some lustre of that Reality might appear.
A formless liberation came on her.
Once sepulchred alive in brain and flesh
She had risen up from body, mind and life;
She was no more a Person in a world,
She had escaped into infinity.
What once had been herself had disappeared;
There was no frame of things, no figure of soul.
A refugee from the domain of sense,
Evading the necessity of thought,
Delivered from Knowledge and from Ignorance
And rescued from the true and the untrue,
She shared the Superconscious's high retreat
Beyond the self-born Word, the nude Idea,
The first bare solid ground of consciousness;

Beings were not there, existence had no place,
There was no temptation of the joy to be.
Unutterably effaced, no one and null,
A vanishing vestige like a violet trace,
A faint record merely of a self now past,
She was a point in the unknowable.
Only some last annulment now remained,
Annihilation's vague indefinable step:
A memory of being still was there
And kept her separate from nothingness:
She was in That but still became not That.
This shadow of herself so close to nought
Could be again self's point d'appui to live,
Return out of the Inconceivable
And be what some mysterious vast might choose.
Even as the Unknowable decreed,
She might be nought or new-become the All,
Or if the omnipotent Nihil took a shape
Emerge as someone and redeem the world.
Even, she might learn what the mystic cipher held,
This seeming exit or closed end of all
Could be a blind tenebrous passage screened from sight,
Her state the eclipsing shell of a darkened sun
On its secret way to the Ineffable.
Even now her splendid being might flame back
Out of the silence and the nullity,
A gleaming portion of the All-Wonderful,
A power of some all-affirming Absolute,
A shining mirror of the eternal Truth
To show to the One-in-all its manifest face,
To the souls of men their deep identity.
Or she might wake into God's quietude
Beyond the cosmic day and cosmic night
And rest appeased in his white eternity.
But this was now unreal or remote
Or covered in the mystic fathomless blank.

In infinite Nothingness was the ultimate sign
Or else the Real was the Unknowable.
A lonely Absolute negated all:
It effaced the ignorant world from its solitude
And drowned the soul in its everlasting peace.

END OF CANTO SIX

Canto Seven

*The Discovery of the Cosmic Spirit
and the Cosmic Consciousness*

IN THE little hermitage in the forest's heart,
In the sunlight and the moonlight and the dark
The daily human life went plodding on
Even as before with its small unchanging works
And its spare outward body of routine
And happy quiet of ascetic peace.
The old beauty smiled of the terrestrial scene;
She too was her old gracious self to men.
The Ancient Mother clutched her child to her breast
Pressing her close in her environing arms,
As if earth ever the same could for ever keep
The living spirit and body in her clasp,
As if death were not there nor end nor change.
Accustomed only to read outward signs
None saw aught new in her, none divined her state;
They saw a person where was only God's vast,
A still being or a mighty nothingness.
To all she was the same perfect Savitri:
A greatness and a sweetness and a light
Poured out from her upon her little world.
Life showed to all the same familiar face,
Her acts followed the old unaltered round,
She spoke the words that she was wont to speak
And did the things that she had always done.
Her eyes looked out on earth's unchanging face,
Around her soul's muteness all moved as of old;
A vacant consciousness watched from within,
Empty of all but bare Reality.
There was no will behind the word and act,
No thought formed in her brain to guide the speech:

An impersonal emptiness walked and spoke in her,
Something perhaps unfelt, unseen, unknown
Guarded the body for its future work,
Or Nature moved in her old stream of force.
Perhaps she bore made conscious in her breast
The miraculous Nihil, origin of our souls
And source and sum of the vast world's events,
The womb and grave of thought, a cipher of God,
A zero circle of being's totality.
It used her speech and acted in her acts,
It was beauty in her limbs, life in her breath;
The original Mystery wore her human face.
Thus was she lost within to separate self;
Her mortal ego perished in God's night.
Only a body was left, the ego's shell
Afloat mid drift and foam of the world-sea,
A sea of dream watched by a motionless sense
In a figure of unreal reality.
An impersonal foresight could already see,—
In the unthinking knowledge of the spirit
Even now it seemed nigh done, inevitable,—
The individual die, the cosmos pass;
These gone, the transcendental grew a myth,
The Holy Ghost without the Father and Son,
Or, a substratum of what once had been,
Being that never willed to bear a world
Restored to its original loneliness,
Impassive, sole, silent, intangible.
Yet all was not extinct in this deep loss;
The being travelled not towards nothingness.
There was some high surpassing Secrecy,
And when she sat alone with Satyavan,
Her moveless mind with his that searched and strove,
In the hush of the profound and intimate night
She turned to the face of a veiled voiceless Truth
Hid in the dumb recesses of the heart

Or waiting beyond the last peak climbed by Thought,—
Unseen itself it sees the struggling world
And prompts our quest, but cares not to be found,—
Out of that distant Vast came a reply.
Something unknown, unreached, inscrutable
Sent down the messages of its bodiless Light,
Cast lightning flashes of a thought not ours
Crossing the immobile silence of her mind:
In its might of irresponsible sovereignty
It seized on speech to give those flamings shape,
Made beat the heart of wisdom in a word
And spoke immortal things through mortal lips.
Or, listening to the sages of the woods,
In question and in answer broke from her
High strange revealings impossible to men,
Something or someone secret and remote
Took hold of her body for his mystic use,
Her mouth was seized to channel ineffable truths,
Knowledge unthinkable found an utterance.
Astonished by a new enlightenment,
Invaded by a streak of the Absolute,
They marvelled at her, for she seemed to know
What they had only glimpsed at times afar.
These thoughts were formed not in her listening brain,
Her vacant heart was like a stringless harp;
Impassive the body claimed not its own voice,
But let the luminous greatness through it pass.
A dual Power at being's occult poles
Still acted, nameless and invisible:
Her divine emptiness was their instrument.
Inconscient Nature dealt with the world it had made,
And using still the body's instruments
Slipped through the conscious void she had become;
The superconscious Mystery through that Void
Missioned its word to touch the thoughts of men.
As yet this great impersonal speech was rare.

But now the unmoving wide spiritual space
In which her mind survived tranquil and bare,
Admitted a traveller from the cosmic breadths:
A thought came through draped as an outer voice.
It called not for the witness of the mind,
It spoke not to the hushed receiving heart;
It came direct to the pure perception's seat,
An only centre now of consciousness,
If centre could be where all seemed only space;
No more shut in by body's walls and gates
Her being, a circle without circumference,
Already now surpassed all cosmic bounds
And more and more spread into infinity.
This being was its own unbounded world,
A world without form or feature or circumstance;
It had no ground, no wall, no roof of thought,
Yet saw itself and looked on all around
In a silence motionless and illimitable.
There was no person there, no centred mind,
No seat of feeling on which beat events
Or objects wrought and shaped reaction's stress.
There was no motion in this inner world,
All was a still and even infinity.
In her the Unseen, the Unknown waited his hour.

But now she sat by sleeping Satyavan,
Awake within, and the enormous Night
Surrounded her with the Unknowable's vast.
A voice began to speak from her own heart
That was not hers, yet mastered thought and sense.
As it spoke all changed within her and without;
All was, all lived; she felt all being one;
The world of unreality ceased to be:
There was no more a universe built by mind,
Convicted as a structure or a sign;
A spirit, a being saw created things

And cast itself into unnumbered forms
And was what it saw and made; all now became
An evidence of one stupendous truth,
A Truth in which negation had no place,
A being and a living consciousness,
A stark and absolute Reality.
There the unreal could not find a place,
The sense of unreality was slain:
There all was conscious, made of the Infinite,
All had a substance of Eternity.
Yet this was the same Indecipherable;
It seemed to cast from it universe like a dream
Vanishing for ever into an original Void.
But this was no more some vague ubiquitous point
Or a cipher of vastness in unreal Nought.
It was the same but now no more seemed far
To the living clasp of her recovered soul.
It was her self, it was the self of all,
It was the reality of existing things,
It was the consciousness of all that lived
And felt and saw; it was Timelessness and Time,
It was the Bliss of formlessness and form.
It was all Love and the one Beloved's arms,
It was sight and thought in one all-seeing Mind,
It was joy of Being on the peaks of God.
She passed beyond Time into eternity,
Slipped out of space and became the Infinite;
Her being rose into unreachable heights
And found no end of its journey in the Self.
It plunged into the unfathomable deeps
And found no end to the silent mystery
That held all world within one lonely breast,
Yet harboured all creation's multitudes.
She was all vastness and one measureless point,
She was a height beyond heights, a depth beyond depths,
She lived in the everlasting and was all

That harbours death and bears the wheeling hours.
All contraries were true in one huge spirit
Surpassing measure, change and circumstance.
An individual, one with cosmic self
In the heart of the Transcendent's miracle
And the secret of World-personality
Was the creator and the lord of all.
Mind was a single innumerable look
Upon himself and all that he became.
Life was his drama and the Vast a stage,
The universe was his body, God its soul.
All was one single immense reality,
All its innumerable phenomenon.

Her spirit saw the world as living God;
It saw the One and knew that all was He.
She knew him as the Absolute's self-space,
One with her self and ground of all things here
In which the world wanders seeking for the Truth
Guarded behind its face of ignorance:
She followed him through the march of endless Time.
All Nature's happenings were events in her,
The heart-beats of the cosmos were her own,
All beings thought and felt and moved in her;
She inhabited the vastness of the world,
Its distances were her nature's boundaries,
Its closenesses her own life's intimacies.
Her mind became familiar with its mind,
Its body was her body's larger frame
In which she lived and knew herself in it
One, multitudinous in its multitudes.
She was a single being, yet all things;
The world was her spirit's wide circumference,
The thoughts of others were her intimates,
Their feelings close to her universal heart,
Their bodies her many bodies kin to her;
She was no more herself but all the world.

Out of the infinitudes all came to her,
Into the infinitudes sentient she spread,
Infinity was her own natural home.
Nowhere she dwelt, her spirit was everywhere,
The distant constellations wheeled round her;
Earth saw her born, all worlds were her colonies,
The greater worlds of life and mind were hers;
All Nature reproduced her in its lines,
Its movements were large copies of her own.
She was the single self of all these selves,
She was in them and they were all in her.
This first was an immense identity
In which her own identity was lost:
What seemed herself was an image of the Whole.
She was a subconscious life of tree and flower,
The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;
She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,
She was the red heart of the passion-flower,
The dream-white of the lotus in its pool.
Out of subconscious life she climbed to mind,
She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,
She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
She was the climbing of his soul to God.
The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.
She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;
She was Space and the wideness of his days.
From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
The superconscious was her native air,
Infinity was her movement's natural space;
Eternity looked out from her on Time.

END OF CANTO SEVEN
END OF BOOK SEVEN

BOOK EIGHT
The Book of Death

*Canto Three*¹

Death in the Forest

Now it was here in this great golden dawn.
By her still sleeping husband lain she gazed
Into her past as one about to die
Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life
Where he too ran and sported with the rest,
Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
Into whose depths he must for ever plunge.
All she had been and done she lived again.
The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories swept through her and fled away
Into the irrecoverable past.
Then silently she rose and, service done,
Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved
By Satyavan upon a forest stone.
What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.
Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge
The infinite Mother watching over her child,
Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word.
At last she came to the pale mother queen.
She spoke but with guarded lips and tranquil face
Lest some stray word or some betraying look
Should let pass into the mother's unknowing breast,
Slaying all happiness and need to live,
A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come.
Only the needed utterance passage found:
All else she pressed back into her anguished heart
And forced upon her speech an outward peace.

¹ The Book of Death was taken from Canto Three of an early version of *Savitri* which had only six cantos and an epilogue. It was slightly revised at a late stage and a number of new lines were added, but it was never fully worked into the final version of the poem. Its original designation, "Canto Three", has been retained as a reminder of this.

“One year that I have lived with Satyavan
Here on the emerald edge of the vast woods
In the iron ring of the enormous peaks
Under the blue rifts of the forest sky,
I have not gone into the silences
Of this great woodland that enringed my thoughts
With mystery, nor in its green miracles
Wandered, but this small clearing was my world.
Now has a strong desire seized all my heart
To go with Satyavan holding his hand
Into the life that he has loved and touch
Herbs he has trod and know the forest flowers
And hear at ease the birds and the scurrying life
That starts and ceases, rich far rustle of boughs
And all the mystic whispering of the woods.
Release me now and let my heart have rest.”
She answered: “Do as thy wise mind desires,
O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule.
I hold thee for a strong goddess who has come
Pitying our barren days; so dost thou serve
Even as a slave might, yet art thou beyond
All that thou doest, all our minds conceive,
Like the strong sun that serves earth from above.”
Then the doomed husband and the woman who knew
Went with linked hands into that solemn world
Where beauty and grandeur and unspoken dream,
Where Nature’s mystic silence could be felt
Communing with the secrecy of God.
Beside her Satyavan walked full of joy
Because she moved with him through his green haunts:
He showed her all the forest’s riches, flowers
Innumerable of every odour and hue
And soft thick clinging creepers red and green
And strange rich-plumaged birds, to every cry
That haunted sweetly distant boughs replied
With the shrill singer’s name more sweetly called.

He spoke of all the things he loved: they were
His boyhood's comrades and his playfellows,
Coevals and companions of his life
Here in this world whose every mood he knew:
Their thoughts which to the common mind are blank,
He shared, to every wild emotion felt
An answer. Deeply she listened, but to hear
The voice that soon would cease from tender words
And treasure its sweet cadences beloved
For lonely memory when none by her walked
And the beloved voice could speak no more.
But little dwelt her mind upon their sense;
Of death, not life she thought or life's lone end.
Love in her bosom hurt with the jagged edges
Of anguish moaned at every step with pain
Crying, "Now, now perhaps his voice will cease
For ever." Even by some vague touch oppressed
Sometimes her eyes looked round as if their orbs
Might see the dim and dreadful god's approach.
But Satyavan had paused. He meant to finish
His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring
They two might wander free in the green deep
Primaeval mystery of the forest's heart.
A tree that raised its tranquil head to heaven
Luxuriating in verdure, summoning
The breeze with amorous wideness of its boughs,
He chose and with his steel assailed the arm
Brown, rough and strong hidden in its emerald dress.
Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose
Of the bright face and body which she loved.
Her life was now in seconds, not in hours,
And every moment she economised
Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,
The miser of his poor remaining gold.
But Satyavan wielded a joyous axe.
He sang high snatches of a sage's chant

That pealed of conquered death and demons slain,
And sometimes paused to cry to her sweet speech
Of love and mockery tenderer than love:
She like a pantheress leaped upon his words
And carried them into her cavern heart.
But as he worked, his doom upon him came.
The violent and hungry hounds of pain
Travelled through his body biting as they passed
Silently, and all his suffering breath besieged
Strove to rend life's strong heart-cords and be free.
Then helped, as if a beast had left its prey,
A moment in a wave of rich relief
Reborn to strength and happy ease he stood
Rejoicing and resumed his confident toil
But with less seeing strokes. Now the great woodsman
Hewed at him and his labour ceased: lifting
His arm he flung away the poignant axe
Far from him like an instrument of pain.
She came to him in silent anguish and clasped,
And he cried to her, "Savitri, a pang
Cleaves through my head and breast as if the axe
Were piercing it and not the living branch.
Such agony rends me as the tree must feel
When it is sundered and must lose its life.
Awhile let me lay my head upon thy lap
And guard me with thy hands from evil fate:
Perhaps because thou toughest, death may pass."
Then Savitri sat under branches wide,
Cool, green against the sun, not the hurt tree
Which his keen axe had cloven,— that she shunned;
But leaned beneath a fortunate kingly trunk
She guarded him in her bosom and strove to soothe
His anguished brow and body with her hands.
All grief and fear were dead within her now
And a great calm had fallen. The wish to lessen
His suffering, the impulse that opposes pain

Were the one mortal feeling left. It passed:
Griefless and strong she waited like the gods.
But now his sweet familiar hue was changed
Into a tarnished greyness and his eyes
Dimmed over, forsaken of the clear light she loved.
Only the dull and physical mind was left,
Vacant of the bright spirit's luminous gaze.
But once before it faded wholly back,
He cried out in a clinging last despair,
“Savitri, Savitri, O Savitri,
Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die.”
And even as her pallid lips pressed his,
His failed, losing last sweetness of response;
His cheek pressed down her golden arm. She sought
His mouth still with her living mouth, as if
She could persuade his soul back with her kiss;
Then grew aware they were no more alone.
Something had come there conscious, vast and dire.
Near her she felt a silent shade immense
Chilling the noon with darkness for its back.
An awful hush had fallen upon the place:
There was no cry of birds, no voice of beasts.
A terror and an anguish filled the world,
As if annihilation's mystery
Had taken a sensible form. A cosmic mind
Looked out on all from formidable eyes
Contemning all with its unbearable gaze
And with immortal lids and a vast brow
It saw in its immense destroying thought
All things and beings as a pitiful dream,
Rejecting with calm disdain Nature's delight,
The wordless meaning of its deep regard
Voicing the unreality of things
And life that would be for ever but never was
And its brief and vain recurrence without cease,
As if from a Silence without form or name

The Shadow of a remote uncaring god
Doomed to his Nought the illusory universe,
Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time
And its imitation of eternity.
She knew that visible Death was standing there
And Satyavan had passed from her embrace.

END OF BOOK EIGHT
END OF PART TWO

PART THREE

BOOKS IX–XII

BOOK NINE

The Book of Eternal Night

Canto One

Towards the Black Void

SO WAS she left alone in the huge wood,
Surrounded by a dim unthinking world,
Her husband's corpse on her forsaken breast.
In her vast silent spirit motionless
She measured not her loss with helpless thoughts,
Nor rent with tears the marble seals of pain:
She rose not yet to face the dreadful god.
Over the body she loved her soul leaned out
In a great stillness without stir or voice,
As if her mind had died with Satyavan.
But still the human heart in her beat on.
Aware still of his being near to hers,
Closely she clasped to her the mute lifeless form
As though to guard the oneness they had been
And keep the spirit still within its frame.
Then suddenly there came on her the change
Which in tremendous moments of our lives
Can overtake sometimes the human soul
And hold it up towards its luminous source.
The veil is torn, the thinker is no more:
Only the spirit sees and all is known.
Then a calm Power seated above our brows
Is seen, unshaken by our thoughts and deeds,
Its stillness bears the voices of the world:
Immobile, it moves Nature, looks on life.
It shapes immutably its far-seen ends;
Untouched and tranquil amid error and tears
And measureless above our striving wills,
Its gaze controls the turbulent whirl of things.
To mate with the Glory it sees, the spirit grows:
The voice of life is tuned to infinite sounds,

The moments on great wings of lightning come
And godlike thoughts surprise the mind of earth.
Into the soul's splendour and intensity
A crescent of miraculous birth is tossed,
Whose horn of mystery floats in a bright void.
As into a heaven of strength and silence thought
Is ravished, all this living mortal clay
Is seized and in a swift and fiery flood
Of touches shaped by a Harmonist unseen.
A new sight comes, new voices in us form
A body of the music of the Gods.
Immortal yearnings without name leap down,
Large quiverings of godhead seeking run
And weave upon a puissant field of calm
A high and lonely ecstasy of will.
This in a moment's depths was born in her.
Now to the limitless gaze disclosed that sees
Things barred from human thinking's earthly lids,
The Spirit who had hidden in Nature soared
Out of his luminous nest within the worlds:
Like a vast fire it climbed the skies of night.
Thus were the cords of self-oblivion torn:
Like one who looks up to far heights she saw,
Ancient and strong as on a windless summit
Above her where she had worked in her lone mind
Labouring apart in a sole tower of self,
The source of all which she had seemed or wrought,
A power projected into cosmic space,
A slow embodiment of the aeonic will,
A starry fragment of the eternal Truth,
The passionate instrument of an unmoved Power.
A Presence was there that filled the listening world;
A central All assumed her boundless life.
A sovereignty, a silence and a swiftness,
One brooded over abysses who was she.
As in a chorric robe of unheard sounds

A Force descended trailing endless lights;
Linking Time's seconds to infinity,
Illimitably it girt the earth and her:
It sank into her soul and she was changed.
Then like a thought fulfilled by some great word
That mightiness assumed a symbol form:
Her being's spaces quivered with its touch,
It covered her as with immortal wings;
On its lips the curve of the unuttered Truth,
A halo of Wisdom's lightnings for its crown,
It entered the mystic lotus in her head,
A thousand-petalled home of power and light.
Immortal leader of her mortality,
Doer of her works and fountain of her words,
Invulnerable by Time, omnipotent,
It stood above her calm, immobile, mute.

All in her mated with that mighty hour,
As if the last remnant had been slain by Death
Of the humanity that once was hers.
Assuming a spiritual wide control,
Making life's sea a mirror of heaven's sky,
The young divinity in her earthly limbs
Filled with celestial strength her mortal part.
Over was the haunted pain, the rending fear:
Her grief had passed away, her mind was still,
Her heart beat quietly with a sovereign force.
There came a freedom from the heart-strings' clutch,
Now all her acts sprang from a godhead's calm.
Calmly she laid upon the forest soil
The dead who still repos'd upon her breast
And bore to turn away from the dead form:
Sole now she rose to meet the dreadful god.
That mightier spirit turned its mastering gaze
On life and things, inheritor of a work
Left to it unfinished from her halting past,

When yet the mind, a passionate learner, toiled
And ill-shaped instruments were crudely moved.
Transcended now was the poor human rule;
A sovereign power was there, a godlike will.
A moment yet she lingered motionless
And looked down on the dead man at her feet;
Then like a tree recovering from a wind
She raised her noble head; fronting her gaze
Something stood there, unearthly, sombre, grand,
A limitless denial of all being
That wore the terror and wonder of a shape.
In its appalling eyes the tenebrous Form
Bore the deep pity of destroying gods;
A sorrowful irony curved the dreadful lips
That speak the word of doom. Eternal Night
In the dire beauty of an immortal face
Pitying arose, receiving all that lives
For ever into its fathomless heart, refuge
Of creatures from their anguish and world-pain.
His shape was nothingness made real, his limbs
Were monuments of transience and beneath
Brows of unwearying calm large godlike lids
Silent beheld the writhing serpent, life.
Unmoved their timeless wide unchanging gaze
Had seen the unprofitable cycles pass,
Survived the passing of unnumbered stars
And sheltered still the same immutable orbs.
The two opposed each other with their eyes,
Woman and universal god: around her,
Piling their void unbearable loneliness
Upon her mighty uncompanioned soul,
Many inhuman solitudes came close.
Vacant eternities forbidding hope
Laid upon her their huge and lifeless look,
And to her ears, silencing earthly sounds,
A sad and formidable voice arose

Which seemed the whole adverse world's. "Unclasp", it cried,
"Thy passionate influence and relax, O slave
Of Nature, changing tool of changeless Law,
Who vainly writh'st rebellion to my yoke,
Thy elemental grasp; weep and forget.
Entomb thy passion in its living grave.
Leave now the once-loved spirit's abandoned robe:
Pass lonely back to thy vain life on earth."
It ceased, she moved not, and it spoke again,
Lowering its mighty key to human chords,—
Yet a dread cry behind the uttered sounds,
Echoing all sadness and immortal scorn,
Moaned like a hunger of far wandering waves.
"Wilt thou for ever keep thy passionate hold,
Thyselv a creature doomed like him to pass,
Denying his soul death's calm and silent rest?
Relax thy grasp; this body is earth's and thine,
His spirit now belongs to a greater power.
Woman, thy husband suffers." Savitri
Drew back her heart's force that clasped his body still
Where from her lap renounced on the smooth grass
Softly it lay, as often before in sleep
When from their couch she rose in the white dawn
Called by her daily tasks: now too, as if called,
She rose and stood gathered in lonely strength,
Like one who drops his mantle for a race
And waits the signal, motionlessly swift.
She knew not to what course: her spirit above
On the crypt-summit of her secret form
Like one left sentinel on a mountain crest,
A fiery-footed splendour puissant-winged,
Watched flaming-silent, with her voiceless soul
Like a still sail upon a windless sea.
White passionless it rode, an anchored might,
Waiting what far-ridged impulse should arise
Out of the eternal depths and cast its surge.

Then Death the king leaned boundless down, as leans
Night over tired lands, when evening pales
And fading gleams break down the horizon's walls,
Nor yet the dusk grows mystic with the moon.
The dim and awful godhead rose erect
From his brief stooping to his touch on earth,
And, like a dream that wakes out of a dream,
Forsaking the poor mould of that dead clay,
Another luminous Satyavan arose,
Starting upright from the recumbent earth
As if someone over viewless borders stepped
Emerging on the edge of unseen worlds.
In the earth's day the silent marvel stood
Between the mortal woman and the god.
Such seemed he as if one departed came
Wearing the light of a celestial shape
Splendidly alien to the mortal air.
The mind sought things long loved and fell back foiled
From unfamiliar hues, beheld yet longed,
By the sweet radiant form unsatisfied,
Incredulous of its too bright hints of heaven;
Too strange the brilliant phantasm to life's clasp
Desiring the warm creations of the earth
Reared in the ardour of material suns,
The senses seized in vain a glorious shade:
Only the spirit knew the spirit still,
And the heart divined the old loved heart, though changed.
Between two realms he stood, not wavering,
But fixed in quiet strong expectancy,
Like one who, sightless, listens for a command.
So were they immobile on that earthly field,
Powers not of earth, though one in human clay.
On either side of one two spirits strove;
Silence battled with silence, vast with vast.
But now the impulse of the Path was felt
Moving from the Silence that supports the stars

To touch the confines of the visible world.
Luminous he moved away; behind him Death
Went slowly with his noiseless tread, as seen
In dream-built fields a shadowy herdsman glides
Behind some wanderer from his voiceless herds,
And Savitri moved behind eternal Death,
Her mortal pace was equalled with the god's.
Wordless she travelled in her lover's steps,
Planting her human feet where his had trod,
Into the perilous silences beyond.

At first in a blind stress of woods she moved
With strange inhuman paces on the soil,
Journeying as if upon an unseen road.
Around her on the green and imaged earth
The flickering screen of forests ringed her steps;
Its thick luxurious obstacle of boughs
Besieged her body pressing dimly through
In a rich realm of whispers palpable,
And all the murmurous beauty of the leaves
Rippled around her like an emerald robe.
But more and more this grew an alien sound,
And her old intimate body seemed to her
A burden which her being remotely bore.
Herself lived far in some uplifted scene
Where to the trance-claimed vision of pursuit,
Sole presences in a high spaceless dream,
The luminous spirit glided stilly on
And the great shadow travelled vague behind.
Still with an amorous crowd of seeking hands
Softly entreated by their old desires
Her senses felt earth's close and gentle air
Cling round them and in troubled branches knew
Uncertain treadings of a faint-foot wind:
She bore dim fragrances, far callings touched;
The wild bird's voice and its winged rustle came

As if a sigh from some forgotten world.
Earth stood aloof, yet near: round her it wove
Its sweetness and its greenness and delight,
Its brilliance suave of well-loved vivid hues,
Sunlight arriving to its golden noon,
And the blue heavens and the caressing soil.
The ancient mother offered to her child
Her simple world of kind familiar things.
But now, as if the body's sensuous hold
Curbing the godhead of her infinite walk
Had freed those spirits to their grander road
Across some boundary's intangible bar,
The silent god grew mighty and remote
In other spaces, and the soul she loved
Lost its consenting nearness to her life.
Into a deep and unfamiliar air
Enormous, windless, without stir or sound
They seemed to enlarge away, drawn by some wide
Pale distance, from the warm control of earth
And her grown far: now, now they would escape.
Then flaming from her body's nest alarmed
Her violent spirit soared at Satyavan.
Out mid the plunge of heaven-surrounded rocks
So in a terror and a wrath divine
From her eyrie streams against the ascending death,
Indignant at its crouching point of steel,
A fierce she-eagle threatened in her brood,
Borne on a rush of puissance and a cry,
Outwinging like a mass of golden fire.
So on a spirit's flaming outrush borne
She crossed the borders of dividing sense;
Like pale discarded sheaths dropped dully down
Her mortal members fell back from her soul.
A moment of a secret body's sleep,
Her trance knew not of sun or earth or world;
Thought, time and death were absent from her grasp:

She knew not self, forgotten was Savitri.
All was the violent ocean of a will
Where lived captive to an immense caress,
Possessed in a supreme identity,
Her aim, joy, origin, Satyavan alone.
Her sovereign prisoned in her being's core,
He beat there like a rhythmic heart,—herself
But different still, one loved, enveloped, clasped,
A treasure saved from the collapse of space.
Around him nameless, infinite she surged,
Her spirit fulfilled in his spirit, rich with all Time,
As if Love's deathless moment had been found,
A pearl within eternity's white shell.
Then out of the engulfing sea of trance
Her mind rose drenched to light streaming with hues
Of vision and, awake once more to Time,
Returned to shape the lineaments of things
And live in borders of the seen and known.
Onward the three still moved in her soul-scene.
As if pacing through fragments of a dream,
She seemed to travel on, a visioned shape
Imagining other musers like herself,
By them imagined in their lonely sleep.
Ungrasped, unreal, yet familiar, old,
Like clefts of unsubstantial memory,
Scenes often traversed, never lived in, fled
Past her unheeding to forgotten goals.
In voiceless regions they were travellers
Alone in a new world where souls were not,
But only living moods: a strange hushed weird
Country was round them, strange far skies above,
A doubting space where dreaming objects lived
Within themselves their one unchanged idea.
Weird were the grasses, weird the treeless plains;
Weird ran the road which like fear hastening
Towards that of which it has most terror, passed

Phantasmal between pillared conscious rocks
Sombre and high, gates brooding, whose stone thoughts
Lost their huge sense beyond in giant night.
Enigma of the Inconscient's sculptural sleep,
Symbols of the approach to darkness old
And monuments of her titanic reign,
Opening to depths like dumb appalling jaws
That wait a traveller down a haunted path
Attracted to a mystery that slays,
They watched across her road, cruel and still;
Sentinels they stood of dumb Necessity,
Mute heads of vigilant and sullen gloom,
Carved muzzle of a dim enormous world.
Then, to that chill sere heavy line arrived
Where his feet touched the shadowy marches' brink,
Turning arrested luminous Satyavan
Looked back with his wonderful eyes at Savitri.
But Death pealed forth his vast abysmal cry:
“O mortal, turn back to thy transient kind;
Aspire not to accompany Death to his home,
As if thy breath could live where Time must die.
Think not thy mind-born passion strength from heaven
To uplift thy spirit from its earthly base
And, breaking out from the material cage,
To upbuoy thy feet of dream in groundless Nought
And bear thee through the pathless infinite.
Only in human limits man lives safe.
Trust not in the unreal Lords of Time,
Immortal deeming this image of thyself
Which they have built on a Dream's floating ground.
Let not the dreadful goddess move thy soul
To enlarge thy vehement trespass into worlds
Where it shall perish like a helpless thought.
Know the cold term-stones of thy hopes in life.
Armed vainly with the Ideal's borrowed might,
Dare not to outstep man's bound and measured force:

Ignorant and stumbling, in brief boundaries pent,
He crowns himself the world's mock suzerain,
Tormenting Nature with the works of Mind.
O sleeper, dreaming of divinity,
Wake trembling mid the indifferent silences
In which thy few weak chords of being die.
Impermanent creatures, sorrowful foam of Time,
Your transient loves bind not the eternal gods."
The dread voice ebbed in the consenting hush
Which seemed to close upon it, wide, intense,
A wordless sanction from the jaws of Night.
The Woman answered not. Her high nude soul,
Stripped of the girdle of mortality,
Against fixed destiny and the grooves of law
Stood up in its sheer will a primal force.
Still like a statue on its pedestal,
Lone in the silence and to vastness bared,
Against midnight's dumb abysses piled in front
A columned shaft of fire and light she rose.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

*The Journey in Eternal Night
and the Voice of the Darkness*

AWHILE on the chill dreadful edge of Night
All stood as if a world were doomed to die
And waited on the eternal silence' brink.
Heaven leaned towards them like a cloudy brow
Of menace through the dim and voiceless hush.
As thoughts stand mute on a despairing verge
Where the last depths plunge into nothingness
And the last dreams must end, they paused; in their front
Were glooms like shadowy wings, behind them, pale,
The lifeless evening was a dead man's gaze.
Hungry beyond, the night desired her soul.
But still in its lone niche of templed strength
Motionless, her flame-bright spirit, mute, erect,
Burned like a torch-fire from a windowed room
Pointing against the darkness' sombre breast.
The Woman first affronted the Abyss
Daring to journey through the eternal Night.
Armoured with light she advanced her foot to plunge
Into the dread and hueless vacancy;
Immortal, unappalled, her spirit faced
The danger of the ruthless eyeless waste.
Against night's inky ground they stirred, moulding
Mysterious motion on her human tread,
A swimming action and a drifting march
Like figures moving before eyelids closed:
All as in dreams went slipping, gliding on.
The rock-gate's heavy walls were left behind;
As if through passages of receding time
Present and past into the Timeless lapsed;
Arrested upon dim adventure's brink,

The future ended drowned in nothingness.
Amid collapsing shapes they wound obscure;
The fading vestibules of a tenebrous world
Received them, where they seemed to move and yet
Be still, nowhere advancing yet to pass,
A dumb procession a dim picture bounds,
Not conscious forms threading a real scene.
A mystery of terror's boundlessness,
Gathering its hungry strength the huge pitiless void
Surrounded slowly with its soundless depths,
And monstrous, cavernous, a shapeless throat
Devoured her into its shadowy strangling mass,
The fierce spiritual agony of a dream.
A curtain of impenetrable dread,
The darkness hung around her cage of sense
As, when the trees have turned to blotted shades
And the last friendly glimmer fades away,
Around a bullock in the forest tied
By hunters closes in no empty night.
The thought that strives in the world was here unmade;
Its effort it renounced to live and know,
Convinced at last that it had never been;
It perished, all its dream of action done:
This clotted cypher was its dark result.
In the smothering stress of this stupendous Nought
Mind could not think, breath could not breathe, the soul
Could not remember or feel itself; it seemed
A hollow gulf of sterile emptiness,
A zero oblivious of the sum it closed,
An abnegation of the Maker's joy
Saved by no wide repose, no depth of peace.
On all that claims here to be Truth and God
And conscious self and the revealing Word
And the creative rapture of the Mind
And Love and Knowledge and heart's delight, there fell
The immense refusal of the eternal No.

As disappears a golden lamp in gloom
Borne into distance from the eyes' desire,
Into the shadows vanished Savitri.
There was no course, no path, no end or goal:
Visionless she moved amid insensible gulfs,
Or drove through some great black unknowing waste,
Or whirled in a dumb eddy of meeting winds
Assembled by the titan hands of Chance.
There was none with her in the dreadful Vast:
She saw no more the vague tremendous god,
Her eyes had lost their luminous Satyavan.
Yet not for this her spirit failed, but held
More deeply than the bounded senses can
Which grasp externally and find to lose,
Its object loved. So when on earth they lived
She had felt him straying through the glades, the glades
A scene in her, its clefts her being's vistas
Opening their secrets to his search and joy,
Because to jealous sweetness in her heart
Whatever happy space his cherished feet
Preferred, must be at once her soul embracing
His body, passioning dumbly to his tread.
But now a silent gulf between them came
And to abysmal loneliness she fell,
Even from herself cast out, from love remote.
Long hours, since long it seems when sluggish time
Is measured by the throbs of the soul's pain,
In an unreal darkness empty and drear
She travelled treading on the corpse of life,
Lost in a blindness of extinguished souls.
Solitary in the anguish of the void
She lived in spite of death, she conquered still;
In vain her puissant being was oppressed:
Her heavy long monotony of pain
Tardily of its fierce self-torture tired.
At first a faint inextinguishable gleam,

Pale but immortal, flickered in the gloom
As if a memory came to spirits dead,
A memory that wished to live again,
Dissolved from mind in Nature's natal sleep.
It wandered like a lost ray of the moon
Revealing to the night her soul of dread;
Serpentine in the gleam the darkness lolled,
Its black hoods jewelled with the mystic glow;
Its dull sleek folds shrank back and coiled and slid,
As though they felt all light a cruel pain
And suffered from the pale approach of hope.
Night felt assailed her heavy sombre reign;
The splendour of some bright eternity
Threatened with this faint beam of wandering Truth
Her empire of the everlasting Nought.
Implacable in her intolerant strength
And confident that she alone was true,
She strove to stifle the frail dangerous ray;
Aware of an all-negating immensity
She reared her giant head of Nothingness,
Her mouth of darkness swallowing all that is;
She saw in herself the tenebrous Absolute.
But still the light prevailed and still it grew,
And Savitri to her lost self awoke;
Her limbs refused the cold embrace of death,
Her heart-beats triumphed in the grasp of pain;
Her soul persisted claiming for its joy
The soul of the beloved now seen no more.
Before her in the stillness of the world
Once more she heard the treading of a god,
And out of the dumb darkness Satyavan,
Her husband, grew into a luminous shade.
Then a sound pealed through that dead monstrous realm:
Vast like the surge in a tired swimmer's ears,
Clamouring, a fatal iron-hearted roar,
Death missioned to the night his lethal call.

“This is my silent dark immensity,
This is the home of everlasting Night,
This is the secrecy of Nothingness
Entombing the vanity of life’s desires.
Hast thou beheld thy source, O transient heart,
And known from what the dream thou art was made?
In this stark sincerity of nude emptiness
Hopest thou still always to last and love?”
The Woman answered not. Her spirit refused
The voice of Night that knew and Death that thought.
In her beginningless infinity
Through her soul’s reaches unconfined she gazed;
She saw the undying fountains of her life,
She knew herself eternal without birth.
But still opposing her with endless night
Death, the dire god, inflicted on her eyes
The immortal calm of his tremendous gaze:
“Although thou hast survived the unborn void
Which never shall forgive, while Time endures,
The primal violence that fashioned thought,
Forcing the immobile vast to suffer and live,
This sorrowful victory only hast thou won
To live for a little without Satyavan.
What shall the ancient goddess give to thee
Who helps thy heart-beats? Only she prolongs
The nothing dreamed existence and delays
With the labour of living thy eternal sleep.
A fragile miracle of thinking clay,
Armed with illusions walks the child of Time.
To fill the void around he feels and dreads,
The void he came from and to which he goes,
He magnifies his self and names it God.
He calls the heavens to help his suffering hopes.
He sees above him with a longing heart
Bare spaces more unconscious than himself
That have not even his privilege of mind,

And empty of all but their unreal blue,
And peoples them with bright and merciful powers.
For the sea roars around him and earth quakes
Beneath his steps, and fire is at his doors,
And death prowls baying through the woods of life.
Moved by the Presences with which he yearns,
He offers in implacable shrines his soul
And clothes all with the beauty of his dreams.
The gods who watch the earth with sleepless eyes
And guide its giant stumbling through the void,
Have given to man the burden of his mind;
In his unwilling heart they have lit their fires
And sown in it incurable unrest.
His mind is a hunter upon tracks unknown;
Amusing Time with vain discovery,
He deepens with thought the mystery of his fate
And turns to song his laughter and his tears.
His mortality vexing with the immortal's dreams,
Troubling his transience with the infinite's breath,
They gave him hungers which no food can fill;
He is the cattle of the shepherd gods.
His body the tether with which he is tied,
They cast for fodder grief and hope and joy:
His pasture ground they have fenced with Ignorance.
Into his fragile undefended breast
They have breathed a courage that is met by death,
They have given a wisdom that is mocked by night,
They have traced a journey that foresees no goal.
Aimless man toils in an uncertain world,
Lulled by inconstant pauses of his pain,
Scourged like a beast by the infinite desire,
Bound to the chariot of the dreadful gods.
But if thou still canst hope and still wouldest love,
Return to thy body's shell, thy tie to earth,
And with thy heart's little remnants try to live.
Hope not to win back to thee Satyavan.

Yet since thy strength deserves no trivial crown,
Gifts I can give to soothe thy wounded life.
The pacts which transient beings make with fate,
And the wayside sweetness earth-bound hearts would pluck,
These if thy will accepts make freely thine.
Choose a life's hopes for thy deceiving prize."

As ceased the ruthless and tremendous Voice,
Unendingly there rose in Savitri,
Like moonlit ridges on a shuddering flood,
A stir of thoughts out of some silence born
Across the sea of her dumb fathomless heart.
At last she spoke; her voice was heard by Night:
"I bow not to thee, O huge mask of death,
Black lie of night to the cowed soul of man,
Unreal, inescapable end of things,
Thou grim jest played with the immortal spirit.
Conscious of immortality I walk.
A victor spirit conscious of my force,
Not as a suppliant to thy gates I came:
Unslain I have survived the clutch of Night.
My first strong grief moves not my seated mind;
My unwept tears have turned to pearls of strength:
I have transformed my ill-shaped brittle clay
Into the hardness of a statued soul.
Now in the wrestling of the splendid gods
My spirit shall be obstinate and strong
Against the vast refusal of the world.
I stoop not with the subject mob of minds
Who run to glean with eager satisfied hands
And pick from its mire mid many trampling feet
Its scornful small concessions to the weak.
Mine is the labour of the battling gods:
Imposing on the slow reluctant years
The flaming will that reigns beyond the stars,
They lay the law of Mind on Matter's works
And win the soul's wish from earth's inconscient Force.

First I demand whatever Satyavan,
My husband, waking in the forest's charm
Out of his long pure childhood's lonely dreams,
Desired and had not for his beautiful life.
Give, if thou must, or, if thou canst, refuse.”
Death bowed his head in scornful cold assent,
The builder of this dreamlike earth for man
Who has mocked with vanity all gifts he gave.
Uplifting his disastrous voice he spoke:
“Indulgent to the dreams my touch shall break,
I yield to his blind father's longing heart
Kingdom and power and friends and greatness lost
And royal trappings for his peaceful age,
The pallid pomps of man's declining days,
The silvered decadent glories of life's fall.
To one who wiser grew by adverse Fate,
Goods I restore the deluded soul prefers
To impersonal nothingness's bare sublime.
The sensuous solace of the light I give
To eyes which could have found a larger realm,
A deeper vision in their fathomless night.
For that this man desired and asked in vain
While still he lived on earth and cherished hope.
Back from the grandeur of my perilous realms
Go, mortal, to thy small permitted sphere!
Hasten swift-footed, lest to slay thy life
The great laws thou hast violated, moved,
Open at last on thee their marble eyes.”
But Savitri answered the disdainful Shade:
“World-spirit, I was thy equal spirit born.
My will too is a law, my strength a god.
I am immortal in my mortality.
I tremble not before the immobile gaze
Of the unchanging marble hierarchies
That look with the stone eyes of Law and Fate.
My soul can meet them with its living fire.

Out of thy shadow give me back again
Into earth's flowering spaces Satyavan
In the sweet transiency of human limbs
To do with him my spirit's burning will.
I will bear with him the ancient Mother's load,
I will follow with him earth's path that leads to God.
Else shall the eternal spaces open to me,
While round us strange horizons far recede,
Travelling together the immense unknown.
For I who have trod with him the tracts of Time,
Can meet behind his steps whatever night
Or unimaginable stupendous dawn
Breaks on our spirits in the untrod Beyond.
Wherever thou leadst his soul I shall pursue.”
But to her claim opposed, implacable,
Insisting on the immutable Decree,
Insisting on the immitigable Law
And the insignificance of created things,
Out of the rolling wastes of night there came
Born from the enigma of the unknowable depths
A voice of majesty and appalling scorn.
As when the storm-haired Titan-striding sea
Throws on a swimmer its tremendous laugh
Remembering all the joy its waves have drowned,
So from the darkness of the sovereign night
Against the Woman's boundless heart arose
The almighty cry of universal Death.
“Hast thou god-wings or feet that tread my stars,
Frail creature with the courage that aspires,
Forgetting thy bounds of thought, thy mortal role?
Their orbs were coiled before thy soul was formed.
I, Death, created them out of my void;
All things I have built in them and I destroy.
I made the worlds my net, each joy a mesh.
A Hunger amorous of its suffering prey,
Life that devours, my image see in things.

Mortal, whose spirit is my wandering breath,
Whose transience was imagined by my smile,
Flee clutching thy poor gains to thy trembling breast
Pierced by my pangs Time shall not soon appease.
Blind slave of my deaf force whom I compel
To sin that I may punish, to desire
That I may scourge thee with despair and grief
And thou come bleeding to me at the last,
Thy nothingness recognised, my greatness known,
Turn nor attempt forbidden happy fields
Meant for the souls that can obey my law,
Lest in their sombre shrines thy tread awake
From their uneasy iron-hearted sleep
The Furies who avenge fulfilled desire.
Dread lest in skies where passion hoped to live,
The Unknown's lightnings start and, terrified,
Lone, sobbing, hunted by the hounds of heaven,
A wounded and forsaken soul thou flee
Through the long torture of the centuries,
Nor many lives exhaust the tireless Wrath
Hell cannot slake nor Heaven's mercy assuage.
I will take from thee the black eternal grip:
Clasping in thy heart thy fate's exiguous dole
Depart in peace, if peace for man is just.”
But Savitri answered meeting scorn with scorn,
The mortal woman to the dreadful Lord:
“Who is this God imagined by thy night,
Contemptuously creating worlds disdained,
Who made for vanity the brilliant stars?
Not he who has reared his temple in my thoughts
And made his sacred floor my human heart.
My God is will and triumphs in his paths,
My God is love and sweetly suffers all.
To him I have offered hope for sacrifice
And gave my longings as a sacrament.
Who shall prohibit or hedge in his course,

The wonderful, the charioteer, the swift?
A traveller of the million roads of life,
His steps familiar with the lights of heaven
Tread without pain the sword-paved courts of hell;
There he descends to edge eternal joy.
Love's golden wings have power to fan thy void:
The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.
He labours in the depths, exults on the heights;
He shall remake thy universe, O Death.”
She spoke and for a while no voice replied,
While still they travelled through the trackless night
And still that gleam was like a pallid eye
Troubling the darkness with its doubtful gaze.
Then once more came a deep and perilous pause
In that unreal journey through blind Nought;
Once more a Thought, a Word in the void arose
And Death made answer to the human soul:
“What is thy hope? to what dost thou aspire?
This is thy body's sweetest lure of bliss,
Assailed by pain, a frail precarious form,
To please for a few years thy faltering sense
With honey of physical longings and the heart's fire
And, a vain oneness seeking, to embrace
The brilliant idol of a fugitive hour.
And thou, what art thou, soul, thou glorious dream
Of brief emotions made and glittering thoughts,
A thin dance of fireflies speeding through the night,
A sparkling ferment in life's sunlit mire?
Wilt thou claim immortality, O heart,
Crying against the eternal witnesses
That thou and he are endless powers and last?
Death only lasts and the inconscient Void.
I only am eternal and endure.
I am the shapeless formidable Vast,
I am the emptiness that men call Space,

I am a timeless Nothingness carrying all,
I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.
I, Death, am He; there is no other God.
All from my depths are born, they live by death;
All to my depths return and are no more.
I have made a world by my inconscient Force.
My Force is Nature that creates and slays
The hearts that hope, the limbs that long to live.
I have made man her instrument and slave,
His body I made my banquet, his life my food.
Man has no other help but only Death;
He comes to me at his end for rest and peace.
I, Death, am the one refuge of thy soul.
The Gods to whom man prays can help not man;
They are my imaginations and my moods
Reflected in him by illusion's power.
That which thou seest as thy immortal self
Is a shadowy icon of my infinite,
Is Death in thee dreaming of eternity.
I am the Immobile in which all things move,
I am the nude Inane in which they cease:
I have no body and no tongue to speak,
I commune not with human eye and ear;
Only thy thought gave a figure to my void.
Because, O aspirant to divinity,
Thou calledst me to wrestle with thy soul,
I have assumed a face, a form, a voice.
But if there were a Being witnessing all,
How should he help thy passionate desire?
Aloof he watches sole and absolute,
Indifferent to thy cry in nameless calm.
His being is pure, unwounded, motionless, one.
One endless watches the inconscient scene
Where all things perish, as the foam the stars.
The One lives for ever. There no Satyavan
Changing was born and there no Savitri

Claims from brief life her bribe of joy. There love
Came never with his fretful eyes of tears,
Nor Time is there nor the vain vasts of Space.
It wears no living face, it has no name,
No gaze, no heart that throbs; it asks no second
To aid its being or to share its joys.
It is delight immortally alone.
If thou desirest immortality,
Be then alone sufficient to thy soul:
Live in thyself; forget the man thou lov'st.
My last grand death shall rescue thee from life;
Then shalt thou rise into thy unmoved source.”
But Savitri replied to the dread Voice:
“O Death, who reasonest, I reason not,
Reason that scans and breaks, but cannot build
Or builds in vain because she doubts her work.
I am, I love, I see, I act, I will.”
Death answered her, one deep surrounding cry:
“Know also. Knowing, thou shalt cease to love
And cease to will, delivered from thy heart.
So shalt thou rest for ever and be still,
Consenting to the impermanence of things.”
But Savitri replied for man to Death:
“When I have loved for ever, I shall know.
Love in me knows the truth all changings mask.
I know that knowledge is a vast embrace:
I know that every being is myself,
In every heart is hidden the myriad One.
I know the calm Transcendent bears the world,
The veiled Inhabitant, the silent Lord:
I feel his secret act, his intimate fire;
I hear the murmur of the cosmic Voice.
I know my coming was a wave from God.
For all his suns were conscient in my birth,
And one who loves in us came veiled by death.
Then was man born among the monstrous stars

Dowered with a mind and heart to conquer thee.”
In the eternity of his ruthless will
Sure of his empire and his armoured might,
Like one disdaining violent helpless words
From victim lips Death answered not again.
He stood in silence and in darkness wrapped,
A figure motionless, a shadow vague,
Girt with the terrors of his secret sword.
Half-seen in clouds appeared a sombre face;
Night’s dusk tiara was his matted hair,
The ashes of the pyre his forehead’s sign.
Once more a wanderer in the unending Night,
Blindly forbidden by dead vacant eyes,
She travelled through the dumb unhoping vasts.
Around her rolled the shuddering waste of gloom,
Its swallowing emptiness and joyless death
Resentful of her thought and life and love.
Through the long fading night by her compelled,
Gliding half-seen on their unearthly path,
Phantasmal in the dimness moved the three.

END OF CANTO TWO
END OF BOOK NINE

BOOK TEN

The Book of the Double Twilight

Canto One

The Dream Twilight of the Ideal

ALL STILL was darkness dread and desolate;
There was no change nor any hope of change.
In this black dream which was a house of Void,
A walk to Nowhere in a land of Nought,
Ever they drifted without aim or goal;
Gloom led to worse gloom, depth to an emptier depth,
In some positive Non-being's purposeless Vast
Through formless wastes dumb and unknowable.
An ineffectual beam of suffering light
Through the despairing darkness dogged their steps
Like the remembrance of a glory lost;
Even while it grew, it seemed unreal there,
Yet haunted Nihil's chill stupendous realm,
Unquenchable, perpetual, lonely, null,
A pallid ghost of some dead eternity.
It was as if she must pay now her debt,
Her vain presumption to exist and think,
To some brilliant Maya that conceived her soul.
This most she must absolve with endless pangs,
Her deep original sin, the will to be
And the sin last, greatest, the spiritual pride,
That, made of dust, equalled itself with heaven,
Its scorn of the worm writhing in the mud,
Condemned ephemeral, born from Nature's dream,
Refusal of the transient creature's role,
The claim to be a living fire of God,
The will to be immortal and divine.
In that tremendous darkness heavy and bare
She atoned for all since the first act whence sprang
The error of the consciousness of Time,
The rending of the Inconscient's seal of sleep,

The primal and unpardon'd revolt that broke
The peace and silence of the Nothingness
Which was before a seeming universe
Appeared in a vanity of imagined Space
And life arose engendering grief and pain:
A great Negation was the Real's face
Prohibiting the vain process of Time:
And when there is no world, no creature more,
When Time's intrusion has been blotted out,
It shall last, unbodied, saved from thought, at peace.
Accursed in what had been her godhead source,
Condemned to live for ever empty of bliss,
Her immortality her chastisement,
Her spirit, guilty of being, wandered doomed,
Moving for ever through eternal Night.
But Maya is a veil of the Absolute;
A Truth occult has made this mighty world:
The Eternal's wisdom and self-knowledge act
In ignorant Mind and in the body's steps.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep.
An unintelligible Intelligence
Invents creation's paradox profound;
Spiritual thought is crammed in Matter's forms,
Unseen it throws out a dumb energy
And works a miracle by a machine.
All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,

A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
The inconscient world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.
Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain.
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go.
Here in this seat of Darkness mute and lone,
In the heart of everlasting Nothingness
Light conquered now even by that feeble beam:
Its faint infiltration drilled the blind deaf mass;
Almost it changed into a glimmering sight
That housed the phantom of an aureate Sun
Whose orb pupilled the eye of Nothingness.
A golden fire came in and burned Night's heart;
Her dusky mindlessness began to dream;
The Inconscient conscious grew, Night felt and thought.
Assailed in the sovereign emptiness of its reign
The intolerant Darkness paled and drew apart
Till only a few black remnants stained that Ray.
But on a failing edge of dumb lost space
Still a great dragon body sullenly loomed;
Adversary of the slow struggling Dawn
Defending its ground of tortured mystery,
It trailed its coils through the dead martyred air
And curving fled down a grey slope of Time.

There is a morning twilight of the gods;
Miraculous from sleep their forms arise
And God's long nights are justified by dawn.
There breaks a passion and splendour of new birth
And hue-winged visions stray across the lids,
Heaven's chanting heralds waken dim-eyed Space.
The dreaming deities look beyond the seen
And fashion in their thoughts the ideal worlds

Sprung from a limitless moment of desire
That once had lodged in some abysmal heart.
Passed was the heaviness of the eyeless dark
And all the sorrow of the night was dead:
Surprised by a blind joy with groping hands
Like one who wakes to find his dreams were true,
Into a happy misty twilit world
Where all ran after light and joy and love
She slipped; there far-off raptures drew more close
And deep anticipations of delight,
For ever eager to be grasped and held,
Were never grasped, yet breathed strange ecstasy.
A pearl-winged indistinctness fleeting swam,
An air that dared not suffer too much light.
Vague fields were there, vague pastures gleamed, vague trees,
Vague scenes dim-hearted in a drifting haze;
Vague cattle white roamed glimmering through the mist;
Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry,
Vague melodies touched the soul and fled pursued
Into harmonious distances unseized;
Forms subtly elusive and half-luminous powers
Wishing no goal for their unearthly course
Strayed happily through vague ideal lands,
Or floated without footing or their walk
Left steps of reverie on sweet memory's ground;
Or they paced to the mighty measure of their thoughts
Led by a low far chanting of the gods.
A ripple of gleaming wings crossed the far sky;
Birds like pale-bosomed imaginations flew
With low disturbing voices of desire,
And half-heard lowings drew the listening ear,
As if the Sun-god's brilliant kine were there
Hidden in mist and passing towards the sun.
These fugitive beings, these elusive shapes
Were all that claimed the eye and met the soul,
The natural inhabitants of that world.

But nothing there was fixed or stayed for long;
No mortal feet could rest upon that soil,
No breath of life lingered embodied there.
In that fine chaos joy fled dancing past
And beauty evaded settled line and form
And hid its sense in mysteries of hue;
Yet gladness ever repeated the same notes
And gave the sense of an enduring world;
There was a strange consistency of shapes,
And the same thoughts were constant passers-by
And all renewed unendingly its charm
Alluring ever the expectant heart
Like music that one always waits to hear,
Like the recurrence of a haunting rhyme.
One touched incessantly things never seized,
A skirt of worlds invisibly divine.
As if a trail of disappearing stars
There showered upon the floating atmosphere
Colours and lights and evanescent gleams
That called to follow into a magic heaven,
And in each cry that fainted on the ear
There was the voice of an unrealised bliss.
An adoration reigned in the yearning heart,
A spirit of purity, an elusive presence
Of faery beauty and ungrasped delight
Whose momentary and escaping thrill,
However unsubstantial to our flesh,
And brief even in imperishableness,
Much sweeter seemed than any rapture known
Earth or all-conquering heaven can ever give.
Heaven ever young and earth too firm and old
Delay the heart by immobility:
Their raptures of creation last too long,
Their bold formations are too absolute;
Carved by an anguish of divine endeavour
They stand up sculptured on the eternal hills,

Or quarried from the living rocks of God
Win immortality by perfect form.
They are too intimate with eternal things:
Vessels of infinite significances,
They are too clear, too great, too meaningful;
No mist or shadow soothes the vanquished sight,
No soft penumbra of incertitude.
These only touched a golden hem of bliss,
The gleaming shoulder of some godlike hope,
The flying feet of exquisite desires.
On a slow trembling brink between night and day
They shone like visitants from the morning star,
Satisfied beginnings of perfection, first
Tremulous imaginings of a heavenly world:
They mingle in a passion of pursuit,
Thrilled with a spray of joy too slight to tire.
All in this world was shadowed forth, not limned,
Like faces leaping on a fan of fire
Or shapes of wonder in a tinted blur,
Like fugitive landscapes painting silver mists.
Here vision fled back from the sight alarmed,
And sound sought refuge from the ear's surprise,
And all experience was a hasty joy.
The joys here snatched were half-forbidden things,
Timorous soul-bridals delicately veiled
As when a goddess' bosom dimly moves
To first desire and her white soul transfigured,
A glimmering Eden crossed by faery gleams,
Trembles to expectation's fiery wand,
But nothing is familiar yet with bliss.
All things in this fair realm were heavenly strange
In a fleeting gladness of untired delight,
In an insistence of magic change.
Past vanishing hedges, hurrying hints of fields,
Mid swift escaping lanes that fled her feet
Journeying she wished no end: as one through clouds

Travels upon a mountain ridge and hears
Arising to him out of hidden depths
Sound of invisible streams, she walked besieged
By the illusion of a mystic space,
A charm of bodiless touches felt and heard
A sweetness as of voices high and dim
Calling like travellers upon seeking winds
Melodiously with an alluring cry.
As if a music old yet ever new,
Moving suggestions on her heart-strings dwelt,
Thoughts that no habitation found, yet clung
With passionate repetition to her mind,
Desires that hurt not, happy only to live
Always the same and always unfulfilled
Sang in the breast like a celestial lyre.
Thus all could last yet nothing ever be.
In this beauty as of mind made visible,
Dressed in its rays of wonder Satyavan
Before her seemed the centre of its charm,
Head of her loveliness of longing dreams
And captain of the fancies of her soul.
Even the dreadful majesty of Death's face
And its sombre sadness could not darken nor slay
The intangible lustre of those fleeting skies.
The sombre Shadow sullen, implacable
Made beauty and laughter more imperative;
Enhanced by his grey, joy grew more bright and dear;
His dark contrast edging ideal sight
Deepened unuttered meanings to the heart;
Pain grew a trembling undertone of bliss
And transience immortality's floating hem,
A moment's robe in which she looked more fair,
Its antithesis sharpening her divinity.
A comrade of the Ray and Mist and Flame,
By a moon-bright face a brilliant moment drawn,
Almost she seemed a thought mid floating thoughts,

Seen hardly by a visionary mind
Amid the white inward musings of the soul.
Half-vanquished by the dream-happiness around,
Awhile she moved on an enchantment's soil,
But still remained possessor of her soul.
Above, her spirit in its mighty trance
Saw all, but lived for its transcendent task,
Immutable like a fixed eternal star.

END OF CANTO ONE

Canto Two

The Gospel of Death and Vanity of the Ideal

THEN pealed the calm inexorable voice:
Abolishing hope, cancelling life's golden truths,
Fatal its accents smote the trembling air.
That lovely world swam thin and frail, most like
Some pearly evanescent farewell gleam
On the faint verge of dusk in moonless eves.
“Prisoner of Nature, many-visioned spirit,
Thought's creature in the ideal's realm enjoying
Thy unsubstantial immortality
The subtle marvellous mind of man has feigned,
This is the world from which thy yearnings came.
When it would build eternity from the dust,
Man's thought paints images illusion rounds;
Prophesying glories it shall never see,
It labours delicately among its dreams.
Behold this fleeing of light-tasselled shapes,
Aerial raiment of unbodied gods;
A rapture of things that never can be born,
Hope chants to hope a bright immortal choir;
Cloud satisfies cloud, phantom to longing phantom
Leans sweetly, sweetly is clasped or sweetly chased.
This is the stuff from which the ideal is formed:
Its builder is thought, its base the heart's desire,
But nothing real answers to their call.
The ideal dwells not in heaven, nor on the earth,
A bright delirium of man's ardour of hope
Drunk with the wine of its own fantasy.
It is a brilliant shadow's dreamy trail.
Thy vision's error builds the azure skies,
Thy vision's error drew the rainbow's arch;

Thy mortal longing made for thee a soul.
This angel in thy body thou callst love,
Who shapes his wings from thy emotion's hues,
In a ferment of thy body has been born
And with the body that housed it it must die.
It is a passion of thy yearning cells,
It is flesh that calls to flesh to serve its lust;
It is thy mind that seeks an answering mind
And dreams awhile that it has found its mate;
It is thy life that asks a human prop
To uphold its weakness lonely in the world
Or feeds its hunger on another's life.
A beast of prey that pauses in its prowl,
It crouches under a bush in splendid flower
To seize a heart and body for its food:
This beast thou dreamst immortal and a god.
O human mind, vainly thou torturtest
An hour's delight to stretch through infinity's
Long void and fill its formless, passionless gulfs,
Persuading the insensible Abyss
To lend eternity to perishing things,
And trickst the fragile movements of thy heart
With thy spirit's feint of immortality.
All here emerges born from Nothingness;
Encircled it lasts by the emptiness of Space,
Awhile upheld by an unknowing Force,
Then crumbles back into its parent Nought:
Only the mute Alone can for ever be.
In the Alone there is no room for love.
In vain to clothe love's perishable mud
Thou hast woven on the Immortals' borrowed loom
The ideal's gorgeous and unfading robe.
The ideal never yet was real made.
Imprisoned in form that glory cannot live;
Into a body shut it breathes no more.
Intangible, remote, for ever pure,

A sovereign of its own brilliant void,
Unwillingly it descends to earthly air
To inhabit a white temple in man's heart:
In his heart it shines rejected by his life.
Immutable, bodiless, beautiful, grand and dumb,
Immobile on its shining throne it sits;
Dumb it receives his offering and his prayer.
It has no voice to answer to his call,
No feet that move, no hands to take his gifts:
Aerial statue of the nude Idea,
Virgin conception of a bodiless god,
Its light stirs man the thinker to create
An earthly semblance of diviner things.
Its hued reflection falls upon man's acts;
His institutions are its cenotaphs,
He signs his dead conventions with its name;
His virtues don the Ideal's skiey robe
And a nimbus of the outline of its face:
He hides their littleness with the divine Name.
Yet insufficient is the bright pretence
To screen their indigent and earthy make:
Earth only is there and not some heavenly source.
If heavens there are they are veiled in their own light,
If a Truth eternal somewhere reigns unknown,
It burns in a tremendous void of God;
For truth shines far from the falsehoods of the world;
How can the heavens come down to unhappy earth
Or the eternal lodge in drifting time?
How shall the Ideal tread earth's dolorous soil
Where life is only a labour and a hope,
A child of Matter and by Matter fed,
A fire flaming low in Nature's grate,
A wave that breaks upon a shore in Time,
A journey's toilsome trudge with death for goal?
The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice;

In vain is seen the shining upward Way.
Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling sun;
She loves her fall and no omnipotence
Her mortal imperfections can erase,
Force on man's crooked ignorance Heaven's straight line
Or colonise a world of death with gods.

O traveller in the chariot of the Sun,
High priestess in thy holy fancy's shrine
Who with a magic ritual in earth's house
Worshippest ideal and eternal love,
What is this love thy thought has deified,
This sacred legend and immortal myth?

It is a conscious yearning of thy flesh,
It is a glorious burning of thy nerves,
A rose of dream-splendour petalling thy mind,
A great red rapture and torture of thy heart.

A sudden transfiguration of thy days,
It passes and the world is as before.

A ravishing edge of sweetness and of pain,
A thrill in its yearning makes it seem divine,
A golden bridge across the roar of the years,
A cord tying thee to eternity.

And yet how brief and frail! how soon is spent
This treasure wasted by the gods on man,
This happy closeness as of soul to soul,
This honey of the body's companionship,
This heightened joy, this ecstasy in the veins,
This strange illumination of the sense!

If Satyavan had lived, love would have died;
But Satyavan is dead and love shall live
A little while in thy sad breast, until
His face and body fade on memory's wall
Where other bodies, other faces come.

When love breaks suddenly into the life
At first man steps into a world of the sun;
In his passion he feels his heavenly element:

But only a fine sunlit patch of earth
The marvellous aspect took of heaven's outburst;
The snake is there and the worm in the heart of the rose.
A word, a moment's act can slay the god;
Precarious is his immortality,
He has a thousand ways to suffer and die.
Love cannot live by heavenly food alone,
Only on sap of earth can it survive.
For thy passion was a sensual want refined,
A hunger of the body and the heart;
Thy want can tire and cease or turn elsewhere.
Or love may meet a dire and pitiless end
By bitter treason, or wrath with cruel wounds
Separate, or thy unsatisfied will to others
Depart when first love's joy lies stripped and slain:
A dull indifference replaces fire
Or an endearing habit imitates love:
An outward and uneasy union lasts
Or the routine of a life's compromise:
Where once the seed of oneness had been cast
Into a semblance of spiritual ground
By a divine adventure of heavenly powers
Two strive, constant associates without joy,
Two egos straining in a single leash,
Two minds divided by their jarring thoughts,
Two spirits disjoined, for ever separate.
Thus is the ideal falsified in man's world;
Trivial or sombre, disillusion comes,
Life's harsh reality stares at the soul:
Heaven's hour adjourned flees into bodiless Time.
Death saves thee from this and saves Satyavan:
He now is safe, delivered from himself;
He travels to silence and felicity.
Call him not back to the treacheries of earth
And the poor petty life of animal Man.
In my vast tranquil spaces let him sleep

In harmony with the mighty hush of death
Where love lies slumbering on the breast of peace.
And thou, go back alone to thy frail world:
Chastise thy heart with knowledge, unhood to see,
Thy nature raised into clear living heights,
The heaven-bird's view from unimagined peaks.
For when thou givest thy spirit to a dream
Soon hard necessity will smite thee awake:
Purest delight began and it must end.
Thou too shalt know, thy heart no anchor swinging,
Thy cradled soul moored in eternal seas.
Vain are the cycles of thy brilliant mind.
Renounce, forgetting joy and hope and tears,
Thy passionate nature in the bosom profound
Of a happy Nothingness and worldless Calm,
Delivered into my mysterious rest.
One with my fathomless Nihil all forget.
Forget thy fruitless spirit's waste of force,
Forget the weary circle of thy birth,
Forget the joy and the struggle and the pain,
The vague spiritual quest which first began
When worlds broke forth like clusters of fire-flowers,
And great burning thoughts voyaged through the sky of mind
And Time and its aeons crawled across the vasts
And souls emerged into mortality."

But Savitri replied to the dark Power:
"A dangerous music now thou findst, O Death,
Melting thy speech into harmonious pain,
And flut'st alluringly to tired hopes
Thy falsehoods mingled with sad strains of truth.
But I forbid thy voice to slay my soul.
My love is not a hunger of the heart,
My love is not a craving of the flesh;
It came to me from God, to God returns.
Even in all that life and man have marred,
A whisper of divinity still is heard,

A breath is felt from the eternal spheres.
Allowed by Heaven and wonderful to man
A sweet fire-rhythm of passion chants to love.
There is a hope in its wild infinite cry;
It rings with callings from forgotten heights,
And when its strains are hushed to high-winged souls
In their empyrean, its burning breath
Survives beyond, the rapturous core of suns
That flame for ever pure in skies unseen,
A voice of the eternal Ecstasy.
One day I shall behold my great sweet world
Put off the dire disguises of the gods,
Unveil from terror and disrobe from sin.
Appeased we shall draw near our mother's face,
We shall cast our candid souls upon her lap;
Then shall we clasp the ecstasy we chase,
Then shall we shudder with the long-sought god,
Then shall we find Heaven's unexpected strain.
Not only is there hope for godheads pure;
The violent and darkened deities
Leaped down from the one breast in rage to find
What the white gods had missed: they too are safe;
A mother's eyes are on them and her arms
Stretched out in love desire her rebel sons.
One who came love and lover and beloved
Eternal, built himself a wondrous field
And wove the measures of a marvellous dance.
There in its circles and its magic turns
Attracted he arrives, repelled he flees.
In the wild devious promptings of his mind
He tastes the honey of tears and puts off joy
Repenting, and has laughter and has wrath,
And both are a broken music of the soul
Which seeks out reconciled its heavenly rhyme.
Ever he comes to us across the years
Bearing a new sweet face that is the old.

His bliss laughs to us or it calls concealed
Like a far-heard unseen entrancing flute
From moonlit branches in the throbbing woods,
Tempting our angry search and passionate pain.
Disguised the Lover seeks and draws our souls.
He named himself for me, grew Satyavan.
For we were man and woman from the first,
The twin souls born from one undying fire.
Did he not dawn on me in other stars?
How has he through the thickets of the world
Pursued me like a lion in the night
And come upon me suddenly in the ways
And seized me with his glorious golden leap!
Unsatisfied he yearned for me through time,
Sometimes with wrath and sometimes with sweet peace
Desiring me since first the world began.
He rose like a wild wave out of the floods
And dragged me helpless into seas of bliss.
Out of my curtained past his arms arrive;
They have touched me like the soft persuading wind,
They have plucked me like a glad and trembling flower,
And clasped me happily burned in ruthless flame.
I too have found him charmed in lovely forms
And run delighted to his distant voice
And pressed to him past many dreadful bars.
If there is a yet happier greater god,
Let him first wear the face of Satyavan
And let his soul be one with him I love;
So let him seek me that I may desire.
For only one heart beats within my breast
And one god sits there throned. Advance, O Death,
Beyond the phantom beauty of this world;
For of its citizens I am not one.
I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream.”
But Death once more inflicted on her heart
The majesty of his calm and dreadful voice:

“A bright hallucination are thy thoughts.
A prisoner haled by a spiritual cord,
Of thy own sensuous will the ardent slave,
Thou sendest eagle-poised to meet the sun
Words winged with the red splendour of thy heart.
But knowledge dwells not in the passionate heart;
The heart’s words fall back unheard from Wisdom’s throne.
Vain is thy longing to build heaven on earth.
Artificer of Ideal and Idea,
Mind, child of Matter in the womb of Life,
To higher levels persuades his parents’ steps:
Inapt, they follow ill the daring guide.
But Mind, a glorious traveller in the sky,
Walks lamely on the earth with footsteps slow;
Hardly he can mould the life’s rebellious stuff,
Hardly can he hold the galloping hooves of sense:
His thoughts look straight into the very heavens;
They draw their gold from a celestial mine,
His acts work painfully a common ore.
All thy high dreams were made by Matter’s mind
To solace its dull work in Matter’s jail,
Its only house where it alone seems true.
A solid image of reality
Carved out of being to prop the works of Time,
Matter on the firm earth sits strong and sure.
It is the first-born of created things,
It stands the last when mind and life are slain,
And if it ended all would cease to be.
All else is only its outcome or its phase:
Thy soul is a brief flower by the gardener Mind
Created in thy matter’s terrain plot;
It perishes with the plant on which it grows,
For from earth’s sap it draws its heavenly hue:
Thy thoughts are gleams that pass on Matter’s verge,
Thy life a lapsing wave on Matter’s sea.
A careful steward of Truth’s limited means,

Treasuring her founded facts from the squandering Power,
It tethers mind to the tent-posts of sense,
To a leaden grey routine clamps Life's caprice
And ties all creatures with the cords of Law.
A vessel of transmuting alchemies,
A glue that sticks together mind and life,
If Matter fails, all crumbling cracks and falls.
All upon Matter stands as on a rock.
Yet this security and guarantor
Pressed for credentials an impostor proves:
A cheat of substance where no substance is,
An appearance and a symbol and a nought,
Its forms have no original right to birth:
Its aspect of a fixed stability
Is the cover of a captive motion's swirl,
An order of the steps of Energy's dance
Whose footmarks leave for ever the same signs,
A concrete face of unsubstantial Time,
A trickle dotting the emptiness of Space:
A stable-seeming movement without change,
Yet change arrives and the last change is death.
What seemed most real once, is Nihil's show.
Its figures are snares that trap and prison the sense;
The beginningless Void was its artificer:
Nothing is there but aspects limned by Chance
And seeming shapes of seeming Energy.
All by Death's mercy breathe and live awhile,
All think and act by the Inconscient's grace.
Addict of the roseate luxury of thy thoughts,
Turn not thy gaze within thyself to look
At visions in the gleaming crystal, Mind,
Close not thy lids to dream the forms of Gods.
At last to open thy eyes consent and see
The stuff of which thou and the world are made.
Inconscient in the dumb inconscient Void
Inexplicably a moving world sprang forth:

Awhile secure, happily insensible,
It could not rest content with its own truth.
For something on its nescient breast was born
Condemned to see and know, to feel and love,
It watched its acts, imagined a soul within;
It groped for truth and dreamed of Self and God.
When all unconscious was, then all was well.
I, Death, was king and kept my regal state,
Designing my unwilled, unerring plan,
Creating with a calm insentient heart.
In my sovereign power of unreality
Obliging nothingness to take a form,
Infallibly my blind unthinking force
Making by chance a fixity like fate's,
By whim the formulas of Necessity,
Founded on the hollow ground of the Inane
The sure bizarrie of Nature's scheme.
I curved the vacant ether into Space;
A huge expanding and contracting Breath
Harboured the fires of the universe:
I struck out the supreme original spark
And spread its sparse ranked armies through the Inane,
Manufactured the stars from the occult radiances,
Marshalled the platoons of the invisible dance;
I formed earth's beauty out of atom and gas,
And built from chemic plasm the living man.
Then Thought came in and spoiled the harmonious world:
Matter began to hope and think and feel,
Tissue and nerve bore joy and agony.
The inconscient cosmos strove to learn its task;
An ignorant personal God was born in Mind
And to understand invented reason's law,
The impersonal Vast throbbed back to man's desire,
A trouble rocked the great world's blind still heart
And Nature lost her wide immortal calm.
Thus came this warped incomprehensible scene

Of souls emmeshed in life's delight and pain
And Matter's sleep and Mind's mortality,
Of beings in Nature's prison waiting death
And consciousness left in seeking ignorance
And evolution's slow arrested plan.
This is the world in which thou mov'st, astray
In the tangled pathways of the human mind,
In the issueless circling of thy human life,
Searching for thy soul and thinking God is here.
But where is room for soul or place for God
In the brute immensity of a machine?
A transient Breath thou takest for thy soul,
Born from a gas, a plasm, a sperm, a gene,
A magnified image of man's mind for God,
A shadow of thyself thrown upon Space.
Interposed between the upper and nether Void,
Thy consciousness reflects the world around
In the distorting mirror of Ignorance
Or upwards turns to catch imagined stars.
Or if a half-Truth is playing with the earth
Throwing its light on a dark shadowy ground,
It touches only and leaves a luminous smudge.
Immortality thou claimest for thy spirit,
But immortality for imperfect man,
A god who hurts himself at every step,
Would be a cycle of eternal pain.
Wisdom and love thou claimest as thy right;
But knowledge in this world is error's mate,
A brilliant procuress of Nescience,
And human love a posturer on earth-stage
Who imitates with verve a faery dance.
An extract pressed from hard experience,
Man's knowledge casked in the barrels of Memory
Has the harsh savour of a mortal draught:
A sweet secretion from the erotic glands
Flattering and torturing the burning nerves,

Love is a honey and poison in the breast
Drunk by it as the nectar of the gods.
Earth's human wisdom is no great-browed power,
And love no gleaming angel from the skies;
If they aspire beyond earth's dullard air,
Arriving sunwards with frail waxen wings,
How high could reach that forced unnatural flight?
But not on earth can divine wisdom reign
And not on earth can divine love be found;
Heaven-born, only in heaven can they live;
Or else there too perhaps they are shining dreams.
Nay, is not all thou art and doest a dream?
Thy mind and life are tricks of Matter's force.
If thy mind seems to thee a radiant sun,
If thy life runs a swift and glorious stream,
This is the illusion of thy mortal heart
Dazzled by a ray of happiness or light.
Impotent to live by their own right divine,
Convinced of their brilliant unreality,
When their supporting ground is cut away,
These children of Matter into Matter die.
Even Matter vanishes into Energy's vague
And Energy is a motion of old Nought.
How shall the Ideal's unsubstantial hues
Be painted stiff on earth's vermillion blur,
A dream within a dream come doubly true?
How shall the will-o'-the-wisp become a star?
The Ideal is a malady of thy mind,
A bright delirium of thy speech and thought,
A strange wine of beauty lifting thee to false sight.
A noble fiction of thy yearnings made,
Thy human imperfection it must share:
Its forms in Nature disappoint the heart,
And never shall it find its heavenly shape
And never can it be fulfilled in Time.
O soul misled by the splendour of thy thoughts,

O earthly creature with thy dream of heaven,
Obey, resigned and still, the earthly law.
Accept the brief light that falls upon thy days;
Take what thou canst of Life's permitted joy;
Submitting to the ordeal of fate's scourge
Suffer what thou must of toil and grief and care.
There shall approach silencing thy passionate heart
My long calm night of everlasting sleep:
There into the hush from which thou cam'st retire."

END OF CANTO TWO

Canto Three

The Debate of Love and Death

A SAD destroying cadence the voice sank;
It seemed to lead the advancing march of Life
Into some still original Inane.
But Savitri answered to almighty Death:
“O dark-browed sophist of the universe
Who veilst the Real with its own Idea,
Hiding with brute objects Nature’s living face,
Masking eternity with thy dance of death,
Thou hast woven the ignorant mind into a screen
And made of Thought error’s purveyor and scribe,
And a false witness of mind’s servant sense.
An aesthete of the sorrow of the world,
Champion of a harsh and sad philosophy
Thou hast used words to shutter out the Light
And called in Truth to vindicate a lie.
A lying reality is falsehood’s crown
And a perverted truth her richest gem.
O Death, thou speakest truth but truth that slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth that saves.
A traveller new-discovering himself,
One made of Matter’s world his starting-point,
He made of Nothingness his living-room
And Night a process of the eternal light
And death a spur towards immortality.
God wrapped his head from sight in Matter’s cowl,
His consciousness dived into inconscient depths,
All-Knowledge seemed a huge dark Nescience;
Infinity wore a boundless zero’s form.
His abysms of bliss became insensible deeps,
Eternity a blank spiritual Vast.
Annulling an original nullity

The Timeless took its ground in emptiness
And drew the figure of a universe,
That the spirit might adventure into Time
And wrestle with adamant Necessity
And the soul pursue a cosmic pilgrimage.
A spirit moved in black immensities
And built a Thought in ancient Nothingness;
A soul was lit in God's tremendous Void,
A secret labouring glow of nascent fire.
In Nihil's gulf his mighty Puissance wrought;
She swung her formless motion into shapes,
Made Matter the body of the Bodiless.
Infant and dim the eternal Mights awoke.
In inert Matter breathed a slumbering Life,
In a subconscious Life Mind lay asleep;
In waking Life it stretched its giant limbs
To shake from it the torpor of its drowse;
A senseless substance quivered into sense,
The world's heart commenced to beat, its eyes to see,
In the crowded dumb vibrations of a brain
Thought fumbled in a ring to find itself,
Discovered speech and fed the new-born Word
That bridged with spans of light the world's ignorance.
In waking Mind, the Thinker built his house.
A reasoning animal willed and planned and sought;
He stood erect among his brute compeers,
He built life new, measured the universe,
Opposed his fate and wrestled with unseen Powers,
Conquered and used the laws that rule the world,
And hoped to ride the heavens and reach the stars,
A master of his huge environment.
Now through Mind's windows stares the demigod
Hidden behind the curtains of man's soul:
He has seen the Unknown, looked on Truth's veilless face;
A ray has touched him from the eternal sun;
Motionless, voiceless in foreseeing depths,

He stands awake in Supernature's light
And sees a glory of arisen wings
And sees the vast descending might of God.

"O Death, thou lookst on an unfinished world
Assailed by thee and of its road unsure,
Peopled by imperfect minds and ignorant lives,
And sayest God is not and all is vain.
How shall the child already be the man?
Because he is infant, shall he never grow?
Because he is ignorant, shall he never learn?
In a small fragile seed a great tree lurks,
In a tiny gene a thinking being is shut;
A little element in a little sperm,
It grows and is a conqueror and a sage.
Then wilt thou spew out, Death, God's mystic truth,
Deny the occult spiritual miracle?
Still wilt thou say there is no spirit, no God?
A mute material Nature wakes and sees;
She has invented speech, unveiled a will.
Something there waits beyond towards which she strives,
Something surrounds her into which she grows:
To uncover the spirit, to change back into God,
To exceed herself is her transcendent task.
In God concealed the world began to be,
Tardily it travels towards manifest God:
Our imperfection towards perfection toils,
The body is the chrysalis of a soul:
The infinite holds the finite in its arms,
Time travels towards revealed eternity.
A miracle structure of the eternal Mage,
Matter its mystery hides from its own eyes,
A scripture written out in cryptic signs,
An occult document of the All-Wonderful's art.
All here bears witness to his secret might,
In all we feel his presence and his power.
A blaze of his sovereign glory is the sun,

A glory is the gold and glimmering moon,
A glory is his dream of purple sky.
A march of his greatness are the wheeling stars.
His laughter of beauty breaks out in green trees,
His moments of beauty triumph in a flower;
The blue sea's chant, the rivulet's wandering voice
Are murmurs falling from the Eternal's harp.
This world is God fulfilled in outwardness.
His ways challenge our reason and our sense;
By blind brute movements of an ignorant Force,
By means we slight as small, obscure or base,
A greatness founded upon little things,
He has built a world in the unknowing Void.
His forms he has massed from infinitesimal dust;
His marvels are built from insignificant things.
If mind is crippled, life untaught and crude,
If brutal masks are there and evil acts,
They are incidents of his vast and varied plot,
His great and dangerous drama's needed steps;
He makes with these and all his passion-play,
A play and yet no play but the deep scheme
Of a transcendent Wisdom finding ways
To meet her Lord in the shadow and the Night:
Above her is the vigil of the stars;
Watched by a solitary Infinitude
She embodies in dumb Matter the Divine,
In symbol minds and lives the Absolute.
A miracle-monger her mechanical craft;
Matter's machine worked out the laws of thought,
Life's engines served the labour of a soul:
The Mighty Mother her creation wrought,
A huge caprice self-bound by iron laws,
And shut God into an enigmatic world:
She lulled the Omniscient into nescient sleep,
Omnipotence on Inertia's back she drove,
Trod perfectly with divine unconscious steps

The enormous circle of her wonder-works.
Immortality assured itself by death;
The Eternal's face was seen through drifts of Time.
His knowledge he disguised as Ignorance,
His Good he sowed in Evil's monstrous bed,
Made error a door by which Truth could enter in,
His plant of bliss watered with Sorrow's tears.
A thousand aspects point back to the One;
A dual Nature covered the Unique.
In this meeting of the Eternal's mingling masques,
This tangle-dance of passionate contraries
Locking like lovers in a forbidden embrace
The quarrel of their lost identity,
Through this wrestle and wrangle of the extremes of Power
Earth's million roads struggled towards deity.
All stumbled on behind a stumbling Guide,
Yet every stumble is a needed pace
On unknown routes to an unknowable goal.
All blundered and straggled towards the One Divine.
As if transmuted by a titan spell
The eternal Powers assumed a dubious face:
Idols of an oblique divinity,
They wore the heads of animal or troll,
Assumed ears of the faun, the satyr's hoof,
Or harboured the demoniac in their gaze:
A crooked maze they made of thinking mind,
They suffered a metamorphosis of the heart,
Admitting bacchant revellers from the Night
Into its sanctuary of delights,
As in a Dionysian masquerade.
On the highways, in the gardens of the world
They wallowed oblivious of their divine parts,
As drunkards of a dire Circean wine
Or a child who sprawls and sports in Nature's mire.
Even wisdom, hewer of the roads of God,
Is a partner in the deep disastrous game:

Lost is the pilgrim's wallet and the scrip,
She fails to read the map and watch the star.
A poor self-righteous virtue is her stock
And reason's pragmatic grope or abstract sight,
Or the technique of a brief hour's success
She teaches, an usher in utility's school.
On the ocean surface of vast Consciousness
Small thoughts in shoals are fished up into a net
But the great truths escape her narrow cast;
Guarded from vision by creation's depths,
Obscure they swim in blind enormous gulfs
Safe from the little sounding leads of mind,
Too far for the puny diver's shallow plunge.
Our mortal vision peers with ignorant eyes;
It has no gaze on the deep heart of things.
Our knowledge walks leaning on Error's staff,
A worshipper of false dogmas and false gods,
Or fanatic of a fierce intolerant creed
Or a seeker doubting every truth he finds,
A sceptic facing Light with adamant No
Or chilling the heart with dry ironic smile,
A cynic stamping out the god in man;
A darkness wallows in the paths of Time
Or lifts its giant head to blot the stars;
It makes a cloud of the interpreting mind
And intercepts the oracles of the Sun.
Yet Light is there; it stands at Nature's doors:
It holds a torch to lead the traveller in.
It waits to be kindled in our secret cells;
It is a star lighting an ignorant sea,
A lamp upon our poop piercing the night.
As knowledge grows Light flames up from within:
It is a shining warrior in the mind,
An eagle of dreams in the divining heart,
An armour in the fight, a bow of God.
Then larger dawns arrive and Wisdom's pomps

Cross through the being's dim half-lighted fields;
Philosophy climbs up Thought's cloud-bank peaks
And Science tears out Nature's occult powers,
Enormous djinns who serve a dwarf's small needs,
Expose the sealed minutiae of her art
And conquers her by her own captive force.
On heights unreached by mind's most daring soar,
Upon a dangerous edge of failing Time
The soul draws back into its deathless Self;
Man's knowledge becomes God's supernal Ray.
There is the mystic realm whence leaps the power
Whose fire burns in the eyes of seer and sage;
A lightning flash of visionary sight,
It plays upon an inward verge of mind:
Thought silenced gazes into a brilliant Void.
A voice comes down from mystic unseen peaks:
A cry of splendour from a mouth of storm,
It is the voice that speaks to night's profound,
It is the thunder and the flaming call.
Above the planes that climb from nescient earth,
A hand is lifted towards the Invisible's realm,
Beyond the superconscious's blinding line
And plucks away the screens of the Unknown;
A spirit within looks into the Eternal's eyes.
It hears the Word to which our hearts were deaf,
It sees through the blaze in which our thoughts grew blind;
It drinks from the naked breasts of glorious Truth,
It learns the secrets of eternity.
Thus all was plunged into the riddling Night,
Thus all is raised to meet a dazzling Sun.
O Death, this is the mystery of thy reign.
In earth's anomalous and magic field
Carried in its aimless journey by the sun
Mid the forced marches of the great dumb stars,
A darkness occupied the fields of God,
And Matter's world was governed by thy shape.

Thy mask has covered the Eternal's face,
The Bliss that made the world has fallen asleep.
Abandoned in the Vast she slumbered on:
An evil transmutation overtook
Her members till she knew herself no more.
Only through her creative slumber flit
Frail memories of the joy and beauty meant
Under the sky's blue laugh mid green-scarfed trees
And happy squanderings of scents and hues,
In the field of the golden promenade of the sun
And the vigil of the dream-light of the stars,
Amid high meditating heads of hills,
On the bosom of voluptuous rain-kissed earth
And by the sapphire tumblings of the sea.
But now the primal innocence is lost
And Death and Ignorance govern the mortal world
And Nature's visage wears a greyer hue.
Earth still has kept her early charm and grace,
The grandeur and the beauty still are hers,
But veiled is the divine Inhabitant.
The souls of men have wandered from the Light
And the great Mother turns away her face.
The eyes of the creatrix Bliss are closed
And sorrow's touch has found her in her dreams.
As she turns and tosses on her bed of Void,
Because she cannot wake and find herself
And cannot build again her perfect shape,
Oblivious of her nature and her state,
Forgetting her instinct of felicity,
Forgetting to create a world of joy,
She weeps and makes her creatures' eyes to weep;
Testing with sorrow's edge her children's breasts,
She spends on life's vain waste of hope and toil
The poignant luxury of grief and tears.
In the nightmare change of her half-conscious dream,
Tortured herself and torturing by her touch,

She comes to our hearts and bodies and our lives
Wearing a hard and cruel mask of pain.
Our nature twisted by the abortive birth
Returns wry answers to life's questioning shocks,
An acrid relish finds in the world's pangs,
Drinks the sharp wine of grief's perversity.
A curse is laid on the pure joy of life:
Delight, God's sweetest sign and Beauty's twin,
Dreaded by aspiring saint and austere sage,
Is shunned, a dangerous and ambiguous cheat,
A specious trick of an infernal Power
It tempts the soul to its self-hurt and fall.
A puritan God made pleasure a poisonous fruit,
Or red drug in the market-place of Death,
And sin the child of Nature's ecstasy.
Yet every creature hunts for happiness,
Buys with harsh pangs or tears by violence
From the dull breast of the inanimate globe
Some fragment or some broken shard of bliss.
Even joy itself becomes a poisonous draught;
Its hunger is made a dreadful hook of Fate.
All means are held good to catch a single beam,
Eternity sacrificed for a moment's bliss:
Yet for joy and not for sorrow earth was made
And not as a dream in endless suffering Time.
Although God made the world for his delight,
An ignorant Power took charge and seemed his Will
And Death's deep falsity has mastered Life.
All grew a play of Chance simulating Fate.

“A secret air of pure felicity
Deep like a sapphire heaven our spirits breathe;
Our hearts and bodies feel its obscure call,
Our senses grope for it and touch and lose.
If this withdrew, the world would sink in the Void;
If this were not, nothing could move or live.

A hidden Bliss is at the root of things.
A mute Delight regards Time's countless works:
To house God's joy in things Space gave wide room,
To house God's joy in self our souls were born.
This universe an old enchantment guards;
Its objects are carved cups of World-Delight
Whose charmed wine is some deep soul's rapture-drink:
The All-Wonderful has packed heaven with his dreams,
He has made blank ancient Space his marvel-house;
He spilled his spirit into Matter's signs:
His fires of grandeur burn in the great sun,
He glides through heaven shimmering in the moon;
He is beauty carolling in the fields of sound;
He chants the stanzas of the odes of Wind;
He is silence watching in the stars at night;
He wakes at dawn and calls from every bough,
Lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree.
Even in this labour and dolour of Ignorance,
On the hard perilous ground of difficult earth,
In spite of death and evil circumstance
A will to live persists, a joy to be.
There is a joy in all that meets the sense,
A joy in all experience of the soul,
A joy in evil and a joy in good,
A joy in virtue and a joy in sin:
Indifferent to the threat of Karmic law,
Joy dares to grow upon forbidden soil,
Its sap runs through the plant and flowers of Pain:
It thrills with the drama of fate and tragic doom,
It tears its food from sorrow and ecstasy,
On danger and difficulty whets its strength;
It wallows with the reptile and the worm
And lifts its head, an equal of the stars;
It shares the faeries' dance, dines with the gnome:
It basks in the light and heat of many suns,
The sun of Beauty and the sun of Power

Flatter and foster it with golden beams;
It grows towards the Titan and the God.
On earth it lingers drinking its deep fill,
Through the symbol of her pleasure and her pain,
Of the grapes of Heaven and the flowers of the Abyss,
Of the flame-stabs and the torment-craft of Hell
And dim fragments of the glory of Paradise.
In the small paltry pleasures of man's life,
In his petty passions and joys it finds a taste,
A taste in tears and torture of broken hearts,
In the crown of gold and in the crown of thorns,
In life's nectar of sweetness and its bitter wine.
All being it explores for unknown bliss,
Sounds all experience for things new and strange.
Life brings into the earthly creature's days
A tongue of glory from a brighter sphere:
It deepens in his musings and his Art,
It leaps at the splendour of some perfect word,
It exults in his high resolves and noble deeds,
Wanders in his errors, dares the abyss's brink,
It climbs in his climbings, wallows in his fall.
Angel and demon brides his chamber share,
Possessors or competitors for life's heart.
To the enjoyer of the cosmic scene
His greatness and his littleness equal are,
His magnanimity and meanness hues
Cast on some neutral background of the gods:
The Artist's skill he admires who planned it all.
But not for ever endures this danger game:
Beyond the earth, but meant for delivered earth,
Wisdom and joy prepare their perfect crown;
Truth superhuman calls to thinking man.
At last the soul turns to eternal things,
In every shrine it cries for the clasp of God.
Then is there played the crowning Mystery,
Then is achieved the longed-for miracle.

Immortal Bliss her wide celestial eyes
Opens on the stars, she stirs her mighty limbs;
Time thrills to the sapphics of her amour-song
And Space fills with a white beatitude.
Then leaving to its grief the human heart,
Abandoning speech and the name-determined realms,
Through a gleaming far-seen sky of wordless thought,
Through naked thought-free heavens of absolute sight,
She climbs to the summits where the unborn Idea
Remembering the future that must be
Looks down upon the works of labouring Force,
Immutable above the world it made.
In the vast golden laughter of Truth's sun
Like a great heaven-bird on a motionless sea
Is poised her winged ardour of creative joy
On the still deep of the Eternal's peace.
This was the aim, this the supernal Law,
Nature's allotted task when beauty-drenched
In dim mist-waters of inconscient sleep,
Out of the Void this grand creation rose,—
For this the Spirit came into the Abyss
And charged with its power Matter's unknowing force,
In Night's bare session to cathedral Light,
In Death's realm repatriate immortality.
A mystic slow transfiguration works.
All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his cloister's door

Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death:
When unity is won, when strife is lost
And all is known and all is clasped by Love
Who would turn back to ignorance and pain?

“O Death, I have triumphed over thee within;
I quiver no more with the assault of grief;
A mighty calmness seated deep within
Has occupied my body and my sense:
It takes the world’s grief and transmutes to strength,
It makes the world’s joy one with the joy of God.
My love eternal sits throned on God’s calm;
For Love must soar beyond the very heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable;
It must change its human ways to ways divine,
Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss.
O Death, not for my heart’s sweet poignancy
Nor for my happy body’s bliss alone
I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,
But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.
Our lives are God’s messengers beneath the stars;
To dwell under death’s shadow they have come
Tempting God’s light to earth for the ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in men’s hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.
For I, the woman, am the force of God,
He the Eternal’s delegate soul in man.
My will is greater than thy law, O Death;
My love is stronger than the bonds of Fate:
Our love is the heavenly seal of the Supreme.
I guard that seal against thy rending hands.
Love must not cease to live upon the earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent’s angel here;
Love is man’s lien on the Absolute.”
But to the woman Death the god replied,

With the ironic laughter of his voice
Discouraging the labour of the stars:
“Even so men cheat the Truth with splendid thoughts.
Thus wilt thou hire the glorious charlatan, Mind,
To weave from his Ideal’s gossamer air
A fine raiment for thy body’s nude desires
And thy heart’s clutching greedy passion clothe?
Daub not the web of life with magic hues:
Make rather thy thought a plain and faithful glass
Reflecting Matter and mortality,
And know thy soul a product of the flesh,
A made-up self in a constructed world.
Thy words are large murmurs in a mystic dream.
For how in the soiled heart of man could dwell
The immaculate grandeur of thy dream-built God,
Or who can see a face and form divine
In the naked two-legged worm thou callest man?
O human face, put off mind-painted masks:
The animal be, the worm that Nature meant;
Accept thy futile birth, thy narrow life.
For truth is bare like stone and hard like death;
Bare in the bareness, hard with truth’s hardness live.”
But Savitri replied to the dire God:
“Yes, I am human. Yet shall man by me,
Since in humanity waits his hour the God,
Trample thee down to reach the immortal heights,
Transcending grief and pain and fate and death.
Yes, my humanity is a mask of God:
He dwells in me, the mover of my acts,
Turning the great wheel of his cosmic work.
I am the living body of his light,
I am the thinking instrument of his power,
I incarnate Wisdom in an earthly breast,
I am his conquering and unslayable will.
The formless Spirit drew in me its shape;
In me are the Nameless and the secret Name.”

Death from the incredulous Darkness sent its cry:
“O priestess in Imagination’s house,
Persuade first Nature’s fixed immutable laws
And make the impossible thy daily work.
How canst thou force to wed two eternal foes?
Irreconcilable in their embrace
They cancel the glory of their pure extremes:
An unhappy wedlock maims their stunted force.
How shall thy will make one the true and false?
Where Matter is all, there Spirit is a dream:
If all are the Spirit, Matter is a lie,
And who was the liar who forged the universe?
The Real with the unreal cannot mate.
He who would turn to God, must leave the world;
He who would live in the Spirit, must give up life;
He who has met the Self, renounces self.
The voyagers of the million routes of mind
Who have travelled through Existence to its end,
Sages exploring the world-ocean’s vasts,
Have found extinction the sole harbour safe.
Two only are the doors of man’s escape,
Death of his body Matter’s gate to peace,
Death of his soul his last felicity.
In me all take refuge, for I, Death, am God.”
But Savitri replied to mighty Death:
“My heart is wiser than the Reason’s thoughts,
My heart is stronger than thy bonds, O Death.
It sees and feels the one Heart beat in all,
It feels the high Transcendent’s sunlike hands,
It sees the cosmic Spirit at its work;
In the dim Night it lies alone with God.
My heart’s strength can carry the grief of the universe
And never falter from its luminous track,
Its white tremendous orbit through God’s peace.
It can drink up the sea of All-Delight
And never lose the white spiritual touch,

The calm that broods in the deep Infinite.”
He said, “Art thou indeed so strong, O heart,
O soul, so free? And canst thou gather then
Bright pleasure from my wayside flowering boughs,
Yet falter not from thy hard journey’s goal,
Meet the world’s dangerous touch and never fall?
Show me thy strength and freedom from my laws.”
But Savitri answered, “Surely I shall find
Among the green and whispering woods of Life
Close-bosomed pleasures, only mine since his,
Or mine for him, because our joys are one.
And if I linger, Time is ours and God’s,
And if I fall, is not his hand near mine?
All is a single plan; each wayside act
Deepens the soul’s response, brings nearer the goal.”
Death the contemptuous Nihil answered her:
“So prove thy absolute force to the wise gods,
By choosing earthly joy! For self demand
And yet from self and its gross masks live free.
Then will I give thee all thy soul desires,
All the brief joys earth keeps for mortal hearts.
Only the one dearest wish that outweighs all,
Hard laws forbid and thy ironic fate.
My will once wrought remains unchanged through Time,
And Satyavan can never again be thine.”
But Savitri replied to the vague Power:
“If the eyes of Darkness can look straight at Truth,
Look in my heart and, knowing what I am,
Give what thou wilt or what thou must, O Death.
Nothing I claim but Satyavan alone.”
There was a hush as if of doubtful fates.
As one disdainful still who yields a point
Death bowed his sovereign head in cold assent:
“I give to thee, saved from death and poignant fate
Whatever once the living Satyavan
Desired in his heart for Savitri.

Bright noons I give thee and unwounded dawns,
Daughters of thy own shape in heart and mind,
Fair hero sons and sweetness undisturbed
Of union with thy husband dear and true.
And thou shalt harvest in thy joyful house
Felicity of thy surrounded eyes.

Love shall bind by thee many gathered hearts.
The opposite sweetness in thy days shall meet
Of tender service to thy life's desired
And loving empire over all thy loved,
Two poles of bliss made one, O Savitri.
Return, O child, to thy forsaken earth.”

But Savitri replied, “Thy gifts resist.
Earth cannot flower if lonely I return.”
Then Death sent forth once more his angry cry,
As chides a lion his escaping prey:
“What knowst thou of earth's rich and changing life
Who thinkst that one man dead all joy must cease?
Hope not to be unhappy till the end:
For grief dies soon in the tired human heart;
Soon other guests the empty chambers fill.
A transient painting on a holiday's floor
Traced for a moment's beauty love was made.
Or if a voyager on the eternal trail,
Its objects fluent change in its embrace
Like waves to a swimmer upon infinite seas.”

But Savitri replied to the vague god,
“Give me back Satyavan, my only lord.
Thy thoughts are vacant to my soul that feels
The deep eternal truth in transient things.”

Death answered her, “Return and try thy soul!
Soon shalt thou find appeased that other men
On lavish earth have beauty, strength and truth,
And when thou hast half forgotten, one of these
Shall wind himself around thy heart that needs
Some human answering heart against thy breast;

For who, being mortal, can dwell glad alone?
Then Satyavan shall glide into the past,
A gentle memory pushed away from thee
By new love and thy children's tender hands,
Till thou shalt wonder if thou lov'dst at all.
Such is the life earth's travail has conceived,
A constant stream that never is the same."

But Savitri replied to mighty Death:

"O dark ironic critic of God's work,
Thou mockst the mind and body's faltering search
For what the heart holds in a prophet hour
And the immortal spirit shall make its own.
Mine is a heart that worshipped, though forsaken,
The image of the god its love adored;
I have burned in flame to travel in his steps.
Are we not they who bore vast solitude
Seated upon the hills alone with God?
Why dost thou vainly strive with me, O Death,
A mind delivered from all twilight thoughts,
To whom the secrets of the gods are plain?
For now at last I know beyond all doubt,
The great stars burn with my unceasing fire
And life and death are both its fuel made.
Life only was my blind attempt to love:
Earth saw my struggle, heaven my victory;
All shall be seized, transcended; there shall kiss
Casting their veils before the marriage fire
The eternal bridegroom and eternal bride.
The heavens accept our broken flights at last.
On our life's prow that breaks the waves of Time
No signal light of hope has gleamed in vain."

She spoke; the boundless members of the god
As if by secret ecstasy assailed,
Shuddered in silence as obscurely stir
Ocean's dim fields delivered to the moon.
Then lifted up as by a sudden wind

Around her in that vague and glimmering world
The twilight trembled like a bursting veil.

Thus with armed speech the great opponents strove.
Around those spirits in the glittering mist
A deepening half-light fled with pearly wings
As if to reach some far ideal Morn.
Outlined her thoughts flew through the gleaming haze
Mingling bright-pinioned with its lights and veils
And all her words like dazzling jewels were caught
Into the glow of a mysterious world,
Or tricked in the rainbow shifting of its hues
Like echoes swam fainting into far sound.
All utterance, all mood must there become
An unenduring tissue sewn by mind
To make a gossamer robe of beautiful change.
Intent upon her silent will she walked
On the dim grass of vague unreal plains,
A floating veil of visions in her front,
A trailing robe of dreams behind her feet.
But now her spirit's flame of conscient force
Retiring from a sweetness without fruit
Called back her thoughts from speech to sit within
In a deep room in meditation's house.
For only there could dwell the soul's firm truth:
Imperishable, a tongue of sacrifice,
It flamed unquenched upon the central hearth
Where burns for the high houselord and his mate
The homestead's sentinel and witness fire
From which the altars of the gods are lit.
All still compelled went gliding on unchanged,
Still was the order of these worlds reversed:
The mortal led, the god and spirit obeyed
And she behind was leader of their march
And they in front were followers of her will.
Onward they journeyed through the drifting ways
Vaguely companioned by the glimmering mists.

But faster now all fled as if perturbed
Escaping from the clearness of her soul.
A heaven-bird upon jewelled wings of wind
Borne like a coloured and embosomed fire,
By spirits carried in a pearl-hued cave,
On through the enchanted dimness moved her soul.
Death walked in front of her and Satyavan,
In the dark front of Death, a failing star.
Above was the unseen balance of his fate.

END OF CANTO THREE

Canto Four

The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real

THERE came a slope that slowly downward sank;
It slipped towards a stumbling grey descent.
The dim-heart marvel of the ideal was lost;
Its crowding wonder of bright delicate dreams
And vague half-limned sublimities she had left:
Thought fell towards lower levels; hard and tense
It passioned for some crude reality.
The twilight floated still but changed its hues
And heavily swathed a less delightful dream;
It settled in tired masses on the air;
Its symbol colours tuned with duller reds
And almost seemed a lurid mist of day.
A straining taut and dire besieged her heart;
Heavy her sense grew with a dangerous load,
And sadder, greater sounds were in her ears,
And through stern breakings of the lambent glare
Her vision caught a hurry of driving plains
And cloudy mountains and wide tawny streams,
And cities climbed in minarets and towers
Towards an unavailing changeless sky:
Long quays and ghauts and harbours white with sails
Challenged her sight awhile and then were gone.
Amidst them travailed toiling multitudes
In ever shifting perishable groups,
A foiled cinema of lit shadowy shapes
Envolved in the grey mantle of a dream.
Imagining meanings in life's heavy drift,
They trusted in the uncertain environment
And waited for death to change their spirit's scene.
A savage din of labour and a tramp
Of armoured life and the monotonous hum

Of thoughts and acts that ever were the same,
As if the dull reiterated drone
Of a great brute machine, beset her soul,—
A grey dissatisfied rumour like a ghost
Of the moaning of a loud unquiet sea.
A huge inhuman cyclopean voice,
A Babel-builders' song towering to heaven,
A throb of engines and the clang of tools
Brought the deep undertone of labour's pain.
As when pale lightnings tear a tortured sky,
High overhead a cloud-rimmed series flared
Chasing like smoke from a red funnel driven,
The forced creations of an ignorant Mind:
Drifting she saw like pictured fragments flee
Phantoms of human thought and baffled hopes,
The shapes of Nature and the arts of man,
Philosophies and disciplines and laws,
And the dead spirit of old societies,
Constructions of the Titan and the worm.
As if lost remnants of forgotten light,
Before her mind there fled with trailing wings
Dimmed revelations and delivering words,
Emptied of their mission and their strength to save,
The messages of the evangelist gods,
Voices of prophets, scripts of vanishing creeds.
Each in its hour eternal claimed went by:
Ideals, systems, sciences, poems, crafts
Tireless there perished and again recurred,
Sought restlessly by some creative Power;
But all were dreams crossing an empty vast.
Ascetic voices called of lonely seers
On mountain summits or by river banks
Or from the desolate heart of forest glades
Seeking heaven's rest or the spirit's worldless peace,
Or in bodies motionless like statues, fixed
In tranced cessations of their sleepless thought

Sat sleeping souls, and this too was a dream.
All things the past has made and slain were there,
Its lost forgotten forms that once had lived,
And all the present loves as new-revealed
And all the hopes the future brings had failed
Already, caught and spent in efforts vain,
Repeated fruitlessly age after age.
Unwearied all returned insisting still
Because of joy in the anguish of pursuit
And joy to labour and to win and lose
And joy to create and keep and joy to kill.
The rolling cycles passed and came again,
Brought the same toils and the same barren end,
Forms ever new and ever old, the long
Appalling revolutions of the world.

Once more arose the great destroying Voice:
Across the fruitless labour of the worlds
His huge denial's all-defeating might
Pursued the ignorant march of dolorous Time.
“Behold the figures of this symbol realm,
Its solid outlines of creative dream
Inspiring the great concrete tasks of earth.
In its motion-parable of human life
Here thou canst trace the outcome Nature gives
To the sin of being and the error in things
And the desire that compels to live
And man's incurable malady of hope.
In an immutable order's hierarchy
Where Nature changes not, man cannot change:
Ever he obeys her fixed mutation's law;
In a new version of her oft-told tale
In ever-wheeling cycles turns the race.
His mind is pent in circling boundaries:
For mind is man, beyond thought he cannot soar.
If he could leave his limits he would be safe:

He sees but cannot mount to his greater heavens;
Even winged, he sinks back to his native soil.
He is a captive in his net of mind
And beats soul-wings against the walls of life.
In vain his heart lifts up its yearning prayer,
Peopling with brilliant Gods the formless Void;
Then disappointed to the Void he turns
And in its happy nothingness asks release,
The calm Nirvana of his dream of self:
The Word in silence ends, in Nought the name.
Apart amid the mortal multitudes,
He calls the Godhead incommunicable
To be the lover of his lonely soul
Or casts his spirit into its void embrace.
Or he finds his copy in the impartial All;
He imparts to the Immobile his own will,
Attributes to the Eternal wrath and love
And to the Ineffable lends a thousand names.
Hope not to call God down into his life.
How shalt thou bring the Everlasting here?
There is no house for him in hurrying Time.
Vainly thou seekst in Matter's world an aim;
No aim is there, only a will to be.
All walk by Nature bound for ever the same.
Look on these forms that stay awhile and pass,
These lives that long and strive, then are no more,
These structures that have no abiding truth,
The saviour creeds that cannot save themselves,
But perish in the strangling hands of the years,
Discarded from man's thought, proved false by Time,
Philosophies that strip all problems bare
But nothing ever have solved since earth began,
And sciences omnipotent in vain
By which men learn of what the suns are made,
Transform all forms to serve their outward needs,
Ride through the sky and sail beneath the sea,

But learn not what they are or why they came;
These polities, architectures of man's brain,
That, bricked with evil and good, wall in man's spirit
And, fissured houses, palace at once and jail,
Rot while they reign and crumble before they crash;
These revolutions, demon or drunken god,
Convulsing the wounded body of mankind
Only to paint in new colours an old face;
These wars, carnage triumphant, ruin gone mad,
The work of centuries vanishing in an hour,
The blood of the vanquished and the victor's crown
Which men to be born must pay for with their pain,
The hero's face divine on satyr's limbs,
The demon's grandeur mixed with the demigod's,
The glory and the beasthood and the shame;
Why is it all, the labour and the din,
The transient joys, the timeless sea of tears,
The longing and the hoping and the cry,
The battle and the victory and the fall,
The aimless journey that can never pause,
The waking toil, the incoherent sleep,
Song, shouts and weeping, wisdom and idle words,
The laughter of men, the irony of the gods?
Where leads the march, whither the pilgrimage?
Who keeps the map of the route or planned each stage?
Or else self-moved the world walks its own way,
Or nothing is there but only a Mind that dreams:
The world is a myth that happened to come true,
A legend told to itself by conscious Mind,
Imaged and played on a feigned Matter's ground
On which it stands in an unsubstantial Vast.
Mind is the author, spectator, actor, stage:
Mind only is and what it thinks is seen.
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of bliss;
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of Truth.
For Mind can never touch the body of Truth

And Mind can never see the soul of God;
Only his shadow it grasps nor hears his laugh
As it turns from him to the vain seeming of things.
Mind is a tissue woven of light and shade
Where right and wrong have sewn their mingled parts;
Or Mind is Nature's marriage of convenience
Between truth and falsehood, between joy and pain:
This struggling pair no court can separate.
Each thought is a gold coin with bright alloy
And error and truth are its obverse and reverse:
This is the imperial mintage of the brain
And of this kind is all its currency.
Think not to plant on earth the living Truth
Or make of Matter's world the home of God;
Truth comes not there but only the thought of Truth,
God is not there but only the name of God.
If Self there is it is bodiless and unborn;
It is no one and it is possessed by none.
On what shalt thou then build thy happy world?
Cast off thy life and mind, then art thou Self,
An all-seeing omnipresence stark, alone.
If God there is he cares not for the world;
All things he sees with calm indifferent gaze,
He has doomed all hearts to sorrow and desire,
He has bound all life with his implacable laws;
He answers not the ignorant voice of prayer.
Eternal while the ages toil beneath,
Unmoved, untouched by aught that he has made,
He sees as minute details mid the stars
The animal's agony and the fate of man:
Immeasurably wise, he exceeds thy thought;
His solitary joy needs not thy love.
His truth in human thinking cannot dwell:
If thou desirest Truth, then still thy mind
For ever, slain by the dumb unseen Light.
Immortal bliss lives not in human air:

How shall the mighty Mother her calm delight
Keep fragrant in this narrow fragile vase,
Or lodge her sweet unbroken ecstasy
In hearts which earthly sorrow can assail
And bodies careless Death can slay at will?
Dream not to change the world that God has planned,
Strive not to alter his eternal law.
If heavens there are whose gates are shut to grief,
There seek the joy thou couldst not find on earth;
Or in the imperishable hemisphere
Where Light is native and Delight is king
And Spirit is the deathless ground of things,
Choose thy high station, child of Eternity.
If thou art Spirit and Nature is thy robe,
Cast off thy garb and be thy naked self
Immutable in its undying truth,
Alone for ever in the mute Alone.
Turn then to God, for him leave all behind;
Forgetting love, forgetting Satyavan,
Annul thyself in his immobile peace.
O soul, drown in his still beatitude.
For thou must die to thyself to reach God's height:
I, Death, am the gate of immortality.”
But Savitri answered to the sophist God:
“Once more wilt thou call Light to blind Truth's eyes,
Make Knowledge a catch of the snare of Ignorance
And the Word a dart to slay my living soul?
Offer, O King, thy boons to tired spirits
And hearts that could not bear the wounds of Time,
Let those who were tied to body and to mind,
Tear off those bonds and flee into white calm
Crying for a refuge from the play of God.
Surely thy boons are great since thou art He!
But how shall I seek rest in endless peace
Who house the mighty Mother's violent force,
Her vision turned to read the enigmaed world,

Her will tempered in the blaze of Wisdom's sun
And the flaming silence of her heart of love?
The world is a spiritual paradox
Invented by a need in the Unseen,
A poor translation to the creature's sense
Of That which for ever exceeds idea and speech,
A symbol of what can never be symbolised,
A language mispronounced, misspelt, yet true.
Its powers have come from the eternal heights
And plunged into the inconscient dim Abyss
And risen from it to do their marvellous work.
The soul is a figure of the Unmanifest,
The mind labours to think the Unthinkable,
The life to call the Immortal into birth,
The body to enshrine the Illimitable.
The world is not cut off from Truth and God.
In vain thou hast dug the dark unbridgeable gulf,
In vain thou hast built the blind and doorless wall:
Man's soul crosses through thee to Paradise,
Heaven's sun forces its way through death and night;
Its light is seen upon our being's verge.
My mind is a torch lit from the eternal sun,
My life a breath drawn by the immortal Guest,
My mortal body is the Eternal's house.
Already the torch becomes the undying ray,
Already the life is the Immortal's force,
The house grows of the householder part and one.
How sayst thou Truth can never light the human mind
And Bliss can never invade the mortal's heart
Or God descend into the world he made?
If in the meaningless Void creation rose,
If from a bodiless Force Matter was born,
If Life could climb in the unconscious tree,
Its green delight break into emerald leaves
And its laughter of beauty blossom in the flower,
If sense could wake in tissue, nerve and cell

And Thought seize the grey matter of the brain,
And soul peep from its secrecy through the flesh,
How shall the nameless Light not leap on men,
And unknown powers emerge from Nature's sleep?
Even now hints of a luminous Truth like stars
Arise in the mind-mooned splendour of Ignorance;
Even now the deathless Lover's touch we feel:
If the chamber's door is even a little ajar,
What then can hinder God from stealing in
Or who forbid his kiss on the sleeping soul?
Already God is near, the Truth is close:
Because the dark atheist body knows him not,
Must the sage deny the Light, the seer his soul?
I am not bound by thought or sense or shape;
I live in the glory of the Infinite,
I am near to the Nameless and Unknowable,
The Ineffable is now my household mate.
But standing on Eternity's luminous brink
I have discovered that the world was He;
I have met Spirit with spirit, Self with self,
But I have loved too the body of my God.
I have pursued him in his earthly form.
A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all."

Then rang again a deeper cry of Death.
As if beneath its weight of sterile law
Oppressed by its own obstinate meaningless will,
Disdainful, weary and compassionate,
It kept no more its old intolerant sound,
But seemed like life's in her unnumbered paths
Toiling for ever and achieving nought
Because of birth and change, her mortal powers
By which she lasts, around the term-posts fixed

Turning of a wide circling aimless race
Whose course for ever speeds and is the same.
In its long play with Fate and Chance and Time
Assured of the game's vanity lost or won,
Crushed by its load of ignorance and doubt
Which knowledge seems to increase and growth to enlarge,
The earth-mind sinks and it despairs and looks
Old, weary and discouraged on its work.
Yet was all nothing then or vainly achieved?
Some great thing has been done, some light, some power
Delivered from the huge Inconscient's grasp:
It has emerged from night; it sees its dawns
Circling for ever though no dawn can stay.
This change was in the godhead's far-flung voice;
His form of dread was altered and admitted
Our transient effort at eternity,
Yet flung vast doubts of what might else have been
On grandiose hints of an impossible day.
The great voice surging cried to Savitri:
"Because thou knowst the wisdom that transcends
Both veil of forms and the contempt of forms,
Arise delivered by the seeing gods.
If free thou hadst kept thy mind from life's fierce stress,
Thou mightst have been like them omniscient, calm.
But the violent and passionate heart forbids.
It is the storm bird of an anarch Power
That would upheave the world and tear from it
The indecipherable scroll of Fate,
Death's rule and Law and the unknowable Will.
Hasteners to action, violators of God
Are these great spirits who have too much love,
And they who formed like thee, for both art thou,
Have come into the narrow bounds of life
With too large natures overleaping time.
Worshippers of force who know not her recoil,
Their giant wills compel the troubled years.

The wise are tranquil; silent the great hills
Rise ceaselessly towards their unreached sky,
Seated on their unchanging base, their heads
Dreamless in heaven's immutable domain.
On their aspiring tops, sublime and still,
Lifting half-way to heaven the climbing soul
The mighty mediators stand content
To watch the revolutions of the stars:
Motionlessly moving with the might of earth,
They see the ages pass and are the same.
The wise think with the cycles, they hear the tread
Of far-off things; patient, unmoved they keep
Their dangerous wisdom in their depths restrained,
Lest man's frail days into the unknown should sink
Dragged like a ship by bound leviathan
Into the abyss of his stupendous seas.
Lo, how all shakes when the gods tread too near!
All moves, is in peril, anguished, torn, upheaved.
The hurrying aeons would stumble on too swift
If strength from heaven surprised the imperfect earth
And veilless knowledge smote these unfit souls.
The deities have screened their dreadful power:
God hides his thought and, even, he seems to err.
Be still and tardy in the slow wise world.
Mighty art thou with the dread goddess filled,
To whom thou criedst at dawn in the dim woods.
Use not thy strength like the wild Titan souls!
Touch not the seated lines, the ancient laws,
Respect the calm of great established things.”
But Savitri replied to the huge god:
“What is the calm thou vauntst, O Law, O Death?
Is it not the dull-visioned tread inert
Of monstrous energies chained in a stark round
Soulless and stone-eyed with mechanic dreams?
Vain the soul's hope if changeless Law is all:
Ever to the new and the unknown press on

The speeding aeons justifying God.
What were earth's ages if the grey restraint
Were never broken and glories sprang not forth
Bursting their obscure seed, while man's slow life
Leaped hurried into sudden splendid paths
By divine words and human gods revealed?
Impose not upon sentient minds and hearts
The dull fixity that binds inanimate things.
Well is the unconscious rule for the animal breeds
Content to live beneath the immutable yoke;
Man turns to a nobler walk, a master path.
I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born.
If I am mighty let my force be unveiled
Equal companion of the dateless powers,
Or else let my frustrated soul sink down
Unworthy of Godhead in the original sleep.
I claim from Time my will's eternity,
God from his moments." Death replied to her,
"Why should the noble and immortal will
Stoop to the petty works of transient earth,
Freedom forgotten and the Eternal's path?
Or is this the high use of strength and thought,
To struggle with the bonds of death and time
And spend the labour that might earn the gods
And battle and bear agony of wounds
To grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard
In her small treasure-chest of passing things?
Child, hast thou trodden the gods beneath thy feet
Only to win poor shreds of earthly life
For him thou lov'st cancelling the grand release,
Keeping from early rapture of the heavens
His soul the lenient deities have called?
Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?"
She answered, "Straight I trample on the road
The strong hand hewed for me which planned our paths.

I run where his sweet dreadful voice commands
And I am driven by the reins of God.
Why drew he wide his scheme of mighty worlds
Or filled infinity with his passionate breath?
Or wherefore did he build my mortal form
And sow in me his bright and proud desires,
If not to achieve, to flower in me, to love,
Carving his human image richly shaped
In thoughts and largenesses and golden powers?
Far Heaven can wait our coming in its calm.
Easy the heavens were to build for God.
Earth was his difficult matter, earth the glory
Gave of the problem and the race and strife.
There are the ominous masks, the terrible powers;
There it is greatness to create the gods.
Is not the spirit immortal and absolved
Always, delivered from the grasp of Time?
Why came it down into the mortal's Space?
A charge he gave to his high spirit in man
And wrote a hidden decree on Nature's tops.
Freedom is this with ever seated soul,
Large in life's limits, strong in Matter's knots,
Building great stuff of action from the worlds
To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands
And love and beauty out of war and night,
The wager wonderful, the game divine.
What liberty has the soul which feels not free
Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds
The Lover winds around his playmate's limbs,
Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?
To seize him better with her boundless heart
She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,
Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands
And laughs in his rich constraints, most bound, most free.
This is my answer to thy lures, O Death."

Immutable, Death's denial met her cry:
"However mighty, whatever thy secret name
Uttered in hidden conclaves of the gods,
Thy heart's ephemeral passion cannot break
The iron rampart of accomplished things
With which the great Gods fence their camp in Space.
Whoever thou art behind thy human mask,
Even if thou art the Mother of the worlds
And pegst thy claim upon the realms of Chance,
The cosmic Law is greater than thy will.
Even God himself obeys the Laws he made:
The Law abides and never can it change,
The Person is a bubble on Time's sea.
A forerunner of a greater Truth to come,
Thy soul creator of its freer Law,
Vaunting a Force behind on which it leans,
A Light above which none but thou hast seen,
Thou claimst the first fruits of Truth's victory.
But what is Truth and who can find her form
Amid the specious images of sense,
Amid the crowding guesses of the mind
And the dark ambiguities of a world
Peopled with the incertitudes of Thought?
For where is Truth and when was her footfall heard
Amid the endless clamour of Time's mart
And which is her voice amid the thousand cries
That cross the listening brain and cheat the soul?
Or is Truth aught but a high starry name
Or a vague and splendid word by which man's thought
Sanctions and consecrates his nature's choice,
The heart's wish donning knowledge as its robe,
The cherished idea elect among the elect,
Thought's favourite mid the children of half-light
Who high-voiced crowd the playgrounds of the mind
Or people its dormitories in infant sleep?
All things hang here between God's yes and no,

Two Powers real but to each other untrue,
Two consort stars in the mooned night of mind
That towards two opposite horizons gaze,
The white head and black tail of the mystic drake,
The swift and the lame foot, wing strong, wing broken
Sustaining the body of the uncertain world,
A great surreal dragon in the skies.
Too dangerously thy high proud truth must live
Entangled in Matter's mortal littleness.
All in this world is true, yet all is false:
Its thoughts into an eternal cipher run,
Its deeds swell to Time's rounded zero sum.
Thus man at once is animal and god,
A disparate enigma of God's make
Unable to free the Godhead's form within,
A being less than himself, yet something more,
The aspiring animal, the frustrate god
Yet neither beast nor deity but man,
But man tied to the kind earth's labour strives to exceed
Climbing the stairs of God to higher things.
Objects are seemings and none knows their truth,
Ideas are guesses of an ignorant god.
Truth has no home in earth's irrational breast:
Yet without reason life is a tangle of dreams,
But reason is poised above a dim abyss
And stands at last upon a plank of doubt.
Eternal truth lives not with mortal men.
Or if she dwells within thy mortal heart,
Show me the body of the living Truth
Or draw for me the outline of her face
That I too may obey and worship her.
Then will I give thee back thy Satyavan.
But here are only facts and steel-bound Law.
This truth I know that Satyavan is dead
And even thy sweetness cannot lure him back.
No magic Truth can bring the dead to life,

No power of earth cancel the thing once done,
No joy of the heart can last surviving death,
No bliss persuade the past to live again.
But Life alone can solace the mute Void
And fill with thought the emptiness of Time.
Leave then thy dead, O Savitri, and live.”
The Woman answered to the mighty Shade,
And as she spoke, mortality disappeared;
Her Goddess self grew visible in her eyes,
Light came, a dream of heaven, into her face.
“O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,
But only his own black shadow on his path
As leaving the Night he takes the upward Way
And drags with him its clinging inconscient Force.
Of God unconscious thou art the dark head,
Of his Ignorance thou art the impenitent sign,
Of its vast tenebrous womb the natural child,
On his immortality the sinister bar.
All contraries are aspects of God’s face.
The Many are the innumerable One,
The One carries the multitude in his breast;
He is the Impersonal, inscrutable, sole,
He is the one infinite Person seeing his world;
The Silence bears the Eternal’s great dumb seal,
His light inspires the eternal Word;
He is the Immobile’s deep and deathless hush,
Its white and signless blank negating calm,
Yet stands the creator Self, the almighty Lord
And watches his will done by the forms of Gods
And the desire that goads half-conscious man
And the reluctant and unseeing Night.
These wide divine extremes, these inverse powers
Are the right and left side of the body of God;
Existence balanced twixt two mighty arms
Confronts the mind with unsolved abysses of Thought.
Darkness below, a fathomless Light above,

In Light are joined, but sundered by severing Mind
Stand face to face, opposite, inseparable,
Two contraries needed for his great World-task,
Two poles whose currents wake the immense World-Force.
In the stupendous secrecy of his Self,
Above the world brooding with equal wings,
He is both in one, beginningless, without end:
Transcending both, he enters the Absolute.
His being is a mystery beyond mind,
His ways bewilder mortal ignorance;
The finite in its little sections parked,
Amazed, credits not God's audacity
Who dares to be the unimagined All
And see and act as might one Infinite.
Against human reason this is his offence,
Being known to be for ever unknowable,
To be all and yet transcend the mystic whole,
Absolute, to lodge in a relative world of Time,
Eternal and all-knowing, to suffer birth,
Omnipotent, to sport with Chance and Fate,
Spirit, yet to be Matter and the Void,
Illimitable, beyond form or name,
To dwell within a body, one and supreme
To be animal and human and divine:
A still deep sea, he laughs in rolling waves;
Universal, he is all,— transcendent, none.
To man's righteousness this is his cosmic crime,
Almighty beyond good and evil to dwell
Leaving the good to their fate in a wicked world
And evil to reign in this enormous scene.
All opposition seems and strife and chance,
An aimless labour with but scanty sense,
To eyes that see a part and miss the whole;
The surface men scan, the depths refuse their search:
A hybrid mystery challenges the view,
Or a discouraging sordid miracle.

Yet in the exact Inconscient's stark conceit,
In the casual error of the world's ignorance
A plan, a hidden Intelligence is glimpsed.
There is a purpose in each stumble and fall;
Nature's most careless lolling is a pose
Preparing some forward step, some deep result.
Ingenious notes plugged into a motived score,
These million discords dot the harmonious theme
Of the evolution's huge orchestral dance.
A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;
It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,
A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance.
It compelled the suns to burn through silent Space,
Flame-signs of its uncomprehended Thought
In a wide brooding ether's formless muse:
It made of Knowledge a veiled and struggling light,
Of Being a substance nescient, dense and dumb,
Of Bliss the beauty of an insentient world.
In finite things the conscious Infinite dwells:
Involved it sleeps in Matter's helpless trance,
It rules the world from its sleeping senseless Void;
Dreaming it throws out mind and heart and soul
To labour crippled, bound, on the hard earth;
A broken whole it works through scattered points;
Its gleaming shards are Wisdom's diamond thoughts,
Its shadowy reflex our ignorance.
It starts from the mute mass in countless jets,
It fashions a being out of brain and nerve,
A sentient creature from its pleasures and pangs.
A pack of feelings obscure, a dot of sense
Survives awhile answering the shocks of life,
Then, crushed or its force spent, leaves the dead form,
Leaves the huge universe in which it lived
An insignificant unconsidered guest.
But the soul grows concealed within its house;
It gives to the body its strength and magnificence;

It follows aims in an ignorant aimless world,
It lends significance to earth's meaningless life.
A demigod animal, came thinking man;
He wallows in mud, yet heavenward soars in thought;
He plays and ponders, laughs and weeps and dreams,
Satisfies his little longings like the beast;
He pores upon life's book with student eyes.
Out of this tangle of intellect and sense,
Out of the narrow scope of finite thought
At last he wakes into spiritual mind;
A high liberty begins and luminous room:
He glimpses eternity, touches the infinite,
He meets the gods in great and sudden hours,
He feels the universe as his larger self,
Makes Space and Time his opportunity
To join the heights and depths of being in light,
In the heart's cave speaks secretly with God.
But these are touches and high moments lived;
Fragments of Truth supreme have lit his soul,
Reflections of the sun in waters still.
A few have dared the last supreme ascent
And break through borders of blinding light above,
And feel a breath around of mightier air,
Receive a vaster being's messages
And bathe in its immense intuitive Ray.
On summit Mind are radiant altitudes
Exposed to the lustre of Infinity,
Outskirts and dependencies of the house of Truth,
Upraised estates of Mind and measureless.
There man can visit but there he cannot live.
A cosmic Thought spreads out its vastitudes;
Its smallest parts are here philosophies
Challenging with their detailed immensity,
Each figuring an omniscient scheme of things.
But higher still can climb the ascending light;
There are vasts of vision and eternal suns,

Oceans of an immortal luminousness,
Flame-hills assaulting heaven with their peaks,
There dwelling all becomes a blaze of sight;
A burning head of vision leads the mind,
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail;
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer,
And sense is kindled into identity.
A highest flight climbs to a deepest view:
In a wide opening of its native sky
Intuition's lightnings range in a bright pack
Hunting all hidden truths out of their lairs,
Its fiery edge of seeing absolute
Cleaves into locked unknown retreats of self,
Rummages the sky-recesses of the brain,
Lights up the occult chambers of the heart;
Its spear-point ictus of discovery
Pressed on the cover of name, the screen of form,
Strips bare the secret soul of all that is.
Thought there has revelation's sun-bright eyes;
The Word, a mighty and inspiring Voice,
Enters Truth's inmost cabin of privacy
And tears away the veil from God and life.
Then stretches the boundless finite's last expanse,
The cosmic empire of the Overmind,
Time's buffer state bordering Eternity,
Too vast for the experience of man's soul:
All here gathers beneath one golden sky:
The Powers that build the cosmos station take
In its house of infinite possibility;
Each god from there builds his own nature's world;
Ideas are phalanxed like a group of suns,
Each marshalling his company of rays.
Thought crowds in masses seized by one regard;
All Time is one body, Space a single look:
There is the Godhead's universal gaze
And there the boundaries of immortal Mind:

The line that parts and joins the hemispheres
Closes in on the labour of the Gods
Fencing eternity from the toil of Time.
In her glorious kingdom of eternal light
All-ruler, ruled by none, the Truth supreme,
Omnipotent, omniscient and alone,
In a golden country keeps her measureless house;
In its corridor she hears the tread that comes
Out of the Unmanifest never to return
Till the Unknown is known and seen by men.
Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,
Above the silence of the wordless Thought,
Formless creator of immortal forms,
Nameless, invested with the name divine,
Transcending Time's hours, transcending Timelessness,
The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm
And holds the eternal Child upon her knees
Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.
There is the image of our future's hope;
There is the sun for which all darkness waits,
There is the imperishable harmony;
The world's contradictions climb to her and are one:
There is the Truth of which the world's truths are shreds,
The Light of which the world's ignorance is the shade
Till Truth draws back the shade that it has cast,
The Love our hearts call down to heal all strife,
The Bliss for which the world's derelict sorrows yearn:
Thence comes the glory sometimes seen on earth,
The visits of Godhead to the human soul,
The Beauty and the dream on Nature's face.
There the perfection born from eternity
Calls to it the perfection born in Time,
The truth of God surprising human life,
The image of God overtaking finite shapes.
There in a world of everlasting Light,
In the realms of the immortal Supermind

Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
In the stark structure of material form,
Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
Is Nature and the common law of things.
There in a body made of spirit stuff,
The hearth-stone of the everliving Fire,
Action translates the movements of the soul,
Thought steps infallible and absolute
And life is a continual worship's rite,
A sacrifice of rapture to the One.
A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense
Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form
And seen through a quivering ecstasy of light
Discovers the bright face of the Bodiless,
In the truth of a moment, in the moment's soul
Can sip the honey-wine of Eternity.
A Spirit who is no one and innumerable,
The one mystic infinite Person of his world
Multiplies his myriad personality,
On all his bodies seals his divinity's stamp
And sits in each immortal and unique.
The Immobile stands behind each daily act,
A background of the movement and the scene,
Upholding creation on its might and calm
And change on the Immutable's deathless poise.
The Timeless looks out from the travelling hours;
The Ineffable puts on a robe of speech
Where all its words are woven like magic threads
Moving with beauty, inspiring with their gleam,
And every thought takes up its destined place
Recorded in the memory of the world.
The Truth supreme, vast and impersonal
Fits faultlessly the hour and circumstance,
Its substance a pure gold ever the same
But shaped into vessels for the spirit's use,

Its gold becomes the wine jar and the vase.
All there is a supreme epiphany:
The All-Wonderful makes a marvel of each event,
The All-Beautiful is a miracle in each shape;
The All-Blissful smites with rapture the heart's throbs,
A pure celestial joy is the use of sense.
Each being there is a member of the Self,
A portion of the million-thoughted All,
A claimant to the timeless Unity,
The many's sweetness, the joy of difference
Edged with the intimacy of the One.

“But who can show to thee Truth's glorious face?
Our human words can only shadow her.
To thought she is an unthinkable rapture of light,
To speech a marvel inexpressible.
O Death, if thou couldst touch the Truth supreme
Thou wouldst grow suddenly wise and cease to be.
If our souls could see and love and clasp God's Truth,
Its infinite radiance would seize our hearts,
Our being in God's image be remade
And earthly life become the life divine.”
Then Death the last time answered Savitri:
“If Truth supreme transcends her shadow here
Severed by Knowledge and the climbing vasts,
What bridge can cross the gulf that she has left
Between her and the dream-world she has made?
Or who could hope to bring her down to men
And persuade to tread the harsh globe with wounded feet
Leaving her unapproachable glory and bliss,
Wasting her splendour on pale earthly air?
Is thine that strength, O beauty of mortal limbs,
O soul who flutterest to escape my net?
Who then art thou hiding in human guise?
Thy voice carries the sound of infinity,
Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words;
The light of things beyond shines in thy eyes.

But where is thy strength to conquer Time and Death?
Hast thou God's force to build heaven's values here?
For truth and knowledge are an idle gleam
If Knowledge brings not power to change the world,
If Might comes not to give to Truth her right.
A blind Force, not Truth has made this ignorant world,
A blind Force, not Truth orders the lives of men:
By Power, not Light, the great Gods rule the world;
Power is the arm of God, the seal of Fate.
O human claimant to immortality,
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
Show me her face that I may worship her;
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death,
An imperishable Force touching brute things
Transform earth's death into immortal life.
Then can thy dead return to thee and live.
The prostrate earth perhaps shall lift her gaze
And feel near her the secret body of God
And love and joy overtake fleeing Time."

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not.
Almost it seemed as if in his symbol shape
The world's darkness had consented to Heaven-light
And God needed no more the Inconscient's screen.
A mighty transformation came on her.
A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal's lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body's house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea.
In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.
A little figure in infinity
Yet stood and seemed the Eternal's very house,
As if the world's centre was her very soul

And all wide space was but its outer robe.
A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
Descending into earth's humility,
Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.
The Power that from her being's summit reigned,
The Presence chambered in lotus secrecy,
Came down and held the centre in her brow
Where the mind's Lord in his control-room sits;
There throned on concentration's native seat
He opens that third mysterious eye in man,
The Unseen's eye that looks at the unseen,
When Light with a golden ecstasy fills his brain
And the Eternal's wisdom drives his choice
And eternal Will seizes the mortal's will.
It stirred in the lotus of her throat of song,
And in her speech throbbed the immortal Word,
Her life sounded with the steps of the world-soul
Moving in harmony with the cosmic Thought.
As glides God's sun into the mystic cave
Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
It glided into the lotus of her heart
And woke in it the Force that alters Fate.
It poured into her navel's lotus depth,
Lodged in the little life-nature's narrow home,
On the body's longings grew heaven-rapture's flower
And made desire a pure celestial flame,
Broke into the cave where coiled World-Energy sleeps
And smote the thousand-hooded serpent Force
That blazing towered and clasped the World-Self above,
Joined Matter's dumbness to the Spirit's hush
And filled earth's acts with the Spirit's silent power.
Thus changed she waited for the Word to speak.
Eternity looked into the eyes of Death
And Darkness saw God's living Reality.
Then a Voice was heard that seemed the stillness' self

Or the low calm utterance of infinity
When it speaks to the silence in the heart of sleep.
“I hail thee, almighty and victorious Death,
Thou grandiose Darkness of the Infinite.
O Void that makest room for all to be,
Hunger that gnawest at the universe
Consuming the cold remnants of the suns
And eatst the whole world with thy jaws of fire,
Waster of the energy that has made the stars,
Inconscience, carrier of the seeds of thought,
Nescience in which All-Knowledge sleeps entombed
And slowly emerges in its hollow breast
Wearing the mind’s mask of bright Ignorance.
Thou art my shadow and my instrument.
I have given thee thy awful shape of dread
And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain
To force the soul of man to struggle for light
On the brevity of his half-conscious days.
Thou art his spur to greatness in his works,
The whip to his yearning for eternal bliss,
His poignant need of immortality.
Live, Death, awhile, be still my instrument.
One day man too shall know thy fathomless heart
Of silence and the brooding peace of Night
And grave obedience to eternal Law
And the calm inflexible pity in thy gaze.
But now, O timeless Mightiness, stand aside
And leave the path of my incarnate Force.
Relieve the radiant God from thy black mask:
Release the soul of the world called Satyavan
Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance
That he may stand master of life and fate,
Man’s representative in the house of God,
The mate of Wisdom and the spouse of Light,
The eternal bridegroom of the eternal bride.”
She spoke; Death unconvinced resisted still,

Although he knew refusing still to know,
Although he saw refusing still to see.
Unshakable he stood claiming his right.
His spirit bowed; his will obeyed the law
Of its own nature binding even on Gods.
The Two opposed each other face to face.
His being like a huge fort of darkness towered;
Around it her light grew, an ocean's siege.
Awhile the Shade survived defying heaven:
Assailing in front, oppressing from above,
A concrete mass of conscious power, he bore
The tyranny of her divine desire.
A pressure of intolerable force
Weighed on his unbowed head and stubborn breast;
Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze.
Her mastering Word commanded every limb
And left no room for his enormous will
That seemed pushed out into some helpless space
And could no more re-enter but left him void.
He called to Night but she fell shuddering back,
He called to Hell but sullenly it retired:
He turned to the Inconscient for support,
From which he was born, his vast sustaining self;
It drew him back towards boundless vacancy
As if by himself to swallow up himself:
He called to his strength, but it refused his call.
His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.
At last he knew defeat inevitable
And left crumbling the shape that he had worn,
Abandoning hope to make man's soul his prey
And force to be mortal the immortal spirit.
Afar he fled shunning her dreaded touch
And refuge took in the retreating Night.

In the dream twilight of that symbol world
The dire universal Shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the Void from which it came.
As if deprived of its original cause,
The twilight realm passed fading from their souls,
And Satyavan and Savitri were alone.
But neither stirred: between those figures rose
A mute invisible and translucent wall.
In the long blank moment's pause nothing could move:
All waited on the unknown inscrutable Will.

END OF CANTO FOUR
END OF BOOK TEN

BOOK ELEVEN

The Book of Everlasting Day

Canto One

*The Eternal Day: The Soul's Choice
and the Supreme Consummation*

A MARVELOUS sun looked down from ecstasy's skies
On worlds of deathless bliss, perfection's home,
Magical unfoldings of the Eternal's smile
Capturing his secret heart-beats of delight.
God's everlasting day surrounded her,
Domains appeared of sempiternal light
Invading all Nature with the Absolute's joy.
Her body quivered with eternity's touch,
Her soul stood close to the founts of the infinite.
Infinity's finite fronts she lived in, new
For ever to an everliving sight.
Eternity multiplied its vast self-look
Translating its endless mightiness and joy
Into delight souls playing with Time could share
In grandeurs ever new-born from the unknown depths,
In powers that leaped immortal from unknown heights,
In passionate heart-beats of an undying love,
In scenes of a sweetness that can never fade.
Immortal to the rapturous heart and eyes,
In serene arches of translucent calm
From Wonder's dream-vasts cloudless skies slid down
An abyss of sapphire; sunlight visited eyes
Which suffered without pain the absolute ray
And saw immortal clarities of form.
Twilight and mist were exiles from that air,
Night was impossible to such radiant heavens.
Firm in the bosom of immensity
Spiritual breadths were seen, sublimely born
From a still beauty of creative joy;
Embodyed thoughts to sweet dimensions held

To please some carelessness of divine peace,
Answered the deep demand of an infinite sense
And its need of forms to house its bodiless thrill.
A march of universal powers in Time,
The harmonic order of self's vastitudes
In cyclic symmetries and metric planes
Harboured a cosmic rapture's revelry,
An endless figuring of the spirit in things
Planned by the artist who has dreamed the worlds;
Of all the beauty and the marvel here,
Of all Time's intricate variety
Eternity was the substance and the source;
Not from a plastic mist of Matter made,
They offered the suggestion of their depths
And opened the great series of their powers.
Arisen beneath a triple mystic heaven
The seven immortal earths were seen, sublime:
Homes of the blest released from death and sleep
Where grief can never come nor any pang
Arriving from self-lost and seeking worlds
Alter Heaven-nature's changeless quietude
And mighty posture of eternal calm,
Its pose of ecstasy immutable.
Plains lay that seemed the expanse of God's wide sleep,
Thought's wings climbed up towards heaven's vast repose
Lost in blue deeps of immortality.
A changed earth-nature felt the breath of peace.
Air seemed an ocean of felicity
Or the couch of the unknown spiritual rest,
A vast quiescence swallowing up all sound
Into a voicelessness of utter bliss;
Even Matter brought a close spiritual touch,
All thrilled with the immanence of one divine.
The lowest of these earths was still a heaven
Translating into the splendour of things divine
The beauty and brightness of terrestrial scenes.

Eternal mountains ridge on gleaming ridge
Whose lines were graved as on a sapphire plate
And etched the borders of heaven's lustrous noon
Climbed like piled temple stairs and from their heads
Of topless meditation heard below
The approach of a blue pilgrim multitude
And listened to a great arriving voice
Of the wide travel hymn of timeless seas.
A chanting crowd from mountain bosoms slipped
Past branches fragrant with a sigh of flowers
Hurrying through sweetenesses with revel leaps;
The murmurous rivers of felicity
Divinely rippled honey-voiced desires,
Mingling their sister eddies of delight,
Then, widening to a pace of calm-lipped muse,
Down many-glimmered estuaries of dream
Went whispering into lakes of liquid peace.
On a brink held of senseless ecstasy
And guarding an eternal poise of thought
Sat sculptured souls dreaming by rivers of sound
In changeless attitudes of marble bliss.
Around her lived the children of God's day
In an unspeakable felicity,
A happiness never lost, the immortal's ease,
A glad eternity's blissful multitude.
Around, the deathless nations moved and spoke,
Souls of a luminous celestial joy,
Faces of stark beauty, limbs of the moulded Ray;
In cities cut like gems of conscious stone
And wonderful pastures and on gleaming coasts
Bright forms were seen, eternity's luminous tribes.
Above her rhythming godheads whirled the spheres,
Rapt mobile fixities here blindly sought
By the huge erring orbits of our stars.
Ecstatic voices smote at hearing's chords,
Each movement found a music all its own;

Songs thrilled of birds upon unfading boughs
The colours of whose plumage had been caught
From the rainbow of imagination's wings.
Immortal fragrance packed the quivering breeze.
In groves that seemed moved bosoms and trembling depths
The million children of the undying spring
Bloomed, pure unnumbered stars of hued delight
Nestling for shelter in their emerald sky:
Faery flower-masses looked with laughing eyes.
A dancing chaos, an iridescent sea
Eternised to Heaven's ever-wakeful sight
The crowding petal-glow of marvel's tints
Which float across the curtained lids of dream.
Immortal harmonies filled her listening ear;
A great spontaneous utterance of the heights
On Titan wings of rhythmic grandeur borne
Poured from some deep spiritual heart of sound,
Strains trembling with the secrets of the gods.
A spirit wandered happily in the wind,
A spirit brooded in the leaf and stone;
The voices of thought-conscious instruments
Along a living verge of silence strayed,
And from some deep, a wordless tongue of things
Unfathomed, inexpressible, chantings rose
Translating into a voice the Unknown.
A climber on the invisible stair of sound,
Music not with these few and striving steps
Aspired that wander upon transient strings,
But changed its ever new uncounted notes
In a passion of unforeseeing discovery,
And kept its old unforgotten ecstasies
A growing treasure in the mystic heart.
A consciousness that yearned through every cry
Of unexplored attraction and desire,
It found and searched again the unsatisfied deeps
Hunting as if in some deep secret heart

To find some lost or missed felicity.
In those far-lapsing symphonies she could hear,
Breaking through enchantments of the ravished sense,
The lyric voyage of a divine soul
Mid spume and laughter tempting with its prow
The charm of innocent Circean isles,
Adventures without danger beautiful
In lands where siren Wonder sings its lures
From rhythmic rocks in ever-foaming seas.
In the harmony of an original sight
Delivered from our limiting ray of thought,
And the reluctance of our blinded hearts
To embrace the Godhead in whatever guise,
She saw all Nature marvellous without fault.
Invaded by beauty's universal revel
Her being's fibre reached out vibrating
And claimed deep union with its outer selves,
And on the heart's chords made pure to seize all tones
Heaven's subtleties of touch unwearying forced
More vivid raptures than earth's life can bear.
What would be suffering here, was fiery bliss.
All here but passionate hint and mystic shade
Divined by the inner prophet who perceives
The spirit of delight in sensuous things,
Turned to more sweetness than can now be dreamed.
The mighty signs of which earth fears the stress,
Trembling because she cannot understand,
And must keep obscure in forms strange and sublime,
Were here the first lexicon of an infinite mind
Translating the language of eternal bliss.
Here rapture was a common incident;
The lovelinesses of whose captured thrill
Our human pleasure is a fallen thread,
Lay, symbol shapes, a careless ornament,
Sewn on the rich brocade of Godhead's dress.
Things fashioned were the imaged homes where mind

Arrived to fathom a deep physical joy;
The heart was a torch lit from infinity,
The limbs were trembling densities of soul.
These were the first domains, the outer courts
Immense but least in range and least in price,
The slightest ecstasies of the undying gods.
Higher her swing of vision swept and knew,
Admitted through large sapphire opening gates
Into the wideness of a light beyond,
These were but sumptuous decorated doors
To worlds nobler, more felicitously fair.
Endless aspired the climbing of those heavens;
Realm upon realm received her soaring view.
Then on what seemed one crown of the ascent
Where finite and the infinite are one,
Immune she beheld the strong immortals' seats
Who live for a celestial joy and rule,
The middle regions of the unfading Ray.
Great forms of deities sat in deathless tiers,
Eyes of an unborn gaze towards her leaned
Through a transparency of crystal fire.
In the beauty of bodies wrought from rapture's lines,
Shapes of entrancing sweetness spilling bliss,
Feet glimmering upon the sunstone courts of mind,
Heaven's cupbearers bore round the Eternal's wine.
A tangle of bright bodies, of moved souls
Tracing the close and intertwined delight,
The harmonious tread of lives for ever joined
In the passionate oneness of a mystic joy
As if sunbeams made living and divine,
The golden-bosomed Apsara goddesses,
In groves flooded from an argent disk of bliss
That floated through a luminous sapphire dream,
In a cloud of raiment lit with golden limbs
And gleaming footfalls treading faery swards,
Virgin motions of bacchant innocences

Who know their riot for a dance of God,
Whirled linked in moonlit revels of the heart.
Impeccable artists of unerring forms,
Magician builders of sound and rhythmic words,
Wind-haired Gandharvas chanted to the ear
The odes that shape the universal thought,
The lines that tear the veil from Deity's face,
The rhythms that bring the sounds of wisdom's sea.
Immortal figures and illumined brows,
Our great forefathers in those splendours moved;
Termless in power and satisfied of light,
They enjoyed the sense of all for which we strive.
High seers, moved poets saw the eternal thoughts
That, travellers from on high, arrive to us
Deformed by our search, tricked by costuming mind,
Like gods disfigured by the pangs of birth,
Seized the great words which now are frail sounds caught
By difficult rapture on a mortal tongue.
The strong who stumble and sin were calm proud gods.
There lightning-filled with glory and with flame,
Melting in waves of sympathy and sight,
Smitten like a lyre that throbs to others' bliss,
Drawn by the cords of ecstasies unknown,
Her human nature faint with heaven's delight,
She beheld the clasp to earth denied and bore
The imperishable eyes of veilless love.
More climbed above, level to level reached,
Beyond what tongue can utter or mind dream:
Worlds of an infinite reach crowned Nature's stir.
There was a greater tranquil sweetness there,
A subtler and profounder ether's field
And mightier scheme than heavenliest sense can give.
There breath carried a stream of seeing mind,
Form was a tenuous raiment of the soul:
Colour was a visible tone of ecstasy;
Shapes seen half immaterial by the gaze

And yet voluptuously palpable
Made sensible to touch the indwelling spirit.
The high perfected sense illumined lived
A happy vassal of the inner ray,
Each feeling was the Eternal's mighty child
And every thought was a sweet burning god.
Air was a luminous feeling, sound a voice,
Sunlight the soul's vision and moonlight its dream.
On a wide living base of wordless calm
All was a potent and a lucid joy.
Into those heights her spirit went floating up
Like an upsoaring bird who mounts unseen
Voicing to the ascent his throbbing heart
Of melody till a pause of closing wings
Comes quivering in his last contented cry
And he is silent with his soul discharged,
Delivered of his heart's burden of delight.
Experience mounted on joy's coloured breast
To inaccessible spheres in spiral flight.
There Time dwelt with eternity as one;
Immense felicity joined rapt repose.

As one drowned in a sea of splendour and bliss,
Mute in the maze of these surprising worlds,
Turning she saw their living knot and source,
Key to their charm and fount of their delight,
And knew him for the same who snares our lives
Captured in his terrifying pitiless net,
And makes the universe his prison camp
And makes in his immense and vacant vasts
The labour of the stars a circuit vain
And death the end of every human road
And grief and pain the wages of man's toil.
One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
A sum of all sweetness gathered into his limbs
And blinded her heart to the beauty of the suns.

Transfigured was the formidable shape.
His darkness and his sad destroying might
Abolishing for ever and disclosing
The mystery of his high and violent deeds,
A secret splendour rose revealed to sight
Where once the vast embodied Void had stood.
Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face.
The vague infinity was slain whose gloom
Had outlined from the terrible unknown
The obscure disastrous figure of a god,
Fled was the error that arms the hands of grief,
And lighted the ignorant gulf whose hollow deeps
Had given to nothingness a dreadful voice.
As when before the eye that wakes in sleep
Is opened the sombre binding of a book,
Illumined letterings are seen which kept
A golden blaze of thought inscribed within,
A marvellous form responded to her gaze
Whose sweetness justified life's blindest pain;
All Nature's struggle was its easy price,
The universe and its agony seemed worth while.
As if the choric calyx of a flower
Aerial, visible on music's waves,
A lotus of light-petalled ecstasy
Took shape out of the tremulous heart of things.
There was no more the torment under the stars,
The evil sheltered behind Nature's mask;
There was no more the dark pretence of hate,
The cruel rictus on Love's altered face.
Hate was the grip of a dreadful amour's strife;
A ruthless love intent only to possess
Has here replaced the sweet original god.
Forgetting the Will-to-love that gave it birth,
The passion to lock itself in and to unite,
It would swallow all into one lonely self,
Devouring the soul that it had made its own,

By suffering and annihilation's pain
Punishing the unwillingness to be one,
Angry with the refusals of the world,
Passionate to take but knowing not how to give.
Death's sombre cowl was cast from Nature's brow;
There lightened on her the godhead's lurking laugh.
All grace and glory and all divinity
Were here collected in a single form;
All worshipped eyes looked through his from one face;
He bore all godheads in his grandiose limbs.
An oceanic spirit dwelt within;
Intolerant and invincible in joy
A flood of freedom and transcendent bliss
Into immortal lines of beauty rose.
In him the fourfold Being bore its crown
That wears the mystery of a nameless Name,
The universe writing its tremendous sense
In the inexhaustible meaning of a word.
In him the architect of the visible world,
At once the art and artist of his works,
Spirit and seer and thinker of things seen,
Virat, who lights his camp-fires in the suns
And the star-entangled ether is his hold,
Expressed himself with Matter for his speech:
Objects are his letters, forces are his words,
Events are the crowded history of his life,
And sea and land are the pages for his tale.
Matter is his means and his spiritual sign;
He hangs the thought upon a lash's lift,
In the current of the blood makes flow the soul.
His is the dumb will of atom and of clod;
A Will that without sense or motive acts,
An Intelligence needing not to think or plan,
The world creates itself invincibly;
For its body is the body of the Lord
And in its heart stands Virat, King of Kings.

In him shadows his form the Golden Child
Who in the Sun-capped Vast cradles his birth:
Hiranyagarbha, author of thoughts and dreams,
Who sees the invisible and hears the sounds
That never visited a mortal ear,
Discoverer of unthought realities
Truer to Truth than all we have ever known,
He is the leader on the inner roads;
A seer, he has entered the forbidden realms;
A magician with the omnipotent wand of thought,
He builds the secret uncreated worlds.
Armed with the golden speech, the diamond eye,
His is the vision and the prophecy:
Imagist casting the formless into shape,
Traveller and hewer of the unseen paths,
He is the carrier of the hidden fire,
He is the voice of the Ineffable,
He is the invisible hunter of the light,
The Angel of mysterious ecstasies,
The conqueror of the kingdoms of the soul.
A third spirit stood behind, their hidden cause,
A mass of superconsciousness closed in light,
Creator of things in his all-knowing sleep.
All from his stillness came as grows a tree;
He is our seed and core, our head and base.
All light is but a flash from his closed eyes:
An all-wise Truth is mystic in his heart,
The omniscient Ray is shut behind his lids:
He is the Wisdom that comes not by thought,
His wordless silence brings the immortal word.
He sleeps in the atom and the burning star,
He sleeps in man and god and beast and stone:
Because he is there the Inconscient does its work,
Because he is there the world forgets to die.
He is the centre of the circle of God,
He the circumference of Nature's run.

His slumber is an Almightiness in things,
Awake, he is the Eternal and Supreme.
Above was the brooding bliss of the Infinite,
Its omniscient and omnipotent repose,
Its immobile silence absolute and alone.
All powers were woven in countless concords here.
The bliss that made the world in his body lived,
Love and delight were the head of the sweet form.
In the alluring meshes of their snare
Recaptured, the proud blissful members held
All joys outrunners of the panting heart
And fugitive from life's outstripped desire.
Whatever vision has escaped the eye,
Whatever happiness comes in dream and trance,
The nectar spilled by love with trembling hands,
The joy the cup of Nature cannot hold,
Had crowded to the beauty of his face,
Were waiting in the honey of his laugh.
Things hidden by the silence of the hours,
The ideas that find no voice on living lips,
The soul's pregnant meeting with infinity
Had come to birth in him and taken fire:
The secret whisper of the flower and star
Revealed its meaning in his fathomless look.
His lips curved eloquent like a rose of dawn;
His smile that played with the wonder of the mind
And stayed in the heart when it had left his mouth
Glimmered with the radiance of the morning star
Gemming the wide discovery of heaven.
His gaze was the regard of eternity;
The spirit of its sweet and calm intent
Was a wise home of gladness and divulged
The light of the ages in the mirth of the hours,
A sun of wisdom in a miracled grove.
In the orchestral largeness of his mind
All contrary seekings their close kinship knew,

Rich-hearted, wonderful to each other met
In the mutual marvelling of their myriad notes
And dwelt like brothers of one family
Who had found their common and mysterious home.
As from the harp of some ecstatic god
There springs a harmony of lyric bliss
Striving to leave no heavenly joy unsung,
Such was the life in that embodied Light.
He seemed the wideness of a boundless sky,
He seemed the passion of a sorrowless earth,
He seemed the burning of a world-wide sun.
Two looked upon each other, Soul saw Soul.

Then like an anthem from the heart's lucent cave
A voice soared up whose magic sound could turn
The poignant weeping of the earth to sobs
Of rapture and her cry to spirit song.
“O human image of the deathless word,
How hast thou seen beyond the topaz walls
The gleaming sisters of the divine gate,
Summoned the genii of their wakeful sleep,
And under revelation's arches forced
The carved thought-shrouded doors to swing apart,
Unlocked the avenues of spiritual sight
And taught the entries of a heavenlier state
To thy rapt soul that bore the golden key?
In thee the secret sight man's blindness missed
Has opened its view past Time, my chariot-course,
And death, my tunnel which I drive through life
To reach my unseen distances of bliss.
I am the hushed search of the jealous gods
Pursuing my wisdom's vast mysterious work
Seized in the thousand meeting ways of heaven.
I am the beauty of the unveiled ray
Drawing through the deep roads of the infinite night
The unconquerable pilgrim soul of earth

Beneath the flaring torches of the stars.
I am the inviolable Ecstasy;
They who have looked on me, shall grieve no more.
The eyes that live in night shall see my form.
On the pale shores of foaming steely straits
That flow beneath a grey tormented sky,
Two powers from one original ecstasy born
Pace near but parted in the life of man;
One leans to earth, the other yearns to the skies:
Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,
Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect heaven.
The two longing to join, yet walk apart,
Idly divided by their vain conceits;
They are kept from their oneness by enchanted fears;
Sundered mysteriously by miles of thought,
They gaze across the silent gulfs of sleep.
Or side by side reclined upon my vasts
Like bride and bridegroom magically divorced
They wake to yearn, but never can they clasp
While thinly flickering hesitates uncrossed
Between the lovers on their nuptial couch
The shadowy eidolon of a sword.
But when the phantom flame-edge fails undone,
Then never more can space or time divide
The lover from the loved; Space shall draw back
Her great translucent curtain, Time shall be
The quivering of the spirit's endless bliss.
Attend that moment of celestial fate.
Meanwhile you two shall serve the dual law
Which only now the scouts of vision glimpse
Who pressing through the forest of their thoughts
Have found the narrow bridges of the gods.
Wait patient of the brittle bars of form
Making division your delightful means
Of happy oneness rapturously enhanced
By attraction in the throbbing air between.

Yet if thou wouldest abandon the vexed world,
Careless of the dark moan of things below,
Tread down the isthmus, overleap the flood,
Cancel thy contract with the labouring Force;
Renounce the tie that joins thee to earth-kind,
Cast off thy sympathy with mortal hearts.
Arise, vindicate thy spirit's conquered right:
Relinquishing thy charge of transient breath,
Under the cold gaze of the indifferent stars
Leaving thy borrowed body on the sod,
Ascend, O soul, into thy blissful home.
Here in the playground of the eternal Child
Or in domains the wise Immortals tread
Roam with thy comrade splendour under skies
Spiritual lit by an unsetting sun,
As godheads live who care not for the world
And share not in the toil of Nature's powers:
Absorbed in their self-ecstasy they dwell.
Cast off the ambiguous myth of earth's desire,
O immortal, to felicity arise."

On Savitri listening in her tranquil heart
To the harmony of the ensnaring voice
A joy exceeding earth's and heaven's poured down,
The bliss of an unknown eternity,
A rapture from some waiting Infinite.
A smile came rippling out in her wide eyes,
Its confident felicity's messenger
As if the first beam of the morning sun
Rippled along two wakened lotus-pools.
"O besetter of man's soul with life and death
And the world's pleasure and pain and Day and Night,
Tempting his heart with the far lure of heaven,
Testing his strength with the close touch of hell,
I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night.
To me who turn not from thy terrestrial Way,

Give back the other self my nature asks.
Thy spaces need him not to help their joy;
Earth needs his beautiful spirit made by thee
To fling delight down like a net of gold.
Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Archmason shapes his works.
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.
The heavens were once to me my natural home,
I too have wandered in star-jewelled groves,
Paced sun-gold pastures and moon-silver swards
And heard the harping laughter of their streams
And lingered under branches dropping myrrh;
I too have revelled in the fields of light
Touched by the ethereal raiment of the winds,
Thy wonder-rounds of music I have trod,
Lived in the rhyme of bright unlabouring thoughts,
I have beat swift harmonies of rapture vast,
Danced in spontaneous measures of the soul
The great and easy dances of the gods.
O fragrant are the lanes thy children walk
And lovely is the memory of their feet
Amid the wonder-flowers of Paradise:
A heavier tread is mine, a mightier touch.
There where the gods and demons battle in night
Or wrestle on the borders of the Sun,
Taught by the sweetness and the pain of life
To bear the uneven strenuous beat that throbs
Against the edge of some divinest hope,
To dare the impossible with these pangs of search,
In me the spirit of immortal love
Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind.
Too far thy heavens for me from suffering men.
Imperfect is the joy not shared by all.
O to spread forth, O to encircle and seize

More hearts till love in us has filled thy world!
O life, the life beneath the wheeling stars!
For victory in the tournament with death,
For bending of the fierce and difficult bow,
For flashing of the splendid sword of God!
O thou who soundst the trumpet in the lists,
Part not the handle from the untried steel,
Take not the warrior with his blow unstruck.
Are there not still a million fights to wage?
O king-smith, clang on still thy toil begun,
Weld us to one in thy strong smithy of life.
Thy fine-curved jewelled hilt call Savitri,
Thy blade's exultant smile name Satyavan.
Fashion to beauty, point us through the world.
Break not the lyre before the song is found;
Are there not still unnumbered chants to weave?
O subtle-souled musician of the years,
Play out what thou hast fluted on my stops;
Arise from the strain their first wild plaint divined
And that discover which is yet unsung.
I know that I can lift man's soul to God,
I know that he can bring the Immortal down.
Our will labours permitted by thy will
And without thee an empty roar of storm,
A senseless whirlwind is the Titan's force
And without thee a snare the strength of gods.
Let not the inconscient gulf swallow man's race
That through earth's ignorance struggles towards thy Light.
O Thunderer with the lightnings of the soul,
Give not to darkness and to death thy sun,
Achieve thy wisdom's hidden firm decree
And the mandate of thy secret world-wide love."
Her words failed lost in thought's immensities
Which seized them at the limits of their cry
And hid their meaning in the distances
That stir to more than ever speech has won

From the Unthinkable, end of all our thought,
And the Ineffable from whom all words come.

Then with a smile august as noonday heavens
The godhead of the vision wonderful:
“How shall earth-nature and man’s nature rise
To the celestial levels, yet earth abide?
Heaven and earth towards each other gaze
Across a gulf that few can cross, none touch,
Arriving through a vague ethereal mist
Out of which all things form that move in space,
The shore that all can see but never reach.
Heaven’s light visits sometimes the mind of earth;
Its thoughts burn in her sky like lonely stars;
In her heart there move celestial seekings soft
And beautiful like fluttering wings of birds,
Visions of joy that she can never win
Traverse the fading mirror of her dreams.
Faint seeds of light and bliss bear sorrowful flowers,
Faint harmonies caught from a half-heard song
Fall swooning mid the wandering voices’ jar,
Foam from the tossing luminous seas where dwells
The beautiful and far delight of gods,
Raptures unknown, a miracled happiness
Thrill her and pass half-shaped to mind and sense.
Above her little finite steps she feels,
Careless of knot or pause, worlds which weave out
A strange perfection beyond law and rule,
A universe of self-found felicity,
An inexpressible rhythm of timeless beats,
The many-movemented heart-beats of the One,
Magic of the boundless harmonies of self,
Order of the freedom of the infinite,
The wonder-plastics of the Absolute.
There is the All-Truth and there the timeless bliss.
But hers are fragments of a star-lost gleam,

Hers are but careless visits of the gods.
They are a Light that fails, a Word soon hushed
And nothing they mean can stay for long on earth.
There are high glimpses, not the lasting sight.
A few can climb to an unperishing sun,
Or live on the edges of the mystic moon
And channel to earth-mind the wizard ray.
The heroes and the demigods are few
To whom the close immortal voices speak
And to their acts the heavenly clan are near.
Few are the silences in which Truth is heard,
Unveiling the timeless utterance in her deeps;
Few are the splendid moments of the seers.
Heaven's call is rare, rarer the heart that heeds;
The doors of light are sealed to common mind
And earth's needs nail to earth the human mass,
Only in an uplifting hour of stress
Men answer to the touch of greater things:
Or, raised by some strong hand to breathe heaven-air,
They slide back to the mud from which they climbed;
In the mud of which they are made, whose law they know
They joy in safe return to a friendly base,
And, though something in them weeps for glory lost
And greatness murdered, they accept their fall.
To be the common man they think the best,
To live as others live is their delight.
For most are built on Nature's early plan
And owe small debt to a superior plane;
The human average is their level pitch,
A thinking animal's material range.
In the long ever-mounting hierarchy,
In the stark economy of cosmic life
Each creature to its appointed task and place
Is bound by his nature's form, his spirit's force.
If this were easily disturbed, it would break
The settled balance of created things;

The perpetual order of the universe
Would tremble, and a gap yawn in woven Fate.
If men were not and all were brilliant gods,
The mediating stair would then be lost
By which the spirit awake in Matter winds
Accepting the circuits of the middle Way,
By heavy toil and slow aeonic steps
Reaching the bright miraculous fringe of God,
Into the glory of the Oversoul.

My will, my call is there in men and things;
But the Inconscient lies at the world's grey back
And draws to its breast of Night and Death and Sleep.
Imprisoned in its dark and dumb abyss
A little consciousness it lets escape
But jealous of the growing light holds back
Close to the obscure edges of its cave
As if a fond ignorant mother kept her child
Tied to her apron strings of Nescience.

The Inconscient could not read without man's mind
The mystery of the world its sleep has made:
Man is its key to unlock a conscious door.
But still it holds him dangled in its grasp:
It draws its giant circle round his thoughts,
It shuts his heart to the supernal Light.
A high and dazzling limit shines above,
A black and blinding border rules below:
His mind is closed between two firmaments.
He seeks through words and images the Truth,
And, poring on surfaces and brute outsides
Or dipping cautious feet in shallow seas,
Even his Knowledge is an Ignorance.

He is barred out from his own inner depths;
He cannot look on the face of the Unknown.
How shall he see with the Omniscient's eyes,
How shall he will with the Omnipotent's force?
O too compassionate and eager Dawn,

Leave to the circling aeons' tardy pace
And to the working of the inconscient Will,
Leave to its imperfect light the earthly race:
All shall be done by the long act of Time.
Although the race is bound by its own kind,
The soul in man is greater than his fate:
Above the wash and surge of Time and Space,
Disengaging from the cosmic commonalty
By which all life is kin in grief and joy,
Delivered from the universal Law
The sunlike single and transcendent spirit
Can blaze its way through the mind's barrier wall
And burn alone in the eternal sky,
Inhabitant of a wide and endless calm.
O flame, withdraw into thy luminous self.
Or else return to thy original might
On a seer-summit above thought and world;
Partner of my unhoured eternity,
Be one with the infinity of my power:
For thou art the World-Mother and the Bride.
Out of the fruitless yearning of earth's life,
Out of her feeble unconvincing dream,
Recovering wings that cross infinity
Pass back into the Power from which thou cam'st.
To that thou canst uplift thy formless flight,
Thy heart can rise from its unsatisfied beats
And feel the immortal and spiritual joy
Of a soul that never lost felicity.
Lift up the fallen heart of love which flutters
Cast down desire's abyss into the gulfs.
For ever rescued out of Nature's shapes
Discover what the aimless cycles want,
There intertwined with all thy life has meant,
Here vainly sought in a terrestrial form.
Break into eternity thy mortal mould;
Melt, lightning, into thy invisible flame!

Clasp, Ocean, deep into thyself thy wave,
Happy for ever in the embosoming surge.
Grow one with the still passion of the depths.
Then shalt thou know the Lover and the Loved,
Leaving the limits dividing him and thee.
Receive him into boundless Savitri,
Lose thyself into infinite Satyavan.
O miracle, where thou beganst, there cease!"

But Savitri answered to the radiant God:
"In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss
Two spirits saved out of a suffering world;
My soul and his indissolubly linked
In the one task for which our lives were born,
To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,
To change the earthly life to life divine.
I keep my will to save the world and man;
Even the charm of thy alluring voice,
O blissful Godhead, cannot seize and snare.
I sacrifice not earth to happier worlds.
Because there dwelt the Eternal's vast Idea
And his dynamic will in men and things,
So only could the enormous scene begin.
Whence came this profitless wilderness of stars,
This mighty barren wheeling of the suns?
Who made the soul of futile life in Time,
Planted a purpose and a hope in the heart,
Set Nature to a huge and meaningless task
Or planned her million-aeoned effort's waste?
What force condemned to birth and death and tears
These conscious creatures crawling on the globe?
If earth can look up to the light of heaven
And hear an answer to her lonely cry,
Not vain their meeting, nor heaven's touch a snare.
If thou and I are true, the world is true;
Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,

To be is not a senseless paradox;
Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God;
What hides within her breast she must reveal.
I claim thee for the world that thou hast made.
If man lives bound by his humanity,
If he is tied for ever to his pain,
Let a greater being then arise from man,
The superhuman with the Eternal mate
And the Immortal shine through earthly forms.
Else were creation vain and this great world
A nothing that in Time's moments seems to be.
But I have seen through the insentient mask;
I have felt a secret spirit stir in things
Carrying the body of the growing God:
It looks through veiling forms at veilless truth;
It pushes back the curtain of the gods;
It climbs towards its own eternity.”
But the god answered to the woman’s heart:
“O living power of the incarnate Word,
All that the Spirit has dreamed thou canst create:
Thou art the force by which I made the worlds,
Thou art my vision and my will and voice.
But knowledge too is thine, the world-plan thou knowest
And the tardy process of the pace of Time.
In the impetuous drive of thy heart of flame,
In thy passion to deliver man and earth,
Indignant at the impediments of Time
And the slow evolution’s sluggish steps,
Lead not the spirit in an ignorant world
To dare too soon the adventure of the Light,
Pushing the bound and slumbering god in man
Awakened mid the ineffable silences
Into endless vistas of the unknown and unseen,
Across the last confines of the limiting Mind
And the Superconscious’s perilous border line
Into the danger of the Infinite.

But if thou wilt not wait for Time and God,
Do then thy work and force thy will on Fate.
As I have taken from thee my load of night
And taken from thee my twilight's doubts and dreams,
So now I take my light of utter Day.
These are my symbol kingdoms but not here
Can the great choice be made that fixes fate
Or uttered the sanction of the Voice supreme.
Arise upon a ladder of greater worlds
To the infinity where no world can be.
But not in the wide air where a greater Life
Uplifts its mystery and its miracle,
And not on the luminous peaks of summit Mind,
Or in the hold where subtle Matter's spirit
Hides in its light of shimmering secracies,
Can there be heard the Eternal's firm command
That joins the head of destiny to its base.
These only are the mediating links;
Not theirs is the originating sight
Nor the fulfilling act or last support
That bears perpetually the cosmic pile.
Two are the Powers that hold the ends of Time;
Spirit foresees, Matter unfolds its thought,
The dumb executor of God's decrees,
Omitting no iota and no dot,
Agent unquestioning, inconscient, stark,
Evolving inevitably a charged content,
Intention of his force in Time and Space,
In animate beings and inanimate things;
Immutably it fulfils its ordered task,
It cancels not a tittle of things done;
Unswerving from the oracular command
It alters not the steps of the Unseen.
If thou must indeed deliver man and earth
On the spiritual heights look down on life,
Discover the truth of God and man and world;

Then do thy task knowing and seeing all.
Ascend, O soul, into thy timeless self;
Choose destiny's curve and stamp thy will on Time.”
He ended and upon the falling sound
A power went forth that shook the founded spheres
And loosed the stakes that hold the tents of form.
Absolved from vision's grip and the folds of thought,
Rapt from her sense like disappearing scenes
In the stupendous theatre of Space
The heaven-worlds vanished in spiritual light.
A movement was abroad, a cry, a word,
Beginningless in its vast discovery,
Momentless in its unthinkable return:
Choired in calm seas she heard the eternal Thought
Rhythming itself abroad unutterably
In spaceless orbits and on timeless roads.
In an ineffable world she lived fulfilled.
An energy of the triune Infinite,
In a measureless Reality she dwelt,
A rapture and a being and a force,
A linked and myriad-motioned plenitude,
A virgin unity, a luminous spouse,
Housing a multitudinous embrace
To marry all in God's immense delight,
Bearing the eternity of every spirit,
Bearing the burden of universal love,
A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls.
All things she knew, all things imagined or willed:
Her ear was opened to ideal sound,
Shape the convention bound no more her sight,
A thousand doors of oneness was her heart.
A crypt and sanctuary of brooding light
Appeared, the last recess of things beyond.
Then in its rounds the enormous fiat paused,
Silence gave back to the Unknowable
All it had given. Still was her listening thought.

The form of things had ceased within her soul.
Invisible that perfect godhead now.
Around her some tremendous spirit lived,
Mysterious flame around a melting pearl,
And in the phantom of abolished Space
There was a voice unheard by ears that cried:
“Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again;
For now from my highest being looks at thee
The nameless formless peace where all things rest.
In a happy vast sublime cessation know,—
An immense extinction in eternity,
A point that disappears in the infinite,—
Felicity of the extinguished flame,
Last sinking of a wave in a boundless sea,
End of the trouble of thy wandering thoughts,
Close of the journeying of thy pilgrim soul.
Accept, O music, weariness of thy notes,
O stream, wide breaking of thy channel banks.”
The moments fell into eternity.
But someone yearned within a bosom unknown
And silently the woman’s heart replied:
“Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
For the magnificent soul of man on earth.
Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy.”
Limitless like ocean round a lonely isle
A second time the eternal cry arose:
“Wide open are the ineffable gates in front.
My spirit leans down to break the knot of earth,
Amorous of oneness without thought or sign
To cast down wall and fence, to strip heaven bare,
See with the large eye of infinity,
Unweave the stars and into silence pass.”
In an immense and world-destroying pause
She heard a million creatures cry to her.
Through the tremendous stillness of her thoughts

Immeasurably the woman's nature spoke:
"Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls."
Mightily retreating like a sea in ebb
A third time swelled the great admonishing call:
"I spread abroad the refuge of my wings.
Out of its incommunicable deeps
My power looks forth of mightiest splendour, stilled
Into its majesty of sleep, withdrawn
Above the dreadful whirlings of the world."
A sob of things was answer to the voice,
And passionately the woman's heart replied:
"Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's arms."
Solemn and distant like a seraph's lyre
A last great time the warning sound was heard:
"I open the wide eye of solitude
To uncover the voiceless rapture of my bliss,
Where in a pure and exquisite hush it lies
Motionless in its slumber of ecstasy,
Resting from the sweet madness of the dance
Out of whose beat the throb of hearts was born."
Breaking the Silence with appeal and cry
A hymn of adoration tireless climbed,
A music beat of winged uniting souls,
Then all the woman yearningly replied:
"Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men."

Then after silence a still blissful cry
Began, such as arose from the Infinite
When the first whisperings of a strange delight
Imagined in its deep the joy to seek,

The passion to discover and to touch,
The enamoured laugh which rhymed the chanting worlds:
“O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose:
All thou hast asked I give to earth and men.
All shall be written out in destiny’s book
By my trustee of thought and plan and act,
The executor of my will, eternal Time.
But since thou hast refused my maimless Calm
And turned from my termless peace in which is expunged
The visage of Space and the shape of Time is lost,
And from happy extinction of thy separate self
In my unaccompanied lone eternity,—
For not for thee the nameless worldless Nought,
Annihilation of thy living soul
And the end of thought and hope and life and love
In the blank measureless Unknowable,—
I lay my hands upon thy soul of flame,
I lay my hands upon thy heart of love,
I yoke thee to my power of work in Time.
Because thou hast obeyed my timeless will,
Because thou hast chosen to share earth’s struggle and fate
And leaned in pity over earth-bound men
And turned aside to help and yearned to save,
I bind by thy heart’s passion thy heart to mine
And lay my splendid yoke upon thy soul.
Now will I do in thee my marvellous works.
I will fasten thy nature with my cords of strength,
Subdue to my delight thy spirit’s limbs
And make thee a vivid knot of all my bliss
And build in thee my proud and crystal home.
Thy days shall be my shafts of power and light,
Thy nights my starry mysteries of joy
And all my clouds lie tangled in thy hair
And all my springtides marry in thy mouth.

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men;
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.
When all thy work in human time is done
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.
Awakened from the mortal's ignorance
Men shall be lit with the Eternal's ray
And the glory of my sun-lift in their thoughts
And feel in their hearts the sweetness of my love
And in their acts my Power's miraculous drive.
My will shall be the meaning of their days;
Living for me, by me, in me they shall live.
In the heart of my creation's mystery
I will enact the drama of thy soul,
Inscribe the long romance of Thee and Me.
I will pursue thee across the centuries;
Thou shalt be hunted through the world by love,
Naked of ignorance's protecting veil
And without covert from my radiant gods.
No shape shall screen thee from my divine desire,
Nowhere shalt thou escape my living eyes.
In the nudity of thy discovered self,
In a bare identity with all that is,
Disrobed of thy covering of humanity,
Divested of the dense veil of human thought,
Made one with every mind and body and heart,
Made one with all Nature and with Self and God,
Summing in thy single soul my mystic world
I will possess in thee my universe,
The universe find all I am in thee.
Thou shalt bear all things that all things may change,
Thou shalt fill all with my splendour and my bliss,
Thou shalt meet all with thy transmuting soul.

Assailed by my infinitudes above,
And quivering in immensities below,
Pursued by me through my mind's wall-less vast,
Oceanic with the surges of my life,
A swimmer lost between two leaping seas
By my outer pains and inner sweetneses
Finding my joy in my opposite mysteries
Thou shalt respond to me from every nerve.
A vision shall compel thy coursing breath,
Thy heart shall drive thee on the wheel of works,
Thy mind shall urge thee through the flames of thought,
To meet me in the abyss and on the heights,
To feel me in the tempest and the calm,
And love me in the noble and the vile,
In beautiful things and terrible desire.
The pains of hell shall be to thee my kiss,
The flowers of heaven persuade thee with my touch.
My fiercest masks shall my attractions bring.
Music shall find thee in the voice of swords,
Beauty pursue thee through the core of flame.
Thou shalt know me in the rolling of the spheres
And cross me in the atoms of the whirl.
The wheeling forces of my universe
Shall cry to thee the summons of my name.
Delight shall drop down from my nectarous moon,
My fragrance seize thee in the jasmine's snare,
My eye shall look upon thee from the sun.
Mirror of Nature's secret spirit made,
Thou shalt reflect my hidden heart of joy,
Thou shalt drink down my sweetness unalloyed
In my pure lotus-cup of starry brim.
My dreadful hands laid on thy bosom shall force
Thy being bathed in fiercest longing's streams.
Thou shalt discover the one and quivering note,
And cry, the harp of all my melodies,
And roll, my foaming wave in seas of love.

Even my disasters' clutch shall be to thee
The ordeal of my rapture's contrary shape:
In pain's self shall smile on thee my secret face:
Thou shalt bear my ruthless beauty unabridged
Amid the world's intolerable wrongs,
Trampled by the violent misdeeds of Time
Cry out to the ecstasy of my rapture's touch.
All beings shall be to thy life my emissaries;
Drawn to me on the bosom of thy friend,
Compelled to meet me in thy enemy's eyes,
My creatures shall demand me from thy heart.
Thou shalt not shrink from any brother soul.
Thou shalt be attracted helplessly to all.
Men seeing thee shall feel my hands of joy,
In sorrow's pangs feel steps of the world's delight,
Their life experience its tumultuous shock
In the mutual craving of two opposites.
Hearts touched by thy love shall answer to my call,
Discover the ancient music of the spheres
In the revealing accents of thy voice
And nearer draw to me because thou art:
Enamoured of thy spirit's loveliness
They shall embrace my body in thy soul,
Hear in thy life the beauty of my laugh,
Know the thrilled bliss with which I made the worlds.
All that thou hast, shall be for others' bliss,
All that thou art, shall to my hands belong.
I will pour delight from thee as from a jar,
I will whirl thee as my chariot through the ways,
I will use thee as my sword and as my lyre,
I will play on thee my minstrelsies of thought.
And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasy,
And when thou liv'st one spirit with all things,
Then will I spare thee not my living fires,
But make thee a channel for my timeless force.
My hidden presence led thee unknowing on

From thy beginning in earth's voiceless bosom
Through life and pain and time and will and death,
Through outer shocks and inner silences
Along the mystic roads of Space and Time
To the experience which all Nature hides.
Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows:
This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heart-beats.
For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!
O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love.
The spirit ensnared by thee force to delight
Of creation's oneness sweet and fathomless,
Compelled to embrace my myriad unities
And all my endless forms and divine souls.
O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace;
O Word, cry out the immortal litany:
Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.
 “Descend to life with him thy heart desires.
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality.
In the world of my knowledge and my ignorance
Where God is unseen and only is heard a Name
And knowledge is trapped in the boundaries of mind
And life is hauled in the drag-net of desire
And Matter hides the soul from its own sight,
You are my Force at work to uplift earth's fate,
My self that moves up the immense incline
Between the extremes of the spirit's night and day.
He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my eternity hid in moving Time

And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space.
It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
And to the beauty and joy from which it fell,
To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
To light without bounds and life illimitable,
Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
Touch of the immortal and the infinite.
He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being's forms:
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.
O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.
While the dim light from the veiled Spirit's peak
Falls upon Matter's stark inconscient sleep
As if a pale moonbeam on a dense glade,
And Mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths
And the human heart knows only human love
And life is a stumbling and imperfect force
And the body counts out its precarious days,
You shall be born into man's dubious hours
In forms that hide the soul's divinity
And show through veils of the earth's doubting air
My glory breaking as through clouds a sun,
Or burning like a rare and inward fire,
And with my nameless influence fill men's lives.
Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God
And feel God like a circumambient air
And rest on God as on a motionless base.
Yet shall there glow on mind like a horned moon
The Spirit's crescent splendour in pale skies

And light man's life upon his Godward road.
But more there is concealed in God's Beyond
That shall one day reveal its hidden face.

Now mind is all and its uncertain ray,
Mind is the leader of the body and life,
Mind the thought-driven chariot of the soul
Carrying the luminous wanderer in the night
To vistas of a far uncertain dawn,
To the end of the Spirit's fathomless desire,
To its dream of absolute truth and utter bliss.

There are greater destinies mind cannot surmise
Fixed on the summit of the evolving Path
The Traveller now treads in the Ignorance,
Unaware of his next step, not knowing his goal.
Mind is not all his tireless climb can reach,
There is a fire on the apex of the worlds,
There is a house of the Eternal's light,
There is an infinite truth, an absolute power.

The Spirit's mightiness shall cast off its mask;
Its greatness shall be felt shaping the world's course:
It shall be seen in its own veilless beams,
A star rising from the Inconscient's night,
A sun climbing to Supernature's peak.

Abandoning the dubious middle Way,
A few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin
And some shall feel in you the secret Force
And they shall turn to meet a nameless tread,
Adventurers into a mightier Day.

Ascending out of the limiting breadths of mind,
They shall discover the world's huge design
And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast.
You shall reveal to them the hidden eternities,
The breath of infinitudes not yet revealed,
Some rapture of the bliss that made the world,
Some rush of the force of God's omnipotence,
Some beam of the omniscient Mystery.

But when the hour of the Divine draws near
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time
And God be born into the human clay
In forms made ready by your human lives.
Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men:
There is a being beyond the being of mind,
An Immeasurable cast into many forms,
A miracle of the multitudinous One,
There is a consciousness mind cannot touch,
Its speech cannot utter nor its thought reveal.
It has no home on earth, no centre in man,
Yet is the source of all things thought and done,
The fount of the creation and its works,
It is the origin of all truth here,
The sun-orb of mind's fragmentary rays,
Infinity's heaven that spills the rain of God,
The Immense that calls to man to expand the Spirit,
The wide Aim that justifies his narrow attempts,
A channel for the little he tastes of bliss.
Some shall be made the glory's receptacles
And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power.
These are the high forerunners, the heads of Time,
The great deliverers of earth-bound mind,
The high transfigurers of human clay,
The first-born of a new supernal race.
The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.
The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demigod
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force
Revealing the secret deity in the cave.
Then shall the earth be touched by the Supreme,
His bright unveiled Transcendence shall illumine
The mind and heart and force the life and act
To interpret his inexpressible mystery
In a heavenly alphabet of Divinity's signs.

His living cosmic spirit shall enring,
Annulling the decree of death and pain,
Erasing the formulas of the Ignorance,
With the deep meaning of beauty and life's hid sense,
The being ready for immortality,
His regard crossing infinity's mystic waves
Bring back to Nature her early joy to live,
The metred heart-beats of a lost delight,
The cry of a forgotten ecstasy,
The dance of the first world-creating Bliss.
The Immanent shall be the witness God
Watching on his many-petalled lotus-throne
His actionless being and his silent might
Ruling earth-nature by eternity's law,
A thinker waking the Inconscient's world,
An immobile centre of many infinitudes
In his thousand-pillared temple by Time's sea.
Then shall the embodied being live as one
Who is a thought, a will of the Divine,
A mask or robe of his divinity,
An instrument and partner of his Force,
A point or line drawn in the infinite,
A manifest of the Imperishable.
The supermind shall be his nature's fount,
The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and acts,
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide.
All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality.
A power released from circumscribing bounds,
Its height pushed up beyond death's hungry reach,

Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its base.
Then in the process of evolving Time
All shall be drawn into a single plan,
A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and joy remould her way to live:
Even the body shall remember God,
Nature shall draw back from mortality
And Spirit's fires shall guide the earth's blind force;
Knowledge shall bring into the aspirant Thought
A high proximity to Truth and God.
The supermind shall claim the world for Light
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.
A greater truth than earth's shall roof-in earth
And shed its sunlight on the roads of mind;
A power infallible shall lead the thought,
A seeing Puissance govern life and act,
In earthly hearts kindle the Immortal's fire.
A soul shall wake in the Inconscient's house;
The mind shall be God-vision's tabernacle,
The body intuition's instrument,
And life a channel for God's visible power.
All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home,
Hidden no more by the body and the life,
Hidden no more by the mind's ignorance;
An unerring Hand shall shape event and act.
The Spirit's eyes shall look through Nature's eyes,
The Spirit's force shall occupy Nature's force.
This world shall be God's visible garden-house,
The earth shall be a field and camp of God,
Man shall forget consent to mortality
And his embodied frail impermanence.
This universe shall unseal its occult sense,
Creation's process change its antique front,

An ignorant evolution's hierarchy
Release the Wisdom chained below its base.
The Spirit shall be the master of his world
Lurking no more in form's obscurity
And Nature shall reverse her action's rule,
The outward world disclose the Truth it veils;
All things shall manifest the covert God,
All shall reveal the Spirit's light and might
And move to its destiny of felicity.
Even should a hostile force cling to its reign
And claim its right's perpetual sovereignty
And man refuse his high spiritual fate,
Yet shall the secret Truth in things prevail.
For in the march of all-fulfilling Time
The hour must come of the Transcendent's will:
All turns and winds towards his predestined ends
In Nature's fixed inevitable course
Decreed since the beginning of the worlds
In the deep essence of created things:
Even there shall come as a high crown of all
The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.
But first high Truth must set her feet on earth
And man aspire to the Eternal's light
And all his members feel the Spirit's touch
And all his life obey an inner Force.
This too shall be; for a new life shall come,
A body of the Superconscious's truth,
A native field of Supernature's mights:
It shall make earth's nescient ground Truth's colony,
Make even the Ignorance a transparent robe
Through which shall shine the brilliant limbs of Truth
And Truth shall be a sun on Nature's head
And Truth shall be the guide of Nature's steps
And Truth shall gaze out of her nether deeps.
When superman is born as Nature's king
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:

He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,
He shall lay upon the earth Truth's greater law;
Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call.
Awake to his hidden possibility,
Awake to all that slept within his heart
And all that Nature meant when earth was formed
And the Spirit made this ignorant world his home,
He shall aspire to Truth and God and Bliss.
Interpreter of a diviner law
And instrument of a supreme design,
The higher kind shall lean to lift up man.
Man shall desire to climb to his own heights.
The truth above shall wake a nether truth,
Even the dumb earth become a sentient force.
The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw
Near to the secret of their separate truth
And know each other as one deity.
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.
Then man and superman shall be at one
And all the earth become a single life.
Even the multitude shall hear the Voice
And turn to commune with the Spirit within
And strive to obey the high spiritual law:
This earth shall stir with impulses sublime,
Humanity awake to deepest self,
Nature the hidden godhead recognise.
Even the many shall some answer make
And bear the splendour of the Divine's rush
And his impetuous knock at unseen doors.
A heavenlier passion shall upheave men's lives,
Their mind shall share in the ineffable gleam,
Their heart shall feel the ecstasy and the fire.
Earth's bodies shall be conscious of a soul;
Mortality's bondslaves shall unloose their bonds,
Mere men into spiritual beings grow

And see awake the dumb divinity.
Intuitive beams shall touch the nature's peaks,
A revelation stir the nature's depths;
The Truth shall be the leader of their lives,
Truth shall dictate their thought and speech and act,
They shall feel themselves lifted nearer to the sky,
As if a little lower than the gods.
For knowledge shall pour down in radiant streams
And even darkened mind quiver with new life
And kindle and burn with the Ideal's fire
And turn to escape from mortal ignorance.
The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,
More and more souls shall enter into light,
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear
And lives blaze with a sudden inner flame
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight
And human wills tune to the divine will,
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy
And mortal bodies of immortality.
A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
And take the charge of breath and speech and act
And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
And every feeling a celestial thrill.
Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;
A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.
Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.”

The measure of that subtle music ceased.
Down with a hurried swimming floating lapse
Through unseen worlds and bottomless spaces forced
Sank like a star the soul of Savitri.
Amidst a laughter of unearthly lyres
She heard around her nameless voices cry
Triumphing, an innumerable sound.
A choir of rushing winds to meet her came.
She bore the burden of infinity
And felt the stir of all ethereal space.
Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet,
A face was over her which seemed a youth's,
Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,
Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile
Insatiably attracted to delight,
Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul.
Changed in its shape, yet rapturously the same,
It grew a woman's dark and beautiful
Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds,
A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,
Turbulent in will and terrible in love.
Eyes in which Nature's blind ecstatic life
Sprang from some spirit's passionate content,
Missioned her to the whirling dance of earth.
Amidst the headlong rapture of her fall
Held like a bird in a child's satisfied hands,
In an enamoured grasp her spirit strove
Admitting no release till Time should end,
And, as the fruit of the mysterious joy,
She kept within her strong embosoming soul
Like a flower hidden in the heart of spring
The soul of Satyavan drawn down by her
Inextricably in that mighty lapse.
Invisible heavens in a thronging flight
Soared past her as she fell. Then all the blind

And near attraction of the earth compelled
Fearful rapidities of downward bliss.
Lost in the giddy proneness of that speed,
Whirled, sinking, overcome she disappeared,
Like a leaf spinning from the tree of heaven,
In broad unconsciousness as in a pool;
A hospitable softness drew her in
Into a wonder of miraculous depths,
Above her closed a darkness of great wings
And she was buried in a mother's breast.

Then from a timeless plane that watches Time,
A Spirit gazed out upon destiny,
In its endless moment saw the ages pass.
All still was in a silence of the gods.
The prophet moment covered limitless Space
And cast into the heart of hurrying Time
A diamond light of the Eternal's peace,
A crimson seed of God's felicity;
A glance from the gaze fell of undying Love.
A wonderful face looked out with deathless eyes;
A hand was seen drawing the golden bars
That guard the imperishable secracies.
A key turned in a mystic lock of Time.
But where the silence of the gods had passed,
A greater harmony from the stillness born
Surprised with joy and sweetness yearning hearts,
An ecstasy and a laughter and a cry.
A power leaned down, a happiness found its home.
Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

END OF CANTO ONE
END OF BOOK ELEVEN

BOOK TWELVE

Epilogue

Epilogue

The Return to Earth

OUT OF abysmal trance her spirit woke.
Lain on the earth-mother's calm inconscient breast
She saw the green-clad branches lean above
Guarding her sleep with their enchanted life,
And overhead a blue-winged ecstasy
Fluttered from bough to bough with high-pitched call.
Into the magic secrecy of the woods
Peering through an emerald lattice-window of leaves,
In indolent skies reclined, the thinning day
Turned to its slow fall into evening's peace.
She pressed the living body of Satyavan:
On her body's wordless joy to be and breathe
She bore the blissful burden of his head
Between her breasts' warm labour of delight,
The waking gladness of her members felt
The weight of heaven in his limbs, a touch
Summing the whole felicity of things,
And all her life was conscious of his life
And all her being rejoiced enfolding his.
The immense remoteness of her trance had passed;
Human she was once more, earth's Savitri,
Yet felt in her illimitable change.
A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth,
A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven;
Light too intense for thought and love too boundless
For earth's emotions lit her skies of mind
And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul.
All that is sacred in the world drew near
To her divine passivity of mood.
A marvellous voice of silence breathed its thoughts.
All things in Time and Space she had taken for hers;

In her they moved, by her they lived and were,
The whole wide world clung to her for delight,
Created for her rapt embrace of love.
Now in her spaceless self released from bounds
Unnumbered years seemed moments long drawn out,
The brilliant time-flakes of eternity.
Outwingings of a bird from its bright home,
Her earthly morns were radiant flights of joy.
Boundless she was, a form of infinity.
Absorbed no longer by the moment's beat
Her spirit the unending future felt
And lived with all the unbeginning past.
Her life was a dawn's victorious opening,
The past and unborn days had joined their dreams,
Old vanished eves and far arriving noons
Hinted to her a vision of prescient hours.
Supine in musing bliss she lay awhile
Given to the wonder of a waking trance;
Half-risen then she sent her gaze around,
As if to recover old sweet trivial threads,
Old happy thoughts, small treasured memories,
And weave them into one immortal day.
Ever she held on the paradise of her breast
Her lover charmed into a fathomless sleep,
Lain like an infant spirit unaware
Lulled on the verge of two consenting worlds.
But soon she leaned down over her loved to call
His mind back to her with her travelling touch
On his closed eyelids; settled was her still look
Of strong delight, not yearning now, but large
With limitless joy or sovereign last content,
Pure, passionate with the passion of the gods.
Desire stirred not its wings; for all was made
An overarching of celestial rays
Like the absorbed control of sky on plain,
Heaven's leaning down to embrace from all sides earth,

A quiet rapture, a vast security.
Then sighing to her touch the soft-winged sleep
Rose hovering from his flowerlike lids and flew
Murmurous away. Awake, he found her eyes
Waiting for his, and felt her hands, and saw
The earth his home given back to him once more
And her made his again, his passion's all.
With his arms' encircling hold around her locked,
A living knot to make possession close,
He murmured with hesitating lips her name,
And vaguely recollecting wonder cried,
“Whence hast thou brought me captive back, love-chained,
To thee and sunlight's walls, O golden beam
And casket of all sweetness, Savitri,
Godhead and woman, moonlight of my soul?
For surely I have travelled in strange worlds
By thee companioned, a pursuing spirit,
Together we have disdained the gates of night.
I have turned away from the celestials' joy
And heaven's insufficient without thee.
Where now has passed that formidable Shape
Which rose against us, the Spirit of the Void,
Claiming the world for Death and Nothingness,
Denying God and soul? Or was all a dream
Or a vision seen in a spiritual sleep,
A symbol of the oppositions of Time
Or a mind-lit beacon of significance
In some stress of darkness lighting on the Way
Or guiding a swimmer through the straits of Death,
Or finding with the succour of its ray
In a gully mid the crowded streets of Chance
The soul that into the world-adventure came,
A scout and voyager from Eternity?”
But she replied, “Our parting was the dream;
We are together, we live, O Satyavan.
Look round thee and behold, glad and unchanged

Our home, this forest with its thousand cries
And the whisper of the wind among the leaves
And, through rifts in emerald scene, the evening sky,
God's canopy of blue sheltering our lives,
And the birds crying for heart's happiness,
Winged poets of our solitary reign,
Our friends on earth where we are king and queen.
Only our souls have left Death's night behind,
Changed by a mighty dream's reality,
Illumined by the light of symbol worlds
And the stupendous summit self of things,
And stood at Godhead's gates limitless, free."

Then filled with the glory of their happiness
They rose and with safe clinging fingers locked
Hung on each other in a silent look.
But he with a new wonder in his heart
And a new flame of worship in his eyes:
"What high change is in thee, O Savitri? Bright
Ever thou wast, a goddess still and pure,
Yet dearer to me by thy sweet human parts
Earth gave thee making thee yet more divine.
My adoration mastered, my desire
Bent down to make its subject, my daring clasped,
Claiming by body and soul my life's estate,
Rapture's possession, love's sweet property,
A statue of silence in my templed spirit,
A yearning godhead and a golden bride.
But now thou seemst almost too high and great
For mortal worship; Time lies below thy feet
And the whole world seems only a part of thee,
Thy presence the hushed heaven I inhabit,
And thou lookst on me in the gaze of the stars,
Yet art the earthly keeper of my soul,
My life a whisper of thy dreaming thoughts,
My morns a gleaming of thy spirit's wings,
And day and night are of thy beauty part.

Hast thou not taken my heart to treasure it
In the secure environment of thy breast?
Awakened from the silence and the sleep,
I have consented for thy sake to be.
By thee I have greatened my mortal arc of life,
But now far heavens, unmapped infinitudes
Thou hast brought me, thy illimitable gift!
If to fill these thou lift thy sacred flight,
My human earth will still demand thy bliss.
Make still my life through thee a song of joy
And all my silence wide and deep with thee.”
A heavenly queen consenting to his will,
She clasped his feet, by her enshrining hair
Enveloped in a velvet cloak of love,
And answered softly like a murmuring lute:
“All now is changed, yet all is still the same.
Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,
Our life has opened with divinity.
We have borne identity with the Supreme
And known his meaning in our mortal lives.
Our love has grown greater by that mighty touch
And learned its heavenly significance,
Yet nothing is lost of mortal love’s delight.
Heaven’s touch fulfils but cancels not our earth:
Our bodies need each other in the same last;
Still in our breasts repeat heavenly secret rhythm
Our human heart-beats passionately close.
Still am I she who came to thee mid the murmur
Of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge;
I am the Madran, I am Savitri.
All that I was before, I am to thee still,
Close comrade of thy thoughts and hopes and toils,
All happy contraries I would join for thee.
All sweet relations marry in our life;
I am thy kingdom even as thou art mine,
The sovereign and the slave of thy desire,

Thy prone possessor, sister of thy soul
And mother of thy wants; thou art my world,
The earth I need, the heaven my thoughts desire,
The world I inhabit and the god I adore.
Thy body is my body's counterpart
Whose every limb my answering limb desires,
Whose heart is key to all my heart-beats, — this
I am and thou to me, O Satyavan.
Our wedded walk through life begins anew,
No gladness lost, no depth of mortal joy.
Let us go through this new world that is the same,
For it is given back, but it is known,
A playing-ground and dwelling-house of God
Who hides himself in bird and beast and man
Sweetly to find himself again by love,
By oneness. His presence leads the rhythms of life
That seek for mutual joy in spite of pain.
We have each other found, O Satyavan,
In the great light of the discovered soul.
Let us go back, for eve is in the skies.
Now grief is dead and serene bliss remains
The heart of all our days for evermore.
Lo, all these beings in this wonderful world!
Let us give joy to all, for joy is ours.
For not for ourselves alone our spirits came
Out of the veil of the Unmanifest,
Out of the deep immense Unknowable
Upon the ignorant breast of dubious earth,
Into the ways of labouring, seeking men,
Two fires that burn towards that parent Sun,
Two rays that travel to the original Light.
To lead man's soul towards truth and God we are born,
To draw the chequered scheme of mortal life
Into some semblance of the Immortal's plan,
To shape it closer to an image of God,
A little nearer to the Idea divine.”

She closed her arms about his breast and head
As if to keep him on her bosom worn
For ever through the journeying of the years.
So for a while they stood entwined, their kiss
And passion-tranced embrace a meeting-point
In their commingling spirits one for ever,
Two-souled, two-bodied for the joys of Time.
Then hand in hand they left that solemn place
Full now of mute unusual memories,
To the green distance of their sylvan home
Returning slowly through the forest's heart.
Round them the afternoon to evening changed;
Light slipped down to the brightly sleeping verge,
And the birds came back winging to their nests,
And day and night leaned to each other's arms.

Now the dusk shadowy trees stood close around
Like dreaming spirits and, delaying night,
The grey-eyed pensive evening heard their steps,
And from all points the cries and movements came
Of the four-footed wanderers of the night
Approaching. Then a human rumour rose
Long alien to their solitary days,
Invading the charmed wilderness of leaves
Once sacred to secluded loneliness
With violent breaking of its virgin sleep.
Through the screened dusk it deepened still and there neared
Floating of many voices and the sound
Of many feet, till on their sight broke in
As if a coloured wave upon the eye
The brilliant strenuous crowded days of man.
Topped by a flaring multitude of lights
A great resplendent company arrived.
Life in its ordered tumult wavering came
Bringing its stream of unknown faces, thronged
With gold-fringed headdresses, gold-broidered robes,

Glittering of ornaments, fluttering of hems,
Hundreds of hands parted the forest-boughs,
Hundreds of eyes searched the entangled glades.
Calm white-clad priests their grave-eyed sweetness brought,
Strong warriors in their glorious armour shone,
The proud-hooved steeds came trampling through the wood.
In front King Dyumatsena walked, no more
Blind, faltering-limbed, but his far-questing eyes
Restored to all their confidence in light
Took seemingly this imaged outer world;
Firmly he trod with monarch step the soil.
By him that queen and mother's anxious face
Came changed from its habitual burdened look
Which in its drooping strength of tired toil
Had borne the fallen life of those she loved.
Her patient paleness wore a pensive glow
Like evening's subdued gaze of gathered light
Departing, which foresees sunrise her child.
Sinking in quiet splendours of her sky,
She lives awhile to muse upon that hope,
The brilliance of her rich receding gleam
A thoughtful prophecy of lyric dawn.
Her eyes were first to find her children's forms.
But at the vision of the beautiful twain
The air awoke perturbed with scaling cries,
And the swift parents hurrying to their child,—
Their cause of life now who had given him breath,—
Possessed him with their arms. Then tenderly
Cried Dyumatsena chiding Satyavan:
“The fortunate gods have looked on me today,
A kingdom seeking came and heaven's rays.
But where wast thou? Thou hast tormented gladness
With fear's dull shadow, O my child, my life.
What danger kept thee for the darkening woods?
Or how could pleasure in her ways forget
That useless orbs without thee are my eyes

Which only for thy sake rejoice at light?
Not like thyself was this done, Savitri,
Who ledst not back thy husband to our arms,
Knowing with him beside me only is taste
In food and for his touch evening and morn
I live content with my remaining days.”
But Satyavan replied with smiling lips,
“Lay all on her; she is the cause of all.
With her enchantments she has twined me round.
Behold, at noon leaving this house of clay
I wandered in far-off eternities,
Yet still, a captive in her golden hands,
I tread your little hillock called green earth
And in the moments of your transient sun
Live glad among the busy works of men.”
Then all eyes turned their wondering looks where stood,
A deepening redder gold upon her cheeks,
With lowered lids the noble lovely child,
And one consenting thought moved every breast.
“What gleaming marvel of the earth or skies
Stands silently by human Satyavan
To mark a brilliance in the dusk of eve?
If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.
Each easy miracle of felicity
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.”
Then one spoke there who seemed a priest and sage:
“O woman soul, what light, what power revealed,
Working the rapid marvels of this day,
Opens for us by thee a happier age?”
Her lashes fluttering upwards gathered in
To a vision which had scanned immortal things,
Rejoicing, human forms for their delight.
They claimed for their deep childlike motherhood
The life of all these souls to be her life,
Then falling veiled the light. Low she replied,

“Awakened to the meaning of my heart
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the magic of our golden change,
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage.”
Wondering at her and her too luminous words
Westward they turned in the fast-gathering night.

From the entangling verges freed they came
Into a dimness of the sleeping earth
And travelled through her faint and slumbering plains.
Murmur and movement and the tread of men
Broke the night’s solitude; the neigh of steeds
Rose from that indistinct and voiceful sea
Of life and all along its marchings swelled
The rhyme of hooves, the chariot’s homeward voice.
Drawn by white manes upon a high-roofed car
In flare of the unsteady torches went
With linked hands Satyavan and Savitri,
Hearing a marriage march and nuptial hymn,
Where waited them the many-voiced human world.
Numberless the stars swam on their shadowy field
Describing in the gloom the ways of light.
Then while they skirted yet the southward verge,
Lost in the halo of her musing brows
Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

THE END

Note on the Text

Note on the Text

SAVITRI began as a narrative poem of moderate length based on a legend told in the Mahabharata. Sri Aurobindo considered the story to be originally “one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle”. Bringing out its symbolism and charging it progressively with his own spiritual vision, he turned *Savitri* into the epic it is today.

By the time it was published, some passages had gone through dozens of drafts. Sri Aurobindo explained how he wrote the poem: “I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. . . . In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one’s own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative.”

The following outline of the composition and publication of *Savitri* draws upon all existing manuscripts and other textual materials, supplemented by the author’s letters on the poem. In brief, *Savitri* took shape through three major phases.

(1) Before 1920, Sri Aurobindo made a number of drafts of a narrative poem retelling in an original way the tale of Savitri and Satyavan. Its last version had a plan of eight books in two parts; the books were not divided into cantos. (2) In the 1930s, he set about converting this narrative poem into an epic. For a long time he concentrated on the description of Aswapati’s Yoga prior to the birth of Savitri, creating by 1945 a new Part One with three books and many cantos. (3) In the last phase, besides revising Part One for publication, he reworked and enlarged most of the books written in the first period. He added a book on the Yoga of Savitri, making twelve books and forty-nine cantos in all and completing Parts Two and Three.

The Composition of *Savitri*

Sri Aurobindo read the Savitri-episode of the Mahabharata in Sanskrit while he was in Baroda. He expressed appreciation of its style in his “Notes on the Mahabharata”, written around 1901. But a report that he worked on an English poem on the subject at this time is not supported by his own statements or any documents that survive. If there was a Baroda *Savitri*, which is doubtful, it was among the writings of which Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1933, “Most of all that has disappeared into the unknown in the whirlpools and turmoil of my political career.” Even assuming that such a poem was written in Baroda, for all practical purposes *Savitri* as we know it was commenced in Pondicherry.

The opening of the first known version is dated “August 8th 9th / 1916”. Further dates occur later on in the draft. From the death of Satyavan to the end of Savitri’s debate with Death, the manuscript is marked every few pages with dates from a three-day period, 17-19 October. After this, the consecutive narration breaks off and the notebook contains only disconnected passages. Some of these are sketches for the conclusion of the poem. Most of them go back over what was already written. They represent the beginning of the long process of rewriting which was to continue until 1950.

This earliest surviving manuscript of *Savitri* shows every sign of being the first draft. It is one of the few versions that Sri Aurobindo dated. But even if precise dates cannot be assigned to them, the manuscripts of the poem can almost always be placed in a definite order after a careful comparison. This is because changes made when one draft was revised were usually incorporated in the next draft, which would then be further altered and most often expanded.

Initially the poem was short enough not to require division into books or cantos. Its sections were separated only by blank lines. But soon Sri Aurobindo was dividing it into “Book I”, ending with the death of Satyavan, and “Book II”, recounting Savitri’s debate with and victory over Death. Next he adopted

a scheme of six cantos and an epilogue. The canto titles were: Love, Fate, Death, Night, Twilight and Day.

After making a few drafts in cantos, he started substituting the word “book” for “canto”. There were now six books with the same names as the former cantos. Meanwhile the larger division had reappeared as two parts, “Earth” and “Beyond”. At first each part comprised three books, not counting the epilogue. But before long, the rapidly growing first book was broken up into two. The second book kept the name “Love”; the first was renamed “Quest”.

A manuscript beginning with “Book I / Quest” has the title “Sâvithrî: A Tale and a Vision”. (In early versions, “Sâvithrî” was the usual spelling of the heroine’s name.) Sri Aurobindo referred to this stage in the poem’s history in a letter of 1936: “*Savitri* was originally written many years ago before the Mother came [*i.e., before the Mother’s final arrival in 1920*], as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond . . . each of four books — or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue.”

This was the plan of *Savitri* at the end of the first phase of its composition. But the last manuscript actually completed was in six cantos and an epilogue. After “books” replaced the “cantos” and the number of books increased, some books were worked over several times. Others were hardly touched. There is a partial draft of “Book III / Death”, for example; there is none from the stage when “Death” would have been the fourth book. After 1945 when Sri Aurobindo incorporated material from the early poem into what was by then a full-fledged epic, he sometimes went back to a manuscript of the six “cantos” as his starting-point.

Savitri was apparently put aside during most of the 1920s, a period when Sri Aurobindo did little writing. The first evidence of its resumption is found in a letter of 1931. Here he speaks of a radical change in the conception and scope of the poem. Already the subtitle, “A Legend and a Symbol”, is present in his mind: “There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have

been a '*magnum opus*' at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame."

Throughout the thirties and early forties, it was primarily Book One that was affected by this recasting. At first this book was still called "Quest". It extended as far as Savitri's arrival at "The Destined Meeting-Place" (the eventual title of Book Five, Canto One). But in the early thirties, the brief description of the Yoga of King Aswapati near the beginning swelled to hundreds of lines. What was to become the second and longest book of the epic, "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds", began to take shape.

In a letter of 1936, Sri Aurobindo mentioned a new first book, the "Book of Birth", carved out of the overgrown "Quest". Another letter of the same year reveals the internal structure of this book. It was "divided into sections and the larger sections into subsections". Up to this point, the books had been divided only into passages separated by spaces, as many cantos are now. As these sections increased in length, they were recognised as formal units and began to be named and numbered. Section marks (§) were usually put before and after the numbers.

The Book of Birth, whose last section related the birth and childhood of Savitri, was still disproportionately long and was constantly growing. Early in 1937, Sri Aurobindo expressed his intention of rearranging the opening books into a Book of Beginnings and a Book of Birth and Quest.

Progress on the poem was intermittent in the thirties due to Sri Aurobindo's heavy load of correspondence. From the end of 1938 to mid-1940, work on *Savitri* was suspended. But on 6 September 1942, a 110-page draft of the Book of Beginnings was completed. The fourth of its eight sections, "The Ascent through the Worlds", accounted for more than half the total length and had twelve subsections. In the next version, this section became Book Two with the title it now has. The last four sections were grouped into Book Three, "The Book of the Divine Mother".

The second phase in the composition of *Savitri* reached its culmination when the first three books were written out in two columns on large sheets. Many passages, including the whole of the first and third books and much of the second, went through two or more drafts in this form. The last complete manuscript is dated "May 7, 1944" at the end.

It was while revising this manuscript that Sri Aurobindo reintroduced the word "canto" which he had not used since an early stage, applying it to the former "sections" of the books. At this point the third section of Book One, "The Yoga of the King", was turned into Cantos 3-5 with their present titles. The three opening books were for the first time identified as "Part One".

The two-column manuscript is the last continuous version of Part One in Sri Aurobindo's hand. But he went on reworking Book One and passages throughout Book Two. For this purpose he began using small note-pads whose sheets, containing new or rewritten matter, could be torn out and pinned to the principal manuscript at the appropriate places.

By the mid-1940s, Sri Aurobindo's eyesight was failing and his handwriting was becoming less and less legible. He needed the help of a scribe in order to put Books 1-3 into a finished form, take up the long-neglected later books, and prepare *Savitri* for publication. This third phase of its composition saw periods of rapid and decisive progress. But it was to be interrupted the month before Sri Aurobindo's passing, a little short of definitive completion.

Much had still to be done with the first part. Sri Aurobindo asked the scribe to read the last version to him. After dictating changes, insertions and transpositions, he had his assistant copy it into a large ledger. This copy was meticulously revised before being given to another disciple for typing. The typescript in its turn was read out to Sri Aurobindo and similarly revised. Heavily revised pages were often retyped. The same process was sometimes repeated, especially in the later cantos of Book Two, where three typed copies exist.

Savitri now began to appear in print, though not yet in its

final form. The first and third books were brought out canto by canto from August 1946 to February 1948 in journals connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. They were also published in fascicles identical to the journal instalments. The second book was issued in 1947 and 1948 in two large fascicles.

Differences between the typescripts and the printed texts show that proofs of the latter must have been revised in detail by Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards a copy of each fascicle was read to him. Even at this advanced stage, he made extensive alterations and added new lines and passages.

Meanwhile he had turned his attention to the later books. The plan of Parts Two and Three resembled that of the pre-1920 poem, whose books had been divided into "Earth" (Quest, Love, Fate, Death) and "Beyond" (Night, Twilight, Day, Epilogue). By 1945, however, most of these books had remained untouched for twenty-five years. Everything written under what Sri Aurobindo termed in 1934 "the old insufficient inspiration" would have to be thoroughly recast. Moreover, a new book had been conceived: The Book of Yoga. Destined to become one of the longest in the epic, six of its seven cantos were still to be drafted.

The material in the Book of Birth and Quest had for a long time been included in Book One. As a result it had gone through several drafts in the 1930s, while other books lay dormant. The last book to be set aside, it was also the first to be taken up again. One manuscript of it precedes the 1942 draft of the Book of Beginnings. The final version was evidently written within a year or so of this. Since much work had already been done on it, this book needed less modification than others. Yet especially in the first two cantos, Sri Aurobindo dictated substantial changes and additions when he revised the manuscript and typescript.

The Book of Love shared to some extent in the good fortune of the previous book during the thirties and early forties. But the last version in Sri Aurobindo's hand, in the notebook which starts with his final manuscript of Book Four, breaks off in the middle of the second canto. The continuation is in the scribe's hand. It was copied there probably two or three years later when the systematic revision of the later books had been undertaken.

The remainder of this notebook contains the scribe's copy of Books Six, Nine and Ten, reworked from the corresponding books in the old poem, expanded, divided into cantos and renamed "The Book of Fate", "The Book of Eternal Night" and "The Book of the Double Twilight". Once Sri Aurobindo had done enough with Books Four and Five for the time being, it appears that he took up these three books one after the other. After Book Six, he skipped to Book Nine, postponing extensive work on Books Seven and Eight. However, he may have revised slightly the versions of the original third book or canto, "Death", on which Book Seven, Canto One and the present Book of Death are based.

Drafts of "Fate", "Night" and "Twilight" had been written on one side of loose sheets of paper, like other cantos or books in several early versions of *Savitri*. This facilitated the complex process of revision which was now set in motion. When the space between lines and in the margins was filled up, the backs of the pages were available. In extreme cases, whole cantos were written on the reverse sides of the pages with little relation to what was on the front.

Sri Aurobindo drafted many passages in small note-pads of the type used for Part One. Lines for Books Five and Nine and large portions of Books Six and Ten were written in this way. Canto Two of Book Six was almost entirely new. The passages drafted for it were transferred by the scribe to another note-pad, with changes dictated by Sri Aurobindo at the time.

The metamorphosis which the Book of Fate underwent included the introduction of the Queen: some of Aswapati's later speeches in the old version were now given to her, and her long speech at the beginning of Canto Two was composed. Sri Aurobindo worked on this book in 1946 and brought it close to its final form. But he was to return to it at the end and add significantly to the second canto.

An early manuscript of "Night" was substantially revised and turned into the two cantos of Book Nine. But in this instance Sri Aurobindo seems to have found the pre-1920 version more adequate than usual. He left it intact to a greater extent than in

the case of other books on which he bestowed his full attention in the 1940s. Only the Book of Death and the Epilogue stayed closer to their original shape, but he always intended to come back to these.

On the other hand, old drafts of “Twilight” formed merely a starting-point for the four cantos of Book Ten. The speeches of Savitri and Death were refashioned, rearranged in their order, and new ones inserted. As he proceeded from one canto to the next, Sri Aurobindo added longer and longer passages that were quite new. The first section of Canto One, the long speech of Death which ends Canto Two, all but the last few pages of Canto Three, and most of Canto Four—especially its second half, where Savitri finally triumphs over Death—owe little or nothing to any early version.

In a letter of 22 April 1947, Sri Aurobindo summarised the status of the various books of the second and third parts. Books Four, Five, Six, Nine and Ten had by then “been completed, in a general way, with a sufficient finality of the whole form but subject to final changes in detail”. The other four books were far from even a provisional completion.

A “drastic recasting of the last two books” was felt to be needed and “only a part of the eleventh” had been subjected to that process. But a yet larger task lay ahead, the splitting up of the original Book of Death and the writing of the new cantos that would go into the Book of Yoga. In his letter of April 1947 Sri Aurobindo did not say what he planned to do next. But there are reasons to believe that, rather than going on directly from Book Ten to Book Eleven, he now retraced his steps to Book Seven.

The description of Savitri’s Yoga, complementing that of Aswapati’s Yoga in Part One, was drafted in a thick notebook whose first hundred pages are filled with drafts for Book Ten, Canto Four. By March 1947, even before finishing the tenth book, Sri Aurobindo had begun to use this notebook for preliminary work on Book Seven. The scribe was not asked to copy the semi-legible handwriting of the draft. Instead, Sri Aurobindo dictated to him the lines he had jotted down, often in a

somewhat different form. The dictated version was extensively revised before a typed copy was made.

The Book of Yoga had four cantos at first. But the second, “The Parable of the Finding of the Soul”, grew to an inordinate length. When the typescript was revised, it was broken up into Cantos 2-5, from “The Parable of the Search for the Soul” to “The Finding of the Soul”. Revision of the typed copy was so elaborate in places (as elsewhere, especially in Book Six, Canto Two and in Book Eleven) that sometimes there was not enough room on the page. The scribe would then write on separate slips of paper, attaching as many as ten of these to a single page of the typescript.

Canto One of Book Seven has a different background. Early in the evolution of *Savitri*, the third canto of the poem (later, the third book) was called “Death”. It described the year leading up to Satyavan’s death as well as the fatal day itself. The latest version, with the heading “Book III”, is incomplete and stops before the last day. Sri Aurobindo used this manuscript as far as it goes when he put Book Seven, Canto One into its present form.

The second half of an earlier “Canto III” had to be used as the manuscript for Book Eight. It was revised slightly near the beginning and a substantial passage was dictated at the end. Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to return to the Book of Death, but this was not to be.

On 20 July 1948 he was compelled to admit, “even *Savitri* has very much slowed down and I am only making the last revisions of the First Part already completed; the other two parts are just now in cold storage.” When the later parts were taken up again, the most important task remaining was evidently to bring the almost untouched eleventh book up to the level of what preceded it. The old “Book VII / Day” on which it would be based was among the best-developed portions of the early poem. But after thirty years, Sri Aurobindo had more to say at the climax of *Savitri*.

There was also the Epilogue; but the contemplated revision of this must have seemed less essential to the total design.

Although a few pages of an early version were significantly retouched at some stage, the concluding two sections of the Epilogue stayed almost exactly as they were. Thus the closing pages of the epic, like most of Book Eight, remained as a sample of the style in which *Savitri* was originally written.

Near the end of his life, Sri Aurobindo's eyesight was so poor that he no longer wrote at all. He made no more drafts for *Savitri* and the work proceeded entirely by dictation. Virtually the whole revision of "The Book of Everlasting Day" was done in this purely oral manner and may be inferred to belong to this late period. There exist only a few pages of drafts for it in Sri Aurobindo's hand, found in note-pads he used around 1946. He was probably referring to these when he wrote in 1947 that he had already recast "part of the eleventh" book.

Book Eleven culminates in the longest continuous dictated passage in *Savitri*. The passage was written by the scribe in a separate note-pad and seems to have no antecedent in any previous draft. This is the section which begins on p. 702 with "Descend to life . . .", and ends at the bottom of p. 710 with "This earthly life become the life divine." Regarding Sri Aurobindo's dictation in Book Eleven, the scribe reports that "line after line began to flow from his lips like a smooth and gentle stream and it was on the next day that a revision was done to get the link for further continuation."

By this time, cantos of Parts Two and Three were coming out in journal instalments and fascicles like those of Part One. Most of the cantos of Books Four, Five, Six and Nine were published in this way in 1949-50. Unlike the fascicles of the first part, they were not revised afterwards by Sri Aurobindo.

But in 1948, an extract from Book Six, Canto Two had already been printed in the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*. An offprint of this was read to Sri Aurobindo and the changes he dictated were incorporated in a retyped copy. The painstaking revision of this second typescript was reportedly the last work he did on *Savitri*. A short paragraph before the concluding description of Narad's departure was the final passage to receive detailed attention in November 1950, less than a month before

Sri Aurobindo's passing. The thirteen-line paragraph was expanded to the seventy-two lines beginning "Queen, strive no more to change the secret will. . . ."

Editions of *Savitri*

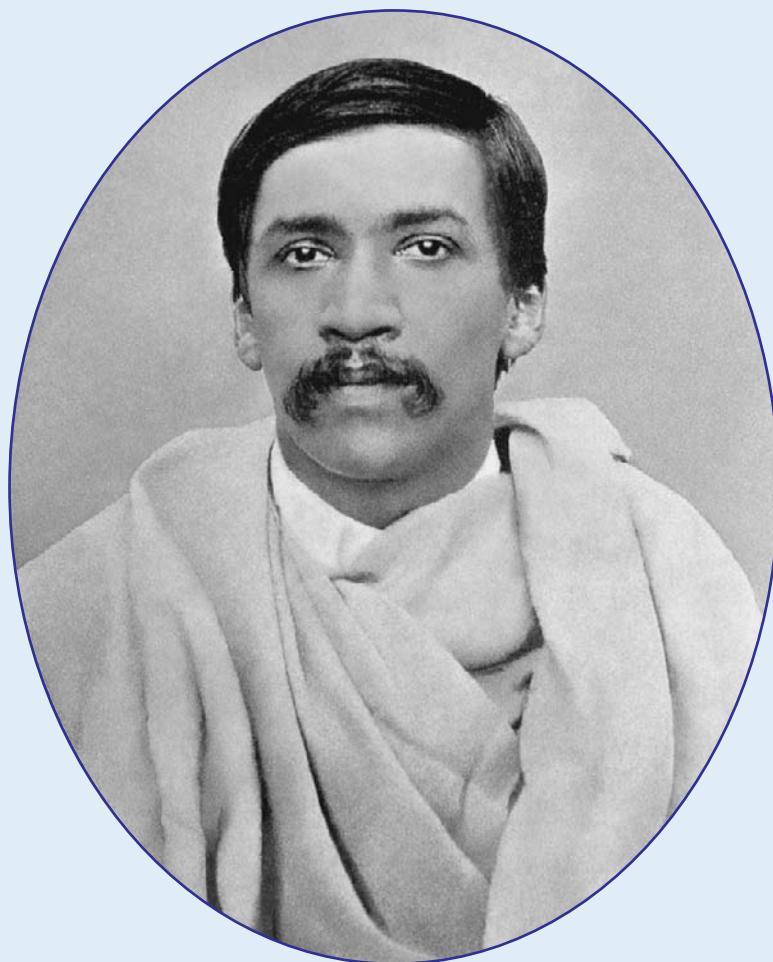
Sri Aurobindo revised the proofs of the first edition of Part One, making numerous final changes and adding more than a hundred new lines. In 1950, Part One of *Savitri* appeared in book form. Parts Two and Three could not be similarly revised. They came out in 1951 in a second volume, thus completing the first edition.

The second edition was issued in 1954 in one volume under the imprint of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. Some obvious errors in the text of the first edition were emended at this time. A few of these were evidently due to the mishearing of Sri Aurobindo's dictation.

In 1968, the first edition of Part One was reprinted with some new textual corrections. The third complete edition (1970) contained further emendations. Comprising Volumes 28 and 29 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, it was also brought out as a single volume in a reduced format. This was reprinted a number of times between 1973 and 1990. Several typographical and other errors were rectified in the 1976 impression.

The fourth, critically revised edition appeared in 1993 and is reproduced here. This edition was the outcome of a systematic comparison of the printed text of *Savitri* with the manuscripts. Each line was traced through all stages of copying, typing and printing in which errors could have occurred. Readings found to have come about through inaccurate transcription or misprinting were corrected. Accidentally omitted lines were restored to the text. This has resulted in a very slight increase in the length of the poem to its present 23,837 lines.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram



Sri Aurobindo

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Letters on Himself and the Ashram

Publisher's Note

This volume contains letters in which Sri Aurobindo referred to his life and works, his sadhana or practice of yoga, and the sadhana of members of his ashram. Many of the letters appeared earlier in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* (1972). These previously published letters, along with many others, appear here under the new title *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*.

The letters included in the present volume have been selected from Sri Aurobindo's extensive correspondence with members of the Ashram and outside disciples between November 1926 and November 1950. Letters he wrote before November 1926 are published in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. That volume also contains remarks by Sri Aurobindo on his life and works that were written as corrections of statements made by biographers and others, public messages on world events, letters to public figures, and public statements on his ashram and path of yoga.

The letters on the sadhana of members of the Ashram selected for publication in Part Four of the present volume differ from those published in *Letters on Yoga*, volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS, in that they are framed historically by events and conditions in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram between 1926 and 1950. The dates and the questions of Sri Aurobindo's correspondents that accompany many of the letters in the present volume make the historical context clear. The letters included in *Letters on Yoga* were also written to Ashramites and outside disciples during the 1926–1950 period, but they deal with Sri Aurobindo's yoga in a more general way, and thus are less in need of the contextualisation provided by the questions and dates.

The letters in the present volume have been arranged by the editors in five parts, the last of which includes mantras and messages. The texts have been checked against all available handwritten, typed and printed versions.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

REMARKS ON HIS LIFE AND WORKS AND ON HIS CONTEMPORARIES AND CONTEMPORARY EVENTS

Section One

Reminiscences and Remarks on Events in His Outer Life

His Life and Attempts to Write about It	5
His Name	8
Life in England, 1879–1893	9
Life in Baroda, 1893–1906	13
Political Career, 1906–1910	17
Outer Life in Pondicherry, 1910–1950	28

Section Two

General Remarks on His Life

Remarks on His Life in Pondicherry after 1926	35
His Temperament and Character	44
Heredity, Past Lives, Astrology	55

Section Three

Remarks on Himself as a Writer and on His Writings

On Himself as a Writer	63
Writing for Publication	67
On His Published Prose Writings	74
The Terminology of His Writings	141

Section Four

Remarks on Contemporaries and on Contemporary Problems

Remarks on Spiritual Figures in India	161
Remarks on European Writers on Occultism	183
Remarks on Public Figures in India	184
Remarks on Public Figures in Europe	203
Remarks on Indian Affairs, 1930–1946	205
Remarks on the World Situation, 1933–1949	209

CONTENTS

PART TWO

HIS SADHANA OR PRACTICE OF YOGA

Section One

Sadhana before Coming to Pondicherry in 1910

Ordinary Life and Yoga	227
Early Experiences	231
The Realisation of January 1908	239
Experiences in Alipur Jail, 1908–1909	263

Section Two

Sadhana in Pondicherry, 1910–1950

The Early Years in Pondicherry, 1910–1926	269
The Realisation of 24 November 1926	270
The Sadhana of 1927–1929	273
General Remarks on the Sadhana of the 1930s	277
The Supramental Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths	298
Remarks on the Current State of the Sadhana, 1931–1947	319

Section Three

Some Aspects of the Sadhana in Pondicherry

Inner Vicissitudes and Difficulties	371
Unusual Experiences and States of Consciousness	383

PART THREE

THE LEADER AND THE GUIDE

Section One

The Guru and the Avatar

The Guru	395
The Question of Avatarhood	399

Section Two

Help and Guidance

Help from the Guide	437
Guidance through Correspondence	450

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo's Force	479
Therapeutic Force and Healing	497
Lights, Visions, Dreams	515
Darshan	520
Contact with People Outside the Ashram	526

PART FOUR

THE PRACTICE OF YOGA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

Section One

The Practice of Yoga in the Ashram, 1926–1950

Entering Sri Aurobindo's Path	539
Admission, Staying, Departure	559
The Ashram and Its Atmosphere	630
Sadhana in the Ashram	634
Discipline in the Ashram	672
Rules in the Life of the Ashram	676
The Ashram and Religion	696
Human Relations and the Ashram	705
Work in the Ashram	742
Life and Death in the Ashram	759
Miscellaneous Matters	794

Section Two

The Practice of Yoga in the Ashram and the Outside World

The Ashram and the Outside World	811
Yoga Centres and Movements	814

PART FIVE

MANTRAS AND MESSAGES

Section One

Mantras

On Mantras	825
Mantras Written by Sri Aurobindo	829

CONTENTS

Section Two	
Messages	
Messages Written for Special Occasions	837
NOTE ON THE TEXTS	847

Letters on Himself and the Ashram

Selected Letters on His Outer and Inner Life,

His Path of Yoga and the Practice of Yoga in His Ashram



Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, c. 1915–1918

Part One

Remarks on His Life and Works
and on His Contemporaries
and Contemporary Events

Section One

Reminiscences and Remarks on Events in His Outer Life

His Life and Attempts to Write about It

Knowing about Things in His Past

For a long time I have wanted to hear something about the early days in Pondicherry from those who lived with you then. This morning I approached X and asked him. He agreed to tell me and a few friends some stories and anecdotes. Do you think it undesirable or objectionable in any way?

I do not know whether it is of much utility. Besides, it would be only myself who could speak of things in my past, giving them their true form and significance. But as you have arranged it, it can be done.

11 August 1933

On Writing His Biography

This [*a proposed book in Telugu*] is not a publication for which the Asram is responsible. If the outer facts of the life are corrected there is no harm, but nothing should be said about the inner things of the life here. It is not necessary to give the book so much importance or try to make it an authoritative biography.

14 May 1933

*

[B. R. DHURANDHAR TO A. B. PURANI:] My friend and colleague Mr. P. B. Kulkarni is the author of several books in Marathi, including a life of C. R. Das. He is now writing a biography of Sri Aurobindo Ghose. He has been collecting material for many years and has already written around 200 pages. As he wants the biography to be authentic he is trying to approach persons who have come into contact with Sri AG. Please be kind enough to extend your cooperation to him.

I am not interested in my own biography. Who is this Dhurandhar or this Kulkarni?

Is there any reply to be sent to this letter?

I don't think a reply is necessary. If I am to be murdered in cold print, it had better be done without my disciples becoming abettors of the crime.

24 June 1933

*

This idea of a "Life" going into details and personalities is itself an error. I wrote the brief life given to Dilip as containing all that I wanted to be said about me for the present.¹ The general public can know about my philosophy and Yoga and general character of my work, it has no claim to know anything about the personal side of my life or of that of the Asram either.

30 October 1935

*

First of all what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not?) but what he was and did within; it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all. It is the inner life that gives to the outer any power it may have, and the inner life of a spiritual man is something vast and full and, at least in the great figures, so crowded and teeming with significant things that no biographer or historian could ever hope to seize it all or tell it.

9 February 1936

*

Here is a tempting offer. A publisher writes to me: "We are beginning a series of biographies. . . . We propose that you take up Sri Aurobindo's biography. We shall give you very good terms, as you are well qualified for the task." If I decline

¹ The "brief life" referred to here is "Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch", reproduced on pages 5–10 of Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. See also Sri Aurobindo's letters to Dilip Kumar Roy about the "Life Sketch" and about biography in general on pages 11–13 of the same volume.—Ed.

I am sure they will just get it done by someone else. What do you say?

There is no one who can write my biography nor is this the time to do it, supposing it has to be done at all. If the outward facts of the life are meant, anybody can do that and it has no importance — the best thing is to have some outsider to do that mess, if mess there must be.

Comments on the Work of a Biographer

Girija's writings are of no importance.² I don't think there is anything on which we can call upon them to stop his articles. He will claim the right to personal judgment and interpretation of facts, as regards the mask of spirituality over the secret society and the "ruthless murders" and there is nothing else on which objection can be based. Let him go his way unnoticed.

² *Girijashankar Raychaudhuri was the author of a Bengali study of Sri Aurobindo's early life. See Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, pp. 88 and 562.—Ed.*

His Name

“Aurobindo”

But look at the irony of human decisions and human hopes. My father who wanted all his sons to be great men — and succeeded in a small way with three of them — in a sudden inspiration gave me the name Aurobindo, till then not borne by anyone in India or the wide world, that I might stand out unique among the great by the unique glory of my name. And now look at the swarm of Aurobindos with their mighty deeds in England, Germany and elsewhere! Don’t tell me it is my fault because of my indiscretion in becoming famous. When I went to the National College in the Swadeshi days which was my first public step towards the ignominies of fame, there was already an Aurobindo Prakash waiting for me there with the sardonic comment of the gods printed on his learned forehead. Aurobindo Prakash, indeed!

“AG”

I do not use the initials AG — they have been discarded long ago.

14 September 1933

Life in England, 1879–1893

An Early Memory

I am not at all concerned about Nicodemus and what seems to me his stupid and ignorant question; he brings a fantastic physical notion across Christ's teaching and I am afraid I must hold him partially responsible for Freud's sexual meanderings and his craze for going back into his mother's womb. I don't myself remember any blissful sojourn in that locality in my case and I don't believe in it and I am quite sure I never felt any passion for returning there. The great Sigismund must have had it, I suppose, and remembered that blissful period and felt a longing for beatific return and I suppose others must have had it unless its acceptance is only a result of a general acceptance of the papal infallibility of Sigismund in psycho-analytical matters, about which few people have any direct reliable knowledge or can form a truly independent conviction based on truly independent evidence. I believe the practical methods and evidence for the success of psycho-analysis are made up mostly of suggestion and auto-suggestion; for suggestion and auto-suggestion can do almost anything and can make you believe in anything and everything. Many of these suggestions seem to me quite artificial and their forced connection with sex to be quite groundless. For instance, there is the suggestion of the dream of being stabbed with a knife, which they say is a rendering by the subliminal of an actual sex-probe, and of that you can obviously persuade a patient who is under your influence. I myself had when a boy of 8 or 9 a vivid dream which I never forgot of myself alone in my bed—I used to be sent to bed much earlier than my brothers—and lay there in a sort of constant terror of the darkness and phantoms and burglars till my brothers came up [*incomplete*]

Exposure to Christianity

[*Lines from a poem submitted to Sri Aurobindo:*]

Soul of poet, thine be quiet
Of the Virgin's prayerful countenance . . .

[Underlining “*prayerful countenance*”:] Lord God! you bring me back to my childhood's agonies in an English Nonconformist chapel.

11 September 1933

Education in England

This afternoon I was doing japa as usual and dropped off to sleep. Then I saw a curious dream. . . . I sang and the song was on Shiva, and was so ecstatic that you got up and blessed me, joining in the hymn. . . . Tell me, however, do you ever sing — I don't mean music of the spheres but our mortal songs with musical intervals as we understand, as for instance Mother does?

No — I don't sing on the physical plane. My education in England was badly neglected — though people say to the contrary. I filled in most of the *lacunae* afterwards, but some remained of which the musical gap is one. But that is no reason why I should not sing on the supraphysical plane where you met me. There is no exact correspondence between the formation here and the formations there. On the contrary on these inner planes the subliminal as they call it in Europe — that is to say, our inner selves — is full of powers which have not emerged — yet at least — in the physical consciousness. And especially as I was full of Shiva in your experience there is no reason why I should not have sung for I suppose Shiva sings as well as dances?

31 August 1933

I.C.S. Examination

Do you think your I.C.S. examination answer papers of 1892 have been preserved by the authorities? I was thinking of

getting them if possible, in order to preserve them as a relic with us. Perhaps they do not give them out or they might have disposed of them.

Not likely that they keep such things.

1 May 1936

A Cambridge Anecdote

While we all agree that we all lie, X thinks she is incapable of lying.

Lies? Well, a Punjabi student at Cambridge once took our breath away by the frankness and comprehensive profundity of his affirmation: “Liars! But we are all liars!” It appeared that he had intended to say “lawyers”, but his pronunciation gave his remark a deep force of philosophic observation and generalisation which he had not intended! But it seems to me the last word on human nature. Only the lying is sometimes intentional, sometimes vaguely half-intentional, sometimes quite unintentional, momentary and unconscious. So there you are!

Learning Languages

It seems most people read more than they assimilate. They read lots of French stories, novels and dramas very rapidly and as a result they hardly assimilate the idioms, phrases, grammatical peculiarities, etc. I find it surprising that X and Y commit elementary errors when they speak. I think one ought to read a book three to four times.

I suppose most learn only to be able to read French books, not to know the language well. X writes and reads fluently but he does not know the grammar — he has only just begun to learn it. Y does not know French so well — he has learned mostly by typing a lot of things in French. It is not many who know French accurately and idiomatically. Z was the best in that respect. I don’t think many people would consent to make a principle of reading each book 3 or 4 times in the way you advocate, for very few have the scholarly mind — but two or three books should

be so read—I learnt Sanskrit by reading the Naladamayanti episode in the Mahabharat like that with minute care several times.

25 March 1937

First Reading of the Upanishads

Is it true that the deep significance of mantras like “OM Shanti Shanti Shanti” and of words like “paix” in the Mother’s *Prayers* is lost because of too much familiarity?

Yes, it must be the familiarity—for I remember when I first read the OM Shanti Shanti Shanti of the Upanishads it had a powerful effect on me. In French it depends on the form or the way in which it is put.

14 February 1936

The European Temperament

How is it that most Europeans manage to remain cheerful, while in India there is so much gloom and moroseness in family life, and cunning, strategy and selfishness in social life? Half of the cheerfulness in Europeans, I suspect, comes not so much from intrinsic joy or humour as from the discipline of having good manners.

It is largely the latter—to show one’s bad moods in society is considered bad form and indicating want of self-control; so people in Europe usually keep their worse side for their own house and family and don’t show it outside. Some do but are considered as either neurasthenic or as having a “sale caractère”. But apart from that Europeans have, I think, more vitality than Indians and are more elastic and resilient and less nervously sensitive. There are plenty of exceptions, of course, but generally, I think, that is true. In family life it is more of the rajasic ego than gloom and moroseness that creates trouble. Gloom and moroseness generally meet with ridicule as a “Byronic” or tragic affectation, so it is very soon discouraged. Cunning, strategy and selfishness in social life is considered in France at least to be more a characteristic of peasant life—in the middle class it is supposed to be the sign of the “arriviste”. 6 January 1937

Life in Baroda, 1893–1906

The Swaying Sensation

I was standing on a scaffolding which was swinging to and fro. At one point I saw the walls nearby swinging like a pendulum. I understood the reason, but the sight of swinging walls was so vivid that I put my hand on the wall nearby to convince myself that it was not moving — yet the “eye-mind” refused to accept the evidence of the “touch-mind”!

But what was it due to? The sense of swinging of the scaffolding communicating itself to the walls as it were in the impression upon some brain centre? After travelling long in a boat I had once or twice the swaying sense of it after coming off it, as if the land about me was tossing like the boat — of course a subtle physical impression, but vivid enough.

4 April 1935

Maharashtrian Cooking

I was just invited by the Dewas Maharaja for tea. I hope he will give me good cakes!

I hope it did not turn out like my first taste of Mahratti cookery — when for some reason my dinner was *non est* and somebody sent to my neighbour, a Mahratta professor, for food. I took one mouthful and only one. Oh God! sudden hell-fire in the mouth could not have been more surprising. Enough to burn down the whole of London in one wild agonising swoop of flame!

15 September 1936

An Attack of Smallpox

A book says one attack of smallpox generally protects for life; but second attacks are not uncommon.

Well, there are people who say that smallpox attacks immunise for only a few years.

But if it is as you say, then there are others, I suppose. There is X among the servants for instance who nearly died of smallpox. I myself had a slight attack in Baroda soon after I came from England—so you needn't try to come up and vaccinate me.

13 April 1937

The Power of Prayer

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my Mesho, K. K. Mitra, editor of *Sanjibani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supraphysical or even imaginative person, was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped as useless. The father said "There is only God now, let us pray." He did, and from that moment the girl began to recover, typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know any number of cases like that. Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery—put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole, if he had to grant all of them—it wouldn't do.

7 October 1936

The Charm of Kashmir

Quite agree with your estimate of Kashmir. The charm of its mountains and rivers and the ideal life dawdling along in the midst of a supreme beauty in the slowly moving leisure of a houseboat—that was a kind of earthly Paradise—also writing poetry on the banks of the Jhelum where it rushes down Kashmir towards the plains. Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gaekwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after

all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.

7 November 1938

The Age of Swami Brahmananda

Captain Guha, an Assistant Surgeon, asked me whether there was any proof that Swami Brahmananda of Chandod lived for 400 years. Could you possibly enlighten me?

There is no incontrovertible proof. 400 years is an exaggeration. It is known however that he lived on the banks of the Narmada for 80 years and when he arrived there, he was already in appearance at the age when maturity turns towards overripeness. He was when I met him just before his death a man of magnificent physique showing no signs of old age except white beard and hair, extremely tall, robust, able to walk any number of miles a day and tiring out his younger disciples, walking too so swiftly that they tended to fall behind, a great head and magnificent face that seemed to belong to men of more ancient times. He never spoke of his age or of his past either except for an occasional almost accidental utterance. One of these was spoken to a disciple of his well known to me, a Baroda Sardar, Mazumdar (it was on the top storey of his house by the way that I sat with Lele in Jan. 1908 and had a decisive experience of liberation and Nirvana). Mazumdar learned that he was suffering from a bad tooth and brought him a bottle of Floriline, a toothwash then much in vogue. The Yogi refused saying, "I never use medicines. My one medicine is Narmada water. As for this tooth I have suffered from it since the days of Bhao Girdi." Bhao Girdi was the Maratha general Sadashiv Rao Bhao who disappeared in the battle of Panipat and his body was never found. Many formed the conclusion that Brahmananda was himself Bhao Girdi, but this was an imagination. Nobody who knew Brahmananda would doubt any statement of his—he was a man of perfect simplicity and truthfulness and did not seek fame or to impose himself. When he died he was still in full strength and his death came not by decay but by the accident of blood poisoning through a rusty nail that entered into his

foot as he walked on the sands of the Narmada. I had spoken to the Mother about him, that was why she mentioned him in her *Conversations* which were not meant for the public—otherwise she might not have said anything as the longevity of Brahmananda to more than 200 years depends only on his own casual word and is a matter of faith in his word. There is no “legal” proof of it. I may say that three at least of his disciples to my knowledge kept an extraordinary aspect and energy of youth even to a comparatively late or quite advanced age—but this perhaps may be not uncommon among those who practise both Raja and Hatha Yoga together.

1 February 1936

Learning Gujarati

I learned Gujarati not for the literature but because it was the language of Baroda where I had to live for 13 years. I have now picked it up again because there are so many Gujarati sadhaks who do not know English—just as I am picking up Hindi now.

25 December 1935

Political Career, 1906–1910

Mother India

When you wrote that you looked upon India not as an inert, dead mass of matter, but as the very Mother, the living Mother, I believe that you *saw* that Truth.

My dear sir, I am not a materialist. If I had seen India as only a geographical area with a number of more or less interesting or uninteresting people in it, I would hardly have gone out of my way to do all that for the said area.

Is there something in what you wrote? Or was it just poetic or patriotic sentiment?

Merely a poetic or patriotic sentiment — just as in yourself only your flesh, skin, bones and other things of which the senses give their evidence are real, but what you call your mind and soul do not really exist being merely psychological impressions created by the food you eat and the activity of the glands. Poetry and patriotism have of course the same origin and the things they speak of are quite unreal. Amen.

11 February 1936

Two Wings of the Independence Movement

It is common today to read and hear the statements of influential Indian leaders condemning the revolutionary efforts of their compatriots in by-gone years. Yet I think that there is little doubt but that the Bengali “revolution”, to name one phase of the larger movement, was of paramount importance in the understanding and realisation of the goals for which the nationalism of the 20th century was heading.

Sri Aurobindo has received your letter.¹ He says there were two

¹ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent. — Ed.

wings to the Independence Movement. First, there was the external political and constitutional movement. And secondly there was the revolutionary movement which meant a preparation for an armed revolt. He considered both the movements necessary and had his share in preparing both.

19 April 1949

The Swadeshi Movement (1905–1910) and Later Developments

When I read the speeches you delivered before 1910, it seems to me as if Gandhi had almost copied everything from that — Swaraj, Samiti, Non-cooperation, and so on. If not outwardly he must have received these things from you in an occult way.

The whole of Gandhi's affair is simply our passive resistance movement given an ethical instead of a political form, applied with a rigid thoroughness which human nature except in a minority cannot bear for long and given too a twist which seems to me to make it harmful to the sane balance and many-sided plasticity necessary for national life. What with Gandhi, Hitler and the rest (very different people but all furiously one-sided and one-idealised) a large part of humanity seems to have gone off its balance in these times.

21 September 1934

*

Did you enjoy the article “Fifty Years of Growth” by K. R. Kripalani in the *Visva-Bharati*?² Fifty years of growth refers by the way to the Congress. About the Swadeshi period he writes: “A long time was to elapse before we were to appreciate the infinite possibilities of the muddy waters at hand. In the meantime something startlingly romantic happened. . . .

“The fountain [of undefiled water] was cut by the fiery shafts of Tilak, Vivekananda, and Aurobindo, among others. They gave to Indian Nationalism its fiery basis in India’s ancient cultural glory and its modern mission. . . . It is always more beautiful and more inspiring to contemplate the Idea

² K. R. Kripalani, “Fifty Years of Growth”, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, vol. I, part IV, New Series (February–April 1936)*, pp. 53–60.

and be drunk with it than to face the actual facts and touch the running sores. . . .

“But this spirit, fiery and beautiful as it was, was fraught with grave dangers. The glory that it invoked and the passion that it aroused were so intensely Hindu that Muslims were automatically left out. Not that they were deliberately excluded. . . . However that may be, it seems now not unlikely that had the influence of Tilak and Aurobindo lasted in its original intensity, we might have had two Indias today—a Hindu-istan and a Pak-istan, both overlaying and undermining each other. . . .

“However that be, the fact remains that the conditions of our country being what they were, the beneficial effects of Tilak’s and of Aurobindo’s political personalities were soon exhausted, and might, if prolonged, have proved dangerous, if Gandhiji had not come on the scene. . . .”

Subject, politics,—taboo. Writer Kripalani a “romantic” and “idealistic” visionary without hold on realities, living only in academic ideas—so not worth commenting. All the present Congress lot seem to be men who live in ideas only, mostly secondhand, borrowed from Europe (Socialism, Communism etc.), borrowed from Gandhi, borrowed from tradition or borrowed from anywhere; Kripalani looks down on the old Moderates for being in a different way exactly what he himself is—only they were classics and not romantics. So what is the use of reading their “histories”? However quite privately and within brackets³ I will enlighten you on one or two points.

(1) The Swadeshi movement was idealist on one side (no great movement can go without an ideal), but it was perfectly practical in its aims and methods. We were quite aware of the poverty of India and its fallen condition, but we did not try to cure the poverty by Khaddar and Hindi prachar. We advocated the creation of an industrial India and made the movement a Swadeshi movement in order to give that new birth a field and favourable conditions—cottage industries were not omitted in

³ Sri Aurobindo put brackets at the beginning and end of this reply to indicate that it was not to be circulated in the Ashram at that time.—Ed.

our view, but there were no fads. The Swadeshi movement created the following very practical effects:

(a) It destroyed the Moderate reformist politics and spread the revolutionary mentality (as Jawaharlal now calls it) and the ideal of independence.

(b) It laid the foundations of an industrial India (not of course wholly industrial, that was not our intention) which is however slowly growing today.

(c) It brought in the commercial classes and the whole educated middle class into the political field—and not the middle class only, while Moderatism had touched only a small fringe.

(d) It had not time to bring in the peasantry, but it had begun the work and Gandhi only carried it farther on by his flashy and unsound but exciting methods.

(e) It laid down a method of agitation which Gandhi took up and continued with three or four startling additions, Khaddar, Hindiism, Satyagraha = getting beaten with joy, Khilafat, Harijan etc. All these had an advertisement value, a power of poking up things which was certainly livelier than anything we put into it. Whether the effects of these things have been good is a more doubtful question.

(2) As a matter of fact the final effects of Gandhi's movement have been

(a) A tremendous fissure between the Hindus and Mahomedans which is going to be kept permanent by communal representation.

(b) A widening fissure between caste Hindus and Harijans, to be made permanent in the same way.

(c) A great confusion in Indian politics which leaves it a huge mass of division, warring tendencies, no clear guide or compass anywhere.

(d) A new constitution which puts the conservative class in power to serve as a means of maintaining British domination or at least as an intolerable brake on progress — also divides India into five or six Indias, Hindu, Moslem, Pariah, Christian, Sikh etc.

(e) A big fiasco⁴ of the Non-Cooperation movement which is throwing politics back on one side to reformism, on the other to a blatant and insincere Socialism.

That, I think, is the sum and substance of the matter.

As for the Hindu-Moslem affair, I saw no reason why the greatness of India's past or her spirituality should be thrown into the waste-paper basket in order to conciliate the Moslems who would not at all be conciliated by such a stupidity. What has created the Hindu-Moslem split was not Swadeshi, but the acceptance of the communal principle by the Congress, (here Tilak made his great blunder), and the farther attempt by the Khilafat movement to conciliate them and bring them in on wrong lines. The recognition of that communal principle at Lucknow made them permanently a separate *political* entity in India which ought never to have happened; the Khilafat affair made that separate political entity an organised separate political power. It was not Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education, Swaraj (our platform) which made this tremendous division, how could it? Tilak whom the Kripalani man blames along with me for it, is responsible not by that, but by his support of the Lucknow affair — for the rest, Gandhi did it with the help of his Ali brothers.

There you are. On a tabooed subject — it is, I think, enough. Not at all for circulation you understand and quite confidential.

14 April 1936

Living Dangerously

There is a coward in every human being — precisely the part in him which insists on “safety” — for that is certainly not a brave attitude. I admit however that I would like safety myself if I could have it — perhaps that is why I have always managed instead to

⁴ I am referring to my prophecy made at the beginning of the Non-Cooperation movement, “It will end in a great confusion or in a great fiasco.” I was not a correct prophet, as I have pointed out before. It should have run, “It will end in a great confusion *and* a great fiasco.” But after all I was not speaking from the supramental which alone can be infallible.

live dangerously and follow the dangerous paths dragging so many poor X's in my train.

5 January 1935

*

You wrote the other day that you have lived dangerously. All that we know is that you were a little hard up in England and had just a little here in Pondicherry at the beginning. In Baroda we know that you had a very handsome pay and in Calcutta you were quite well off. Of course, that can be said about Mother, but we know nothing about you.

I was so astonished by this succinct, complete and impeccably accurate biography of myself that I let myself go in answer! But I afterwards thought that it was no use living more dangerously than I am obliged to, so I rubbed all out. My only answer now is !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I thank you for the safe, rich, comfortable and unadventurous career you have given me. I note also that the only danger man can run in this world is that of the lack of money. Karl Marx himself could not have made a more economic world of it! But I wonder whether that was what Nietzsche meant by living dangerously?

15 January 1935

*

I was grieved to see that you rubbed off what you wrote. We want to know so much of your life, of which we know so little!

Why the devil should you know anything about it?

Of course I didn't mean that lack of money is the only danger one can be in. Nevertheless, is it not true that poverty is one of the greatest dangers as well as incentives? Lives of great men show that.

You are writing like Samuel Smiles. Poverty has never had any terrors for me nor is it an incentive. You seem to forget that I left my very safe and "handsome" Baroda position without any need to it, and that I gave up also the Rs. 150 of the National College Principalship, leaving myself with nothing to live on. I

could not have done that if money had been an incentive.

I know that the idea has obvious fallacies, but isn't it broadly true?

Not in the least.

But what is the use of telling me what Nietzsche meant by living dangerously, and how am I to know that you mean the same?

Certainly not the commercial test. I was quoting Nietzsche — so the mention of him is perfectly apposite.

Kindly let us know by your example what you mean by living dangerously.

I won't. It is altogether unnecessary besides. If you don't realise that starting and carrying on for ten years and more a revolutionary movement for independence without means and in a country wholly unprepared for it meant living dangerously, no amount of puncturing of your skull with words will give you that simple perception. And as to the Yoga, you yourself were perorating at the top of your voice about its awful, horrible, pathetic and tragic dangers. So —

16 January 1935

*

I beg to submit my apologies. I committed this folly because of ignorance of facts. Believe me, I did not know that you were the brain behind the revolutionary movement and its real leader till I read the other day what Barinbabu has written about you. I only knew that you were an extremist Congress leader, for which the Government was shadowing and suspecting you. Now that it is confirmed by you, I know what is meant by the phrase "living dangerously".

Wait a sec. I have admitted nothing about "Barinbabu" — only to having inspired and started and maintained while I was in the field a movement for independence. That used at least to be

a matter of public knowledge. I do not commit myself to more than that. My dear fellow, I was acquitted of sedition twice and of conspiracy to wage war against the British Raj once and each time by an impeccably British magistrate, judges or judge. Does not that prove conclusively my entire harmlessness and that I was a true Ahimsuk?

17 January 1935

Politics and Truth-Speaking

Would it not sometimes be dangerous to speak truth, e.g., in politics, war, revolution? The truth-speaking moralist who would always insist on not concealing anything may bring disaster by revealing the plans and movements of one side to the opposite side.

Politics, war, revolution are things of stratagem and ambush — one cannot expect the truth there. From what I have heard Gandhi himself has played tricks and dodges there. Das told me it was impossible to lead men in politics or get one's objects without telling falsehoods by the yard and he was often feeling utterly disgusted with himself and his work, but supposed he would have to go through with it to the end.

There is no necessity to reveal one's plans and movements to those who have no business to know it, who are incapable of understanding or who would act as enemies or spoil all as a result of their knowledge. Secrecy is perfectly admissible and usual in spiritual matters except in special relations like that of the shishya to the guru. We do not let people outside know what is going on in the Asram but we do not tell any lies about it either. Most Yogis say nothing about their spiritual experiences to others or not until long afterwards and secrecy was a general rule among the ancient Mystics. No moral or spiritual law commands us to make ourselves naked to the world or open up our hearts and minds for public inspection. Gandhi talked about secrecy being a sin but that is one of his many extravagances.

17 May 1936

Some Political Associates

I knew very well Sister Nivedita (she was for many years a friend and a comrade in the political field) and met Sister Christine,—the two closest European disciples of Vivekananda. Both were Westerners to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook; although Sister Nivedita, an Irishwoman, had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-Oriental to the end. Yet she found no difficulty in arriving at realisation on the lines of Vedanta.

*

I knew Satish Mukherji when he was organising the Bengal National College (1905–7), but afterwards I had no contact with him any longer. Even at that time we were not intimate and I knew nothing about his spiritual life or attainments—except that he was a disciple of Bijoy Goswami—as were also other political coworkers and leaders, like Bipin Pal and Manoranjan Guha. I knew Satish Mukherji only as a very able and active organiser in the field of education—a mission prophetically assigned to him, I was told, by his guru,—nothing more.

3 December 1932

*

Charu Dutt, I.C.S., wrote a review of Jawaharlal's *Autobiography* in the *Visva-Bharati* review last month. Did you know him well of yore? Political?

Charu Dutt? Yes, saw very little of him, for physically our way lay far apart, but that little was very intimate, one of the kind of men whom I used to appreciate most and felt as if they had been my friends and comrades and fellow-warriors in the battle of the ages and could be so for ages more. But curiously enough my physical contact with men of his type—there were two or three others—was always brief. Because I had something else to do this time, I suppose.

28 September 1936

The Surat Congress (1907)

I happened to read an article in which the author mentions the Surat Congress, but strangely enough he does not even mention your name whereas Tilak, Lal, Pal take the prominent place. It is impossible he could not have known the part you played. In a Gujarati novel, K. M. Munshi has brought you in and indicated you were the central figure, putting certain things in movement and keeping behind the veil. X also says that Tilak used to consult you. How is it these things are forgotten by these Gandhiites?

Probably they know nothing about it, as these things happened behind the veil. History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the show in front of the curtain. Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat. Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn or founding the revolutionary movement is very little known.

22 March 1936

Leaving Politics

I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct adesh in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal. For the rest, I have never known any will of mine for any major event in the conduct of the world affairs to fail in the end, although it may take a long time for the world-forces to fulfil it. As for

the possibility of failure in my spiritual work, I shall deal with that another time. Difficulties there are, but I see no cause for pessimism or for the certification of failure. October 1932

Inability to Participate in Politics

There was a report in the *Hindu* that a deputation was coming from London to Pondicherry to ask you to take the helm of politics as a successor to Gandhi. The report says that you know 35 languages and have written 500 books.

I have read the wonderful screed from London. Truly I am more marvellous than I thought, 35 languages and 500 books! As to the seven pilgrims, they must be men of the Gita's type, *niṣkāma-karmīs*, to be prepared to come all these thousands of miles for nothing. 2 September 1934

*

Sri Aurobindo says that it is impossible for him to take up political action and enter the political field which would involve a sacrifice of his spiritual work.⁵

His spiritual help is given to the country and individually to all those who aspire for it. He is ready to continue this help and even to increase it if it is necessary. But he is convinced that written messages alone are not sufficient to have a permanent effect or even a sufficiently wide effect.

Among the members of the Ashram he sees nobody whom he can send to represent him effectively.

⁵ This reply was written by the Mother at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or under his instructions.—Ed.

Outer Life in Pondicherry 1910–1950

Meeting Paul Richard

I would like to know the mystery behind M. Paul Richard's meeting with Sri Aurobindo. I have heard that when he started for Pondicherry you [*i.e. the Mother*] gave him some signs or some questions to be solved by an Indian Yogi. And they were solved by Sri Aurobindo.

I don't think there was any mystery. He came for political purposes and enquired of Naidu or perhaps from Shankar Chettiar in whose house I was living whether there was any Indian Guru here and my name was mentioned and they brought him to see me. He showed me some signs employed in Indian, Egyptian and other occultisms, some of which I had seen — they happened to be, he said, the Indian ones. That was all. 26 June 1936

Fasting

I have myself fasted first 10 days and then 23 days just to see what it was like and how far one could live without food, and certain things like that. I found that it was no good. To take with equanimity whatever comes (or does not come) seemed to me more the thing than any violent exercises like that.

4 May 1935

Start of the *Arya*

It is said that the *Arya* began on the day the world war broke out or just before it. Has this not some significance? Was it not a kind of parallel movement?

The *Arya* was decided on on the 1st June and it was agreed that it would start on the 15th August. The war intervened on the 4th. "Parallelism" of dates if you like, but it was not very close

and certainly nothing came down at that time.

9 September 1935

Walking and Standing

X is experiencing pain in her heel. There is no bone or joint tenderness, just tenderness in the pad of fat in the heel.

It may be “policeman’s disease” as the French call it, “maladie de sergent de ville”; I have forgotten the technical name for it, but it is supposed to come from too much standing. I had it myself for something like a year because of walking or standing all day — that was when I used to meditate while walking. The Fr. medical dictionary says there is no remedy but rest. I myself got rid of it by application of force without any rest or any other remedy. But X is not a policeman and she does not walk while she meditates — so how did she get it?

29 May 1935

The Mother’s Taking Charge of the Ashram

On what date in 1926 did Mother take up the work of the sadhana?

Mother does not at all remember the exact date. It may have been a few days after 15th August. She took up the work completely when I retired.

17 May 1936

Bushy and the Meditation House

Today I felt like writing a story. I cast it in the form of an autobiography of Bushy the great cat. In the opening statement she claims to be one of the greatest personalities in the world.

Bushy was the cat who introduced us to this house (Meditation) running before us and showing us all the rooms. That ought to find a place in her autobiography.

12 October 1934

**Relations with the Government
of French India, 1934–1935**

But how is it that people can have such an idea?¹ There is no fund and there has never been a fund. All money has been given to myself or to the Mother. If there were a fund I suppose there would be trustees and a secretary and a treasurer and all the rest of it! The houses are ours, the money ours and it is to us in our houses that people come for learning the methods of Yoga. There is no association or public institution and nothing belonging to an association or institution.

16 February 1934

*

I have not wantonly stopped the books or free letter-writing nor have I become impatient with you or anyone. I am faced with a wanton and brutal attack on my life-work from outside and I need all my time and energy to meet it and do what is necessary to repel it during these days. I hope that I can count not only on the indulgence but on the support of those who have followed me and loved me, while I am thus occupied, much against my will.

I do hope you will not misunderstand me. I have not altered to you in the least and if I wrote laconically it was because I had no time to do otherwise.

My prohibition of long letters was of a general character and I had to issue it so that the stoppage of the books might not result in a flood of long letters which would leave me no time for making the concentration and taking the steps I have to take. I have said that you can send your poems and write too when you feel any urgent need—I had no feeling to the contrary at all.

17 February 1934

*

¹ Shortly before writing this letter, Sri Aurobindo learned that the Government of French India planned to launch an inquiry into the status of the Ashram. It appears that this move was provoked by reports that the Ashram was a formal "institution" that had a "common fund". Had this been the case, it ought to have been registered with the government as a legal entity.—Ed.

I do not know that your going later to Bombay is at all necessary — since it is decided, it may be better to get it over quickly. It is too early to say whether the menace to the Asram is conquered or still hangs over it.

19 February 1934

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Of course, one must use these external means and there one must be careful so as to have as many factors as possible on one's side and give as little handle as possible to adverse forces. But no outward action can be for us sure of success unless behind it is the growing Yogic vision and Yogic power. We have had ourselves serious difficulties from the outside, petitions made against us to the Minister of Colonies in Paris and a report demanded from the Governor here which if acted on would have put the Asram in serious jeopardy. We used outward means of a very slight and simple character, i.e. getting the Mother's brother (Governor in French Equatorial Africa) to intervene with the Ministry (and also an eminent writer in France, a disciple), but for the most part I used a strong inner Force to determine the action of the Colonial Office, to get a favourable report from the Governor here, to turn the minds of some who were against us here and to nullify the enmity of others. In all these respects I succeeded and our position here is much stronger than before; especially a new and favourable Governor has come. Nevertheless we have to remain vigilant that the situation may not be again threatened. Also one disadvantage has resulted, that we have been asked not to buy or rent more houses, but to build instead. This is difficult without land near here and much money; so we are for the moment unable to expand. In certain respects however this is not a disadvantage, as I have been long wishing to put off farther expansion and consolidate the inward life of the Asram in a more completely spiritual sense. I give this as an example of how things have to be dealt with from the Yogic point of view.

20 March 1935

*

X has passed along these two pieces of news about the Asram:
(1) During his tour Mahatma Gandhi went to Pondicherry and with a view to meet Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to him. In reply Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to the Mahatma, which the local authorities withheld. It was after this that Sri Aurobindo published his statements about the Asram and his teaching.²
(2) The French authorities at Pondicherry have enacted a law, the effect of which was to prevent the Mother from purchasing any more houses in the town for the purposes of the Asram.

You can write about the stories of the Asram that they are not true. The publication had no connection with Gandhi's visit to Pondicherry. No "law" has been passed by the French Government, nor could be. The relations of the Asram with the French Government are very friendly. But there was a housing crisis in Pondicherry and some complaints from the officials that they could not get houses to live in because the Asram had occupied so much of the better part of the town, so it was suggested to us that we might build houses in future rather than buy them.

1 July 1935

² The "statements" referred to here were first published in a newspaper on 20 February 1934 and later brought out in pamphlets and as a booklet. See Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 530–31 and 547–50. For Gandhi's visit to Pondicherry see pp. 442–44 of the same volume.—Ed.

Section Two

General Remarks on His Life

Remarks on His Life in Pondicherry after 1926

On His Retirement

What harm would there be if you would talk for a few minutes to each sadhak at least once a year?

There would be no gain from it and my retirement is necessary for the inner work.

25 May 1933

*

When will you come out of your retirement?

That is a thing of which nothing can be said at present. My retirement had a purpose and that purpose must first be fulfilled.

25 August 1933

*

The psychic is not responsible for my aloofness or retirement — it is the mass of opposition that I have to face which is responsible for that. It is only when I have overcome by the aid of the psychic and (excuse me!) your other *bête noire*, the supermind, that the retirement can cease.

21 January 1935

*

Sardar Vallabhbhai asked X when you would come out and guide people. X replied that that was not to be expected. I rather suspect that Vallabhbhai spoke sarcastically and X failed to catch it.

Perhaps not. Vallabhbhai is not likely to understand more than others that a spiritual life can be led by me without a view to a comeback hereafter for the greatest good of the greatest India (or world). Tagore expected the latter and is much disappointed

that I have not done it.

9 March 1935

*

Will you come out of your retirement after the supramental descent?

That will be decided after the descent.

23 September 1935

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[SWAMI SAMBUDDHANANDA:] In connection with the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna, a Parliament of Religions will be held in Calcutta from the 1st to 7th March, 1937. It is the unanimous and seriously considered view of the organisers that nobody in India today is in a more appropriate position than you are to direct the proceedings of the International Assembly. We shall be highly obliged if you would kindly consent to preside over the session of the Parliament.

Write to him on my behalf that I regret I am unable to accept his invitation as I have adopted a rule of life which prevents me from appearing in public or taking any personal part in public activities. This rule is still valid for me and I am unable to depart from it.

Or perhaps you [Sri Aurobindo's secretary] can type the answer as from me and I will sign it. 17 October 1936

On His Modified Retirement after 1938

By the way, no one sees me daily and talks with me except the Mother and those who have been in attendance on me since the accident. Anything to the contrary you may have heard is incorrect. 31 March 1942

31 March 1942

*

My retirement is nothing new, even the cessation of contact by correspondence is nothing new,—it has been there now for a long time. I had to establish the rule not out of personal preference or likes or dislikes, but because I found that the correspondence occupied the greater part of my time and my energies.

and there was a danger of my real work remaining neglected and undone if I did not change my course and devote myself to it, while the actual results of this outer activity were very small—it cannot be said that it resulted in the Asram making a great spiritual progress. Now in these times of world-crisis when I have had to be on guard and concentrated all the time to prevent irremediable catastrophes and have still to be so and when, besides, the major movement of the inner spiritual work needs an equal concentration and persistence, it is not possible for me to abandon my rule. (Moreover, even for the individual sadhak it is in his interest that this major spiritual work should be done, for its success would create conditions under which his difficulties could be much more easily overcome.) All the same I have broken my rule, and broken it for you alone; I do not see how that can be interpreted as a want of love and a hard granite indifference.

29 May 1942

*

It is not possible to accept his suggestion about joining with those who are in personal attendance upon me. They were not admitted as a help to their sadhana but for practical reasons. In fact here also there is some misconception. Continual personal contact does not necessarily bring out the action of the Force. Hriday had that personal contact with Ramakrishna and the opportunity of personal service to him, but he received nothing except on one occasion and then he could not contain the Force and the realisation which the Master put into him. The feeling of losing himself which X had was on the special occasions of the Darshan and the pranam to the Mother. That he had this response shows that he can answer to the Force, that he has the receptivity, as we say, and that is a great thing; all do not have it and those who have it are not always conscious of its cause but only of its result. But he should reason less and rather try to keep himself open as he was in those moments. The Force is not a matter for reasoning or theory but of experience. If I have written about the Force, it is because both the Mother and myself have had many thousand experiences in which it acted

and produced results of every kind. This idea of the Force has nothing to do with theory or reasoning but is felt constantly by every Yogin; it is part of his yogic consciousness and his constant spiritual activity.

18 May 1945

Demands on His Time

It is quite impossible for me to do any literary work (original or revision) just now, if that is what he wants.

July 1930

*

As to the book, I am afraid I have no time for such things. The twenty-four hours are already too short for what I have to do.

3 September 1930

*

Sri Aurobindo regrets his inability to accept the position offered to him in connection with the Indian Research Institute, with the objects of which he has every sympathy, as he would be unable to discharge the obligations however light attached to the position. All his time and energies are occupied by his own work and he has made it a rule to abstain from all other activities in order to give to this his undivided attention.

11 July 1933

*

I hope that will be *éclaircissement* enough for you — for I have no time for more — certainly none for writing sonnets — my energy is too occupied in very urgent and pressing things (quite apart from correspondence) to “dally with the rhythmic line”.

2 August 1934

*

Won’t you please look at my essay tomorrow and give me your impression of it, pointing out, of course, whatever awkwardness of style that might draw your attention?

Let the floods pass! let the floods pass! I have four eight-twelve-sixteen-page letters still unanswered, one in Bengali closely written, one in Gujarati (decently large letters), one in Hindi (close-packed) and one in English. How the belettered devil am I to deal with essays under such polypageous circumstances?

23 February 1935

*

My only free time is between 9.30 and 10.30 or 11 at night.
What can one write in an hour or an hour and a half?

Good Lord! what can one write in 1 or $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour? If I could only get that time for immortal productions every day! Why in another three years *Savitri* and *Ilion* and I don't know how much more would be all written, finished, resplendently complete.

6 December 1935

*

Sri Krishna must have had more leisure than you have. In those days the art of writing had not developed so much and so he had not to reply to questions, though sometimes he had sudden calls as when Durvasa came with a host of thousands of disciples asking for food when there was not a morsel. Perhaps he had to perform more miracles than you have to, though I should not forget that constant calls must be coming to you also for help in illnesses and many others in many ways. Moreover, Sri Krishna never actually became the Guru of a number of people.

Well, he may have been rather wise in that and fortunate in the infrequency of correspondence in those days — but that did not save him. There is a poignant chapter in the Mahabharat describing his miseries and bothers with his people in Dwarka which is very illuminating. Unfortunately I have forgotten where it is. The calls don't matter much, for putting the Force is a subjective thing which does not take time, except in cases when it is a daily or frequently recurring difficulty. As for Durvasa if he turned up, it would be met by an order to X "Go and manage" or else an intimation to Durvasa not to be unreasonable. 4 September 1936

*

What about my planning to read Meredith, Hardy, Shelley, Keats and the Continental and Russian writers?

Lord, Sir, I wish I had time to follow out a programme as massive as yours. I have none even to dilate upon yours.

22 September 1936

Reading in Pondicherry

I said to a visitor, "Sri Aurobindo has not read a single book in the last twenty years yet there is no knowledge in the world that is unknown to him."

That is a rather excessive statement. I have learned my own philosophy from Adhar Das, for instance, and read something about Sunlight Treatment for the eyes, etc. etc.

17 January 1935

*

I have not Boccaccio's tales. I am afraid my library is mainly composed of my own and the sadhaks' works and books presented to me by people as a personal offering which I can't therefore send to the library — and some stray volumes, dictionaries etc. — that is all.

16 February 1935

Passing Away of Customary Illnesses

I may say that I see no reason for alarm or apprehension about my eyesight; it has happened before and I was able to recover, even getting a better reading eyesight than before. These things are for me a question of the working of the Yogic force. Many customary illnesses have passed away from me permanently after an intimation that they would occur no more. In my last days in Calcutta that happened with regard to colds in the head, and when I was in the rue des Missions Étrangères with regard to fever. I had no cold or fever after that. So also with regard to things like the bad cough I had for many years; it was intimated some time ago that these things would fade out, and it has been

so happening — only vestiges remain. So it will happen with what ailments remain, I expect.

25 February 1945

Correspondence and Literary Work, 1948–1949

As for my going far away, your feeling is based on my slackness in giving answers to your letters but this slackness had no such cause. My love and affection have remained always the same and it is regrettable if by my slackness in answering your letters I have produced the impression that I was moving farther and farther away from you. I think your recent letters have been mostly about persons recommended for Darshan or applying for it or about accommodation, things which have to be settled by the Mother, and these were naturally most conveniently conveyed to you through X's oral answer. I suppose I must have unduly extended that method of answer to other matters. I must admit that for many reasons the impulse of letter writing and literary productivity generally have dwindled in me almost to zero and that must have been the real cause of my slackness. The first reason is my inability to write with my own hand, owing to the failure of the sight and other temporary reasons; the sight is improving but the improvement is not so rapid as to make reading and writing likely in the immediate future. Even *Savitri* is going slow, confined mainly to revision of what has already been written, and I am as yet unable to take up the completion of Parts II and III which are not yet finally revised and for which a considerable amount of new matter has to be written. It is no use going into all the thousand and one reasons for this state of things, for that would explain and not justify the slackness. I know very well how much you depend on my writing in answer to your letters as the one physical contact left which helps you and I shall try in future to meet the need by writing as often as possible.

10 July 1948

*

As to my silence, this does not arise from any change of feeling towards you or any coldness or indifference. I have not

concealed from you the difficulty I feel now that I cannot write my own letters or, generally, do my own writing but I do not think I have neglected anything you have asked for when you have written. There is the question of the interview which you want to publish, but this I have to consider carefully as to what parts can be published as soon as I have been able to go through it. At the moment I have been very much under pressure of work for the Press which needed immediate attention and could not be postponed, mostly correction of manuscripts and proofs; but I hope to make an arrangement which will rid me of most of this tedious and uninteresting work so that I can turn my time to better purposes. I am conscious all the same that my remissness in writing has been excessive and that you have just cause for your complaint; but I hope to remedy this remissness in future as it is not at all due to any indifference but to a visitation of indolence of the creative will which has extended even to the completion of the unfinished parts of *Savitri*. I hope soon to get rid of this inability, complete *Savitri* and satisfy your just demand for more alertness in my correspondence with you.

4 March 1949

*

You also seem to have misunderstood something I said to X about pressure and difficulties as indicating some unwillingness on my part to write to you; nothing was farther from my mind, I said that only to explain my remissness in writing to you before. I was not referring to the pressure caused by the necessity of hastening the publication of my yet unpublished books or those that need to be republished — there is much work of that kind pressing to be done and much else not pressing but still needing to be done while there is still time, such as *The Future Poetry* or other works like the first part of *Savitri* which has to be revised for early publication in book-form. All that could have nothing to do with it — I was referring only to personal difficulties of my own and the difficulties concerning the Ashram which I had to face and which owing to their gravity and even danger had too much preoccupied my mind. That I have mentioned as an

explanation of my earlier remissness and not as an excuse,— there could be no valid excuse. Certainly, that had nothing to do with your present trouble and the letter,— the present one, — which I had sent word through X that I was starting to write yesterday.

7 December 1949

His Temperament and Character

The Battle of Life

But what strange ideas again—that I was born with a supramental temperament and had never any brain or mind or any acquaintance with human mentality—and that I know nothing of hard realities. Good God! my whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardship and semi-starvation in England through the fierce difficulties and perils of revolutionary leadership and organisation and activity in India to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, internal and external. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle,—the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But of course as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for the sadhaks to think I am living in an august, glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or nature present themselves. But what an illusion, all the same!

November 1935

Change of Nature

It is perfectly possible to change one's nature. I have proved that in my own case, for I have made myself exactly the opposite in character to what I was when I started life. I have seen it done in many and I have helped myself to do it in many. But certain conditions are needed. At present in this Asram there is an obstinate resistance to the change of nature—not so much in the inner being, for there are a good number who accept change there, but in the outer man which repeats its customary movements like a machine and refuses to budge out of its groove. X's case does not matter—his vital has always wanted to be

itself and follow its own way and his mental will cannot prevail over it. The difficulty is far more general than that.

That however would not matter — it would be only a question of a little more or less time, if the divine action were admitted whole-heartedly by the sadhaks. But the conditions laid down by them and the conditions laid down from above seem radically to differ. From above the urge is to lift everything above the human level, the demand of the sadhaks (not all, but so many) is to keep everything on the human level. But the human level means ignorance, disharmony, strife, suffering, death, disease — constant failure. I cannot see what solution there can be for such a contradiction — unless it be Nirvana. But transformation is hardly more difficult than Nirvana.

17 October 1934

*

People of sattwic temperament in the ordinary life behave practically in the same manner as sadhaks who realise spiritual peace as a result of Yoga. Can it be said that in sattwic people the peace descends but in a hidden manner? Or is it due to their past lives?

Of course they have gained their power to live in the mind by a past evolution. But the spiritual peace is something other and infinitely more than the mental peace and its results are different, not merely clear thinking or some control or balance or a sattwic state. But its greater results can only be fully and permanently manifest when it lasts long enough in the system or when one feels spread out in it above the head and on every side stretching towards infinity as well as penetrated by it down to the very cells. Then it carries with it the deep and vast and solid tranquillity that nothing can shake — even if on the surface there is storm and battle. I was myself of the sattwic type you describe in my youth, but when the peace from above came down, that was quite different. *Sattvaguṇa* disappeared into *nirguṇa* and negative *nirguṇa* into positive *traigunyātīta*. 23 July 1935

Keeping Silence

I suppose I am silent, first, because I have no “free-will” and, secondly, because I have no Time.

Less metaphysically and more Yogo logically, there are periods when silence becomes imperative, because to throw oneself outward delays the “work that has to be done”.

I suppose someday I will write about Free Will, but for the moment there is no effective will, free or otherwise, to do it.

7 April 1931

Peace and Ananda

My own experience is *not* limited to a radiant peace; I know very well what ecstasy and Ananda are from the Brahmananda down to the *śārīra ānanda*, and can experience them at any time. But of these things I prefer to speak only when my work is done — for it is in a transformed consciousness here and not only above where the Ananda always exists that I seek their base of permanence.

4 August 1934

The Burden of Love

It is only divine love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine. The Gallio-like “Je m’en fiche”-ism (I do not care) would not carry me one step; it would certainly not be divine. It is quite another thing that enables me to walk unweeping and unlamenting towards the goal.

April 1934

Solid Strength

If silence does not contain the fire within, will it not be the silence of a dead man? What can one accomplish without fire, zeal, enthusiasm?

Zeal and enthusiasm are all right and very necessary but the spiritual condition combines calm with intensity. Psychic fire is different — what you are speaking of here is the rajasic vital fire of self-assertion, aggressive self-defence, exerting lawful rights etc.

Fire is the active expression of solid strength. But I feel that this fire is more necessary than solid strength in dynamic work.

I speak from my own experience. I have solid strength, but I have not much of the fire that blazes out against anybody who does not give me lawful rights. Yet I do not find myself weak or a dead man. I have always made it a rule not to be restless in any way, to throw away restlessness — yet I have been able to use my solid strength whenever necessary. You speak as if rajasic force and vehemence were the only strength and all else is deadness and weakness. It is not so — the calm spiritual strength is a hundred times stronger; it does not blaze up and sink again — but is steady and unshakable and perpetually dynamic.

21 November 1933

Rudra Power

I have dropped using the Rudra power — its effects used to be too catastrophic and now from a long disuse the inclination to use it has become rusty. Not that I am a convert to Satyagraha and Ahimsa, — but Himsa too has its inconvenience. So the fires sleep.

26 June 1936

Neither Rejection nor Attachment

I have no special liking for the ideal of Shiva, though something of the Shiva temperament must necessarily be present. I have never had any turn for rejection of the money power nor any attachment to it; one has to rise above these things as your Guru did but it is precisely when one has risen above that one can

more easily command them.

15 January 1936

*

It depends on what is meant by asceticism. I have no desires but I don't lead outwardly an ascetic life, only a secluded one. According to the Gita, *tyāga*, the inner freedom from desire and attachment, is the true asceticism.

9 July 1937

Not Grim and Stern

The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur take my breath away, making my heart palpitate!

O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing that I never was! I groan in an unAurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least commonsense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation — not imagining wild imaginations — or for that matter despairing “I know not why” despairs.

23 February 1935

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The mistake was an old obstinate suggestion returning so as to bring about the old reactions which have to be got over. It is your old error of the greatness and “grimness” of God, Supramental etc. which was used to bring back the wrong ideas and the gloom. All this talk about grimness and sternness is sheer rot — you will excuse me for the expression, but there is no other that is adequate. The only truth about it is that I am not demonstrative or expansive in public — but I never was. Nevinson seeing me presiding at the Surat Nationalist Conference — which was not a joke and others were as serious as myself — spoke of me as that most politically dangerous of men — “the man who never smiles” which made people who knew me smile very much. You

seem to have somewhere in you a Nevinson impression of me. Or perhaps you agree with X who wrote demanding of me why I smiled only with the lips and complained that it was not a satisfactory smile like the Mother's. All the same, whatever I may have said to Y or Y may have said to you, I have always given a large place to mirth and laughter and my letters in that style are only the natural outflow of my personality. I have never been "grim" in my life — that is the Stalin-Mussolini style, it is not mine; the only trait I share with the "grim" people is obstinacy in following out my aim in life, but I do it quietly and simply and have always done. Don't set up some gloomy imaginations and take them for the real Aurobindo.

By the way, if you get such imaginations like the Nrisinha Hiranyakashipu one, I shall begin to think that the Overmind has got hold of you also. I don't know the gentleman (Nrisinha) personally, but only by hearsay; if he was there I certainly did not recognise him. I always thought of him as a symbol — or perhaps a divinised Neanderthal man who sent for Hiranyakashipu (whoever H. was) and cut him open in the true Neanderthal way! For myself I was sitting there very quiet and as pacific as anybody at Geneva itself — more so in fact and receiving the stream of people with much inner amiability and, outwardly, a frequent "lip-smile" — so where the deuce was room for Nrisinha there? Besides it seems to me that I have long overpassed the man-beast stage of evolution — perhaps I flatter myself? — so again why Nrisinha. At the most there may have been some Power behind me guarding against the stream of "grim" difficulties — really grim these — which had been cropping up down to the Darshan eve. If so, it was not part of myself nor was I identified with it. So exit Nrisinha.

February 1935

*

I do not know that I can say anything in defence of my unlovable marbleness — which is also unintentional, for I feel nothing like marble within me. But obviously I can lay no claims to the expansive charm and grace and lovability of a Gandhi or Tagore. For one thing I have never been able to establish a cheerful

hail-fellow contact with the multitude, even when I was a public leader; I have been always reserved and silent except with the few with whom I was intimate or whom I could meet in private. But my reference to Nevinson and the Conference was only casual; I did not mean that I regard the Darshan as I would a political meeting or a public function. But all the same it is not in the nature of a private interview; I feel it is an occasion on which I am less a social person than a receptacle of a certain Power receiving those who come to me. I receive the sadhaks (not X or others) with a smile however unsatisfactory or invisible to you — but I suppose it becomes naturally a smile of the silence rather than a radiant substitute for cordial and bubbling laughter. *Que voulez-vous?* I am not Gandhi or Tagore.

All that I really wanted to say was that the inwardness and silence which you feel at the time of Darshan and dislike is not anything grim, stern, ferocious (Nrisinha) or even marble. It is absurd to describe it as such when there is nothing in me that has any correspondence with these epithets. What is there is a great quietude, wideness, light and universal or all-containing oneness. To speak of these things as if they were grim, stern, fierce and repellent or stiff and hard is to present not the fact of my nature but a caricature. I never heard before that peace was something grim, wideness repellent, light stern or fierce or oneness hard and stiff like marble. People have come from outside and felt these things, but they have felt not repelled but attracted. Even those who went out giddy with the onrush of light or fainted like Y, had no other wish but to come back and they did not fly away in terror. Even casual visitors have sometimes felt a great peace and quiet in the atmosphere and wished that they could stay here. So even if the sadhaks feel only a terrifying grimness, I am entitled to suppose that my awareness of myself is not an isolated illusion of mine and to question whether grimness is my real character and a hard and cold greatness my fundamental nature.

I suppose people get a sense of calm and immobility from my appearance. But what is there terrifying in that? Up till now it used to be supposed that this was the usual Yogic poise and that

it could soothe and tranquillise. Am I to understand that I have turned it into something fierce and Asuric which terrifies and is fierce, grim and repellent? I find it rather difficult to believe. Or is it that I live too much within and have too much that is unknown and incomprehensible? I have always lived within, and what else could be expected of me? There is something to be manifested and it is only within that it can be found — there is a world struggling to be born and it is only from within that one can find and release it.

24 February 1935

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All this insistence on grandeur and majesty makes me remember Shakespeare's remarks — the greatness that is thrust on one. I am unaware, as of grimness, so of any stiff majesty or pompous grandeur — the state of peace, wideness, universality I feel is perfectly easy, simple, natural, *dégage*, more like a robe of ease than any imperial purple. Between X's palpitating testimony to my grandeur and your melancholy testimony to my majesty — it appears I sit like the Himalayas and am as remote as the stratosphere — I begin to wonder whether it is so and how the devil I manage to do the trick. Unconscious hypnotism? No, for I begin to feel not like the juggler but like the little boy who has to climb his rope and perch there in a perilous and uncomfortable elevation — and it seems to be rather a self-hypnotism by the spectators of the show. All the same it was a relief to find someone writing of a beautiful and "loving" darshan and others who describe it in a similar tone. From which I conclude that the quality of the object lies in the eye of the seer — নানা মুনির
নানা মত.

1935

Sense of Humour

The Divine may be difficult, but his difficulties can be overcome if one keeps at Him. Even my smilelessness was overcome which Nevinson had remarked with horror more than twenty years before — "the most dangerous man in India", Aurobindo Ghose "the man who never smiles". He ought to have added, "but who

always jokes”; but he did not know that, as I was very solemn with him, or perhaps I had not developed sufficiently on that side then. Anyhow if you could overcome that, you are bound to overcome all the other difficulties also. 11 February 1937

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[From a report of a meeting with Sri Aurobindo:] “He laughed till his body shook; it was rollicking. . .”

This won’t do. It is a too exhilarating over-description. It calls up to my mind a Falstaff or a Chesterton; it does not fit in my style of hilarity. It is long since my laughter has been continuous and uncontrolled like that. For that to be true I shall have to wait till the Year 1, S.D. (Supramental Descent). And “rollicking”? The epithet would have applied to my grandfather but not to his less explosive grandson. 1945

Rising above Depression

I am still not able to maintain the right attitude in my own sadhana and yet I try to pose as an adviser and instructor.

Well, one can give good advice even when one does not follow it oneself—there is the old adage “Do what I preach and not what I practise.” More seriously, there are different personalities in oneself and the one that is eager to advise and help may be quite sincere. I remember in days long past when I still had personal struggles and difficulties, people came to me from outside for advice etc. when I was in black depression and could not see my way out of a sense of hopelessness and failure, yet nothing of that came out and I spoke with an assured conviction. Was that insincerity? I think not, the one who spoke in me was quite sure of what he spoke. The turning of all oneself to the Divine is not an easy matter and one must not be discouraged if it takes time and other movements still intervene. One must note, rectify and go on अनिर्विण्णेन चेतसा. 24 February 1935

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We hear that you also had to undergo a lot of suffering and despair — to the extent of wanting to commit suicide!

What nonsense! Suicide! Who the devil told you that? Even if I knew that all was going to collapse tomorrow, I would not think of suicide, but go on to do what I still could for the future.

21 June 1935

Attitude towards Work

It is not a question of liking but of capacity — though usually (not always) liking goes with the capacity. But capacity can be developed and liking can be developed or rather the *rasa* you speak of. One cannot be said to be in the full Yogic condition — for the purposes of this Yoga — if one cannot take up with willingness any work given to one as an offering to the Divine. At one time I was absolutely unfit for any physical work and cared only for the mental, but I trained myself in doing physical things with care and perfection so as to overcome this glaring defect in my being and make the bodily instrument apt and conscious. It was the same with some others here. A nature not trained to accept external work and activity becomes mentally top-heavy — physically inert and obscure. It is only if one is disabled or too physically weak that physical work can be put aside altogether. I am speaking of course from the point of view of the ideal — the rest depends upon the nature.

As for the deity presiding over control of servants, godown work as well as over poetry or painting, it is always the same — the Shakti, the Mother.

11 December 1934

*

I have such a push to write poetry, stories, all kinds of things, in Bengali!

Ambitions of that kind are too vague to succeed. You have to limit your fields and concentrate in order to succeed in them. I don't make any attempt to be a scientist or painter or general. I have certain things to do and have done them, so long as the

Divine wanted; others have opened in me from above or within by Yoga. I have done as much of them as the Divine wanted.

19 September 1936

Genius for Lolling

I intend to loll for a day or two after weeks of protracted hard work. How best to loll is a problem. By the way please note I am taking a regular sea-bath. It is doing me a lot of good.

All right about the sea-baths. As for lolling there is no how about it,— one just lolls,— if one has the genius for it. I have, though opportunities are now lacking for showing my genius. But it can't be taught, nor any process invented — it is just a gift of Nature.

25 April 1936

Heredity, Past Lives, Astrology

Heredity and Past Lives

It is true that we bring most of ourselves from past lives. Heredity only affects the external being and all the effects of heredity are not accepted, only those that are in consonance with what we are to be or not preventive of it at least. I may be the son of my father or mother in certain respects, but most of me is as foreign to them as if I had been born in New York or Paraguay.

3 June 1935

Speculations about His Past Lives

It is reported that you were Kalidasa and Shakespeare. I suppose it is true, at least regarding Kalidasa — isn't it?

As to the report, who is the reporter? and in what "Reincarnation Review" have these items been reported? 31 March 1932

*

We have various guesses about your previous lives. The other day I happened to ask X whether you were Shakespeare. He was diffident. My own belief is that you have somehow amalgamated all that was precious in those that manifested as Homer, Shakespeare, Valmiki, Dante, Virgil and Milton: if not all, at least the biggest of the lot. Kindly let us know the truth. Among your other and non-poetic incarnations, some surmise Alexander and Julius Caesar.

Good Heavens, all that! You have forgotten that Mrs. Besant claims Julius Caesar. I don't want to be prosecuted by her for misappropriation of personality. Alexander was too much of a torrent for me; I disclaim Milton and Virgil, am unconscious of Dante and Valmiki, diffident like X about the Bard (and money-lender?) of Avon. If, however, you can bring sufficiently cogent

evidence, I am ready to take upon my back the offences of all the famous people in the world or any of them; but you must prove your case.

Seriously, these historical identifications are a perilous game and open a hundred doors to the play of imagination. Some may, in the nature of things must be true; but once people begin, they don't know where to stop. What is important is the lines, rather than the lives, the incarnation of Forces that explain what one now is—and, as for particular lives or rather personalities, those alone matter which are very definite in one and have powerfully contributed to what one is developing now. But it is not always possible to put a name upon these; for not one hundred-thousandth part of what has been has still a name preserved by human Time.

1 April 1932

*

On both occasions when Paul Brunton saw you, he had the impression of you as a Chinese sage. In the early days of my stay here, you struck me as a king of Hungarian gypsies! And when I say Hungarian, I mean the Magyar element which I suppose has mid-Asiatic characteristics. Do these ideas point to some occult truth or some outstanding fact of previous birth?

Confucius? Lao-Tse? Mencius? Hang-whang-pu? (Don't know who the last was, but his name sounds nice.) Can't remember anything about it. As for the Hungarian gypsy, I suppose we must have been everything at one time or another, on this earth in some other cycle. But I am not aware of any particularly Magyar or Chinese element in me. However, when I came here, I was told I looked just like a Tamil sannyasi and some Christians said I was just like Christ. So it may be.

More seriously, Brunton seems to have thought I was Lao-Tse. Maybe, I can't say it is impossible. 7 December 1936

*

The Mother or you are said to have declared that a divine descent was attempted during the Renaissance, with Leonardo

da Vinci as its centre — a very credible report since we believe you were Leonardo and the Mother Mona Lisa. I shall be much interested to know something about the inner side of this phenomenon. Was Leonardo aware of a semi-avatarhood or a pressure of spiritual planes?

Never heard before of my declaring or anybody declaring such a thing. What Leonardo da Vinci held in himself was all the new age of Europe on its many sides. But there was no question of Avatarhood or consciousness of a descent or pressure of spiritual planes. Mysticism was no part of what he had to manifest.

15 July 1937

His Horoscope

This year is said to be your brightest year according to the horoscope, Sir.

Horoscope by whom? According to a famous Calcutta astrologer (I have forgotten his name) my biggest time comes much later, though the immediately ensuing period is also remarkable. Like doctors, astrologers differ.

3 January 1936

*

X told me that today [4 April] is the birthday of Pondicherry because you came here on this date. If one can place oneself in the year 2036 A.D. he may find that 4th April is celebrated as the birthday of the Earth's spiritual life. Perhaps the horoscope of the Earth may show this more accurately; but is there a horoscope of the Earth as there are horoscopes of some villages?

Pondicherry was born long ago — but if X means the rebirth, it may be, for it was absolutely dead when I came. I don't know that there is a horoscope of the Earth. There was nobody present to note the year, day, hour, minute when she came into existence. But some astrologer could take the position of the stars at the moment when I got out of the boat and build up the terrestrial consequences upon that perhaps! Unfortunately he would probably get everything wrong, like the astrologer who

predicted that I would leave Pondicherry in March 1936 and wander about India till 1948 and then disappear while bathing in a river among my disciples. I believe he predicted it on the strength of the Bhrigu Samhita — the old dodge; but I am not sure. Long ago I had a splendiferous Mussolinic-Napoleonic prediction of my future made to me on the strength of the same old mythological Bhrigu.

4 April 1936

*

Astrologers tell all sorts of things that don't come true. According to one I was to have died last year, according to another I was to have gone out from Pondicherry in March or May last year and wandered about India with my disciples till I disappeared in a river (on a ferry). Even if the prediction were a correct one according to the horoscope it need not fulfil itself, because by entering the spiritual life one opens to a new force which can change one's destiny.

22 August 1937

*

It is no doubt possible to draw the illnesses of others upon oneself and even to do it deliberately, the instance of the Greek king Antigonus and his son Dimitrius is a famous historical case in point: Yogis also do this sometimes; or else adverse forces may throw illnesses upon the Yogi, using those round him as a door or a passage or the ill wishes of people as an instrumental force. But all these are special circumstances connected, no doubt, with his practice of Yoga; but they do not establish the general proposition as an absolute rule. A tendency such as X's to desire or welcome or accept death as a release could have a force because of her advanced spiritual consciousness which it would not have in ordinary people. On the other side there can be an opposite use and result of the Yogic consciousness: illness can be repelled from one's own body or cured, even chronic or deep-seated illnesses and long-established constitutional defects remedied or expelled and even a predestined death delayed for a long period. Narayan Jyotishi, a Calcutta astrologer, who predicted, not knowing then who I was, in the days before my name was politically known,

my struggle with Mlechchha enemies and afterwards the three cases against me and my three acquittals, predicted also that though death was prefixed for me in my horoscope at the age of 63, I would prolong my life by Yogic power for a very long period and arrive at a full old age. In fact I have got rid by Yogic pressure of a number of chronic maladies that had got settled in my body, reduced others to a vanishing minimum, brought about steadily progressing diminution of two that remained and on the last produced a considerable effect. But none of these instances either on the favourable or unfavourable side can be made into a rule; there is no validity in the tendency of human reason to transform the relativity of these things into an absolute.

8 December 1949

Knowledge of Astrology

I can't say anything about the horoscope, as I have forgotten the little astrology I knew.

14 September 1936

Section Three

Remarks on Himself as a Writer and on His Writings

On Himself as a Writer

Yoga and Intellectual Development

Can it be that in course of the sadhana, one may have certain intellectual or other training by the direct power of yoga? How did your own wide development come?

It came not by “training”, but by the spontaneous opening and widening and perfecting of the consciousness in the sadhana.

4 November 1936

Yoga and Literary Expression

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

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

29 December 1934

*

When one hears that you had to plod through a lot, one wonders whether the story of Valmiki's sudden opening of poetic faculties is true — whether such a miracle is really possible.

Plod about what? For some things I had to plod — other things came in a moment or in two or three days like Nirvana or the power to appreciate painting. The “latent” philosopher failed to come out at the first shot (when I was in Calcutta) — after some years of incubation (?) it burst out like a volcano as soon as I started writing the *Arya*. There is no damned single rule for these things. Valmiki's poetic faculty might open suddenly like a

champagne bottle, but it does not follow that everybody's will do like that.

1 April 1935

Avoidance of Certain Subjects

If I write about these questions from the Yogic point of view, even though on a logical basis, there is bound to be much that is in conflict with your own settled and perhaps cherished opinions, e.g. about "miracles", persons, the limits of judgment by sense data etc. I have avoided as much as possible writing about these subjects because I would have to propound things that cannot be understood except by reference to other data than those of the physical senses or of reason founded on these alone. I might have to speak of laws and forces not recognised by physical reason or science. In my public writings and my writings to sadhaks I have not dwelt on these because they go out of the range of ordinary knowledge and the understanding founded on it. These things are known to some, but they do not usually speak about it, while the public view of such of them as are known is either credulous or incredulous, but in both cases without experience or knowledge. So if the views founded on them are likely to upset, shock or bewilder, the better way is silence.

December 1935

On His Philosophy in General

I do not mind if you find inconsistencies in my statements. What people call consistency is usually a rigid or narrow-minded inability to see more than one side of the truth or more than their own narrow personal view or experience of things. Truth has many aspects and unless you look on all with a calm and equal eye, you will never have the real or the integral knowledge.

22 December 1934

*

One Kishorlal G. Mashriwala has written a book in which he says that your "language" has been responsible for creating confusion, etc. X seems to have written to him about this and

got a reply that Kishorlal has not been satisfied with your philosophy nor with any of your disciples whom he has seen, but that he may change his views if he gets a quarter of an hour's talk with you.

Well, there seems evidently to be a confusion in his ideas about my philosophy, — though what has been responsible for creating it? — well, it is perhaps the goodness of his thinking! I fear the pleasure and honour of having a quarter of an hour's talk with the Yogi Kishorlal is too high a thing for me to wish to attain to it in this life. I must try to obtain *punya* first and strive to be born again in order to deserve it.

13 April 1935

*

I am thinking of writing a book on your teachings in a systematic Western form in three main sections: (1) Metaphysics, (2) Psychology, (3) Ethics. But to make it presentable in the academic fashion would require a large reading of some past and present Western philosophers and psychologists. And where is the time for it?

I am afraid it would be a rather too colossal affair. But why ethics? I don't think that there is any ethics; because ethics depends upon fixed principles and rules of conduct, whereas here any such thing can only be for sadhana purposes as conditions for getting the spiritual or higher consciousness and afterwards everything is freely determined by that consciousness and its movements and dictates.

26 July 1936

*

You wrote to X that though people call you a philosopher you have never learnt philosophy.¹ Well, what you have written in the *Arya* is so philosophical that the greatest philosopher of the world can never expect to write it. I don't mean here the bringing down of the new Truth, but the power of expression, the art of reasoning and arguing with intellect and logic.

¹ See the letter of 31 August 1934 on page 70. — Ed.

There is very little argument in my philosophy—the elaborate metaphysical reasoning full of abstract words with which the metaphysician tries to establish his conclusions is not there. What is there is a harmonising of the different parts of a many-sided knowledge so that all unites logically together. But it is not by force of logical argument that it is done, but by a clear vision of the relations and sequences of the knowledge.

4 November 1936

Writing for Publication

Unwillingness to Write for Newspapers and Magazines

If I allow the *Orient* to publish something yet unpublished by me, I lose my defence against demands from outside which is that I have ceased to contribute to magazines, newspapers *et hoc genus omne* and have made it indeed a rule not to do so. Therefore—

*

I am afraid X is asking from me a thing psychologically impossible. You know that I have forbidden myself to write anything for publication for some time past and some time to come—I am self-debarred from press, platform and public. Even if it were otherwise, it would be impossible under present circumstances to write at a week's notice. You will present him my excuses in your best and most tactful manner.

27 August 1931

*

The answer to Woolf was written long ago at the time Woolf's article appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation*—a London weekly. It was X who drew my notice to it and asked for an answer. Y this time wanted something of mine for the *Onward* August 15th number and chose this one.

24 August 1934

*

I have not begun writing in the papers—what is being published in the magazines is excerpts from the unpublished things in the *Arya* or translations such as X is making. So I cannot give anything.

As for past writings, I never take the initiative for publication in papers. Y, X or Z sometimes ask for leave to publish this

or that somewhere where it is asked for and I consent — that is all.

circa 1936

*

The initiative is always X and I do not send anything myself or intervene in his action, but he takes the sanction from me.

All that you need to write to Delhi is that Sri Aurobindo is not writing articles for the papers; the things that appear from time to time are old writings of his not yet published in book form and sent to the papers at their request with his sanction. He is not writing any new things nowadays, as his time is entirely occupied with his work. This is simply to prevent demands on me for new contributions which I cannot satisfy. 2 July 1936

*

As to the Foreword, I had made a strict rule not to publish anything of the kind or anything except the books from the *Arya* and letters, so as to avoid any call on me from anyone. I don't know if I can break this rule now. In any case I shall have to read and consider, and I have now no time for anything but the correspondence and the work of concentration that is necessary — the pressure is too great for reading anything. So they should not depend on me for this Foreword. 28 September 1936

*

X must not expect the rather portentous article or essay he demands from me. You know I have made it a rule not to make any public pronouncement; the Cripps affair was an exception that remains solitary; for the other things on the war were private letters, not written for publication. I do not propose to change the rule in order to set forth a programme for the Supermind energy to act on if and when it comes down now or fifteen years after.¹ Great Powers do not publish beforehand, least of all in a journalistic compilation, their war-plans or even their peace-plans; the Supermind is the greatest of all Powers and we can

¹ Sri Aurobindo was asked to write an article about what the world would be like fifteen years after the supramental descent. — Ed.

leave it to its own secrecy until the moment of its action.

14 January 1945

*

What has happened to my letter of request for a Message to grace the Special Number of *Mother India* of August 15? I have heard nothing from you.

I have been trying to get you informed without success about the impossibility of your getting your expected Message from me for the 15th August. I had and have no intention of writing a Message for my birthday this year. It is psychologically impossible for me to manufacture one to command; an inspiration would have to come and it is highly improbable that any will come in this short space of time; I myself have no impulse towards it. But how is it that you have clean forgotten my rule of not writing any article for an outside paper, magazine or journal—I mean other than those conducted from the Asram and by the Asram—and even for these I write nothing new except for the *Bulletin* at the Mother's request,—also my reasons for this fixed rule? If I started doing that kind of thing, my freedom would be gone; I would have to write at everybody's command, not only articles but blessings, replies on public questions and all the rest of that kind of conventional rubbish. I would be like any ordinary politician publishing my views on all and sundry matters, discoursing on all sorts of subjects, a public man at the disposal of the public. That would make myself, my blessings, my views and my Messages exceedingly cheap; in fact, I would be no longer Sri Aurobindo. Already *Hindusthan Standard*, the *Madras Mail* and I know not what other journals and societies are demanding at the pistol's point special messages for the 15th for themselves and I am supposed to stand and deliver. I won't. I regret that I must disappoint you, but self-preservation is a first law of Nature.

3 August 1949

Writing Philosophy

Look here! Do these people expect me to turn myself again into a machine for producing articles? The times of the *Bande Mataram* and *Arya* are over, thank God! I have now only the Asram correspondence and that is “overwhelming” enough in all conscience without starting philosophy for standard books and the rest of it.

And philosophy! Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher — although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the Yoga and came to Pondicherry — I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher! How I managed to do it? First, because Richard proposed to me to cooperate in a philosophical review — and as my theory was that a Yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything, I could not very well refuse: and then he had to go to the War and left me in the lurch with 64 pages a month of philosophy all to write by my lonely self. Secondly, I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily and the philosophy was there, automatically. But that is not being a philosopher!

I don't know how to excuse myself to Radhakrishnan — for I can't say all that to him.² Perhaps you can find a formula for me? Perhaps — “so occupied not a moment for any other work; can't undertake because I might not be able to carry out my promise”. What do you say?

31 August 1934

*

Anilbaran says that he can compile something out of *The Life Divine* for Radhakrishnan. Can he do it?

No, I think not.

10 September 1934

*

² Sri Aurobindo's letter to Dr. Radhakrishnan, turning down his request to contribute an article to a book Radhakrishnan was editing, is published in Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 444–45. — Ed.

As to Radhakrishnan, I don't care whether he is right or wrong in his eagerness to get the blessed contribution from me. But the first fact is that it is quite impossible for me to write philosophy to order. If something comes to me of itself, I can write, if I have time. But I have not time. I had some thought of writing to Adhar Das pointing out that he was mistaken in his criticism of my ideas about consciousness and intuition and developing briefly what were my real views about these things. But I have never been able to do it—I might as well think of putting the moon under my arm, Hanuman-like,—though in his case it was the sun—and going for a walk! The moon is not available and the walk is not possible. It would be the same if I promised anything to Radhakrishnan—it would not get done, and that would be much worse than a refusal.

And the second fact is that I do not care a button about my having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days; I preferred to remain behind the curtain, push people without their knowing it and get things done. It was the confounded British Government that spoiled my game by prosecuting me and forcing me to be publicly known and a "leader". Then again I don't believe in advertisement except for books etc., and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is a poison. It means either a stunt or a boom—and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crest and leave it lifeless and broken high and dry on the shores of nowhere—or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the "religions" and is the reason of their failure. If I tolerate a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counterweight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always aroused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of ignorance. But the utility ends there and too much advertisement would

defeat that object. I am perfectly “rational”, I assure you, in my methods and I do not proceed merely on any personal dislike of fame. If and so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable.

This “Contemporary Philosophy”, British or Indian, looks to me very much like bookmaking and, though the “vulgarisation” of knowledge — to use the French term — by bookmaking may have its use, I prefer to do solid work and leave that to others. You may say that I can write a solid thing in philosophy and let it be bookmade. But even the solid tends to look shoddy in such surroundings. And besides my solid work at present is not philosophy but something less wordy and more to the point. If that work gets done, then it will propagate itself so far as propagation is necessary — if it were not to get done, propagation would be useless.

These are my reasons. However let us wait till the book is there and see what kind of stuff it is.

2 October 1934

Philosophical Theft

Radhakrishnan, in his lecture published in the *Hindu*,³ has stolen not only most of your ideas but has actually lifted several sentences *en masse*. I wonder how such piracy in philosophical literature passes unchastised. I am thinking either of writing to him deplored the theft or informing the *Hindu*.

I don't think it is worth while doing anything. The thefts are obvious, but if he wants to add some peacock plumes to his dun colours!

24 July 1936

*

Professor Mahendranath Sircar and others would like to write to Radhakrishnan, asking him why he used passages from your works without acknowledgement.

³ “World Fellowship through Faith . . . Sir S. Radhakrishnan's Address”, The Hindu, 20 July 1936.

No. I have said no public notice should be taken of the matter. I consider it inadvisable, so the letters should not be sent.

*

From the Yogic point of view one ought to be indifferent and without sense of ownership or desire of fame or praise. But for that one must have arrived at the Yogic poise—such a detachment is not possible without it. I do not mind Radhakrishnan's lifting whole sentences and paragraphs from my writings at the World Conference as his own and getting credit for a new and quite original point of view.

But if I were eager to figure before the world as a philosopher, I would resent it. But even if one does not mind, one can see the impropriety of the action or take measures against its repetition, if one thinks it worth while.

5 August 1936

The Sale of His Books

The question of the royalty can be deferred till X has seen the translation. If it is not approved, the question of royalty does not arise. You can tell him that the Asram is not supported by public subscriptions but by what is given by disciples and private sympathisers. Therefore Sri Aurobindo's publications cannot be given free, they are sold and the proceeds counted among the available resources just as is the case with the publications of the Ramakrishna Mission.

19 September 1936

On His Published Prose Writings

Publication Plans, 1927

There is no intention of withdrawing support. The small book *The Mother* was given to Rameshwar because it was necessary to bring it out without delay and the A.P.H. [Arya Publishing House] was already occupied with the *Essays on the Gita* which it had not been able to bring to completion.

It was hoped that Rameshwar's joining the A.P.H. would unite all interests, but since you have not been able to agree together, it will be necessary to give him something from time to time as the long-standing connection with him cannot be broken—there being no reason for giving him up any more than for giving up A.P.H. This will not stand in the way of my giving my principal books to A.P.H.—provided always that the A.P.H. can keep its side of the arrangement by publishing them properly and without inordinate delay.

I can understand that there have been financial and other difficulties in putting A.P.H. on a sound footing and I have not insisted either on publication or money or anything else. At the same time I am bound to say that the methods of work seem to be loose and haphazard, e.g. the enormous time taken to publish the Second Series [of Essays on the Gita], the endless delay in sending me my copies of the First Series, the absence of all information regarding the condition of the concern or of any regular accounts of my dues from the House etc. I hope that things will be better in the future.

It is not necessary or possible to publish all my books together; hardly any of them can go out without revision and as I have very little time for this kind of work revision will take time.

For Sri Aurobindo's remarks on his poetic works, see Letters on Poetry and Art, volume 27 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 219–363. —Ed.

The Ideal of Human Unity. I was revising, but as there seemed to be no progress with the *Gita* and I had other work to do, I dropped it. I will now complete the revision and I expect it will not take more than another two months.

The Defence of Indian Culture. Not finished. I will look through it and revise and add two or three chapters to finish. The time taken will depend on the amount of revision necessary — probably not very extensive alterations are needed.

The Katha Upanishad. This also needs revision before it can be published; but it is not likely to take very long.

The Kena Upanishad. My present intention is not to publish it as it stands. This must be postponed for the present.

=

It would be no use coming to see me, as I am seeing nobody, not even those who are living here. Nor is there any necessity for the journey, as I have not any present intention of altering the existing arrangement.

30 November 1927

Political Writings

I am an Indian student working for the Ph.D. degree at Harvard University. For my thesis subject I have selected "Contemporary Political Thought in India". You of course will be one of the authors I will be considering. Unfortunately your books are not available here. Please send me a list of books related to my subject, and the address of your publisher.

Refer him to A.P.H. Tell him that my political writings appeared in the daily *Bande Mataram* and the weekly *Karmayogin* and have for the most part not been separately published. You can mention however *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, *The Renaissance in India*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *War and Self-Determination* as books that may be useful for his subject, as the two former are partly concerned with or touch upon Indian politics, and the two latter are written upon international questions. I do not remember any others; if there are any, they may be included in the list. Ask A.P.H. to send him a complete list of my published works.

11 April 1928

Speeches

Now that they have written, I remember that in fact the *Speeches* were transferred from the Prabartak to A.P.H. But then how is it that Rameshwar asked for it? I gave permission under the impression that it must be in his share of the already published books. You had better write to him about it. After receiving his answer I will decide.

6 May 1929

*

I find it impossible to decide about the *Speeches*; the whole matter has got twisted up in a very undesirable way. It would be better if they settle it themselves amicably; otherwise I shall have to promise it to whoever can bring it out soonest or in the best style or put it up to auction or toss heads or tails. This whole matter of the publications being split up between half a dozen Arya Aurobindo houses is reaching the point of a *reductio ad absurdum* if not *ad impossible*. But nothing however absurd seems impossible here.

10 July 1931

*

Regarding *Speeches of Sri Aurobindo* — there has been a great demand for it in the market. If you kindly allow us to omit those speeches which may come under the Press Act, we could print the book. Please let us know your decision.

But who will decide what may come under the Press Act? It is a legal point and the law of sedition is exceedingly elastic.

September 1935

The Ideal of the Karmayogin

Have you seen my review of *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*?

Yes, I have seen it, but I don't think it can be published in its present form as it prolongs the political Aurobindo of that time into the Sri Aurobindo of the present time. You even assert that I have "thoroughly" revised the book and these articles are an

index of my latest views on the burning problems of the day and there has been no change in my views in 27 years (which would surely be proof of a rather unprogressive mind). How do you get all that? My spiritual consciousness and knowledge at that time was as nothing to what it is now — how would the change leave my view of politics and life unmodified altogether? There has been no such thorough revision; I have left the book as it was, because it would be useless to modify what was written so long ago — the same as with *Yoga and Its Objects*. Anyway the review would almost amount to a proclamation of my present political views — while on the contrary I have been careful to pronounce nothing — no views whatever on political questions for the last I don't know how many years.

21 April 1937

*

In the new edition of *The Ideal of the Karmayogin* there is this announcement: —

Fourth Edition — January, 1937

(Thoroughly Revised by the Author)

Radhakanta is repeating the above formula in all your old books which are really reprints. May I ask him not to do it?

Evidently it is an untrue statement and cannot be allowed to continue as it creates a false impression. But I think it will be necessary for me to write myself — otherwise he may not listen. Or you may write that I have asked you to inform him that I want this to be discontinued in future editions as it creates a wrong impression — since in fact these are reprints and I have not revised or rewritten any part of them.

23 April 1937

A System of National Education

I readily give the permission you request to embody my *System of National Education* as a chapter in the book projected by your Institute.¹ I have no time to go again through it, but I am

¹ This letter was drafted by one of Sri Aurobindo's secretaries and extensively revised by Sri Aurobindo. He wrote the last sentence in his own hand. — Ed.

asking my publishers, the Arya Publishing House of Calcutta, to send you a copy of the corrected and authorised edition. The Madras edition is unauthorised and full of gross errors. The book is only a series of preliminary essays never worked out or completed, but I shall be glad if, even as it is, you think it can be of some use.

Yogic Sadhan

The Yogi from the North (Uttara Yogi)² was my own name given to me because of a prediction made long ago by a famous Tamil Yogi, that thirty years later (agreeing with the time of my arrival) a Yogi from the North would come as a fugitive to the South and practise there an integral Yoga (Poorna Yoga), and this would be one sign of the approaching liberty of India. He gave three utterances as the mark by which this Yogi could be recognised and all these were found in the letters to my wife.

As for *Yogic Sadhan* it was not I exactly who wrote it, though it is true that I am not a Mayavadin.

*

Your name was not printed on the first two editions of *Yogic Sadhan*. But the third edition (brought out by A.P.H.) has your name on it.

No need of name. The publication of the name in the third edition of *Yogic Sadhan* was unauthorised and is in fact a falsehood.

6 June 1931

*

As to *Yogic Sadhan*, it is *not my* composition nor its contents the essence of my Yoga, whatever the publishers may persist in saying in their lying blurb in spite of my protests. 4 May 1934

*

The *Yogic Sadhan* has its use, but it is not one of the main or

² On the title page of the book *Yogic Sadhan* (first published in 1911) the editor is given as "The Uttara Yogi".—Ed.

most important books published among mine, nor is it my own writing.

6 December 1935

Passages from *Yogic Sadhan*

It is said in *Yogic Sadhan*: “The Will when it begins to act, will be hampered by the Swabhava; therefore until you are able to act on the Swabhava, you will not, should not bring your Will to bear upon life.”³ I don’t understand what this means.

I don’t remember the passage. Possibly it means that till you can act on the real nature in you and use the true will and consciousness, you should go on trying for that, and not try to shape life with an imperfect will and imperfect instrument.

18 September 1933

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In *Yogic Sadhan*, Sri Aurobindo has said: “You have so many milestones to pass; but you may pass them walking, in a carriage, in a railway train, but pass them you must” [p. 1378]. What are the main milestones on the Shakti *marga*?

Answer as under.⁴

The *Yogic Sadhan* is not Sri Aurobindo’s writing — only communicated to him. The statement of the publishers that it contains the essence of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is an error propagated by them against his own protest. He cannot therefore say what particular milestones were meant. It is true as a general rule, but can be partly cancelled by a concentrated movement.

I suppose there are different milestones on different paths?

Necessarily.

Again, while discussing the law of resistance, Sri Aurobindo says: “They [*old rules, habits or tendencies*] are supported by

³ *Yogic Sadhan*, in *Record of Yoga*, volume 11 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 1375.

⁴ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent. — Ed.

an army of forces or spiritual beings who surround you and live upon your experiences and enjoyments” [p. 1377]. What are these “spiritual beings”?

They are powers, forces or beings of the mental, vital or subtle physical worlds. There are some that simply want to utilise, there are others that want to possess, oppose or destroy and are known by us as “the hostile forces”. 14 April 1936

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What does the author of *Yogic Sadhan* mean by saying “when the man himself becomes God” [p. 1378]?

He means “when he becomes identified with the Divine”, or “when he feels himself to be only a portion of the Divine and thinks and acts as such.” 24 September 1933

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“It [*the Manas*] catches thoughts on their way from the Buddhi to the Chitta, but in catching them it turns them into the stuff of sensations . . .” [p. 1383]. Has Manas any right to catch these thoughts? If so, what is the way to stop it so that it does not turn them into stuff of sensations?

The terms Manas etc. belong to the ordinary psychology applied to the surface consciousness. In our Yoga we adopt a different classification based on the Yoga experience. What answers to this movement of the Manas there would be two separate things — a part of the physical mind communicating with the physical vital. It receives from the physical senses and transmits to the Buddhi — i.e. to some part or other of the Thought-Mind; it receives back from the Buddhi and transmits idea and will to the organs of sensation and action. All that is indispensable in the ordinary action of the consciousness. But in the ordinary consciousness everything gets mixed up together and there is no clear order or rule. In the Yoga one becomes aware of the different parts and their proper action, and puts each in its place and to its proper action under the control of the higher consciousness or else under the control of the Divine Power.

Afterwards all gets surcharged with the spiritual consciousness and there is an automatic right perception and right action of the different parts because they are controlled entirely from above and do not falsify or resist or confuse its dictates.

13 September 1933

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What is “the conceptual activity of the Manas” [p. 1385] and how can one still it?

The real conceptual activity belongs rather to the Buddhi—that of the Manas is simply a rendering of perceptions and impressions into thought-forms. There is no necessity of specially stilling this function—it comes best with a general stillness of the mind.

12 September 1933

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It is written in *Yogic Sadhan*: “Adharma is often necessary as a passage or preparation for passing from an undeveloped to a developed, a lower to a higher Dharma” [p. 1387]. How is this?

I don’t remember the context; but I suppose he means that when one has to escape from the lower Dharma, one has often to break it so as to arrive at a larger one. E.g. social duties, paying debts, looking after family, helping to serve your country, etc. etc. The man who turns to the spiritual life, has to leave all that behind him often and he is reproached by lots of people for his Adharma. But if he does not do this Adharma, he is bound for ever to the lower life—for there is always some duty there to be done—and cannot take up the spiritual dharma or can do it only when he is old and his faculties impaired. That is a point in instance.

14 September 1933

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“I come next to Prana, the nervous or vital element in man which is centralised below the Manas and Chitta in the subtle body and connected with the navel in the Sthula Deha” [p. 1388]. What is that subtle body? Also, I don’t understand

the phrase “connected with the navel in the Sthula Deha”.

How is it you do not know these elementary things? Man has not a gross (*sthūla*) visible body only, but a subtle body (*sūkṣma deha*) in which he goes out of the *sthūla deha* at his death.

The navel is the vital center in the physical body — but the native seat of the vital is in the vital sheath of the subtle body, which sheath it pervades, but for action through the gross body its action is centred at the navel and below it.

16 September 1933

*The Yoga and Its Objects, Yogic Sadhan
and The Synthesis of Yoga*

Sri Aurobindo is the author of *Yoga and Its Object*.⁵ It must be by an error of the printers that his name has been omitted.

But the book represents an early stage of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana and only a part of it is applicable to the Yoga as it has at present taken form after a lapse of more than twenty years.

The *Yogic Sadhan* is not Sri Aurobindo's own writing, but was published with a note by him, — that is all. The statement made to the contrary by the publishers was an error which they have been asked to correct. There is no necessity of following the methods suggested in that book unless one finds them suggestive or helpful as a preliminary orientation of the consciousness — e.g. in the upbuilding of an inner Will etc.

A book giving some hints about the Yoga compiled from letters to the sadhaks is about to be published,⁶ but it cannot be said to be complete. There is no complete book on the subject; for even *The Synthesis of Yoga*, published in the *Arya* but not yet republished in book form, gives only the theory of different components of the Yoga (Knowledge, Works, Devotion) and remains besides unfinished; it does not cover the more recent developments of the Yoga.

28 October 1934

⁵ When first published in 1921, *The Yoga and Its Objects* was entitled *The Yoga and Its Object*. — Ed.

⁶ The reference is to *Lights on Yoga*, first published in February 1935. — Ed.

The Yoga and Its Objects

A friend says there are no books in Gujarati that he can give to people who want to know about Sri Aurobindo's yoga. So he suggested I translate *The Yoga and Its Object*.

The Yoga and Its Object is not at all suitable for the purpose as it was written very long ago and expresses things that belong to the early stages of my sadhana, not the fullness of the integral and supramental sadhana.

16 August 1934

Passages from The Yoga and Its Objects

"To those who demand from him, God gives what they demand. . . ."⁷ Is this true?

It is not meant that He gives always whatever anyone demands — but that what they demand is all He gives — they cannot get anything else.

9 January 1934

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"For behind the Sad Atman is the silence of the Asat which the Buddhist Nihilists realised as the *śūnyam* and beyond that silence is the Paratpara Purusha (*puruṣo varenya ādityavarnas tamasah parastāt*)" [p. 76].

The passage in *Yoga and Its Objects* is written from the point of view of the spiritualised Mind approaching the supreme Truth directly, without passing through the Supermind or disappearing into it. The Mind spiritualises itself by shedding all its own activities and formations and reducing everything to a pure Existence, Sad Atman, from which all things and activities proceed and which supports everything. When it wants to go still beyond, it negates yet farther and arrives at an Asat, which is the negation of all this existence and yet Something inconceivable to mind, speech or defining experience. It is the silent Unknowable, the Turiya or featureless and relationless Absolute of the monistic

⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Yoga and Its Objects*, in Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 74.

Vedantins, the Sunyam of the nihilistic Buddhists, the Tao or omnipresent and transcendent Nihil of the Chinese, the indefinable and ineffable Permanent of the Mahayana. Many Christian mystics also speak of the necessity of a complete ignorance in order to get the supreme experience and speak too of the Divine Darkness — they mean the shedding of all mental knowledge, making a blank of the mind and engulfing it in the Unmanifest, — the *param avyaktam*. All this is the mind's way of approaching the Supreme — for beyond the *avyakta, tamasah parastāt*, is the Supreme, the Purushottama of the Gita, the Para Purusha of the Upanishads. It is *āditya-varṇa* in contrast to the darkness of the Unmanifest; it is a metaphor, but not a mere metaphor, for it is a symbol also, a symbol visually seen by the *sūkṣma dṛṣṭi*, the subtle vision, and not merely a symbol, but, as one might say, a fact of spiritual experience. The sun in the Yoga is the symbol of the supermind and the supermind is the first power of the Supreme which one meets across the border where the experience of spiritualised mind ceases and the unmodified divine Consciousness begins the domain of the supreme nature, *parā prakṛti*. It is that Light of which the Vedic mystics got a glimpse and it is the opposite of the intervening darkness of the Christian mystics — for the supermind is all light and no darkness. To the mind the Supreme is *avyaktāt param avyaktam*, but if we follow the line leading to the supermind, it is an increasing affirmation rather than an increasing negation through which we move.

Light is always seen in Yoga with the inner eye and even with the outer eye, but there are many lights; all are not and all do not come from the *param jyotiḥ*.

18 August 1932

*

"Matter itself, you will one day realise, is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness, *guna*, the result of quality of being perceived by sense-knowledge" [p. 77].

There is no need to put "the" before "quality" — in English that would alter the sense. Matter is not regarded in this passage as a quality of being perceived by sense; I don't think that would have any meaning. It is regarded as a result of a certain power

and action of consciousness which presents forms of itself to sense perception and it is this quality of sense-perceivedness, so to speak, that gives them the appearance of Matter, i.e. of a certain kind of substantiality inherent in themselves—but in fact they are not self-existent substantial objects but forms of consciousness. The point is that there is no such thing as the self-existent Matter posited by nineteenth-century Science.

“chitta” and “chetas”

Chitta is ordinarily used for the mental consciousness in general, thought, feeling, etc. taken together with a stress now on one side or another, sometimes on the feelings as in *citta-pramāthī*, sometimes on the thought-mind—that is why I translated it [on p. 75] “heart and mind” in its wider sense. Chetas can be used in the same way, but it has a different shade of sense, properly speaking, and can include also the movements of the soul, covering the whole consciousness even; [on p. 82] I take it in its most general sense. The translation is not meant to be literal but to render the thought in the line in its fullness. *Adhyātmacetasā* practically amounts to what in English we would describe as a spiritual consciousness.

“throw our arms around” [p. 78]

It is a figure meaning to comprehend in our consciousness with love and Ananda.

“the nature” [p. 81, lines 29, 31, 33]

Nature here means the parts of Prakriti in the human being: as it is the condition of the Prakriti that changes with shifting of the gunas and it is this condition of the Prakriti that will become illumined by the transformation of *sattva* into *jyotiḥ*.

“*lokasaṅgrahārthāya*” [p. 85]—Does this mean the present order?

No. It is in a more general sense the maintenance of the world order which may be a developing, not necessarily a stationary one, an order spiritual, moral etc. and not merely a social order.

“Maya means nothing more than the freedom of Brahman from the circumstances through which he expresses himself”
[p. 89].

The sentence is rather loose in expression. It does not mean that Maya is Brahman’s freedom, but “the doctrine of Maya simply comes to this that Brahman is free from the circumstances through which he expresses himself.” This limited play is not He, for He is illimitable; it is only a conditioned (partial) manifestation, but He is not bound by the conditions (circumstances) as the play is bound. The world is a figure of something of Himself which he has put forth into it, but He is more than that figure. The world is not unreal or illusory, but our present seeing or consciousness of it is ignorant, and therefore the world *as seen by us* can be described as an illusion. So far the Maya idea is true. But if we see the world as it really is, a partial and developing manifestation of Brahman, then it can no longer be described as an illusion, but rather as a Lila. He is still more than his Lila, but He is in it and it is in Him; it is not an illusion. 16 October 1931

The Arya

The *Arya*⁸ is a work of spiritual philosophy founded on personal realisation; it is obviously not meant for minds that do not think out spiritual things in all their aspects.

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For understanding *Arya* one must have a sufficiently trained and developed intellect or else a basis of experience along with a capacity of mentalising experience. X as yet has neither. It is

⁸ *The monthly journal (1914–1921) in which The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga and many other works by Sri Aurobindo first appeared. Before these works were published as separate books, they were referred to collectively as “the Arya”. —Ed.*

sufficient if he can get accustomed to forming general ideas and thinking coherently about them.

22 September 1933

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What is meant by: 1. the psychic nature, 2. spiritual nature, 3. supramental nature, 4. divine nature?

To answer these questions it would be necessary to write a volume. I have written some letters about the psychic being and the self — you can get hold of those and read them.

Supramental nature can only be understood if one understands what supermind is and that is not altogether possible for mind so long as it does not open into the higher planes. So far as a mental account can be given, I have done it in the *Arya*.

Divine Nature is the nature of the divine Consciousness, Truth, Peace, Light, Purity, Knowledge, Power, Ananda on whichever plane it manifests. Supermind is one plane of the Divine Nature. The Divine is Sachchidananda.

18 October 1938

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I do not find it easy to answer the few brief and casual sentences in Angus' letter, — precisely because they are so brief and casual.⁹ Not knowing him or the turns of his mind, I do not exactly seize what is behind this passage in his letter. It would be easier to reply if I had some notion of the kind of thought or experience on which he takes his stand when he dismisses so cavalierly the statement of spiritual truth put forward in the *Arya*. As it is, I am obliged to answer to what *may* be behind his sentences and, as there is much that possibly stands behind them, the reply becomes long and elaborate and is in danger of seeming long and discursive. I could of course answer easily myself by a few brief and trenchant sentences of the same calibre, but in that kind of discussion there is no profit.

⁹ The paragraphs that follow are from a letter-draft that was not revised or sent in this form to the correspondent. — Ed.

Let me say that he makes an initial mistake — quite natural for him, since he has not read the *Arya*, — when he describes the extract sent to him as a “theological fragment”. I must insist that there is no theology in the *Arya*. Nothing there is written to support or to develop any kind of religious belief or dogma or to confirm or enunciate the credo of any old or new religion. No less does he miss the mark when he describes as a scholastic distinction the substance of the passage. The teaching there is not taken from books, nor, although put in philosophic language, is it based upon abstract thought or any formal logic. It expresses a fundamental spiritual experience, dynamic for the growth of the being, confirmed and enlarged and filled with detail by almost thirty years of continuous sadhana, and, as such, it cannot be seriously challenged or invalidated by mere intellectual question or reasoning, but, if at all, then only by a greater and wider spiritual experience. Moreover, it coincides (not in expression, it may be, but in substance) with the experience of hundreds of spiritual seekers in many paths and in all parts of the world since the days of the Upanishads — and of Plotinus and the Gnostics and Sufis — to the present time. It is hardly admissible then to put it aside as the thought of a tyro or beginner in spiritual knowledge making his first clumsy potshots at a solution of the crossword enigma of the universe. That description seems to show that he has missed the point of the passage altogether and that also makes it difficult to reply; for where there is no meeting point of minds, discussion is likely to be sterile.

I was a little surprised at first by this entire lack of understanding, shown still more in his cavil at the two Divines — for I had somehow got the impression that Angus was a Christian and the recognition of “two Divines” — the Divine Transcendent and the Divine Immanent — is, I have read, perfectly familiar to Christian ideas and to Christian experience. The words themselves in fact — transcendent and cosmic — are taken from the West. I do not know that there is anything exactly corresponding to them in the language of Indian spiritual thinking, although the experiences on which the distinction rests are quite familiar. On another side, Christianity insists not only on a double but a triple

Divine. It even strikes me that this triple Godhead or Trinity is not very far off at bottom from my trinity of the individual, cosmic and transcendent Divine — as far at least as one can judge who has not himself followed the Christian discipline. Christ whether as the human Incarnation or the Christos in men or the Godhead proceeding from the Father, seems to me to be quite my individual Divine. The Father has very much the appearance of the One who overstands and is immanent in the cosmos. And although this is more obscure, yet if one can be guided by the indications in the Scripture, the Holy Ghost looks very much like a rather mysterious and inexpressible Transcendence and its descent very much like what I would call the descent of Light, Purity, Peace — that passeth all understanding — or Power of the supramental Spirit. In any case these Christian and Western ideas show surely that my affirmation of a double or a triple Divine is not anything new and ought not to be found startling or upsetting and I do not see why it should be treated as (in itself) obscure and unintelligible.

Again, are these or similar distinctions very positively made in the Christian, Sufi or other teachings mere theoretical abstractions, scholastic distinctions, theological cobwebs, or metaphysical puzzles? I had always supposed that they corresponded to very living, very dynamic, almost — for the paths to which they relate — indispensable experiences. No doubt, for those who follow other ways or no way at all or for those who have not yet had the illuminating and vivifying experience, they may seem at first a little difficult or unseizable. But that is true of most spiritual truth — and not of spiritual truth alone. There are many very highly intelligent and cultured people to whom a scientific explanation of even so patent and common a fact as electricity and electric light (this is a reminiscence of an article by Y. Y. in the *New Statesman and Nation*) seems equally difficult to seize by the mind or to fix either in the memory or the intelligence. And yet the distinction between positive and negative electricity, both necessary for the existence of the light, — like that of the passive and active Brahman (another scholastic distinction?) both necessary for the existence of the universe, — cannot be

dismissed for that reason as something academic or scholastic, but is a very pertinent statement of things quite dynamic and real. No doubt the unscientific man does not and perhaps need not trouble about these things and can be content to enjoy the electric light (when he is allowed to do so by the grace of the Pondicherry Municipality), without enquiring into the play of the forces behind it: but for the seeker after scientific truth or for the practical electrician it is a different matter. Now these distinctions in the spiritual field are a parallel case; they seem theoretical or abstract only so long as experience has not made them concrete, but once experienced they become living stuff of the consciousness and, after a certain stage, even the basis of action and growth in the spiritual life.

Here I am driven to a rather lengthy digression from the main theme—for I am met by Angus' rather baffling appeal to Whitham's History of Science. What has Whitham or Science to do with spiritual truth or spiritual experience? I can only suppose that he condemns all intrusion of anything like metaphysical thought into the spiritual field—a position excessive but not altogether untenable—and even perhaps proposes to bring the scientific method and the scientific mentality into spiritual experience as the sole true way of arriving at or judging the truth of things. I should like to make my view clear as to that point, because here much confusion has been created about it, and more is possible. And the first thing I would say is that if metaphysics has no right to intervene in spiritual experience, neither has Science. There are here three different domains of knowledge and experience each with its own instrumentation, its own way of approach and seeing, suited for its own task, but not to be imposed or substituted in these other fields of knowledge,—at least unless and until they meet by some kind of supreme reconciling transmutation in something that is at the source of all knowledge. For knowledge may be essentially one, but like the one Divine, it manifests differently in different fields of its play and to abolish their distinctions is not the way to arrive at true understanding of experience.

Science deals effectively with phenomenon and process and

the apparent play of forces which determine the process. It cannot deal even intellectually in any adequate way with ultimate truths, that is the province of the higher, less external mind — represented up till now by metaphysics, though metaphysics is not its only possible power. If Science tries to fix metaphysical truth by forcing on this domain its own generalisations in the physical field, as people have been doing for almost the last century, it makes a mess of thought by illegitimately extended conclusions and has in the end to retire from this usurpation as it is now beginning to retire. Its discoveries may be used by philosophy, but on the grounds proper to philosophy and not on the grounds proper to Science. The philosopher must judge the scientific conceptions of relativity or discontinuity or space-time, for instance, by his own processes and standards of evidence. So too, Science has no instrumentation or process of knowledge which can enable it to discover spiritual truth or to judge or determine the results of spiritual experience. There is a field of knowledge of process in the spiritual and the occult domain, in the discovery of a world of inner forces and their way of action and even of their objective dynamisation in the mind and life and the functioning of the body. But the mathematical exactitudes and rigid formulas of physical Science do not apply here and the mentality created by them would hamper spiritual experience.

The Life Divine

There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Adwaita. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* is such a realistic Adwaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. But here in the material world or at its basis he has hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy; but this is only an appearance, for we

find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the working of a supreme secret intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. The apparently inconscient Energy which creates is in fact the Consciousness-Force of the Divine and its aspect of consciousness, secret in Matter, begins to emerge in Life, finds something more of itself in Mind and finds its true self in a spiritual consciousness and finally a supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is what we call evolution which is an evolution of consciousness and an evolution of the Spirit in things and only outwardly an evolution of species. Thus also, the delight of existence emerges from the original insentience first in the contrary forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the bliss of the Spirit or as it is called in the Upanishads, the bliss of the Brahman. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*.

A Passage from *The Life Divine*

“This opens the way for other explanations which make Consciousness the creator of this world out of an apparent original Inconscience. . . . All these things we see around us are then the thoughts of an extra-cosmic Divinity, a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will. . . .”¹⁰

The phrase “extra-cosmic Divinity” is used here in *The Life Divine* because in that stage of the reasoning nothing more emerged as positively established. In fact Sri Aurobindo regards the Divinity, the Reality behind and in the universe as at once supracosmic or transcendent of cosmos and immanent in it, and all, constituting the universe by its being, consciousness and force and by that too bringing out from the Inconscient the evolution and developing its stages inevitably according to a truth

¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, volume 21 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 316.

in things which is its element of Necessity and the possibilities of the Consciousness and Force (seen by the human mind as Chance) through which the truth works itself out.

The Synthesis of Yoga

The Synthesis of Yoga is being revised and largely rewritten for publication; so I don't think it is possible to send out copies of it like this. For the time the revision has been stopped, because I have not a moment free, but I hope to resume it shortly; the publishers are in fact pressing for the book. It was why I wrote to X that it could not be sent outside. December 1932

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X would like to see the six revised chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, as he has translated the unrevised ones. May I send him a copy?

These six chapters cannot be translated and published separately or along with the other unrevised chapters. It can only be done when the revision of the whole book is complete.

3 September 1936

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What about the publication of the *Synthesis*? They are all asking me about it. So many are eager that it should see the light, fed up as we all are with the analysis of the universe through science of mind and ignorance of life, what?

I hope you are not referring to the whole colossal mass of the *Synthesis*,—though that too *may* be ready for publication before the next world war (?) or after the beginning of the Satya Yuga (new World Order?). If you mean the Yoga of Works, I am writing or trying to write four or five additional chapters for it. I hope they will be ready in a reasonable time,—but my daily time is short and chapters are long. In the absence of exact prophetic power, that is all I can say. 2 March 1944

Passages from *The Synthesis of Yoga*

"Often, we see this desire of personal salvation overcome by another attraction which also belongs to the higher turn of our nature and which indicates the essential character of the action the liberated soul must pursue. . . . It is that which inspires a remarkable passage in a letter of Swami Vivekananda. 'I have lost all wish for my salvation,' wrote the great Vedantin, 'may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship. He who is the high and low, the saint and the sinner, the god and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols. In whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship; break all other idols.'

"The last two sentences contain indeed the whole gist of the matter. . . ."¹¹

As to the extract about Vivekananda, the point I make there does not seem to me humanitarian. You will see that I emphasise there the last sentences of the passage quoted from Vivekananda, not the words about God the poor and sinner and criminal. The point is about the Divine in the World, the All, *sarva-bhūtāni* of the Gita. That is not merely humanity, still less only the poor or the wicked; surely even the rich or the good are part of the All and those also who are neither good nor bad nor rich nor poor. Nor is there any question (I mean in my own remarks) of philanthropic service; so neither *daridra* nor *sevā* is the point. I had formerly not the humanitarian but the humanity view—and something of it may have stuck to my expressions in the *Arya*. But I had already altered my viewpoint from the "Our Yoga for the sake of humanity" to "Our Yoga for the sake of the Divine". The Divine includes not only the supracosmic but

¹¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, volume 23 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 269–70.

the cosmic and the individual — not only Nirvana or the Beyond but Life and the All. It is that I stress everywhere. But I shall keep the extracts for a day or two and see what there is, if anything, that smacks too much of a too narrow humanistic standpoint. I stop here for today.

29 December 1934

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“This concentration proceeds by the Idea . . . ; for it is through the Idea that the mental being rises beyond all expression to that which is expressed, to that of which the Idea itself is only the instrument. By concentration upon the Idea the mental existence which at present we are breaks open the barrier of our mentality and arrives at the state of consciousness, the state of being, the state of power of conscious-being and bliss of conscious-being to which the Idea corresponds and of which it is the symbol, movement and rhythm” [p. 321].

I have not the original chapter before me just now; but from the sentences quoted it seems to be the essential mental Idea. As for instance in the method of Vedantic knowledge one concentrates on the idea of Brahman omnipresent — one looks at a tree or other surrounding objects with the idea that Brahman is there and the tree or object is only a form. After a time if the concentration is of the right kind, one begins to become aware of a presence, an existence, the physical tree form becomes a shell and that presence or existence is felt to be the only reality. The idea then drops, it is a direct vision of the thing that takes its place — there is no longer any necessity of concentrating on the idea, one sees with a deeper consciousness, स पश्यति. It should be noted that this concentration on the idea is not mere thinking, मननम् — it is an inner dwelling on the essence of the Idea.

27 August 1933

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“ . . . we must not only cut asunder the snare of the mind and the senses, but flee also beyond the snare of the thinker, the snare of the theologian and the church-builder, the meshes of the Word and the bondage of the Idea” [p. 330]. Would you explain this to me?

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

18 September 1933

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“Therefore the psychic life-energy presents itself to our experience as a sort of desire-mind, which we have to conquer if we mean to get back to the true self” [p. 350].

It means the life-energy which comes from within and is in consonance with the psychic being—it is the energy of the true vital being, but in the ordinary ignorant vital it is deformed into desire. You have to quiet and purify the vital and let the true vital emerge. Or you have to bring the psychic in front, and the psychic will purify and psychicise the vital and then you will have the true vital energy.

11 September 1933

The Synthesis of Yoga, The Mother and Lights on Yoga

Does the method of sadhana as given in *The Synthesis of Yoga* apply now in our practice? What one finds when one reads the *Synthesis* seems to differ a great deal from what one finds in *The Mother* and *Lights on Yoga*.

The Synthesis of Yoga was not meant to give a method for all to follow. Each side of the Yoga was dealt with separately with all its possibilities, and an indication as to how they meet so that one starting from knowledge could realise karma and bhakti also and so with each path. It was intended when the Self-Perfection¹² was finished, to suggest a way in which all could be combined, but this was never written. *The Mother* and the *Lights* were not intended to be a systematic treatment of the sadhana as a whole; they only touch on various elements in it.

18 May 1936

¹² “*The Yoga of Self-Perfection*”, Part IV of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. — Ed.

A Passage from “Rebirth and Karma”

In “Rebirth and Karma”,¹³ I find the following: “We have in fact an immutable Self, a real Person, lord of this ever-changing personality which, again, assumes ever-changing bodies, but the real Self knows itself always as above the mutation, watches and enjoys it, but is not involved in it. Through what does it enjoy the changes and feel them to be its own, even while knowing itself to be unaffected by them? . . . This more essential form is or seems to be in man the mental being or mental person which the Upanishads speak of as the mental leader of the life and body, *manomayaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā*.¹⁴ Would not the mental being be part of the human personality — the mental, nervous and physical composite?

The mental being spoken of by the Upanishad is not part of the mental nervous physical composite — it is the *manomayaḥ puruṣaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā*, the mental being leader of the life and body. It could not be so described if it were part of the composite. Nor can the composite or part of it be the Purusha, — for the composite is composed of Prakriti. It is described as *manomaya* by the Upanishad because the psychic being is behind the veil and man being the mental being in the life and body lives in his mind and not in his psychic, so to him the *manomaya puruṣa* is the leader of the life and body, — of the psychic behind supporting the whole he is not aware or dimly aware in his best moments. The psychic is represented in man by the Prime Minister, the *manomaya*, itself being a mild constitutional king; it is the *manomaya* to whom Prakriti refers for assent to her actions. But still the statement of the Upanishad gives only the apparent truth of the matter, valid for man and

¹³ The sixteen essays published since 1952 as The Problem of Rebirth originally appeared in the monthly review *Arya* between 1915 and 1921. The first twelve, which were published in 1915 and 1919, were sometimes referred to as “Rebirth and Karma”. This informal title was used later as the subtitle of Section I of The Problem of Rebirth. (In the United States, it also was used as the title of the entire book.) The Problem of Rebirth is reproduced in Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 255–434. — Ed.

¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, p. 275.

the human stage only — for in the animal it would be rather the *prāṇamaya puruṣa* that is the *netā*, leader of mind and body. It is one reason why I have not yet allowed the publication of “Rebirth and Karma” because this had to be corrected and the deeper truth put in its place. I had intended to do it later on, but had not time to finish the remaining articles. 24 December 1935

“The Lines of Karma”

Regarding “The Lines of Karma”,¹⁵ we beg to draw your attention to the matter and ask what should be done to publish it. If you kindly manage to write the first part of the book, then we can bring it out.

The book is unfinished — that is the main obstacle to its publication. However I will look at the copy Nolini has sent up and see. 5 September 1935

The Ideal of Human Unity

With regard to *The Ideal of Human Unity*, the book has to be revised before it is ready for reprinting. Sri Aurobindo will take up the work when he is able to make some time for it.¹⁶

19 April 1949

Translations of Vedic Hymns

Last year I got from X some translations of the Rig-Vedic hymns done by the Master after his retirement. I have just retyped them for myself and Y wanted my old copy.

These translations are provisional, not final — so I should not like them to be freely copied and seen by all; but I have no objection to your keeping a copy. 3 December 1936

¹⁵ A group of four essays that originally appeared in the Arya in 1920 and 1921. They now comprise Section II of The Problem of Rebirth. Here the reference may be to a proposed book including all of Sri Aurobindo’s essays on rebirth and karma, which eventually came out as The Problem of Rebirth. — Ed.

¹⁶ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer. — Ed.

Glossary of Vedic Words

I see that this is a glossary of Vedic words with their current meanings. I have no objection to that. But I do not want any publication of Vedic interpretations or significances founded upon my translations, so long as my work on the Veda is incomplete and has not taken its final form.

5 March 1929

Essays on the Gita

My brother is thinking of starting a bookselling and publishing business and has asked for one or two books of Sri Aurobindo for publication. May I prepare for him an edition of the Gita with only the text and Sri Aurobindo's translation compiled from the *Essays on the Gita*?

The casual renderings in the *Essays* cannot be published as my translation,—they were not intended for the purpose.

20 January 1932

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Before coming here, I found some justification for my anger from your *Essays on the Gita*—though I must say that the tendency to violence was already there. Will there be any place for some sort of violence in the new creation?

The *Essays on the Gita* explain the ordinary karmayoga as developed in the Gita, in which the work done is the ordinary work of human life with only an inward change. There too the violence to be used is not a personal violence done from egoistic motives, but part of the ordered system of social life. Nothing can spiritually justify individual violence done in anger or passion or from any vital motive. In our yoga our object is to rise higher than the ordinary life of man and in it violence has to be left aside altogether.

12 August 1933

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I have compiled a translation of most of the slokas of the Gita, using your interpretation of them in the *Essays on the Gita*. I request you to give me permission to publish the book as it

will help the public to understand the Gita from your point of view.

The permission cannot be given — the translations in the *Essays* are more explanatory than textually precise or cast in a literary style — I do not want that to go out as my translation of the Gita.

1 August 1934

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I read your *Essays on the Gita* twice or thrice before. But when I started reading it again, I found that there were many ideas in it which I had missed before. I think if I read it over and over again I would find newer and newer ideas each time.

That is a common experience — most books with any profundity of knowledge in them have that effect. Almost all spiritual problems have been briefly but deeply dealt with in the Gita and I have tried to bring out all that fully in the *Essays*.

1 November 1936

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The *Essays on the Gita* is the most important of the published books.¹⁷ If it is to be translated in Telugu it should be assured that it is an accurate translation in good style. A translation from a translation does not usually secure that object.

Passages from *Essays on the Gita*

“But the Gita insists that the nature of the action does matter. . . .”¹⁸ This perplexes me. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me in reply to my question about office work: “The nature of the work does not matter.”

That is quite a different question from the choice referred to in the passage of the *Essays*.

¹⁷ At the time this letter was written, *Essays on the Gita* was the only full-length work by Sri Aurobindo that was available in the form of a book.—Ed.

¹⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, volume 19 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 131.

What is written must be read and interpreted according to the context. In the Gita, the question is between two kinds of action — the quietistic life of the Sannyasin with the minimum of action and the dynamic life offered in all its actions whatever they be as a sacrifice to the Divine. It might be said that Arjuna might do either, it does not matter — but the Gita thinks it does matter: that Arjuna being called to a life of dynamic action must follow that and not the quietistic life.

3 December 1934

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In *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo renders the term “Kshara Purusha” as “the universal Soul” [p. 436]. How can the “Kshara” be the universal Soul, if the one is mutable and the other immutable?

This is not my interpretation, it is what the Gita itself plainly says. It explains Kshara as “all existences” and since Purusha is the being which observes and experiences all the movements of Nature, (which is what is meant here by soul) it cannot be anything else than the universal Soul identifying itself with all existences in Nature.

Kindly indicate the relation of the universal Soul to the Divine.

The word क्षर [kṣara] means really mobile as opposed to the immobile immutable Akshara. The Kshara Purusha is that which follows the movement of the universe and seems to move and change, because it identifies itself while the Akshara is not identified and stands apart. The Upanishad makes the same distinction of the two Souls and Prakriti.

I used to take *kṣetra* and *kṣara puruṣa* to mean the lower nature.

Nature is Prakriti — Purusha cannot be Prakriti. Neither can Purusha be *kṣetra*, the field, because Purusha by its very definition is that which is behind Prakriti and its field and observes it — it is the Being not the nature.

28 November 1934

The Future Poetry

I will write later about the University idea. But it is not possible, I think, to give *The Future Poetry* as a whole. If it is to be published, it should be in England and the time is not ready for that.

26 January 1932

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There is a review of the *Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse* in the *New Statesman*. It might be noted as worth getting when you have the money — unless you have already something of the kind. Have you Donne and Blake in the Library? — not that I want them just now, but I shall some day when I revise *The Future Poetry*.

January 1934

The Mother

I sent you a review of *The Mother* a few days ago. Have you seen it?

Yes. I think it will give the reader the impression that *The Mother* is a philosophical or practical exposition of Yoga — while its atmosphere is really not that at all.

1 March 1937

The Mother as a Mantra

Some mornings I recite *The Mother* silently with an aspiration to know what it contains. But sometimes it seems to me that this is intellectual and so not part of our discipline. Should I continue with this recitation?

Yes, if you find that it helps you.

I also recite the Gita with the view to understanding it but along the lines of *Essays on the Gita*. Is this a good idea?

Yes. It does not matter whether it is mental, if it helps you. These things often help the mind to get into the psychic attitude.

25 June 1933

A Note on the Terminology of *The Mother*

(1) *Falsehood and Ignorance*

Ignorance means Avidya, the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life that flows from it and all that is natural to the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life. This Ignorance is the result of a movement by which the cosmic Intelligence separated itself from the light of Supermind (the divine Gnosis) and lost the Truth,—truth of being, truth of divine consciousness, truth of force and action, truth of Ananda. As a result instead of a world of integral truth and divine harmony created in the light of the divine Gnosis, we have a world founded on the part truths of an inferior cosmic Intelligence in which all is half truth, half error. It is this that some of the ancient thinkers like Shankara, not perceiving the greater Truth-Force behind, stigmatised as Maya and thought to be the highest creative power of the Divine. All in the consciousness of this creation is either limited or else perverted by separation from the integral Light; even the Truth it perceives is only a half knowledge. Therefore it is called the Ignorance.

Falsehood, on the other hand, is not this Avidya, but an extreme result of it. It is created by an Asuric power which intervenes in this creation and is not only separated from the Truth and therefore limited in knowledge and open to error, but in revolt against the Truth or in the habit of seizing the Truth only to pervert it. This Power, the dark Asuric Shakti or Rakshasic Maya, puts forward its own perverted consciousness as true knowledge and its wilful distortions or reversals of the Truth as the verity of things. It is the powers and personalities of this perverted and perverting consciousness that we call hostile beings, hostile forces. Whenever these perversions created by them out of the stuff of the Ignorance are put forward as the truth of things, that is the Falsehood, in the Yogic sense, *mithyā*, *moha*.

(2) Powers and Appearances

These are the forces and beings that are interested in maintaining the falsehoods they have created in the world of the Ignorance and in putting them forward as the Truth which men must follow. In India they are termed Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas (beings respectively of the mentalised vital, middle vital and lower vital planes) who are in opposition to the Gods, the Powers of Light. These too are Powers, for they too have their cosmic field in which they exercise their function and authority and some of them were once divine Powers (the former gods, *pūrve devāḥ*, as they are called somewhere in the Mahabharata) who have fallen towards the Darkness by revolt against the divine Will behind the cosmos. The word “Appearances” refers to the forms they take in order to rule the world, forms often false and always incarnating falsehood, sometimes pseudo-divine.

(3) Powers and Personalities

The use of the word Power has already been explained — it can be applied to whatever or whoever exercises a conscious power in the cosmic field and has authority over the world movement or some part of it or some movement in it. But the Four of whom you speak are also Shaktis, manifestations of different powers of the supreme Consciousness and Force, the Divine Mother, by which she rules or acts in the universe. And they are at the same time divine Personalities; for each is a being who manifests different qualities and personal consciousness-forms of her Godhead. All the greater Gods are in this way personalities of the Divine — one Consciousness playing in many personalities, *ekam sat bahudhā*. Even in the human being there are many personalities and not only one, as used formerly to be imagined; for all consciousness can be at once one and multiple. “Powers and Personalities” simply describe different aspects of the same being; a Power is not necessarily impersonal and certainly it is not *avyaktam*, as you suggest,— on the contrary it is a manifestation acting in the worlds of the divine manifestation.

(4) Emanations

Emanations correspond to your description of the Matrikas of whom you speak in your letter. An emanation of the Mother is something of her consciousness and power put forth from her, which so long as it is in play is held in close connection with her and, when its play is no longer required, is withdrawn back into its source, but can always be put out and brought into play once more. But also the detaining thread of connection can be severed or loosened and that which came forth as an emanation can proceed on its way as an independent divine being with its own play in the world. All the Gods can put forth such emanations from their being, identical with them in essence of consciousness and power though not commensurate. In a certain sense the universe itself can be said to be an emanation from the Supreme. In the consciousness of the sadhaka an emanation of the Mother will ordinarily wear the appearance, form and characteristics with which he is familiar.

In a sense the four Powers of the Mother may be called, because of their origin, her Emanations, just as the Gods may be called Emanations of the Divine, but they have a more permanent and fixed character; they are at once independent beings allowed their play by the Adyā Shakti and yet portions of the Mother, the Mahashakti, and she can always either manifest through them as separate beings or draw them together as her own various Personalities and hold them in herself, sometimes drawn back, sometimes at play, according to her will. In the supramental plane they are always in her and do not act independently but as intimate portions of the original Mahashakti and in close union and harmony with each other.

(5) Gods

These four Powers are the Mother's cosmic godheads, permanent in the world-play; they stand among the greater cosmic Godheads to whom allusion is made when it is said the Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world "stands there (in the

Overmind plane) above the Gods".¹⁹ The Gods, as has been already said, are in origin and essence permanent Emanations of the Divine put forth from the Supreme by the Transcendent Mother, the Adyā Shakti; in their cosmic action they are Powers and Personalities of the Divine each with his independent cosmic standing, function and work in the universe. They are not impersonal entities but cosmic Personalities, although they can and do ordinarily veil themselves behind the movement of impersonal forces. But while in the Overmind and the triple world they appear as independent beings, they return in the Supermind into the One and stand there united in a single harmonious action as multiple personalities of the one Person, the divine Purushottama.

(6) *Presence*

It is intended by the word Presence to indicate the sense and perception of the Divine as a Being, felt as present in one's existence and consciousness or in relation with it, without the necessity of any farther qualification or description. Thus of the "ineffable Presence"²⁰ it can only be said that it is there and nothing more can or need be said about it, although at the same time one knows that all is there, personality and impersonality, Power and Light and Ananda and everything else, and that all these flow from that indescribable Presence. The word may be used sometimes in a less absolute sense, but that is always the fundamental significance,—the essential perception of the essential presence supporting everything else.

(7) *The Transcendent Mother*

This is what is termed the Adyā Shakti; she is the supreme

¹⁹ "Determining all that shall be in this universe and in the terrestrial evolution by what she sees and feels and pours from her, she stands there above the Gods and all her Powers and Personalities are put out in front of her for the action. . . ."—Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1999), p. 34.

²⁰ "Alone, she harbours the absolute Power and the ineffable Presence. . . ."—Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 29.

Consciousness and Power above the universe and it is by her that all the Gods are manifested, and even the supramental Ishwara comes into manifestation through her — the supramental Purushottama of whom the Gods are Powers and Personalities.

Passages from *The Mother*

What I want to know is — when does God take full charge of our sadhana?

The sadhana described in the *Arya* in the beginning was based on the conviction that God was the sadhak. In subsequent years, individual effort was permitted in *Arya*, something like cooperation between the individual and God.

This is an error. There is no such variation in the beginning of the *Arya* and in subsequent years.

In the message of February,²¹ the operator is God and the individual becomes the operated. The individual effort consists in fasting etc. before and during the operation.

What is all this about operations and fasting? Certainly, I cannot have written anything of the kind.

What are the signs of the coming of the Divine Grace? Does the Divine Grace take full charge of the sadhana as soon as the sadhak gives the charge? If not, when will it take full charge?

If he gives full charge truly and really, with an absolute sincerity of total surrender and does not come in the way of the divine Grace. How many can do that? It cannot be done by a word or by taking up a mental posture.

Calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a self-deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection.²²

30 May 1927

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²¹ Chapter One of *The Mother* was first issued as a "message" on 21 February 1927.
—Ed.

²² Sri Aurobindo incorporated this sentence into Chapter Two of *The Mother*, which he wrote on the back of this letter.—Ed.

Does our spiritual destiny mean the fulfilment of “the aim of our endeavour”, which you mentioned at the beginning of *The Mother*?²³

Yes. It means to find your true self, the Divine, and become in the Nature a conscious and illumined part of the Divine in manifestation.

14 November 1933

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“ . . . it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties . . . ” [p. 2].

“Opening from below” means this — that the supramental force descending awakes a response from below in the earth consciousness so that it is possible for a supramental activity to be formed in the material itself. All is involved as potentiality in the earth consciousness — life, mind, supermind — but it is only when Life Force descended from the life plane into the material that active and conscious organised life was possible — so it was only when mind descended that the latent mind in Matter awoke and could be organised. The supramental descent must create the same kind of opening from below so that a supramental consciousness can be organised in the material. 20 April 1933

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“ . . . it is only the very highest supramental Force . . . that can victoriously handle the physical Nature . . . ” [p. 2]. Is this idea to be found anywhere in the Upanishads or Vedas? What is there in this Force which can deal with Matter, and why cannot other forces do it — for example the occult vital forces that are used to produce *kāya siddhi* in Hathayoga?

The physical Nature does not mean the body alone but the phrase includes the transformation of the whole physical mind, vital, material nature — not by imposing siddhis on them, but by

²³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 1.

creating a new physical nature which is to be the habitation of the supramental being in a new evolution. I am not aware that this has been done by any Hathayogic or other process. Mental or vital occult power can only bring siddhis of the higher plane into the individual life — like the Sannyasi who could take any poison without harm, but he died of a poison after all when he forgot to observe the conditions of the siddhi. The working of the supramental power envisaged is not an influence on the physical giving it abnormal faculties, but an entrance and permeation changing it wholly into a supramentalised physical. I did not learn the idea from Veda or Upanishad, and I do not know if there is anything of the kind there. What I received about the Supermind was a direct, not a derived knowledge given to me; it was only afterwards that I found certain confirmatory revelations in the Upanishad and Veda.

11 September 1936

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"Detect first what is false or obscure in you . . . then alone can you rightly call for the divine Power to transform you" [pp. 4–5]. Does "rightly" mean "it is the right way of calling" or does it mean "then only you have the 'right' to call"?

It means "in the right way".

"If behind your devotion and surrender you make a cover for your desires, egoistic demands . . ." [p. 3]. Does this mean "you use devotion and surrender as a *means* of fulfilling your desires and demands"?

Yes, practically it means that. I put it in that way so as to avoid suggesting that the devotion is altogether insincere and meant *only* as a cover.

12 December 1934

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No sadhak can rely entirely on the Divine in the beginning. He goes by his own effort. Even as he makes his own effort, many subtle beings, the power of the Divine, etc. must be helping the sadhak. Is not this kind of tapasya and self-dependence a form of the Divine Power's help?

It has been clearly stated in *The Mother* that personal effort is necessary so long as the transference to the Divine Power cannot be complete [p. 8]. It is the fact that all power is the Divine's and therefore self-effort is also a use of the Divine Power conceded by the Divine, but there is a great practical difference between the delegated use and the direct Divine Action.

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In the book *The Mother* Sri Aurobindo says, "The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender." And "rejection of the movements of the lower nature — rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind, — rejection of the vital nature's desires . . .", etc. [p. 9]. How can I apply this in my working life?

This has to be done in life itself — whether the life is in an Asram or outside, the rule and method is the same. It is an internal change for which one must become conscious of the lower nature as well as of the psychic and spiritual workings. Meditation is usually necessary for that but so also is life, for it is only life that tests the genuineness of the change. 7 April 1938

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" . . . surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti" [p. 10]. Can I take this to mean surrender of the outward life to the Universal Nature through reason and will (i.e. a rational adaptation of the material life to the ways of Nature) and surrender of the inward life to the Divine through faith?

No. Universal Nature is a mass of forces, mental, vital and physical. The Divine is above with its supreme Shakti — and within behind Nature. 25 December 1934

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In *The Mother*, you have said: "Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth" [p. 13]. Should one have

such a high aspiration? The general impression in the Ashram is that it would be laughable to try.

There is nothing laughable in aspiring for the supramental Truth so long as one understands that it is not possible to have it at once and one must go through a long preparation and development. What is laughable is to think you have it when you are floundering about it in mental and vital half-truths or delusions — that is what some have done and it is probably these bad examples that have created the impression of which you speak.

2 June 1933

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In *The Mother* you write that the Mother is the consciousness and force of the Ishwara [p. 28]. But my experience here is that Ishwara is the consciousness and force of the Supreme Mother. Could you please make it clear to me?

The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Divine — or, it may be said, she is the Divine in its consciousness-force. The Ishwara as Lord of the Cosmos does come out of the Mother who takes her place beside him as the cosmic Shakti — the cosmic Ishwara is one aspect of the Divine. The experience therefore is correct so far as it goes.

16 November 1934

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In *The Mother* you write: "There are three ways of being of the Mother of which you can become aware when you enter into touch of oneness with the Conscious Force that upholds us and the universe" [p. 28]. Is it the Cosmic Spirit that is meant or the Overmind?

It is the Divine Shakti — who acts on all the planes and has all the aspects.

16 June 1933

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I am or was under the impression that Mother is the Cosmic and Supracosmic Mahashakti.

I don't quite understand the question. I have explained it in *The*

Mother [pp. 28–29] that there are three aspects, transcendent, universal and individual of the Mother.

31 May 1933

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“At the summit of this manifestation of which we are a part there are worlds of infinite existence, consciousness, force and bliss over which the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal Power” [p. 32]. Are we to understand that the Transcendent Mother stands above the Ananda plane? There would then be four steps of the Divine Shakti:

- (1) The Transcendent Mahashakti who stands above the Ananda plane and who bears the supreme Divine in her eternal consciousness.
- (2) The Mahashakti immanent in the worlds of Sat-Chit-Ananda, where all beings move in an ineffable completeness.
- (3) The Supralental Mahashakti immanent in the worlds of Supermind.
- (4) The Cosmic Mahashakti immanent in the lower hemisphere.

Yes; that is all right. One speaks often however of all above the lower hemisphere as part of the transcendence. This is because the Supermind and Ananda are not manifested in *our* universe at present, but are planes above it. For us the higher hemisphere is पर [para], the Supreme Transcendence is परात्पर [parātpara]. The Sanskrit terms are here clearer than the English.

27 January 1932

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In *The Mother* you write that the Mother as the Cosmic Mahashakti “stands there above the Gods and all her Powers and Personalities are put out in front of her for the action and she sends down emanations of them into these lower worlds to intervene, to govern, to battle and conquer, to lead and turn their cycles, to direct the total and the individual lines of their forces” [pp. 34–35]. Does this imply that the World War or the Bolshevik Revolution or the Satyagraha movement were in some manner arranged by the Mother?

They are incidents in the cosmic plan and so arranged by the

cosmic Mahashakti and worked out by men under the impulse
of the forces of Nature.

1 June 1933

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You write in *The Mother* that there are Vibhutis of the powers and personalities of the Ishwara and Vibhutis of the Mother, but that in both cases it is the action of the Grace of the Mother that alone can effect a transformation of the Vibhuti [p. 35]. I would like to know the difference. Take for example, Christ, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Confucius, Zarathustra, Buddha, Shankara, Mohammed, Alexander, Napoleon — among these well-known figures which are Vibhutis of the Mother and which are Vibhutis of the Ishwara? And what about the Mother's action in Avatars like Rama and Krishna?

The Mother's Vibhutis would normally be feminine personalities most of whom would be dominated by one of the four personalities of the Mother. The others you mention would be personalities and powers of the Ishwara, but in them also, as in all, the Mother's force would act. I do not quite catch the question about the transformation of the Vibhutis. All creation and transformation is the work of the Mother.

29 October 1935

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Since all creation is her work, can it be taken that it is the personalities of the Mother who, behind the veil, prepare the conditions for the descent of the Avatar or Vibhutis?

If you mean the divine personalities of the Mother — the answer is yes. It may even be said that each Vibhuti draws his energies from the Four, from one of them predominantly in most cases, as Napoleon from Mahakali, Rama from Mahalakshmi, Augustus Caesar from Mahasaraswati.

31 October 1935

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"Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play" [p. 37].

What are you speaking of here?

Of the Mother in her universal workings.

13 July 1933

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"Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection are their several attributes and it is these powers that they bring with them into the world, manifest in a human disguise in their Vibhutis and shall find in the divine degree of their ascension in those who can open their earthly nature to the direct and living influence of the Mother" [pp. 38–39].

I am afraid it [*a translation of the above passage*] is still wrong. Let me try to explain otherwise. It means "they bring the powers into the world (in their ordinary and in man their human degree), manifest them (in a half-divine degree but) in a human disguise in their Vibhutis and shall (hereafter), in those who can open to the direct influence of the Mother, raise them (the powers) to their highest divine degree and establish them in that degree." Please don't translate my explanation, for that will make it very awkward; I only want the true sense of the sentence expressed in the translation as briefly and elegantly as possible. You might send me up what you propose to put for approval and only after approval put in the proof so that there may not be too many erasures.

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What is meant by "height" in the phrase "not wideness but height" [p. 42]?

It is very much as we speak of high ideas, high feelings, high aspirations. In that sense Mahakali's movement is a high, swift action, very effective at the point touched, but not wide, patient, comprehensive like Maheshwari's.

11 August 1933

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This morning, when I said that I thought that the Mother was putting pressure on me, you wrote that the word "pressure" was "entirely wrong". If that is so, what is the sense

of the word “pressure” in this passage from *The Mother*: “[Maheshwari] puts on them the required pressure” [p. 41]? You wrote also, in regard to Mahakali, of “the vehemence of her pressure” [p. 44].

I was speaking of your case only—it was not my intention to say that the Mother never uses pressure. But pressure also can be of various kinds. There is the pressure of the Force when it is entering the mind or vital or body—a pressure to go faster, a pressure to build or form, a pressure to break and many more. In your case if there is any pressure it is that of help or support or removal of an attack, but it does not seem to me that that can properly be called pressure.

In the same book you say of Mahakali, “her hands are outstretched to strike and to succour” [p. 44]. What do you mean here by “strike”?

It expresses her general action in the world. She strikes at the Asuras, she strikes also at everything that has to be got rid of or destroyed, at the obstacles to the sadhana etc. I may say that the Mother never uses the Mahakali power in your case nor the Mahakali pressure.

5 June 1936

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About the Mother’s Mahakali aspect it is said in *The Mother*: “When she is allowed to intervene in her strength, then in one moment are broken like things without consistence the obstacles that immobilise or the enemies that assail the seeker” [p. 44]. How is this intervention of the Mahakali force felt?

It is felt as if something swift, sudden, decisive and imperative. When it intervenes, it has a kind of divine or supramental sanction behind it and is like a fiat against which there is no appeal. What is done cannot be reversed or undone. The adverse forces may try, may even touch or invade, but they retire baffled and it is seen as soon as they withdraw that the past ground has remained intact—it is felt even in the attack. Also the difficulties that were strong before touched by this fiat lose their power, their

verisimilitude destroyed or are weak shadows that come only to flicker and fade away. I say “allowed”, because this supreme action of Mahakali is comparatively rare, the action of the other Powers or a partial action of Mahakali is more common.

24 August 1933

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In the book *The Mother* what is the sense of “false adaptation” [p. 53]—is it something like a mason doing a coolie’s work?

Well, yes—it means misapplication of any kind and fitting things in where they do not really fit—whether with regard to ideas, activities, or anything else.

“Only when the Four have founded their harmony and freedom of movement in the transformed mind and life and body . . .” [p. 56]. Here does “transformed” mean the full transformation?

At any rate a sufficient *foundation* of the harmony in a sufficiently transformed Nature for still greater things to come in without perturbation of the Nature. 29 March 1933

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“There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation,—most of all one who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secracies the work of all the other Powers of the universe” [pp. 55–56]. Is not the Personality referred to in this passage the Radha-Power, which is spoken of as Premamayi Radha, Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti?

Yes—but the images of the Radha-Krishna *līlā* are taken from the vital world and therefore it is only a minor manifestation of the Radha Shakti that is there depicted. That is why she is called Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti. What is referred to is

not this minor form, but the full Power of Love and Ananda

above.

7 February 1934

The Riddle of This World

In reference to what Prof. Sorley has written on *The Riddle of This World*, the book of course was not meant as a full or direct statement of my thought and, as it was written to sadhaks mostly, many things were taken for granted there. Most of the major ideas — e.g. Overmind — were left without elucidation. To make the ideas implied clear to the intellect, they must be put with precision in an intellectual form — so far as that is possible with supra-intellectual things. What is written in the book can be clear to those who have gone far enough in experience, but for most it can only be suggestive.

10 April 1934

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All that was bowed and rapt lifting clasped hands out of pain
and night,
How hast thou filled with murmuring ecstasy, made proud and
bright!
Thou hast chosen the grateful earth for thy own in her hour of
anguish and strife,
Surprised by thy rapid feet of joy, O Beloved of the Master of
Life.²⁴

Your answer is not only fine poetry but it is a true explanation of the descent of the soul into the Ignorance. It is the adventure into the Night (the introduction of the Light, Joy, Immortality) to see whether they cannot be established there — so that there may be a new experience of the Divine and joy of the Divine through separation and union (or reunion) on a new basis. It is what I have hinted at in *The Riddle of This World*.

²⁴ From "Lakshmi", a Bengali poem by Dilip Kumar Roy, as translated by Sri Aurobindo. See Translations, volume 5 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 561. — Ed.

Passages from *The Riddle of This World*

In the *Riddle* you speak of a conversion inwards and a series of conversions upwards.²⁵ Does the upward conversion begin only after the inward conversion, i.e. the psychicisation of the lower nature, is complete?

Not necessarily.

Or do both kinds of work go on simultaneously?

It differs with different people, but the upward conversions cannot go very far or cannot be secure if the lower nature is not psychicised—for there is then always the possibility of a big or even a decisive fall if there is something seriously unpsychic in the lower nature.

29 March 1935

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What precisely is meant by the “intermediate zone” [pp. 35–45]? Has everyone to pass through it to reach the truth?

The intermediate zone means simply a confused condition or passage in which one is getting out of the personal consciousness and opening into the cosmic (cosmic Mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical, something perhaps of the cosmic higher Mind) without having yet transcended the human mind levels. One is not in possession of or direct contact with the divine Truth *on its own levels*, but one can receive something from them, even from the Overmind, indirectly. Only, as one is still immersed in the cosmic Ignorance, all that comes from above can be mixed, perverted, taken hold of for their purposes by lower, even by hostile Powers.

It is not necessary for everyone to struggle through the intermediate zone. If one has purified oneself, if there is no abnormal vanity, egoism, ambition or other strong misleading element, or if one is vigilant and on one's guard, or if the psychic is in front, one can either pass rapidly and directly or with a minimum of

²⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Riddle of This World* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973), p. 5.

trouble into the higher zones of consciousness where one is in direct contact with the Divine Truth.

On the other hand the passage through the higher zones —higher Mind, illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind, is obligatory —they are the true Intermediaries between the present consciousness and the Supermind.

28 December 1933

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About the intermediate zone, you wrote [*in the preceding letter*]: “One is not in possession of or direct contact with the divine Truth *on its own levels*.” Are the planes of Higher Mind or Intuition in direct contact with the truth?

Yes — because it is there that one opens to the cosmic Truth (as opposed to the cosmic Ignorance) —the cosmic Divine etc. It is not the full power of the Truth — that one reaches only in the Supermind where one is in direct communion with the Transcendent Reality; but it is still manifested Truth and not manifested Ignorance. This, of course, is when one can rise to those levels and stay there for a time at least or when the mind etc. are already so much changed that they can receive without perverting or distorting or misusing and diminishing too much. It is not so difficult once that is done to receive the Truth in consciousness — what is more difficult is to make it dynamic in its purity for life.

29 December 1933

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You write in *The Riddle of This World*: “Very readily they come to think that they are in the full cosmic consciousness when it is only some front or small part of it or some larger Mind, Life-Power or subtle physical ranges with which they have entered into dynamic connection” [p. 37]. What is meant here by “larger Mind”?

It means simply larger than the limited personal mind. It is a play of some combination of cosmic Mind-Forces but not the full cosmic Consciousness, not even the Cosmic Mind. It belongs usually to the Ignorance.

30 March 1934

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About polytheism, I certainly accept the truth of the many forms and personalities of the One which since the Vedic times has been the spiritual essence of Indian polytheism — a secondary aspect in the seeking for the one and only Divine. But the passage referred to by Professor Sorley (page 56 [of the first edition])²⁶ is concerned with something else — the little godlings and Titans spoken of there are supraphysical beings of other planes. It is not meant to be suggested that they are real Godheads and entitled to worship — on the contrary it is indicated that to accept their influence is to move towards error and confusion or a deviation from the true spiritual way. No doubt they have some power to create, they are makers of forms in their own way and in their limited domain, but so are men too creators of outward and inward things in their own domain and limits — and even man's creative powers can have a repercussion on the supraphysical levels.

10 April 1934

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I have always believed that there was an existence after death akin to our existence in this world minus the physical body.

The soul goes out in a subtle body.

On the strength of certain phenomena that did not appear to me to be capable of being summarily dismissed, I further believed that after a period of confusion immediately following death, the recollections of the life just preceding returned, and persisted till rebirth.

Only for a time, not till rebirth — otherwise the stamp could be so strong that remembrance of past births even after taking a new body would be the rule rather than the exception.

I was also disposed to believe that in cases of pure and unalloyed attachment the relationships of one birth persisted in successive births, the number depending on the strength of attachment.

²⁶ “ . . . for these intermediate planes are full of little Gods or strong Daityas. . . . ” The Riddle of This World (1973), p. 38.

This is possible, but not a law — as a rule the same relationship would not be constantly repeated — the same people often meet again and again on earth in different lives, but the relations are different. The purpose of rebirth would not be served if the same personality with the same relations and experiences were incessantly repeated.

All these beliefs were shattered to pieces when someone drew my attention to certain statements of yours in the book *The Riddle of This World* [pp. 53–54, 58–60], in which I understood you to say that in the case of forms of life lower than man there is a complete annihilation of the ego on death.

That is not the case.

I further understood you to say that in the case of man, the ego persisted in a static condition of complete rest and carried with it (except in a very few exceptional cases) only the essence of the experiences and the inclinations gathered and acquired in the life just preceding.

This is said not of the ego, but of the psychic being after it has shed its vital and other sheaths and is resting in the psychic world. Before that it passes through vital and other worlds on its way to the psychic plane.

I would like to know whether it is possible to come into direct touch with those who have departed from this world.

Yes, so long as they are near enough to the earth (it is usually supposed by those who have occult experience that it is for three years only) or if they are earth-bound or if they are of those who do not proceed to the psychic plane but linger near the earth and are soon reborn.

Universal statements cannot be easily made about these things — there is a general line, but individual cases vary to an almost indefinite extent.

[Note by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary:] You will tell him that

I do not carry on correspondence usually with people outside, but as his questions were from the book, I have asked you to give him my answers to his questions. 28 February 1938

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"It is not to be denied, no spiritual experience will deny that this is an unideal and unsatisfactory world, strongly marked with the stamp of inadequacy, suffering, evil" [p. 61].

That is when you look at what the world ought to be and lay stress on what it should be. The idealist's question is why should there be pain at all, even if it is outweighed by the fundamental pleasure of existence. The real crux is why should inadequacy, limit and suffering come across this natural pleasure of life. It does not mean that life is essentially miserable in its very nature.

23 July 1935

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Weber writes of Spinoza's conception of God: "God is not the cause of the world in the proper and usual sense of the term, a cause acting from without and creating it once for all, but the permanent substratum of things, the innermost substance of the universe."²⁷ Does this not find a parallel in the following lines from *The Riddle of This World*: "For it is not . . . a supracosmic, arbitrary, personal Deity himself altogether unininvolved in the fall who has imposed evil and suffering on creatures made capriciously by his fiat" [pp. 65–66]. I wonder why Spinoza did not arrive at a convincing explanation of the problem of evil and misery.

The European type of monism is usually pantheistic and weaves the universe and the Divine so intimately together that they can hardly be separated. But what explanation of the evil and misery can there be there? The Indian view is that the Divine is the inmost substance of the Universe, but he is also outside it, transcendent; good and evil, happiness and misery are only phenomena of cosmic experience due to a division and diminution

²⁷ Alfred Weber, *History of Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1904), pp. 328–29.

of consciousness in the manifestation, but are not part of the essence or of the undivided whole-consciousness either of the Divine or of our own spiritual being.

6 October 1935

Passages from *Lights on Yoga*

You write in a letter: "One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of Yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end."²⁸

It is simply an indication to those who wish to enter on to this Path that they must have a call (not take it up as they would take any way for spiritual experience) and must be prepared for great difficulties to surmount.

Can it be said that you have seen in all those who are permanent members of the Asram this readiness to go through to the end?

The readiness to go through to the end is a thing dependent on the will of the sadhak. That will may be there in the beginning and flag afterwards. All who are here did not come as permanent members and some were never told that they were made permanent but they have stuck on and Mother has not sent them away.

What is the exact significance of "to the end"?

Until the siddhi — but it means essentially here to go through in spite of the difficulties.

20 October 1934

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"The difference or contrast between the Personal and Impersonal is a truth of the Overmind — there is no separate truth

²⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1981), pp. 2–3. *Lights on Yoga* is made up of letters by Sri Aurobindo, who revised the letters for publication in the book, which was brought out in 1935. The writer of this question of October 1934 cited the original version of the letter, which Sri Aurobindo wrote on 6 April 1928 (see page 540 of the present volume). — Ed.

of them in the Supermind, they are inseparably one” [p. 5]. If this refers to the Personal and Impersonal Divine, the question of the difference can hardly arise, because the Personal Divine (i.e. the Avatar) is not always there. It is only very rarely that the Divine becomes the Avatar to come on earth.

I do not understand. The Personal Divine does not mean the Avatar. What I said was that the scission between the two aspects of the Divine is a creation of the Overmind which takes various aspects of the Divine and separates them into separate entities. Thus it divides Sat, Chit and Ananda, so that they become three separate aspects different from each other. In fact in the Reality there is no separateness, the three aspects are so fused into each other, so inseparably one that they are a single undivided reality. It is the same with the Personal and Impersonal, the Saguna and Nirguna, the Silent and the Active Brahman. In the Reality they are not contrasted and incompatible aspects; what we call Personality and what we call Impersonality are inseparably fused together in a single Truth. In fact “fused together” even is a wrong phrase, because there they were never separated so that they have to be fused. All the quarrels about either the Impersonal being the only true truth or the Personal being the only highest truth are mind-created quarrels derivative from this dividing aspect of the Overmind. The Overmind does not deny any of the aspects as the Mind does, it admits them all as aspects of the One Truth, but by separating them it originates the quarrel in the more ignorant and more limited and divided Mind, because the Mind cannot see how two opposite things can exist together in one Truth, how the Divine can be *nirguṇo gunī*; — having no experience of what is behind the two words it takes each in an absolute sense. The Impersonal is Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, not a Person, but a state. The Person is the Existent, the Conscious, the Blissful; consciousness, existence, bliss taken as separate things are only states of his being. But in fact the two (personal being and eternal state) are inseparable and are one reality.

13 October 1935

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You write in *Lights on Yoga*: "It is a mistake to dwell on the lower nature and its obstacles, which is the negative side of the Sadhana. . . . The positive side of experience of the descent is the more important thing" [cf. p. 5]. But there may be obstacles that themselves prevent the experience of descent. If that is the case, I suppose one would have to deal with them in order to clear the road.

The statement is a general one and like all general statements subject to qualification according to circumstances. What I meant was to discourage what some do which is to be always dwelling on their difficulties and shortcomings only, for that makes them turn for ever like squirrels in a cage always in the same circle of difficulties without the least breaking of light through the clouds. The sentence would be more accurate or generally applicable if it were written "dwell too much" or "dwell solely".²⁹ Naturally, without rejection nothing can be done. And in hard periods or moments concentration on the difficulties is inevitable. Also in the early stages one has often to do a great amount of clearance work so that the road can be followed at all.

29 April 1935

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"The taking away of the Force of destruction implies a creation that will not be destroyed but last and develop always" [pp. 7–8]. Does this mean that in the Truth-Creation the force of destruction will be taken away and only the forces of creation and preservation remain? Does it mean that nobody will die — not even plants and animals?

That might be true if the whole world were to be supramentalised and that supramentalisation meant inability to change or put off a form, but it is not so.

16 October 1935

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You write in *Lights on Yoga* that the subconscious "receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in

²⁹ Sri Aurobindo in fact wrote "dwell too much" in the passage in *Lights on Yoga*. The correspondent omitted "too much" when he transcribed the passage.—Ed.

itself” [p. 11]. Where then are stored all the words, images and thoughts that we say come out of memory? What is the difference between storing in memory and this subconscious storing?

The clear memory of words, images and thoughts is an action of the conscious mind, not the unconscious. Of course the memory goes behind, so to speak, in the back part of the mind, but it can be brought out. Also the memory can be lost or defaced, so that one remembers wrongly or forgets altogether, but that is still an imperfect action of the conscious mind, not an action of the subconscious. What the subconscious keeps is a mass of impressions, not of clear or exact images and these can come up as in dreams in an incoherent jumble distorted altogether or else in the waking state as a mechanical recurrence or repetition of the same suggestions, impulses (subconscious vital) or sensations. There is a recognisable difference between the two functionings.

26 October 1935

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“The true vital being . . . is wide, vast, calm, strong, without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda” [p. 13]. Does this imply that the true vital belongs to the cosmic or supracosmic consciousness? If not, how can it have such qualities?

The true being mental, vital or subtle physical has always the greater qualities of its plane—it is the Purusha and like the psychic, though in another way, the projection of the Divine, therefore in connection with the Higher Consciousness and reflects something of it, though it is not altogether that—it is also in tune with the cosmic Truth.

In the change of the vital nature, is the external surface vital to be entirely effaced and replaced by the true vital or is it to be kept and changed into the nature of the true vital? In either case, what is the need of an external vital at all if the true vital is already there?

The true vital is in the inner consciousness, the external is that

which is instrumental for the present play of Prakriti in the surface personality. When the change comes, the true vital rejects what is out of tune with its own truth from the external and makes it a true instrument for its expression, a means of expression of its inner will, not a thing of responses to the suggestions of the lower Nature. The strong distinction between the two practically disappears.

19 October 1935

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If the true vital is “capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda” [p. 13], it would seem to be the equal of the supramental vital itself or the vital of the Ishwara. How is it possible for an individual to have such a vital?

It is capable of receiving the movements of the higher consciousness, and afterwards it can be capable of receiving the still greater supramental power and Ananda. If it is not, then the descent of the higher consciousness would be impossible and supramentalisation would be impossible. It is not meant that it possesses these things itself in its own right and that as soon as one is aware of the true vital, one gets all these things as inherent in the true vital.

20 October 1935

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“This central being has two forms — above, it is Jivatman, . . . below, it is the psychic being . . .” [p. 15]. Is it meant that the Jivatman and the psychic being are different *forms* of the central being? If they are *forms* of the central being, how can they be *beings*?

“Forms” is not used in a physical sense here. The central being is the being in its original self, the psychic being is the same in the becoming.

Again, when one rises from the psychic being below to the Jivatman above, does the psychic being cease to be? And when one rises above the Jivatman does the central being become formless?

The evolution or becoming continues, so the psychic also continues, just as the rest of the nature continues, only spiritualised and felt as one being in all planes. It is not a question of formed or formless. As I have said “forms” is not used here in its outward but its inward or metaphysical sense.

11 October 1935

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“The Jivatman . . . knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember the distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatar or lose balance like Hridaya with Ramakrishna” [pp. 15–16]. Can the Jivatman status be realised before vital egoism is abolished?

One can get the knowledge or perception in the higher mind “I am That” while the vital is still untransformed,— then the vital ego can take it up and give it a wrong application.

How can one go so far as to think of oneself as an Avatar? Is it because, if there is union with the Divine, the sense of all-powerfulness that it brings is reflected on the vital ego as something grandiose?

Yes. It is when one feels that one is the Divine, So *aham* but not in the impersonal way to which all is the one Brahman, the One Self, but in the personal way “I am God, the Parameshwara”. It is as in the Puranic story in which the knowledge was given both to Indra and Virochana and the God understood but the Asura concluded that he the ego was the Divine and therefore went about trying to impose his ego on the universe.

26 November 1935

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“The ego . . . does not cease with the body” [pp. 16–17]. Does this mean that it is carried by the psychic as a separate principle after death, just as the psychic sometimes carries with it a highly developed mental or vital being, or does it mean that it is taken up in the psychic as a seed-*samskara* or that it exists side by side with the psychic in the after-death state?

It is only meant that the separative ego is not a creation of birth in the physical body; the mental and the vital have it also. So long as the mental and vital are subject to ignorance, the ego will last also. When the psychic being goes into rest it naturally takes it with the essence of its past experience and in coming back it takes up a mental, vital and physical existence which has the mark of the ego and the ignorance.

29 October 1935

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"Moreover, the multiple Divine is an eternal reality antecedent to the creation here" [p. 17]. Does this mean that souls existed eternally separate from the Brahman? In other words are Jiva and Brahman eternally separate?

The Brahman is not a mathematical One with the Many as an illusion — he is an infinite One with an infinite multiplicity implied in the Oneness. This is not Dwaitavada — for in Dwaitavada the many are quite different from the One. In the Sankhya Prakriti is one but the Purushas are many, so it is not Sankhya, nor I suppose Jainism, unless Jainism is quite different from what it is usually represented to be.

Does "antecedent to the creation" mean creation as it took place from Supermind downward or does it simply mean the material creation?

The material creation or the creation of the universe generally.

If the multiple Divine is to be taken as an eternal reality, does this not come down to something like Jainism and Sankhya, in which several Purushas exist eternally? This would be a pure Dwaitavada.

It is on the contrary a complete Adwaitavada, more complete than Shankara's who splits Brahman into two incompatible principles — the Brahman and a universe of Maya which is not Brahman and yet somehow exists. In this view which is that of the Gita and some other Vedantic schools the Para Shakti and the Many are also Brahman. Unity and Multiplicity are aspects of

the Brahman, just as are Personality and Impersonality, Nirguna and Saguna.

18 March 1936

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“ . . . if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain [when the body is dissolved]; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic” [p. 18]. Does this mean that the vital of strong persons like Napoleon is carried forward in the future lives? But how can it be said that their vital was centred around the psychic being? It is only about the Bhaktas and the Jnanis that we can say that their vital was centred around the psychic.

If one has had a strong spiritual development, that makes it easier to retain the developed mental or vital after death. But it is not absolutely necessary that the person should have been a Bhakta or a Jnani. One like Shelley or like Plato for instance could be said to have a developed mental being centred round the psychic — of the vital the same can hardly be said. Napoleon had a strong vital but not one organised round the psychic being.

12 October 1935

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“It is really for the vital part of the being that Shraddha and rites are done — to help the being to get rid of the vital vibrations which still attach it to the earth or to the vital worlds, so that it may pass quickly to its rest in the psychic peace” [p. 18]. Does this mean that the Shraddha ceremony performed at present by the Brahmins is correct? Does feeding the caste and the Brahmins fulfil the purpose?

I only said what was originally *meant* by the ceremonies — the rites. I was not referring to the feeding of the caste or the Brahmins which is not a rite or ceremony. Whether the Shraddha as performed is actually effective is another matter — for those who perform it have not either the knowledge or the occult power.

11 April 1935

Bases of Yoga

I have been reading your *Bases of Yoga* — a most staggering book: the Himalayan conditions for success you impose — well, shall the likes of us ever fulfil a hundredth part of such countless conditions?

Conditions for success? But these are not conditions for doing the sadhana, but the basic conditions for the integral siddhi — they are, as it might be said, basic siddhis, realised foundations on which the total and permanent siddhi can be created — or one may say they are the constituents of the Yogic as opposed to the ordinary consciousness. When one has arrived fully at this Yogic consciousness, one can be called a Yogi, till then one is a sadhak. So much as all that is not demanded immediately from a sadhak. From the sadhak all that is asked is “a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive . . . in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come.”³⁰ “All sincere aspiration has its effect; if you are sincere you will grow into the divine life” [p. 26]. Again “One cannot become altogether this at once, but if one aspires at all times and calls in the aid of the Divine Shakti with a true heart and a straightforward will, one grows more and more into the true consciousness” [cf. p. 27]. It is of course said that the success will come sooner or later, — it is for that reason that patience is indispensable. But these are not Himalayan conditions — it is not putting an impossible price on what is asked for. As for the difficulty, as it has also been said in the book, when one once enters into the true (Yogic) consciousness, “then you see that everything can be done, even if at present only a slight beginning has been made; but a beginning is enough, once the Force, the Power are there” [pp. 33–34]. It is not really on the capacity of the outer nature that success depends, (for the outer nature all self-exceeding seems impossibly difficult), but on the inner being and to the inner being all is possible. One has only to get into contact with the inner being and change the outer

³⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *Bases of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1981), p. 24.

view and consciousness from the inner — that is the work of the sadhana and it is sure to come with sincerity, aspiration, and patience. All that is not excessively stern or exacting.

As a description of the constituents of the Yogic consciousness, the bases of realisation, I don't think the book can be called staggering or its suggestions Himalayan — for in fact they have already been stated by the Gita and other books on Yoga and, after all, thousands of people have realised them in part at least or in the inner being — though not so well in the outer. But to realise the inner being is quite enough for a foundation — for many it is quite enough even as a last state, for those who do not seek the transformation of the outer nature. Here too, even if one puts the whole ideal, it is not alleged that it must be all done at once or as a first condition for the greater endeavour.

26 June 1936

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You feel depressed on reading the *Bases of Yoga*, because your mind becomes active at the wrong end; from the point of view of your obsession about inability, hopelessness, past failure enforcing future failure. The right way to read these things is not to be mentally active, but receive with a quiet mind leaving the knowledge given to go in and bear its fruit hereafter at the proper time, not ask how one can practise it now or try to apply it to immediate circumstances in which it may not fit. I have told you already that these things are the basic siddhis which constitute the Yogic consciousness — they are things towards which one has to move but cannot be established now and offhand. What has to be done now is for each the thing necessary for him at present. I have indicated what is necessary at present for you, the growth of the psychic being which had begun and the power of contact and communication which it will bring with the inner consciousness and through it with the Divine Power or Presence. But for that to grow the mind must keep more quiet, not insisting, not desponding at every moment, but steadily aspiring and letting the things of which these were indications grow from within.

28 June 1936

Passages from *Bases of Yoga*

I do not remember the context of the sentence quoted,³¹ without which it is not possible to say what was meant by its not being the first aim of the Yoga. That may mean it is not the one to be pursued at the beginning, for first there should be the union in the heart of the personal being with the Divine. Or it may mean that it does not take priority or importance over all others. For both personality and impersonality have their claims and join together in the final realisation of what transcends and unites them both in one.

What has to disappear is the personal separative ego — the dualities of course also. The quickest though not the final way to extinguish ego is to make it disappear in impersonality. When all is one, universal or infinite then there is no place for the sense of ego — the dualities also begin to disappear. But the difficulty is that usually this realisation is confined to the mind or the above-mind while in the vital the stamp of ego remains and is felt in the life and its actions and reactions. Even if full impersonality comes in the vital and physical also, there remains the impossibility, all being impersonal, of having any relation with the Divine. What has therefore to be done is to lose the small personality in impersonality, but also by that loss to discover the true personality which is a portion of the Divine. This person is not separative and limited but is a universal individual, has the sense of uniting with all, but also the power of love and worship for the Divine. That is why I say that to merge the personal consciousness is not the first (or the whole) aim of the Yoga.

November 1935

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In *Bases of Yoga* one reads, “It is with the Mother who is always with you and in you that you converse” [p. 56]. Could you kindly explain to me how one converses with the Mother?

³¹ “Also to merge the personal consciousness is not the first aim of the Yoga. . . .” *Bases of Yoga*, p. 1.

One hears the voice or the thought speaking inwardly and one answers inwardly. Only it is not always safe for the sadhak if there is any insincerity of ego, desire, vanity, ambition in him —for then he may construct a voice or thought in his mind and ascribe it to the Mother and it will say to him pleasing and flattering things which mislead him. Or he may mistake some other Voice for the Mother's.

2 July 1936

*

You write in *Bases of Yoga*, "All the ordinary vital movements . . . are waves from the general Nature, Prakriti," and "The desires come from outside . . ." [p. 61]. If desires are only waves from outside (Prakriti), what then is the vital itself? Is not desire its main constituent?

There can be a vital without desire. When desire disappears from the being, the vital does not disappear with it.

Is not the vital itself part of the same Prakriti?

By Prakriti is meant universal Prakriti. Universal Prakriti entering into the vital being creates desires which appear by its habitual response as an individual nature; but if the habitual desires she throws in are rejected and exiled, the being remains but the old individual prakriti of vital desire is no longer there —a new nature is formed responding to the Truth above and not to the lower Nature.

What determines the *first* response to these waves? One may suppose that the habit of response is carried over from life to life. But what determined the response when we were animals in some distant past?

Universal Prakriti determined it and the soul or Purusha accepted it. In the acceptance lies the responsibility. The Purusha is that which sanctions or refuses. The vital being responds to the ordinary life waves in the animal; man responds to them but has the power of mental control. He has also, as the mental Purusha is awake in him, the power to choose whether he shall have desire

or train his being to surmount it. Finally, there is the possibility of bringing down a higher nature which will not be subject to desire but act on another vital principle.

December 1936

*

You write in *Bases of Yoga*, "The whole principle of this Yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone . . . and to bring down into ourselves . . . all the transcendent light . . . and Ananda of the supramental Divine. . . ." And then, "It is only after becoming one with the supramental Divine . . ." and also, "It is only the bringing down of the supramental Light, Power and Bliss . . ." [pp. 70–72]. These passages indicate that it is possible for the Jiva to rise up into and bring down the supramental consciousness. But in the *Arya* you define the supermind as the truth-will of Sachchidananda. How could any human being except one who has come for the divine manifestation reach or bring down the supermind? This is something for the Divine alone.

It is the very principle of this Yoga that only by the supramentalisation of the consciousness which means rising above mind to supermind and the descent of the supermind into the nature can the final transformation be made. So if nobody can rise above mind to supermind or obtain the descent of the supermind, then logically this Yoga becomes impossible. Every being is in essence one with the Divine and in his individual being a portion of the Divine, so there is no insuperable bar to his becoming supramental. It is no doubt impossible for the human nature being mental in its basis to overcome the Ignorance and rise to or obtain the descent of the Supermind by its own unaided effort, but by surrender to the Divine it can be done. One brings it down into the earth Nature through his own consciousness and so opens the way for the others, but the change has to be repeated in each consciousness to become individually effective.

29 July 1936

*

"In this Yoga . . . there can be no place for vital relations or interchanges with others. . . . Still worse would it be if this interchange took the form of a sexual relation . . ." [p. 70].

The first of these sentences seems to refer to relations between men and men or women and women. But didn't you once say that ordinary interchanges between people are almost unavoidable? Moreover, almost everyone here [*in the Ashram*] has friends. Do friendships fall in the category of "vital relations"?

I suppose I must have been referring to the interchanges which are the result of vital relations. The involuntary vital or other involuntary interchange which takes place by the mere fact of meeting, talking or being together are those which are practically unavoidable. That is to say, they are avoidable only when one has become entirely conscious and is able to put a wall of Force around oneself which nothing can penetrate except the things which one wills to accept. But the reference in the passage cannot be to these, but to the interchange due to vital attachments, passions, vital love or hate etc.

Friendships can be vital relations if there is strong attachment or desire but the friendship which is the nature of comradeship or mental affinity or of a psychic character need not be a vital relation.

4 January 1937

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In *Bases of Yoga*, it is said about the sex-movements that they "throw into the atmosphere forces that would block the supralental descent, bringing instead the descent of adverse vital powers" [p. 71]. Is it meant that any kind of sex-movement in the Ashram atmosphere would block the supralental descent? If it were so, the descent would hardly be possible because new sadhaks or temporary visitors may indulge in sex-movements and throw these forces in the atmosphere.

That is not what is said in that passage. What is spoken of is the taking of sex indulgence as a part of the aim and method of the sadhana. It is said that if that were done, the sadhana would bring down vital Forces of a type adverse to the supralental change which would serve to block (stand in the way of) the supralental descent.

1 August 1936

*

You write in *Bases of Yoga*, in regard to "the waves that recur from the general Nature", that "they return on him [the individual], often with an increased force . . . when they find their influence rejected. But they cannot last long once the environmental consciousness is cleared — unless the 'Hostiles' take a hand" [p. 90]. Two questions arise: (1) Whether the Hostiles are something quite different from the waves of Nature? (2) Whether, during the process you describe (the "return" of the forces and so forth), it was not the Hostiles attacking all the time.

There are some who are never touched by the hostile forces.

The normal resistance of the lower Nature in human beings and the action of the Hostiles are two quite different things. The former is natural and occurs in everybody; the latter is an intervention from the non-human world. But this intervention can come in two forms. (1) They use and press on the lower Nature forces making them resist where they would otherwise be quiescent, making the resistance strong or violent where it would be otherwise slight or moderate, exaggerating its violence when it is violent. There is besides a malignant cleverness, a conscious plan and combination when the Hostiles act on these forces which is not evident in the normal resistance of the forces. (2) They sometimes invade with their own forces. When this happens there is often a temporary possession or at least an irresistible influence which makes the thoughts, feelings, actions of the person abnormal — a black clouding of the brain, a whirl in the vital, all acts as if the person could not help himself and were driven by an overmastering force. On the other hand instead of a possession there may be only a strong Influence; there the symptoms are less marked, but it is easy for anyone acquainted with the ways of these forces to see what has happened. Finally it may be only an attack, not possession or influence; the person then is separate, is not overcome, resists.

24 August 1936

The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth

Before coming to the main point I may as well clear out one

matter not unconnected with it, my articles or messages, as they have been called, in the *Bulletin*,³² for their appearance there and their contents seem to have caused some trouble, perplexity or misunderstanding in your mind and especially my speculations about the divine body. I wrote the first of these articles to explain about how or why sport came to be included in the programme of the Ashram activities and I think I made it clear, as I went on, that sport was not sadhana, that it belonged to what I called the lower end of things, but that it might be used not merely for amusement or recreation or the maintenance of health, but for a greater efficiency of the body and for the development of certain qualities and capacities, not of the body only but of morale and discipline and the stimulation of mental energies: but I pointed out also that these could be and were developed by other means and that there were limitations to this utility. In fact, it is only by sadhana that one could go beyond the limits natural to the lower-end means. I think there was little room for misunderstanding here but the Mother had asked me to write on other subjects not connected in any way with sport and had suggested some subjects such as the possibilities of the evolution of a divine body; so I wrote on that subject and went on to speak of the Supermind and Truth-Consciousness which had obviously not even the remotest connection with sport. The object was to bring in something higher and more interesting than a mere record of gymnasium events but which might appeal to some of the readers or even to wider circles. In speaking of the divine body I entered into some far-off speculations about what might become possible in the future evolution of it by means of a spiritual force, but obviously the possibilities could not be anything near or immediate and I said clearly enough that we shall have to begin at the beginning and not attempt anything out of the way. Perhaps I should have insisted more on present limitations but that I should now make clear. For the immediate object of my endeavours is to establish spiritual life on earth and

³² *The eight essays making up The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth were first published in the Bulletin of Physical Education in 1949 and 1950.* — Ed.

for that the first necessity must always be to realise the Divine; only then can life be spiritualised or what I have called the Life Divine be made possible. The creation of something that could be called a divine body could be only an ulterior aim undertaken as part of this transformation; as obviously the development of such a divine body as was envisioned in these speculations could only come into view as the result of a distant evolution and need not alarm or distract anyone. It might even be regarded as a phantasy of some remotely possible future which might one day happen to come true.

7 December 1949

Publication Plans, 1949

There can be no objection to the immediate or early publication [*in the United States*] of (1) *The Life Divine* (2) the *Essays on the Gita* (3) *The Synthesis of Yoga* (*Yoga of Works*) (4) *Superman* (and other essays) (5) *The Hero and the Nymph* (with essay on Kalidasa). As regards the *Collected Poems* numerous corrections have to be made in *Perseus* and the essay on classical metres, but as these are mainly misprints there is no objection to their being made on the proofs when these are sent to us.

As to *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Psychology of Social Development* they have to be altered by the introduction of new chapters and rewriting of passages and in the *Ideal* changes have to be made all through the book in order to bring it up to date, so it is quite impossible to make these alterations on the proofs. I propose however to revise these two books as soon as possible; they will receive my first attention.

The Defence of Indian Culture is an unfinished book and also I had intended to alter much of it and to omit all but brief references to William Archer's criticisms. That was why its publication has been so long delayed. Even if it is reprinted as it is, considerable alterations will have to be made and there must be some completion and an end to the book which does not at present exist.

The Future Poetry also cannot be published as it is, for there must be a considerable rearrangement of its matter since

publication from month to month left its plan straggling and ill-arranged and also one or two chapters will have to be omitted or replaced by other new ones. I do not wish it to be published in its present imperfect form.

The publication of *The Secret of the Veda* as it is does not enter into my intention. It was published in a great hurry and at a time when I had not studied the Rig Veda as a whole as well as I have since done. Whole chapters will have to be rewritten or written otherwise and a considerable labour gone through; moreover, it was never finished and considerable additions in order to make it complete are indispensable. 30 June 1949

The Terminology of His Writings

Spiritual and Supramental

Krishnaprem has always complained (and quite naturally) that it was difficult to get the right meaning of the “technical terms” used by you. . . . Of course a full expounding of the difference between Spiritualisation and Supramentalisation would fatten into a volume, but is it not possible just to indicate why the one is called partial transformation and the other complete transformation? Also in what way the supramental consciousness-force is not identical with the spiritual.

If spiritual and supramental were the same thing, then all the sages and devotees and Yogis and sadhaks throughout the ages would have been supramental beings and all I have written about the supermind would be so much superfluous rubbish. Anybody who had spiritual experiences would then be a supramental being; the Asram would be chock-full of supramental beings and every other Asram in India also. As for writing about these things, I do not see the utility. I have already two philosophical essays to write and I do not find them writing themselves. If I start explaining the supramental, it would mean a book of 200 pages at least and even then you would be no wiser than before — as everything I wrote would probably be misinterpreted in the terms of mental cognition. The supramental has to be realised, not explained; I therefore prefer to leave it to explain or not explain itself when it is there and not waste my time in explaining mentally the supramental. As to technical terms, I have explained many times over in a way sufficient for those who practise this Yoga. If I have to explain philosophically to others, I must write a few more volumes of the *Arya*. I have no time just now.

I may say that spiritual experiences can fix themselves in the inner consciousness and alter it, transform it, if you like, one can realise the Divine everywhere, the Self, the universal Shakti

doing all things, one can feel merged in the Cosmic Self or full of ecstatic bhakti or Ananda, but that need not transform the instrumental being. One can go on thinking with the intellect, willing with the mental will, feeling joy and sorrow on the vital surface, undergoing physical afflictions etc. just as before. The change only will be that the inner self will watch all that without getting disturbed or bewildered, taking it as a part of nature. That is not the transformation I envisage. 12 October 1935

*

People seem to misunderstand certain words used by Dr. Sircar in his lectures: "supermind" or "supramental", "psychic", "ascent and descent" etc. I think such terms should be defined precisely when used.

The words supermind and supramental were first used by me, but since then people have taken up and are using the word supramental for anything above mind. Psychic is ordinarily used in the sense of anything relating to the inner movements of the consciousness or anything phenomenal in the psychology; in this case I have made a special use of it, relating it to the Greek word psyche meaning soul; but ordinarily people make no distinction between the soul and the mental-vital consciousness; for them it is all the same. The ascent of the Kundalini — not its descent, so far as I know — is a recognised phenomenon, there is one that corresponds in our Yoga, the feeling of the consciousness ascending from the vital or physical to meet the higher consciousness. This is not necessarily through the chakras but is often felt in the whole body. Similarly the descent of the higher consciousness is not felt necessarily or usually through the chakras but as occupying the whole head, neck, chest, abdomen, body. 18 June 1937

Supermind

Others besides X have assumed that they had the Supermind because something opened in them which was "super" to the ordinary human mind. It is a common mistake. Even the word supermind (which I invented) has been taken up by several

people (writers in the *Prabuddha Bharata* and elsewhere) and applied generally to the spiritual consciousness. I see no reason to doubt that *X* saw things in vision (hundreds of people do) or had experiences.

7 July 1936

Supermind and Overmind

Is it true that when you write “must”, it is from the Supermind, and when you write “maybe” or “if”, it is from the Overmind?

No—I can’t say that. The Overmind has its certitudes also, though of a less absolute kind than the supramental.

19 March 1933

*

What is the connection between Overmind and Supermind?

That would need some chapters to explain. It is not important to know it before you have got some experience of the planes above mind.

23 June 1933

*

What you call supramental overmind¹ is still overmind—not a part of the true Supermind. One cannot get into the true Supermind (except in some kind of trance or Samadhi) unless one has first objectivised the overmind Truth in life, speech, action, external knowledge and not only experienced it in meditation and inner experience.

25 February 1934

*

I sent up an article on your Yoga some time ago. You returned it without comment. I do not know whether you have gone through it and approve of its publication or not.

There are some errors about the Supermind and Overmind,—the two getting rather mixed up as they always do (I had much

¹ This expression is a misnomer since overmind cannot be supramental: it can at most receive some light and truth from the higher source.

difficulty in separating them myself); I have tried to clear that up but it is difficult to put in language that the mind can grasp. I hope you will manage to unravel the writing which has become microscopically illegible owing to lack of space for the corrections.

Supermind by the way is synthetic only in the lowest spaces of itself where it has to prepare the principles of Overmind—synthesis is necessary only where analysis has taken place; one has dissected everything, put in pieces (analysis) so one has to piece together. But Supermind is unitarian, has never divided up, so it does not need to add and piece together the parts and fragments. It has always held the conscious Many together as the conscious One.

26 October 1938

Overmind

In the whole of *The Synthesis of Yoga [as originally published in the Arya]* there is nowhere any mention of Overmind. If there is anything in that book similar to what you now call Overmind, it would be in the last seven chapters.

At the time when these chapters were written, the name “overmind” had not been found, so there is no mention of it. What is described in these chapters is the action of the supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them.² It was intended in later chapters to show how difficult even this was and how many levels there were between human mind and supermind and how even supermind, descending, could get mixed with the lower action and turned into something that was less than the true Truth. But these later chapters were not written.

The lack of a clear distinction between overmind and supermind is causing me some confusion, as you have said that some of my experiences belonged to the overmind.

² The highest Supermind or Divine Gnosis existent in itself is something that lies beyond still and quite above.

Not exactly that. They result from the overmind pressure on the intervening mental and lower planes, trying to pour into them the overmind movements. The process is very intricate, has many stages, is not of a simple, single, definite character.

13 April 1932

*

Is Overmind the same as what you call “supramental reason” in the *Arya*?

No,— although there is a supramentalised overmind which is not very different from it, but overmind has always something relative in its knowledge.

18 March 1933

*

In the *Arya* there is no mention of the Overmind. You have mentioned the supramental or Divine Reason in the gradations of the Supermind, but from its description it is quite different from the Overmind. Why was the Overmind not mentioned and clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the *Arya*?

The distinction has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind—for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under

the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change. 20 November 1933

*

Judging from your description of Overmind [*in the preceding letter*], it would seem that what the Vedantins (especially of the Mayavada School) call *kāraṇa* is Overmind, *īśvara* is the cosmic spirit in Overmind, and *prajña* is individualised being in the Overmind. Supermind would be in *turiya* and *mahākāraṇa*, about which they had only a few glimpses. In *kāraṇa* and *īśvara*, they must have found something wanting of the Highest Truth.

That is evidently what they meant. But they had no clear perception of these things because they lived at the highest in the spiritualised higher mind, and for the rest could only receive things from even the Overmind — they could not enter it except by deep samadhi (सुषुप्ति). Prajna and Ishwara were for them Lord of the *susupti*. 20 November 1933

*

Is it possible for another being to take birth in a human being's कारण देह [*kāraṇa deha*] and see everything from that standpoint?

The कारण देह may be simply a form answering to the higher consciousness (overmental, intuitive etc.) and I suppose a being could be there working in that consciousness and body. It is not likely to be the supramental being and supramental body — for in that case the whole consciousness, thought, action subjective and objective would begin to be faultlessly true and irresistibly effective. Nobody has reached that stage yet, even the overmind is, for all but the Mother and myself, either unrealised or only an influence mostly subjective. 24 March 1934

*

In my translation I have been obliged to find or make a word for "Overmind". I want to know if Hiranyagarbha can be used

with a change from its old connotation? It is not *prajñā* as far as I can make out. Have you any other word more suitable to convey the idea of the Overmind?

Hiranyagarbha is not the Overmind, but the subtle subjective Consciousness which includes much more than the Overmind. *Prajñā* certainly won't do—*prajñā* belongs to the Mind; you are probably thinking of the *prajñā प्राज्ञ* (*cidghana*) *caitanya*, but that is a different thing from *prajñā प्रज्ञा*. Perhaps Overmind can be described as आद्य हिरण्यगर्भं चैतन्यं (as opposed to the rest of the सूक्ष्म from the intuitive mind to the bottom), but that is a very long phrase. It is really, however, a different classification and other words ought to be found for it. परा मनीषा, आद्या मनीषा, दैवी मनीषा, any of these might do, if no single word can be found or invented.

Overmind and Intuition

Is Overmind to the Cosmic Spirit as Intuition is to the individual Self?

The Cosmic Spirit uses all powers, but Overmind power is the highest it normally uses in the present scheme of things here. In that sense as intuition is normally the highest power used by the individual being in the body, what you say may be considered as correct.

2 June 1933

Intuition

In a recent letter to me you wrote: "But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light—through revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations." Since all these terms connect up with "Intuition", perhaps "intuitions" is unnecessary.

"Intuition" is the word for the general power proper to that plane, but it works through a fourfold process expressed in the four words connected together here. If you like you can substitute "intuitive intimations" for the third.

17 October 1936

*

Your intuition says everything to you? Have you nothing to think whether right or wrong? Alas! How then can the shishya follow the Guru?

Good heavens! after a life of sadhana you expect me still to “think” and what is worse think what is right or wrong. I don’t think, even; I see or I don’t see. The difference between intuition and thought is very much like that between seeing a thing and badgering one’s brains to find out what the thing can possibly be like. Intuition is truth-sight. The thing seen may not be the truth? Well, in that case it will at least be one of its hundred tails or at least a hair from one of the tails. The very first step in the supramental change is to transform all operations of consciousness from the ordinary mental to the intuitive, only then is there any hope of proceeding farther,—not to, but towards the supramental. I must surely have done this long ago, otherwise how could I be catching the tail of the supramental whale? 7 May 1938

Jivatman, Spark-Soul and Psychic Being

The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

The Jivatman or spirit, as it is usually called in English, is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being—it is superior to birth and death, always the same, the individual Self or *ātman*. It is the eternal true being of the individual.

The soul is a spark of the Divine which is not seated above the manifested being, but comes down into the manifestation to support its evolution in the material world. It is at first an undifferentiated power of the divine consciousness, containing all possibilities, but at first unevolved possibilities, which have not yet taken form, but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark is there in all living beings, from the lowest to the highest.

The psychic being is formed by the soul in its evolution. It supports the mind, vital, body, grows by their experiences, carries the nature from life to life. It is the psychic or *caitya*

puruṣa. At first it is veiled by mind, vital and body, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body; in the ordinary man it depends on them for expression and is not able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal or human and not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation becomes possible.

The Self or Atman being free and superior to birth and death, the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self brings the sense of liberation; but for the transformation of the life and nature the awakening of the psychic being is indispensable.

The psychic being realises its oneness with the true being, the Jivatman, but it does not change into it.

The *bindu* seen [*in vision by the correspondent*] above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the portion of the Divine; the aspiration there would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but it may want the rest of the consciousness to realise it.

The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.

Both aspirations are necessary for the fullness of this Yoga. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire and this is what was felt as the aspiration from the level of the lower being. The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest. Therefore both aspirations help each other. The seeking of the lower being is necessarily at first intermittent and oppressed by the ordinary consciousness. It has by sadhana to become clear, constant, strong and enduring.

The sense of peace, purity and calm is brought about by the union of the lower with the higher consciousness. It cannot be permanent at first, but it can become so by increased frequency and endurance of the calm and peace and finally by the full descent of the eternal peace and calm and silence of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

5 May 1935

*

I read a [*copy of the preceding*] letter on Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being. I would like to ask some questions. Is Jivatman of (or in) one person different from that of another?

It is one, yet different. The Gita puts it that the Jiva is an अंशः सनातनः [*amśah sanātanah*] of the One. It can also be spoken of as one among many centres of the Universal Being and Consciousness.

If different, is it a qualitative or a quantitative difference?

Essentially one Jiva has the same nature as all — but in manifestation each puts forth its own line of Swabhava.

Is not what you term “Jivatman” the same as what they call *kūṭastha*?

No. Kutastha is the अक्षर पुरुष [*akṣara puruṣa*] — it is not the Jivatman.

What is the plane on which the Jivatman stands?

It is on the spiritual plane always that is above the mind, but there it is not fixed to any level.

Is there anything like union of one’s psychic being with another’s?

No. Affinity, harmony, sympathy, but not union. Union is with the Divine.

3 October 1936

Psychic and Spiritual

Ordinarily, all the more inward and all the abnormal psychological experiences are called psychic. I use the word psychic for the soul as distinguished from the mind and vital. All movements and experiences of the soul would in that sense be called psychic, those which rise from or directly touch the psychic being; where mind and vital predominate, the experience would be called psychological (surface or occult). "Spiritual" has nothing to do with the Absolute, except that the experience of the Absolute is spiritual. All contacts with self, the higher consciousness, the Divine above are spiritual. There are others that could not be so sharply classified and set off against each other.

The spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable. I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions. Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed — others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life. Some no doubt can carry on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other; but the process I suggest is the safer.

The governing factors for us must be the spirit and the psychic being united with the Divine — the occult laws and phenomena have to be known but only as an instrumentation, not as the governing principles. The occult is a vast field and complicated and not without its dangers. It need not be abandoned but it should not be given the first place.

Psychic Being

I have translated the words "psychic being" as *jīva* but I was doubtful whether *jīva* conveys the idea of the psychic being.

How can *jīva* = psychic being? Ask X for the proper word — if there is any.

15 June 1931

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Can *antarātmā* or *hṛt-puruṣa* do for “psychic being”? Or your own term *caitya puruṣa*?

Antarātmā is the inner being — it is a larger term than the psychic being. *Hṛt-puruṣa* or *caitya puruṣa* would do. June 1931

*

As directed, “psychic being” has been translated as *caitya puruṣa*. Does this mean the *puruṣa* in the *citta*? Is *jīva* the combined and the fundamental being of all the beings — the vital, the psychic and others?

चैत्य पुरुष [*caitya puruṣa*] means rather the पुरुष [*puruṣa*] in the चित् [*cit*], the fundamental (inner) consciousness.

जीव [*jīva*] is the fundamental, or as we call it, the central being. But the fundamental being is not *combined* of the mental, vital, psychic etc., these are only expressions of the Jivatman; the Jivatman itself is self-existent in the Divine; *essential* in its being, it cannot be regarded as a combination of things. 1 July 1931

The Psychic

How is it that in the *Arya* you never laid any special stress on the psychic centre and considered the centre above the head the most important in your *Yoga*? Is it because you wrote under different conditions and circumstances? But what exactly made you shift your emphasis?

You might just as well ask me why in my pre-*Arya* writings I laid stress on other things than the centre above the head or in the post-*Arya* on the distinction between overmind and supermind. The stress on the psychic increased because it was found that without it no true transformation is possible. 5 July 1937

Transformation

If you find time to answer my letter, do at least remember my chief questions: (1) whether in Vaishnavism and Ramakrishnaism there wasn’t partial transformation at least, and (2) does

not any light of realisation, if it is to be lasting, presuppose some transformation of the *ādhāra* in order that the descent may not be fugitive?

Under your pressure (not suprmental) I have splashed about a little on the surface of the subject — the result is imperfect and illegible. (I am sending it down to Nolini to wrestle with it.) Your fault! How on earth do you expect me to go deep on the point or do anything else but scribble when I have no time at all, at all, at all.

I am not sure what you mean by the Vaishnava transformation or Ramakrishna's, so I can't say anything about that. I can only say that by transformation I do not mean some change of the nature — I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's). I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the consciousness such as and greater than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards it, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. I do not think realisation by itself, necessarily transforms anything; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need

not change the vital nature, a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, the transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many procedures of the old Yogas — its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the *Riddle* or the *Lights* or in the new book to be published [*Bases of Yoga*] there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it — also the scheme of its psychology and its working: but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The later stages of the Yoga which go into little known untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations — the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical Siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc. etc. I have alluded to these things

myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining to the Divine beyond the world, but also for the very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has now to make. I do not therefore care in the least,—even though these things were far from identical with mine,—whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not, that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself and make itself true by achievement is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is the natural but still secret destined outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

It is new as compared with the old Yogas

(1) Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into a Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent—the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the fulfilment of life.

(2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here, a cosmic not a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the supramental) not yet active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.

(3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid

to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method as a whole or anything like it proposed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public.

5 October 1935

Brahma — Brahman — Brahmin

Please favour me with the correct transliteration of the words ब्रह्म and ब्राह्मण in the English language. In the *Essays on the Gita*, they are spelt alike, viz. Brahman. What is the necessity of an “n” when transliterating ब्रह्म?

In English, Brahma = the Creator, one of the Trinity.

Brahman is the Eternal and Infinite. In English very often the stem is taken as the form of the name in transliterating and not the nominative form e.g. Pururavas, not Pururavā. So Vivekananda writes “Sannyasin bold” instead of Sannyasi.

1 February 1933

*

You have given me the spellings of ब्रह्म (the Eternal) and ब्रह्मा (the Creator). Kindly write to me the correct spelling of ब्राह्मण (a caste) also.

I spoke of Brahma the Creator in order to explain why the *n* was necessary in transliterating ब्रह्म the Eternal.

As for the other word the correct English is Brahmin, but it is often transliterated Brahmana or Brahman in order to be nearer the Sanskrit. Usually, I write Brahmin but in the Press it gets altered into Brahman.

2 February 1933

Dynamis

Dynamis is a Greek word, not current, so far as I know, in English; but the verb *dunamai*, I can, am able, from which it derives, has given a number of words to the English language

including dynamise, dynamics, dynamic, dynamical, dyne (a unit of force), so that the word can be at once understood by all English readers. It means power, especially energetic power for energetic action. It is equivalent to the Sanskrit word, Shakti. Philosophically it can stand as the opposite word to status, Divine Status, Divine Dynamis.

Ineffugable

“Infinity imposes itself upon the appearances of the finite by its ineffugable self-existence.”³

[Note by a correspondent:] “*Ineffugable* is a new word, like *dynamis*, introduced into the English language by Sri Aurobindo. It means inescapable, inevitable, not to be avoided. A similar word was used by Blount in 1656 with slight change of form—ineffugible. Etymologically it is an adaptation of the Latin *ineffugibilis*, from *effugere*, to flee from, avoid. (*Vide, Oxford English Dictionary.*)” ■

Ineffugible is the correct formation, but it has not force or power of suggestive sound in it. The *a* in ineffugable has been brought in by illegitimate analogy from words like “fugacious”, Latin *fugare*, because it sounds better and is forcible.

1 October 1943

Sublate

“It claims to stand behind and supersede, to sublate and to eliminate every other knowledge. . . .”⁴

“Sublate” means originally to remove: it implies denial and removal (throwing off) of something posited. What appeared to be true, can be sublated by a greater truth contradicting it. The experience of the world can be sublated by the experience of Self, it is denied and removed; so the experience of the Self can be sublated by the experience of Sunya; it is denied and removed.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, volume 21 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 81.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 487.

[Note by a correspondent:] “Hegelian philos. (rendering G. *aufheben*, used by Hegel as having the opposite meanings of ‘destroy’ and ‘preserve’). See quotation: ‘Nothing passes over into Being, but Being equally sublates itself, is a passing over into Nothing, Ceasing-to-be. They sublate not themselves mutually, not the one the other externally; but each sublates itself in itself, and is in its own self the contrary of itself.’ (*Vide, Oxford English Dictionary.*)”

Hegel could not have used the word “sublate” as he wrote in German.⁵ I do not know what word he used which is here translated by sublate, but certainly it does not mean both destroy and preserve, nor in fact does it mean either. Being passes over into Non-being, so it sublates itself, changes and eliminates itself as it were from the view, becomes Non-being instead of being; but so also does Non-being, what was Non-being passes over into being; where there was nothing, there is being; nothing has eliminated itself from the view. This, says Hegel, is not a mutual destruction by two contraries each of which was outside the other. Being inside itself becomes nothing or Non-Being; Non-Being or Nothing equally inside itself passes into being. They do not really sublate or drive out each other, but each sublates itself into the other. In other words it is the same Reality that presents itself now as one and now as the other.

31 July 1944

Global

“To contact” is a phrase that has established itself and it is futile to try to keep America at arm’s length any longer; “global” also has established itself and it is too useful and indeed indispensable to reject; there is no other word that can express exactly the same shade of meaning. I heard it first from Arjava who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global thinking and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind.

2 April 1947

⁵ *Aufheben*, if that is the German word, must mean the same as the Latin word *subtollere* p.p. *sublatus*, to heave up and off, or throw, from which “sublate” is taken.

Section Four

Remarks on Contemporaries and on Contemporary Problems

Remarks on Spiritual Figures in India

Ramakrishna Paramhansa

I would have been surprised to hear that I regard (in agreement with an advanced sadhak) Ramakrishna as a spiritual pygmy, if I had not become past astonishment in these matters. I have said, it seems, so many things that were never in my mind and done too not a few that I have never dreamed of doing! I shall not be surprised or perturbed if one day I am reported to have declared, on the authority of advanced or even unadvanced sadhaks, that Buddha was a *poseur* or Shakespeare an overrated poetaster or Newton a third-rate college Don without any genius. In this world all is possible. Is it necessary for me to say that I have never thought and cannot have said anything of the kind, since I have at least some faint sense of spiritual values? The passage you have quoted is my considered estimate of Ramakrishna.¹

3 February 1932

*

I have heard that if one learns logic or philosophy it can be a great help in the yoga, because it makes the mind wider to spiritual experiences so that once the mind gets beyond the intellect and reaches the intuitive, it is able to bring down or express knowledge which an unintellectual mind could not do.

An unintellectual mind cannot bring down the Knowledge? What then about Ramakrishna? Do you mean to say that the

¹ "And in a recent unique example, in the life of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge." — Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, volume 23 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 41.

majority of the sadhaks here who have not learned logic and are ignorant of philosophy will never get Knowledge?

4 November 1936

*

"An unintellectual mind cannot bring down the Knowledge?"
Certainly it can. But don't you think there is a world of difference between the expression of an intellectual mind and an unintellectual one?

Expression is another matter, but Ramakrishna was an uneducated, nonintellectual man, yet his expression of knowledge was so perfect that the biggest intellects bowed down before it.

5 November 1936

*

What a difference there is between Ramakrishna's expressions of knowledge and those of a perfectly developed intellect like yourself!

His expressions are unsurpassable in their quality. Don't talk nonsense. Moreover I never developed my intellect and I made zero marks in Logic.

Who preached Ramakrishna's gospel to the world? Vivekananda, a highly developed mind.

And who taught Vivekananda the Truth? Not a logician or highly developed intellect certainly? 13 November 1936

*

I have heard different things about Ramakrishna from different people. Some say he was an Avatar and some that he was not. Do you think he was an Avatar as he said in his autobiography?

He never wrote an autobiography. What he said was in conversation with his disciples and others. He was certainly quite as much an Avatar as Christ or Chaitanya. 13 November 1936

*

Ramakrishna himself never thought of transformation or tried for it. All he wanted was bhakti for the Mother and along with that he received whatever knowledge she gave him and did whatever she made him do. He was intuitive and psychic from the beginning and only became more and more so as he went on. There was no need in him for the transformation which we seek; for although he spoke of the divine man (Ishwarakoti) coming down the stairs as well as ascending, he had not the idea of a new consciousness and a new race and the divine manifestation in the earth-nature.

Swami Vivekananda

I do not remember what I said about Vivekananda.² If I said he was a great Vedantist, it is quite true. It does not follow that all he said or did must be accepted as the highest truth or the best. His ideal of *sevā* was a need of his nature and must have helped him — it does not follow that it must be accepted as a universal spiritual necessity or ideal. Whether in declaring it he was the mouthpiece of Ramakrishna or not, I cannot pronounce. It seems certain that Ramakrishna expected him to be a great power for changing the world-mind in a spiritual direction and it may be assumed that the mission came to the disciple from the Master. The details of his action are another matter. As for proceeding like a blind man, that is a feeling that easily comes when a Power greater than one's own mind is pushing one to a large action; for the mind does not realise intellectually all that it is being pushed to do and may have its moments of doubt or wonderment about it and yet it is obliged to go on. Vedantic (Adwaita) realisation is the realisation of the silent static or absolute Brahman — one may have that and yet not have the same indubitable clearness as to the significance of one's action — for over action for the Adwaitin lies the shadow of Maya.

24 December 1934

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² Sri Aurobindo is referring here to the passage from The Synthesis of Yoga that is reproduced on page 94 of the present volume. — Ed.

I am thinking of reading Vivekananda. What he has said in his lectures — is it all truth, something directly inspired?

I cannot say that it is all truth — he had his own opinions about certain things (like everybody else) which can be questioned. But most of what he said was of great value.

I wish to read some good books on yoga or philosophy. Will you please give me some names?

I am not sure what books would interest you and I am myself so far away from books that it is difficult to remember names. If you have not read V's things you can read them or any books that would give you an idea of Vedanta schools and Sankhya. There is Mahendra Sircar's *Eastern Lights*. It is Indian philosophy you want, I suppose?

25 September 1935

*

I hear that there is a file of unpublished letters by Vivekananda, in one of which he says: "The time has now come to follow Aurobindo Ghose." Because of this it seems the Ramakrishna Mission keeps always an interested eye on what is going on in Pondy. Do you know anything of that reference by Vivekananda and in what connection it was made?

Where on earth is this extraordinary file? How could Vivekananda know anything about me? Trikaldrishti? 5 July 1937

*

God knows where that extraordinary file of Vivekananda's letters is. I got news of it from X who heard about it from a man of the Ramakrishna Mission who came here.

What I want to know is when did Vivekananda write that or what led him to take notice of me. I no longer remember when he left his body, but my impression is that it was when I was a blissfully obscure Professor of Baroda College and neither in politics nor Yoga had put on the tedious burden of fame. Why then should Vivekananda say anything about me at all, much

less a thing like that — unless it was as the trikaldarshi Yogi that he spoke?

7 July 1937

Swami Ramatirtha

From the standpoint of sadhana Vivekananda has never attracted me — he was more of a missionary. As far as I have studied Ramatirtha, he seems to have been on a higher level.

That can be judged from the personal experience only — not from the books which are too highly mentalised to give any indication of the full achievement in the lower part of the nature.

2 December 1933

*

Ramatirtha used to say that all beings were himself in different forms and to address others as “myself in the form of . . .”. This sounds a little fantastic!

It is fantastic.

Can this not be called an example of the transformed mind and vital, for he seems to have been engrossed in the Self in the waking life as well as in meditation.

I think Ramatirtha's realisations were more mental than anything else. He had opening of the higher mind and a realisation there of the cosmic Self, but I find no evidence of a transformed mind and vital; that transformation is not a result of or object of the Yoga of Knowledge. The realisation of the Yoga of Knowledge is when one feels that one lives in the wideness of something silent, featureless and universal (called the Self) and all else is seen as only forms and names; the Self is real, nothing else. The realisation of “*my* self in other forms” is a part of this or a step towards it, but in the full realisation the “*my*” should drop so that there is only *the* one Self or rather only the Brahman. For the Self is merely a subjective aspect of the Brahman, just as the Ishwara is its objective aspect. That is the Vedantic “Knowledge”. Its result is peace, silence, liberation. As for the active Prakriti,

(mind, vital, body), the Yoga of Knowledge does not make it its aim to transform them — that would be no use as the idea is that if the liberation has come, it will all drop off at death. The only change wanted is to get rid of the idea of ego and realise as true only the supreme Self, the Brahman.

25 June 1934

Ramana Maharshi

I did not ask X to prevent you from going to Ramana Maharshi and I never had the least thought or intention of requesting him to intervene at all. He tells me that it is true he told you Sri Aurobindo had approved of his speaking to you about the right attitude etc. and he had inferred that from a phrase in my answer to a letter of his. But that inference was a mistake — the phrase did not carry that meaning, nor was there in the context any reference to Ramana Maharshi. He adds, “But I did *not* say I was authorised by Sri Aurobindo to try to detain him here.”

There was absolutely no reason why I should want to prevent you from going to the Maharshi. I have always encouraged people to go even in long past years when the Maharshi was unknown except to a few and I even sent several there who wanted to come here. Even if anyone wished to leave me and go to him, I would be the last person to interfere. Everyone has the right to choose his own Guru or, if he is dissatisfied or has lost his faith, to go elsewhere.

The Mother in her letter to you made it very clear that she approved of your visit and she even said it was the first thing to do. There can be no doubt therefore of her approval. Mine is contained in hers.

2 September 1935

*

Ramana Maharshi seems to agree to some extent with your views. He seems to believe in Grace and takes the position that the Real Self is in the heart, something akin to the psychic being. That means he is less of a Shankara Adwaitin.

According to Brunton's description of the sadhana he (Brunton) practised under the Maharshi's instructions, it is the Overself

one has to seek within, but he describes the Overself in a way that is at once the Psychic Being, the Atman and the Ishwara. So it is a little difficult to know what is the exact reading.

25 January 1936

*

I quote the following remarks of Ramana Maharshi as recorded by Paul Brunton: "All human beings are ever wanting happiness, untainted with sorrow. They want to grasp a happiness which will not come to an end. The instinct is a true one."³

All? It is far too sweeping a generalisation. If he had said that is one very strong strain in human nature it could be accepted. But mark that it is in human physical consciousness only. The human vital tends rather to reject a happiness untainted by sorrow and to find it a monotonous, boring condition. Even if it accepts it, after a time it kicks over the traces and goes to some new painful or risky adventure.

"Man's real nature *is* happiness. Happiness is inborn in the true self. His search for happiness is an unconscious search for his true self. The true self is imperishable; therefore, when a man finds it, he finds a happiness which does not come to an end" [pp. 157–58].

The true Self is quite a different proposition. But what it has is not happiness but something more.

"Even they [the wicked and the criminal] sin because they are trying to find the self's happiness in every sin which they commit. This striving is instinctive in man, but they do not know that they are really seeking their true selves, and so they try these wicked ways first as a means to happiness" [p. 158].

Who is this "they"? I fear it is a very summary and misleading criminal psychology. To say that a Paris crook or apache steals,

³ Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (London: Rider & Company, [1934] 1943), p. 157.

swindles, murders for the happiness of stealing, swindling, murdering is a little startling. He does it for quite other reasons. He does it as his métier just as you do your doctor's work. Do you really do your doctor's work because of the happiness you find in it?

People will not seek a sorrowless, untainted, everlasting happiness, even if shown the way — because they will consider it beyond their power to attain, or so it seems to me.

It is also with many because they prefer the joy mixed with sorrow, মানুষের হাসিকান্ন, and consider your everlasting happiness an everlasting bore.

About the criminals, I don't obviously include those types who are born with a criminal instinct: idiots and imbeciles.

Why not? If your generalisation is good for all, it must be good for them also.

Ramana Maharshi also says that if you "meditate for an hour or two every day, you can then carry on with your duties. If you meditate in the right manner . . ."

A very important qualification.

"then the current of mind induced will continue to flow even in the midst of your work. It is as though there were two ways of expressing the same idea; the same line which you take in meditation will be expressed in your activities." The result will be a gradual change of attitude towards people, events and objects. "Your actions will tend to follow your meditations of their own accord" [p. 156].

If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that *can* go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation but to

remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards and also to avoid things that relax or disperse or dissipate too much—precisely for this reason that so the effects of what she put on them might continue and the change of attitude the Maharshi speaks of will take place. But I am afraid most of the sadhaks have never understood or practised anything of the kind—they could not appreciate or understand her directions.

Of course, he adds that setting apart time for meditation is for spiritual novices. You too wrote to me to meditate at least half an hour a day, if only to bring a greater concentration in the work.

It does bring the effects of meditation into work if one gives it a chance.

You know that meditations are not always successful.

You forget that with numbers of people they are successful.

Even if they were, how does this affect the whole day's work?

It doesn't, if one does not take care that it should do so—if one takes care, it can.

Is it something like charging a battery which goes on inducing an automatic current?

It is not exactly automatic. It can be easily spoilt or left to sink into the subconscious or otherwise wasted. But with simple and steady practice and persistence it has the effect the Maharshi speaks of—he assumes, I suppose, such a practice. I am afraid your meditation is hardly simple or steady—too much *kasrat* and fighting with yourself.

Ramana Maharshi seems a real Maharshi.

He is more of a Yogi than a Rishi, it seems to me. The happiness theory does not impress me,—it is as old as the mountains but

not so solid. But he knows a lot about Yoga. 9 February 1936

*

Ramana Maharshi has seen the truth. Can he not be called a Rishi?

He has experienced certain eternal truths by process of Yoga — I don't think it is by Rishilike intuition or illumination, nor has he the mantra. 10 February 1936

*

I recently have read of some of Ramana Maharshi's disciples, who have the power of vision to a greater degree than X. But it seems that the beings they see do not come and help them in their difficulties. Usually these beings show them certain things which strengthen their faith; but their difficulties remain. It is they or their guru who have to solve them.

It is quite usual at a certain stage of the sadhana for people who have the faculty to see or hear the Devata of their worship and to receive constant directions from him or her with regard either to action or to sadhana. Defects and difficulties may remain, but that does not prevent the direct guidance from being a fact. The necessity of a Guru in such cases is to see that it is the right experience, the right voice or vision — for it is possible for a false guidance to come as it did with Y and Z.

Moreover, Maharshi dissuaded his disciples from cultivating this power of vision, since it had nothing to do with the realisation of the self.

Maharshi is very much of a Vedantist. He does not believe in what we believe or in the descent etc. At the same time he himself has had experiences in which the Mother interfered in a visible, even material form and prevented him from doing what he intended to do. 7 July 1936

*

It is evident that my ideas about visions and views on occult things were poor and ignorant from the very beginning. They

became all the more ignorant when I read that the Maharshi, whom you have called a great man and one who “lives always in the light” and therefore in the truth consciousness, discouraged his disciples from using their occult gifts.

Because he is a great man does it follow that everything he thinks or says is right? or because he lives in the light, does it follow that his light is absolute and complete? The “Truth-Consciousness” is a phrase I use for the supermind. Maharshi is not in the supermind. He may be and is in a true Consciousness, but that is a different matter.

They were not misusing their gifts, rather they were making spiritual progress through them.

He discouraged his disciples because his aim was the realisation of the inner Self and intuition—in other words the fullness of the spiritual Mind—visions and voices belong to the inner occult sense, therefore he did not want them to lay stress on it. I also discourage some from having any dealing with visions and voices because I see that they are being misled or in danger of being misled by false visions and false voices. That does not mean that visions and voices have no value. 9 July 1936

*

If the true being behind the usual emotional heart is the psychic, how is it that Ramana Maharshi says, and all the Upanishads too say, that in the core of the heart is the Self, the Atman? Maharshi says the place of the Self is not in the centre of the chest but two fingers to the right—whereas the psychic is located in the middle.

The Upanishads do not say that about the Atman—what they say about the Atman is that it is in all and all is in it, it is everywhere and all this universe is the Atman. What they speak of as situated in the deeper inner heart is the Purusha in the heart or Antaratman.⁴ This is in fact what we call the psychic being, *caitya puruṣa*.

⁴ *āṅguṣṭhamātrah puruṣo antarātmā.*

The heart spoken of by the Upanishads corresponds with the physical cardiac centre; it is the *hrtpadma* of the Tantriks. As a subtle centre, *cakra*, it is supposed to have its apex on the spine and to broaden out in front. Exactly where in this area one or another feels it does not matter much; to feel it there and be guided by it is the main thing. I cannot say what the Maharshi has realised—but what Brunton describes in his book as the Self is certainly this Purusha Antaratma but concerned more with *mukti* and a liberated action than with transformation of the nature. What the psychic realisation does bring is a psychic change of the nature purifying it and turning it altogether towards the Divine. After that or along with it comes the realisation of the cosmic Self. It is these two things that the old Yogas encompassed and through them they passed to Moksha, Nirvana or the departure into some kind of celestial transcendence. The Yoga practised here includes both liberation and transcendence, but it takes liberation or even a certain Nirvana, if that comes, as a first step and not as the last step of its siddhi. Whatever exit to or towards the Transcendent it achieves is an ascent accompanied by a descent of the power, light, consciousness that has been achieved and it is by such descents that is to be achieved the spiritual and supramental transformation here. This possibility does not seem to be admitted in the Maharshi's thought,—he considers the Descent as superfluous and logically impossible. "The Divine is here, from where will He descend?" is his argument. But the Divine is everywhere, he is above as well as within, he has many habitats, many strings to his bow of Power, there are many levels of his dynamic Consciousness and each has its own light and force. He is not confined to his position in the heart or to the single cord of the psycho-spiritual realisation. He has also his supramental station above the heart-centre and mind-centres and can descend from there if He wants to do so.

3 March 1937

*

I am giving below the best brief account by Paul Brunton of the Maharshi's technique of discovering what Brunton calls the Overself. It occurs in the book named *A Message from*

Arunachala:

“When the mind is deeply engaged in a train of thought, it tends to become unconscious of external surroundings as concentration deepens. When this condition is carried to a profound extent, then the mind becomes one-pointed. If, at this degree, the subject of the meditation could be somehow dropped, the ensuing vacuum would swiftly cause the hidden world of man’s soul to arise and fill it. In that apparent emptiness he would become aware of a new visitant, his Overself. Such is the essential principle behind this process of self-knowing. . . .

“It [*the Maharshi’s method*] consists in taking as the subject of meditation the inquiry, ‘Who Am I?’ The mind must centre itself upon this single question, pressing deeply inward in the effort to discover the elusive inhabitant of the body. If the concentration is complete and the persistence undiminished; if the inquiry is conducted in the correct manner; if the person is really sincere; then an extraordinary thing will happen. The mental current of self-questioning, the attempt to ferret out what one really is, the watching of one’s thoughts in the earlier part of the process, ultimately pins all thinking down to the single thought of personal existence. ‘I’ is the first thought sprayed up by the spring of life’s being, but it is also the last. As this final thought is held in the focus of attention and questioned in a particular way, it suddenly disappears and the Overself takes its place, overwhelming both questioner and question in its divine stillness.”⁵

What do you think, from this, the Overself of the Maharshi is? Is it the Antaratman leading to or widening into the Cosmic Self or is it the silent Self of the Jnanis, the traditional Atman, realised directly?

[*Sri Aurobindo did not immediately answer this question, posed on 4 March 1937. The correspondent sent two reminders, to which Sri Aurobindo answered as follows on 6 and 7 March:*]

I had started answering your questions but it took on too long a development and I could not finish it—I don’t suppose I shall find time.

⁵ Paul Brunton, *A Message from Arunachala* (London: Rider & Co., n.d. [1936]), pp. 205–7.

In the first place I do not want to go farther into the question of the Maharshi's realisation which does not really concern us. As I have said comparisons are of no use; each path has its own aim and direction and method and the truth of one does not invalidate the truth of the other. The Divine (or if you like, the Self) has many aspects and can be realised in many ways — to dwell upon those differences is irrelevant and without use.

Transformation is a word that I have brought in myself (like supermind) to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the integral Yoga. People are now taking them up and using them in senses which have nothing to do with the significance which I put into them. Purification of the nature by the "influence" of the Spirit is not what I mean by transformation; purification is only part of a psychic change or a psycho-spiritual change — the word besides has many senses and is very often given a moral or ethical meaning which is foreign to my purpose. What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the self, or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of a Divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and unmixed above mind, life and body and not in mind, life and body. It is a matter of the undeniable experience of many that this can descend and it is my experience that nothing short of its *full* descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation. No metaphysical or logical reasoning in the void as to what the Atman "must" do or can do or needs or needs not to do is relevant here or of any value. I may add that transformation is not the central object of other paths as it is of this Yoga — only so much purification and change is demanded by them as will lead to liberation and the

beyond-life. The influence of the Atman can no doubt do that — a full descent of a new Consciousness into the whole nature from top to bottom to transform life here is not needed at all for the spiritual escape from life.

6 March 1937

*

Sundays are no better than other days. A number of people always choose it for long letters demanding replies. But apart from that to write what you demand of me would mean a volume, not a letter — especially as these are matters of which people know a great deal less than nothing and would either understand nothing or misunderstand everything. Some day I suppose I shall write something, but the supramental won't bear talking of now. Something about the spiritual transformation might be possible and I may finish the letter on that point⁶ — if I find leisure, but that is doubtful.

7 March 1937

*

The methods described in the account are the well-established methods of Jnanayoga⁷ — (1) one-pointed concentration followed by thought-suspension, (2) the method of distinguishing or finding out the true self by separating it from mind, life, body (this I have seen described by him more at length in another book) and coming to the pure I behind; this also can disappear into the Impersonal Self. The usual result is a merging in the Atman or Brahman — which is what one would suppose is meant by the Overself, for it is that which is the real Overself. This Brahman or Atman is everywhere, all is in it, it is in all, but it is in all not as an individual being in each but is the same in all — as the Ether is in all. When the merging into the Overself is complete, there is no ego, or distinguishable I, or any formed separative person or personality. All is *ekākāra* — an indivisible

⁶ The "letter" referred to here is presumably the one on pages 173–75, which Sri Aurobindo wrote below the date 6 March 1937. He apparently had not finished writing it when he wrote this note dated (Sunday) 7 March 1937. — Ed.

⁷ This is Sri Aurobindo's reply to the correspondent's question of 4 March 1937 (see pp. 172–73), containing Paul Brunton's account of Ramana Maharshi's methods. — Ed.

and indistinguishable Oneness either free from all formation or carrying all formations in it without being affected—for one can realise it in either way. There is a realisation in which all beings are moving in the one Self and this Self is there stable in all beings; there is another more complete and thoroughgoing in which not only is it so but all are vividly realised as the Self, the Brahman, the Divine. In the former, it is possible to dismiss all beings as creations of Maya, leaving the one Self alone as true—in the other it is easier to regard them as real manifestations of the Self, not as illusions. But one can also regard all beings as souls, independent realities in an eternal Nature dependent upon the One Divine. These are the characteristic realisations of the Overself familiar to the Vedanta. But on the other hand you say that this Overself is realised by the Maharshi as lodged in the heart-centre, and it is described by Brunton as something concealed which when it manifests appears as the real Thinker, source of all action, but now guiding thought and action in the Truth. Now the first description applies to the Purusha in the heart, described by the Gita as the Ishwara situated in the heart and by the Upanishads as the Purusha Antaratma; the second could apply also to the mental Purusha, *manomayah prāṇaśarīra netā* of the Upanishads, the mental Being or Purusha who leads the life and the body. So your question is one which on the data I cannot easily answer. His Overself may be a combination of all these experiences, without any clear distinction being made or thought necessary between the various aspects. There are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine and each way has its own experiences which have their own truth and stand really on a basis, one in essence but complex in aspects, common to all, but not expressed in the same way by all. There is not much use in discussing these variations; the important thing is to follow one's own way well and thoroughly. In this Yoga, one can realise the Psychic Being as a portion of the Divine seated in the heart with the Divine supporting it there—this psychic being takes charge of the sadhana and turns the whole being to the Truth and the Divine, with results in the mind, the vital, the physical consciousness which I need not go into

here,—that is a first transformation. We realise it next as the one Self, Brahman, Divine, first *above* the body, life, mind and not only within the heart supporting them—above and free and unattached as the static Self but also extended in wideness through the world as the silent Self in all and dynamic too as the active cosmic Divine Being and Power, Ishwara-Shakti, containing the world and pervading it as well as transcending it, manifesting all cosmic aspects. But, what is most important for us, is that it manifests as a transcending Light, Knowledge, Power, Purity, Peace, Ananda of which we become aware above and which descends into the being and progressively replaces the ordinary consciousness by its own movements—that is the second transformation. We realise also the consciousness itself as moving upward, ascending through many planes physical, vital, mental, overmental to the supramental and Ananda planes. This is nothing new; it is stated in the Taittiriya Upanishad that there are five Purushas, the physical, the vital, the mental, the Truth Purusha (supramental) and the Bliss Purusha; it says that one has to draw the physical self up into the vital, the vital into the mental, the mental into the Truth Self, the Truth Self into the Bliss Self and so attain perfection. But in this Yoga we become aware not only of this taking up but of a pouring down of the powers of the higher Self, so that there comes in the possibility of a descent of the Supramental Self and nature to dominate and change our present nature and turn it from nature of Ignorance into nature of Truth-Knowledge (and through the supramental into nature of Ananda)—this is the third or supramental transformation. It does not always go in this order, for with many the spiritual descent begins first in an imperfect way before the psychic is in front and in charge, but the psychic development has to be attained before a perfect and unhampered spiritual descent can take place, and the last or supramental change is impossible so long as the two first have not become full and complete. That's the whole matter, put as briefly as possible.

March 1934

*

I wish I had learned logic. One needs to know it before entering into a discussion with you. In a recent letter you say, as if logically: "If I think that the human plane is like the plane or planes of infinite Light, Power, Ananda, infallible Will Force, then I must be either a stark lunatic or a gibbering imbecile or a fool. . . ." Surely no one ever thought of you in these terms!

No need of logic to see that — a little common sense is sufficient. If anyone, no matter who he be, thinks that this world of ignorance, limitation and suffering is a plane of eternal and infinite Light, Power and Ananda, infallible Will and Power, what can he be but a self-deceiving fool or lunatic? And where then would be the need of bringing down the said Light, Power etc. from the higher planes, if it was already gambolling about all over this blessed earth and its absurd troop of human-animal beings? But perhaps you are of the opinion of Ramana Maharshi, "The Divine is here, how can he descend from anywhere?" The Divine may be here, but if he has covered here his Light with darkness of Ignorance and his Ananda with suffering, that, I should think, makes a big difference to the plane and, even if one enters into that sealed Light etc., it makes a difference to the Consciousness but very little to the Energy at work in this plane which remains of a dark or mixed character.

3 May 1937

Swami Ramdas

In the April number of *The Vision*, Ramdas concludes his editorial letter with the words, "When all are kind to us, we realise God's own kindness, because God dwells in all — God is verily all."⁸ But what cogent objection is there to continuing: "When all are cruel or indifferent to us, we realise God's own cruelty or indifference, because etc."? The stock answer is to acknowledge human incapacity to fathom an inscrutable Providence; but then why profess to do so in the case of kindness or similar circumstances of happiness (beauty, health, powers and capacities of different kinds)? It seems to

⁸ *The Vision*, vol. 1 (April 1934), p. 146.

be loading the dice — to be placing in the mouth of Providence some such words as “Heads I win, tails you lose”.

Earlier in the letter there is this sentence: “God is the one power who provides for and guides all the works of the Ashram [*i.e. Anandashram*] as He does also all the affairs of the world.” This put me in mind of a missionary who, trying hard to be liberal and fair-minded about Taoism in China, acknowledged defeat when confronted with the spectacle of Taoist priests conducting a religious ceremony in a brothel for the success of the business. Would it be possible for you to indicate which of your writings would clear up my perplexity?

I have not read Ramdas's writings nor am I at all acquainted with his personality or what may be the level of his experience. The words you quote from him could be expressions either of a simple faith or of a pantheistic experience; evidently if they are used or intended to establish the thesis that the Divine is everywhere and is all and therefore all is good, being Divine, they are very insufficient for that purpose. But as an experience, it is a very common thing to have this feeling or realisation in the Vedantic sadhana — in fact without it there would be no Vedantic sadhana. I have had it myself on various levels of consciousness and in numerous forms and I have met scores of people who have had it very genuinely — not as an intellectual theory or perception, but as a spiritual reality which was too concrete for them to deny whatever paradoxes it may entail for the ordinary intelligence.

Of course it does not mean that all here is good or that in the estimation of values a brothel is as good as an Asram, but it does mean that all are part of one manifestation and that in the inner heart of the harlot as in the inner heart of the sage or saint there is the Divine. Again his experience is that there is one Force working in the world both in its good and in its evil — one Cosmic Force; it works both in the success (or failure) of the Asram and in the success (or failure) of the brothel. Things are done in this world by the use of the force, although the use made is according to the nature of the user, one uses it for the works of light, another for the works of

Darkness, yet another for a mixture. I don't think any Vedantin (except perhaps some modernised ones) would maintain that all is good here — the orthodox Vedantic idea is that all is here an inextricable mixture of good and evil, a play of the Ignorance and therefore a play of the dualities. The Christian missionaries, I suppose, hold that all that God does is morally good, so they are shocked by the Taoist priests aiding the work of the brothel by their rites. But do not the Christian priests invoke the aid of God for the destruction of men in battle and did not some of them sing Te Deums over a victory won by the massacre of men and the starvation of women and children? The Taoist who believes only in the Impersonal Tao is more consistent and the Vedantin who believes that the Supreme is beyond good and evil, but that the Cosmic Force the Supreme has put out here works through the dualities, therefore through both good and evil, joy and suffering, has a thesis which at least accounts for the double fact of the experience of the Supreme which is All Light, All Bliss and All Beauty and a world of mixed light and darkness, joy and suffering, what is fair and what is ugly. He says that the dualities come by a separative Ignorance and so long as you accept this separative Ignorance, you cannot get rid of that, but it is possible to draw back from it in experience and to have the realisation of the Divine in all and the Divine everywhere and then you begin to realise the Light, Bliss and Beauty behind all and this is the one thing to do. Also you begin to realise the one Force and you can use it or let it use you for the growth of the Light in you and others — no longer for the satisfaction of the ego and for the works of the ignorance and darkness.

As to the dilemma about the cruelty of things, I do not know what answer Ramdas would give. One answer might be that the Divine within is felt through the psychic being and the nature of the psychic being is that of the divine light, harmony, love, but it is covered by the mental and separative vital ego from which strife, hate, cruelty naturally come. It is therefore natural to feel in the kindness the touch of the Divine, while the cruelty is felt as a disguise or perversion in Nature, although that would not prevent the man who has the realisation from

feeling and meeting the Divine behind the disguise. I have known even instances in which the perception of the Divine in all accompanied by an intense experience of universal love or a wide experience of an inner harmony had an extraordinary effect in making all around kind and helpful, even the most coarse and hard and cruel. Perhaps it is some such experience which is at the base of Ramdas's statement about the kindness. As for the Divine working, the experience of the Vedantic realisation is that behind the confused mixture of good and evil something is working that he realises as the Divine and in his own life he can look back and see what each step, happy or unhappy, meant for his progress and how it led towards the growth of his spirit. Naturally this comes fully as the realisation progresses; before that he had to walk by faith and may have often felt his faith fail and yielded to grief, doubt and despair for a time.

As for my writings, I don't know if there is any that would clear up the difficulty. You would find mostly the statement of the Vedantic experience, for it is that through which I passed and, though now I have passed to something beyond, it seems to me the most thorough-going and radical preparation for whatever is Beyond, though I do not say that it is indispensable to pass through it. But whatever the solution, it seems to me that the Vedantin is right in insisting that one must, to arrive at it, admit the two facts, the prevalence of evil and suffering here and the experience of that which is free from these things—and it is only by the progressive experience that one can get a solution—whether through reconciliation, a conquering descent or an escape. If we start from the basis taken as an axiom that the prevalence of suffering and evil in the present and in the hard, outward fact of things, disproves of itself all that has been experienced by sages and mystics of the other side, the realisable Divine, then no solution seems possible.

15 April 1934

J. Krishnamurti

At one time I tried to come into imaginative contact with J. Krishnamurti. I imagined as follows: He has acquired a quiet

mind and a semi-quiet vital and has glimpses through them of the Self. He receives some things intuitively in his mind. But he goes no further than that. He has neither the knowledge nor the power nor bliss of the higher planes.

What he speaks is all purely mental — if he has any glimpses of realisation, they are in the mind only. 4 September 1933

*

I don't think there is much either in this man himself or in his teachings. It does not seem to me that he is a yogi in the true sense of the word but rather a man with some intellectual ability who is posing as a spiritual teacher. His photograph gives an impression of much pretension and vanity and an impression also of much falsity in the character. As for what he teaches, it does not hang together. If all books are worthless, why did he write a book and one of this kind telling people what they should do, what they should not do and if all teachers are unhelpful, why does he take the posture of a teacher since according to his own statement that cannot be helpful to anybody? Krishnamurti was, before he broke away on his own, certainly the disciple of two Gurus, Leadbeater and Annie Besant: if he has denounced Mrs. Besant, Krishnaprem is quite entitled to denounce him as a *gurudrohī*.

9 December 1949

Remarks on European Writers on Occultism

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

On reading *La Vie de Mme Blavatsky*, I had the impression that there is nothing but vital occultism in her. Her life and work are concerned mostly with the supraphysical worlds and spirits and miraculous powers and Mahatmas.

You are quite right. She was an occultist, not a spiritual personality. What spiritual teachings she gave, seemed to be based on *intellectual* knowledge, not on realisation. Her attitude was Tibetan Buddhistic. She did not believe in God, but in Nirvana, miraculous powers and the Mahatmas. 31 March 1936

Alexandra David-Neel

Recently someone gave me a book called *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet* by Madame Alexandra David-Neel. I am sending you a photograph of her. I was impressed by the hardships she endured and by her study of Tibetan mystics. But I don't know whether what she writes is authentic.

This is a photograph of Madame David-Neel taken long ago when she was much younger. Her story about her travels is perfectly authentic. She came here once to Pondicherry and saw me on her way to the North — that was before the Mother came here. Mother knew her very well in Paris. Even before she went to Tibet she was a Buddhist and deeply versed in Buddhism. As to the authenticity of all in this book (magic, mysticism) Mother cannot say as she has not read it. But she is not a woman with any imagination or invention and has a rather hard positive mind, — if there are any "travellers' tales" she is more likely to have heard them than invented them.

Remarks on Public Figures in India

Sayajirao Gaekwar

I find it strange that they have made the Gaekwar the President of the World Conference of Faiths. Is he a Hindu?

When I knew him the Gaekwar was a free-thinker without any religion; I don't know if he has altered his views since. Formally, he is of course a Hindu.

7 July 1936

*

I read the Gaekwar's speech at the World Conference of Faiths. It is full of commonplace ideas about brotherhood, fellowship and goodwill. These ideas seem to have become mere catchwords and it is doubtful if they can be of any help in solving the problems of modern life.

One can't expect anything more than catchwords and the most common ones from the Gaekwar on such subjects and occasions —in fact the whole affair of this Conference is likely to be little else. There are people who have a faith in words and think that with them they can sweep back the realities of life and embody effectively the realities of spirit.

9 July 1936

Mahatma Gandhi

As for Gandhi, why should you suppose that I am so tender for the faith of the Mahatma? I do not call it faith at all, but a rigid mental belief, and what he terms soul-force is only a strong vital will which has taken a religious turn. That, of course, can be a tremendous force for action, but unfortunately Gandhi spoils it by his ambition to be a man of reason, while in fact he has no reason in him at all, never was reasonable at any moment in his life and, I suppose, never will be. What he has in its place is a remarkable type of unintentionally sophistic logic. Well, what this

reason, this amazingly, precisely unreliable logic brings about is that nobody is ever sure and, I don't think, he is himself really sure what he will do next. He has not only two minds, but three or four minds, and all depends on which will turn up topmost at a particular moment and how it will combine with the others. There would be no harm in that, on the contrary there might be an advantage if there were a central Light somewhere choosing for him and shaping the decision to the need of the action. He thinks there is and calls it God — but it has always seemed to me that it is his own mind that decides and most of the time decides wrongly. Anyhow I cannot imagine Lenin or Mustapha Kemal not knowing their own minds or acting in this way — even their strategic retreats were steps towards an end clearly conceived and executed. But whatever it be, it is all mind-action and vital-force in Gandhi. So why should he be taken as an example of the defeat of the Divine or of a spiritual Power? I quite allow that there has been something behind Gandhi greater than himself and you can call it the Divine or a Cosmic Force which has used him, but then there is that behind everybody who is used as an instrument for world ends, — behind Kemal and Lenin also, — so that is not germane to the matter.

29 July 1932

*

This second fast of Mahatma Gandhi of three weeks has disquieted me a little. There seems to be no way out, for Gandhi asserts that he can break his irrevocable fast only if he is persuaded that the inner voice which enjoins the fast on him is the voice not of God but of the Devil. I wonder whose voice it is though? Can it be anything but disastrous augury?

I don't think it was the voice of God that raged and thundered till Gandhi decided to starve himself on to the danger line — it looks as if it were the other fellow. One can only hope that he will scrape through somehow and that the doctors are wrong as they most often are when they opine in the plural; but the last experiment was not encouraging. And as this time there seems to be no reason whatever for this inspired procedure and no

practical or practicable object set before it, there is no tangible means either of bringing it to a timely close. What an extraordinary ignorance of spiritual things to take any “inner” shout for the command of the Supreme!

5 May 1933

*

Yesterday I thought how nice it would be if Gandhiji came here for the truth which he is seeking. At times he hears some “voice” he says.

I don’t think he would accept the Truth that is here. His mind is too rigid for it.

22 July 1933

*

The letter to Govindbhai from Gandhiji has created a stir in the atmosphere and people are busy speculating.¹ Some think it would be an event useful to the world if he could see you. I wonder if even half an hour’s interview would help our inner work or its outward manifestation. Perhaps people are excited about the possibility that the Truth that is here and is accepted by us will be accepted by a person who is called the world’s greatest man.

Gandhi has his own work, his own ideal and dharma — how can he open himself to receive anything from here?

28 December 1933

*

I heard that Gandhi has written a letter expressing his desire to have an interview with Sri Aurobindo.

I don’t see how I can see him — the time has not come when I

¹ In December 1933, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Govindbhai Patel, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo then living in the Ashram, asking whether it would be possible for him to meet Sri Aurobindo. Govindbhai communicated Gandhi’s request to Sri Aurobindo. On 2 January 1934, Gandhi wrote directly to Sri Aurobindo asking for a face-to-face meeting. Extracts from Govindbhai’s and Gandhi’s letters, and Sri Aurobindo’s complete replies, are published in Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 442–44. —Ed.

can depart from my rule.²

29 December 1933

*

I was glad when X informed me that Gandhi is not coming here. I had an impression that his coming just before our occasion [*the darshan of 21 February*] would create a disturbance in the atmosphere.

It would have meant a very serious and quite unprofitable and unnecessary disturbance.

4 February 1934

*

It seems some people from the town went to see Gandhi and asked him why he had cancelled his visit to the Asram. Gandhi is supposed to have said that it was because Sri Aurobindo was not willing to see him, after which he showed a copy of the notice which was put on our notice board—the one prohibiting members of the Asram from attending Gandhi's arrival procession, etc.³ I don't believe Gandhi actually had a copy of the notice but some people in town must have known of it.

That is all nonsense. Gandhi's decision not to come here was made before the notice was put on the board. My decision to issue the notice and his decision not to come may have coincided—but how could he know it except by telepathy?

In one of his letters to Govindbhai, Gandhi said that he would be much disappointed if he did not see Sri Aurobindo. If that was the case, I wonder why he couldn't wait till the 21st to have Darshan.

I suppose the disappointment was nothing more than a phrase—meaning, I would so much have liked to see what kind of a person you are. If I have read his last letter to Govindbhai aright, his request was dictated by curiosity rather than anything else.

² After November 1926, Sri Aurobindo made it a rule not to meet with anyone, not even his disciples.—Ed.

³ See Notice of 3 February 1934, in Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, p. 536.—Ed.

If anybody expected him to come here seeking for Truth, it was absurd—he has his own fixed way of seeing things and is not likely to change it.

9 February 1934

*

Yesterday Gandhi asked permission to see the Mother. I heard that Mother asked Govindbhai to meet him and explain her inability to see him.

Gandhi wrote to Govindbhai and from his letter it seemed as if he were still expecting to see the Mother and the Asram or at least expecting an answer. In view of this persistence we sent Govindbhai to explain to him that it was impossible for the Mother to receive his visit.

23 February 1934

*

It is curious that mosquitoes do not bite me. Perhaps they do not like my blood or they do not bite me because I don't kill them. Here is an example of the efficacy of the truth of Ahimsa. But if this is true, why with all the Ahimsa Gandhi practises has the government not given up their enmity towards him? Of course, the meaning of Ahimsa can be extended to All-love, and, as it says in one Upanishad, everything that is not compatible with the Higher Self is Himsa.

Mosquitoes do have strong preferences (and dislikes) in the matter of blood. One person is sleeping in a room, no mosquitoes—another enters, immediately there is a cloud of mosquitoes. Also as between two persons in a room, they will swarm round one and leave the other.

I don't think the Ahimsa principle works like that with Governments—after all Gandhi is trying to do to them or their interests immense harm and you can't expect his mere non-violence to make them love him for that or leave him alone. On the other hand Ahimsa does work (though not invariably) with animals—if you don't kill them, they don't as a rule go out of their way to kill you—unless they are frightened or mad or otherwise abnormal or unless it is their rule to kill. I don't know what effect it can have on mosquitoes.

All-love is a different matter — it has sometimes a powerful effect, very powerful, in conciliating automatically men, animals, Nature itself. The only beings who do not respond are the Asuras and Rakshasas.

11 March 1934

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Someone was speaking to me about Gandhi's seven-day fast. I said: "Is it to create an earthquake for the sake of the Harijans? At least his own earth (body) will quake."

It seems to be very foolish, these fasts — as if they could alter anything at all. A fast can at most affect one's own condition, but how can it "atone" for the doings of others or change their nature?

12 July 1934

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In a recent statement, Gandhi criticises the attitude taken by Dr. Ambedkar and his followers at the Bombay Presidency Depressed Classes Conference. They passed a resolution recommending the "complete severance of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu fold and their embracing any other religion which guaranteed them equal status and treatment". About this Gandhi says: "But religion is not like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one's self than of one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's Creator and whilst the body perishes, as it has to, religion persists even after death."⁴ Is there any truth in what Gandhi says? Why should a particular religion persist after death? Why should one be bound to one form of religion if one feels the necessity of a different approach to Truth?

If it is meant by the statement that the form of religion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak

⁴ M. K. Gandhi, "Statement to the Press" (15 October 1935), in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 62 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1975), p. 37.

for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made, it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another, for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made by the Mahatma here; the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has a bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say "I will swap Krishna for Christ so that I may become socially respectable."

19 October 1935

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Gandhi says the following in a recent article: "I hold that complete realization is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings."⁵
Your opinion on the matter?

I do not know what Mahatma Gandhi means by complete realisation. If he means a realisation with nothing more to realise, no farther development possible, then I agree—I have myself spoken of farther divine progression, an infinite development. But the question is not that; the question is whether the Ignorance can be transcended, whether a complete essential realisation turning the consciousness from darkness to light, from

⁵ M. K. Gandhi, "Where Is the Living God?" (13 June 1936), in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 63 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1976), p. 58.

an instrument of the Ignorance seeking for Knowledge into an instrument or rather a manifestation of Knowledge proceeding to greater Knowledge, Light enlarging, heightening into greater Light, is or is not possible. My view is that this conversion is not only possible, but inevitable in the spiritual evolution of the being here. The embodiment of life has nothing to do with it. This embodiment is not of life, but of consciousness and its energy, of which life is only one phase or force. As life has developed mind, and the embodiment has modified itself to suit this development (mind is precisely the main instrument of ignorance seeking for knowledge), so mind can develop supermind which is in its nature knowledge not seeking for itself, but manifesting itself by its own automatic power, and the embodiment can again modify itself or be modified from above so as to suit this development. Faith is a necessary means for arriving at realisation because we are ignorant and do not yet know that which we are seeking to realise; faith is indeed knowledge giving the ignorance an intimation of itself previous to its own manifestation, it is the gleam sent before by the yet unrisen Sun. When the Sun shall rise there will be no longer any need of the gleam. The supramental knowledge supports itself, it does not need to be supported by faith; it lives by its own certitude. You may say that farther progression, farther development will need faith. No, for the farther development will proceed on a basis of knowledge, not of Ignorance. We shall walk in the light of knowledge towards its own wider vistas of self-fulfilment.

7 July 1936

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I would prefer to avoid all public controversy especially if it touches in the least on politics. Gandhi's theories are like other mental theories built on a basis of one-sided reasoning and claiming for a limited truth (that of non-violence and of passive resistance) a universality which it cannot have. Such theories will always exist so long as the mind is the main instrument of human truth seeking. To spend energy trying to destroy such theories is of little use; if destroyed they are replaced by others equally limited and partial.

As for imperialism, that is no new thing — it is as old as the human vital; there was never a time in known human history when it was not in existence. To get rid of it means to change human nature or at least to curb it by a superior power. Our work is not to fight these things but to bring down a higher nature and a Truth-creation which will make spiritual Light and Power the chief force in terrestrial existence. 10 October 1936

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Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said: “To be born as a ‘Bhangi’ was the result of great *punya* in previous birth. He [Gandhi] did not know what qualifications determined the birth of one man as Bhangi and another as Brahmin, but from the point of view of benefit to society the one was no whit lower than the other.”⁶ This seems like nonsense to me. How can he say that through *punya* (righteous acts) in previous births people go to a life in the lowest order of human society?

The view taken by the Mahatma in these matters is Christian rather than Hindu — for the Christian self-abasement, humility, the acceptance of a low status to serve humanity or the Divine are things which are highly spiritual and the noblest privilege of the soul. This view does not admit any hierarchy of castes; the Mahatma accepts castes but on the basis that all are equal before the Divine, a bhangi doing his dharma is as good as the Brahmin doing his, there is division of function but no hierarchy of functions. That is one view of things and the hierarchic view is another, both having a standpoint and logic of their own which the mind takes as wholly valid but which only corresponds to a part of the reality. All kinds of work are equal before the Divine and all men have the same Brahman within them, is one truth, but that development is not equal in all is another. The idea that it needs special *punya* to be born as a bhangi is of course one of those forceful exaggerations of an idea which are common

⁶ M. K. Gandhi, “Address to Congress Volunteers” (21 December 1936). Reported in the Hindu and other newspapers, and reproduced in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 64 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1976), pp. 162–63.

with the Mahatma and impress greatly the mind of his hearers. The idea behind is that his function is an indispensable service to the society, quite as much as the Brahmin's, but that being disagreeable it would need a special moral heroism to choose it voluntarily and he thinks as if the soul freely chose it as such a heroic service and as a reward of righteous acts — that is hardly likely. The service of the scavenger is indispensable under certain conditions of society, it is one of those primary necessities without which society can hardly exist and the cultural development of which the Brahmin life is part could not have taken place. But obviously the cultural development is more valuable than the service of the physical needs for the progress of humanity as opposed to its first static condition and that development can even lead to the minimising and perhaps the eventual disappearance by scientific inventions of the need for the functions of the scavenger. But that I suppose the Mahatma would not approve of as it is machinery and a departure from the simple life. In any case it is not true that the bhangi life is superior to the Brahmin life and the reward of especial righteousness. On the other hand the traditional conception that a man is superior to others because he is born a Brahmin is not rational or justifiable. A spiritual or cultured man of Pariah birth is superior in the divine values to an unspiritual and worldly-minded or a crude and uncultured Brahmin. Birth counts, but the basic value is in the man himself, the soul behind and the degree to which it manifests itself in his nature.

23 December 1936

Jawaharlal Nehru

I have just finished Jawaharlal's autobiography. I send you some citations which moved me deeply. I caught myself today praying for him that he may have peace. How I wish he could do yoga for a year at least, if only to realise the divine harmony within him — even in this age when times are so grievously "out of joint".

I have not read Jawaharlal's book and know nothing of his life except what is public; now of course I have no time for reading.

But he bears on himself the stamp of a very fine character, a nature of the highest sattwic kind, full of rectitude and a high sense of honour: a man of the finest Brahmin type with what is best in European education added—that is the impression he gives. I must say that Mother was struck by his photograph when she first saw it in the papers, singling it out from the mass of ordinary *eminent* people.

But peace? Peace is never easy to get in the life of the world and never constant, unless one lives deep within and bears the external activities as only a surface front of our being. And the work he has to do is the least peaceful of all. If Buddha had to lead the Indian National Congress, well! For the spiritual life there is perhaps no immediate possibility: his mind stands in between, for it has seized strongly the Socialist dream of social perfection by *outward* change as the thing to be striven for and has made that into a sort of religion. The best possible on earth has been made by his mind its credo: the something beyond he does not believe in, the something more here would seem to him a dream without basis, I suppose. But pray for him, of course. He is a man with a strong psychic element and in this life or another that must go beyond the mind to find its source.

13 September 1936

Subhas Chandra Bose

I have read your correspondence with Subhas Bose.⁷ Your main point is of course quite the right thing to answer; all this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. Yoga must include life and not exclude it does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right; the

⁷ All the letters in this group except the one dated 2 July 1938 were written to Dilip Kumar Roy, who was a close friend of Subhas Chandra Bose.—Ed.

present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the soul, the self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we were. The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the godhead within and without us.

16 June 1932

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I want to send Chapter 1 of "The Yoga of Divine Works" to Subhas. It will, I am sure, be just the aliment for his soul and may work a sort of miracle as it did in me. So unless you have a particular reason, could you see your way to allowing me to send him this chapter by tomorrow's post?

I am not sure that Subhas is prepared to receive any effect from it — it is only because your inner preparation had proceeded to a point at which you could feel something of what was behind the words that it had an effect upon you. All the same — you can send it, if you like.

26 December 1932

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I received this post-card from Subhas in the last mail. He had written it before starting for Calcutta by aeroplane. Now he is practically a prisoner — a home-internee really — at his residence. I wonder what work he will be doing now. . . . He used once to meditate and see light and had a real bhakti — had even turned a sannyasi once. And now he says that seeking the Divine is useless inactive work!

I had never a very great confidence in Subhas's yoga-turn getting the better of his activism — he has two strong ties that prevent

it, ambition and need to act and lead in the vital and in the mind a mental idealism — these two things are the great fosterers of illusion. The spiritual path needs a certain amount of realism — one has to see the real value of the things that are — which is very little, except as steps in evolution. Then one can either follow the spiritual static path of rest and release or the spiritual dynamic path of a greater truth to be brought down into life. But otherwise —

12 December 1934

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I wrote a letter to Subhas this morning in reply to his exhorting me to come away, assuring me that all my friends want me back and that nobody is cross with me etc. etc. I wrote that I must be faithful to the call of my soul and to my Guru whom I do believe to be the Divine incarnate. Perhaps he will smile the well-known “the old old story” smile of our up-to-date rationalism.

Well, his also is the old old story repeated without any satisfactory result or liberating end.

20 August 1935

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Here is Subhas the desirer: “It is no use trying to argue with you. You are quite blind. Reason is but the slave of your faith. When I think how a person of your calibre can surrender his reasoning in this way, I feel like despairing of my country. Everywhere we find the same thing. You regard Sri Aurobindo as God Incarnate. So many regard Mahatma Gandhi in the same light. My own mother — whose sincerity I cannot doubt — has a guru whom she regards as God incarnate.” — *Extract from a letter of Subhas Chandra Bose to Dilip Kumar Roy, dated Vienna, 23 December 1935.*

As for the desperate Subhas, why the deuce does he want everybody to agree with him and follow his line of conduct or belief? That is the never realised dream of the politician; we, incarnate Gods, Gurus, spiritual men, are more modest in our hopes and are satisfied with a handful or, if you like, an Asramful of disciples, and even we don’t ask for that, — they come, they come.

So are we not nearer to reason and wisdom than the political leaders? Unless of course we make the mistake of founding a universal religion, but that is not our case. Moreover, Subhas upbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith, but what is his view of things except a reasoned faith; you believe according to your faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to his opinion, which is natural also but no better so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason? So is the opinion of his political opponents according to their reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is reason going to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face, they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end he prevails whom the greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to right reason — whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter of fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions, there is only my reason, your reason, x's, y's, z's reason multiplied up to the discordant innumerable. Each reasons according to his view of things, his opinion, that is, his mental constitution and mental preference. So what's the use of running down faith which after all gives something to hold on to amidst the contradictions of an enigmatic universe? If one can get at a knowledge that knows, it is another matter; but so long as we have only an ignorance that argues, well, there is a place still left for faith — even, faith may be a glint from the knowledge that knows, however far off, and meanwhile there is not the slightest doubt that it helps to get things done. There's a bit of reasoning for you! just like all other reasoning too, convincing to the convinced, but not to the unconvinced, i.e., who don't agree with the ground upon which the reasoning dances. Logic after all is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else.

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The day before yesterday I was telling someone how Bertrand Russell, in his *In Praise of Idleness*, predicted with almost irrefutable logic the coming collapse of war-mad Europe seized with lunacy born of horror on the one hand and greed on the other. Just listen: "We are all more aware of our fellow-citizens than we used to be, more anxious, if we are virtuous, to do them good," — like Dr. Stanley Jones, what? — "and in any case to make them do us good. We do not like to think of anyone lazily enjoying life, however refined may be the quality of his enjoyment. We feel that everybody ought to be doing something to help on the great cause (whatever it may be), the more so as so many bad men are working against it and ought to be stopped. We have not leisure of mind, therefore, to acquire any knowledge except such as will help us in the fight for whatever it may happen to be that we think important."⁸ What would the rational Subhas, himself a worshipper of Russell's keen logic, say to this cynicism?

Poor Subhas! But he is a politician and the rationality of politicians has perforce to move within limits; if they were to allow themselves to be as clear-minded as that, their occupation would be gone. It is not everybody who can be as cynical as Birkenhead or as philosophical as C. R. Das and go on with political reason or political humbug in spite of knowing what it all came to — from *arrivisme* in the one and from patriotism in the other case.

In another essay, Russell writes: "When the indemnities were imposed, the Allies regarded themselves as consumers: they considered that it would be pleasant to have the Germans work for them as temporary slaves, and to be able themselves to consume, without labour, what the Germans had produced. Then, after the Treaty of Versailles had been concluded, they suddenly remembered that they were also producers, and that the influx of German goods which they had been demanding would ruin their industries. . . . The plain fact is that the governing classes of the world are too ignorant and stupid to be able to think through such a problem, and too conceited

⁸ Bertrand Russell, *In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), pp. 35–36.

to ask advice of those who might help them" [pp. 66–67]. Well, what would Subhas as a ruling patriot say to this? How support his reason? All these meeting-makers are reasonable people, aren't they?

Yes, but human reason is a very convenient and accommodating instrument and works only in the circle set for it by interest, partiality and prejudice. The politicians reason wrongly or insincerely and have power to enforce the results of their reasoning, so make a mess of the world's affairs, — the intellectuals reason and see what their minds show them, which is far from being always the truth, for it is generally decided by intellectual preference and the mind's inborn or education-inculcated angle of vision, — but even when they see it, they have no power to enforce it. So between blind power and seeing impotence the world moves, achieving destiny through a mental muddle.

To conclude, Russell writes in the same essay: "When a nation, instead of an individual, is seized with lunacy, it is thought to be displaying remarkable industrial wisdom" [p. 67]. *Qu'en dites-vous?*

Seized with lunacy? But that implies the nation is ordinarily led by reason? Is it so? Or even by common sense? Masses of men act upon their vital push, not according to reason — individuals too mostly, though they frequently call in their reason as a lawyer to plead the vital's case.

30 January 1936

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Sarojini Naidu's daughter Padmaja told me today that when Subhas issued his manifesto from Europe to the effect that he and Jawaharlal were great friends and at one on every point, he actually had been scheming from Europe to bring J. down in the public eye. I could not believe this, I told her point blank. She averred it was absolutely true. I am very pained to hear it. For though I feel there is not a little exaggeration in this business, I fear there may be substance of truth somewhere in this dirty story.

I would certainly not hang anybody on the testimony of Padmaja: she has too much of a delight in scandal-mongering of the worst kind; but I suppose she would not cite Jawaharlal as a witness if there were nothing in it. The question is: how much exaggeration? I am afraid it is not at all impossible that Subhas should say one thing to Jawaharlal and quite another to somebody else. Politics is like that, a dirty and corrupting business full of "policy", "strategy", "tactics", "diplomacy": in other words, lying, tricking, manoeuvring of all kinds. A few escape the corruption but most don't. It has after all always been a trade or art of Kautilya from the beginning, and to touch it and not be corrupted is far from easy. For it is a field in which people fix their eyes on the thing to be achieved and soon become careless about the character of the means, while ambition, ego and self-interest come pouring in to aid the process. Human nature is prone enough to crookedness as it is, but here the ordinary restraints put upon it fail to be at all effective. That however is general: in a particular case one can't pronounce without knowing the circumstances more at first hand or before having seen the documents cited.

20 October 1936

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For Subhas Bose, country is the one thing that matters and nothing else.

Excuse me — country is not the only thing for Subhas Bose — there is also Subhas Bose and he looms very large. You have illusions about these political heroes — I have seen them close and have none.

2 July 1938

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I am not responsible for anything that may have been said by any sadhak in the Asram. I have not said that Subhas was my enemy and that anybody sympathising with him ought to leave the Asram. If this statement was made, it certainly did not have my authority. There is absolutely no reason why you should say anything contrary to your feelings or to what you believe to be

the truth, or feel that in not doing so you were going contrary to what was expected of you and think of leaving the Asram. The question you put me as to what you should do, does not really arise, for I would never make any such demand on anybody. I hope that will clear your mind and restore your peace.

30 March 1942

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In all this imbroglio about the book on Subhas⁹ one thing is positive that I never gave any such order and it ought to have been evident to everybody that I could not have done it since I permitted the publication of your book and the prohibition of it would have been too outrageous a self-contradiction to be even thinkable. . . .

Behind all that is an old story which may account for everything. You will remember that both the Mother and I were very angry against Subhas for having brought the Japanese into India and reproached him with it as a treason and crime against the Motherland. For if they had got in, it would have been almost impossible to get them out. The Mother knows the Japanese nation well and was positive about that. Okawa, the leader of the Black Dragon (the one who shamed mad and got off at the Tokyo trial) told her that if India revolted against the British, Japan would send her Navy to help, but he said that he would not like the Japanese to land because if they once got hold of Indian soil they would never leave it, and it was true enough. If the Japanese had overrun India, and they would have done it if a powerful Divine intervention had not prevented it and turned the tables on them, they would have joined the Germans in Mesopotamia and the Caucasus and nothing could have saved Europe and Asia from being overrun. This would have meant the destruction of our work and a horrible fate for this country and for the world. You can understand therefore the bitterness of our feelings at that time against Subhas and his association with the Axis and the disaster to his country for which he would have

⁹ The Subhash I Knew, by Dilip Kumar Roy (Bombay, Nalanda Publications, 1946).

been responsible. Incidentally, instead of being liberated in 1948, India would have had to spend a century or several centuries in a renewed servitude. When therefore the Mother heard that you were writing a book eulogising Subhas, she disapproved strongly of any such thing issuing out of the Ashram and she wanted that you should be asked not to publish it. . . .

. . . Subsequently she met one of the chief lieutenants of Subhas, a man from Hyderabad who had been his secretary and companion in the submarine by which he came from Germany to Japan, and he recounted his daily talks in the submarine and strongly defended his action. From what he said it was evident although we still regarded Subhas's action as a reckless and dangerous folly, that the aspect of a crime against the country disappeared from it. Since then Mother modified her attitude towards Subhas; moreover, the war was receding into the past and there was no longer any room for the poignancy of the feeling it had raised and it was better that all that should be forgotten. But although almost a year had passed, the impressions made at that time have remained in the minds of many and account for the attitude of X and Y to your book and must also be the psychological source of X's misunderstanding about the supposed order.

We regret that a blow should have fallen on you and the pain accompanying it when no blow was really given or intended. Anyhow, the matter has been rectified; the library has been informed that there has been a misunderstanding, no prohibition was actually made and the book must be issued to sadhaks.

5 April 1947

Remarks on Public Figures in Europe

Kaiser Wilhelm II

The Kaiser gave up at the last moment when he could have assumed a dictatorship. Napoleon did the same after Waterloo.

In Napoleon's case they say it was the result of his disease, he was no longer quite his old self. The Kaiser was a man without any real strong stuff in him to face adversity. In the German case they simply lost hope after the American intervention and the failure of the submarine campaign — there was no way out any longer and they felt exhausted by a hopeless struggle. But the end was inevitable. After the turning back at Compiègne all the balance of forces had passed to the other side. 26 October 1934

The Kaiser, Hitler and His Lieutenants

Hitler and his chief lieutenants Goering and Goebbels are certainly vital beings or possessed by vital beings, so you can't expect common sense from them. The Kaiser, though ill-balanced, was a much more human person; these people are hardly human at all. The nineteenth century in Europe was a preeminently human era — now the vital world seems to be descending there.

18 September 1936

Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky

From what I read about Stalin's life, it seems that it was he who saved Bolshevism (even when Lenin was there) and turned several catastrophes into successes either by military operations or tactics. If Lenin was the mind of the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalin was its vital — a very solid, steadfast and intuitive vital.

But where did you read that? It must be someone who since Stalin became powerful has exaggerated his share in the work. When Lenin lived he alone was all-powerful and dictated the whole policy changing it whenever that was needed. As for military operations, the man who saved Bolshevism in history was Trotsky who organised the Red Army, created it out of nothing and directed its operations. Stalin was not so much the vital as the physical mind working out details; after Lenin's death he took charge and arranged everything by this faculty.

25 January 1937

Edward Windsor

Edward VIII is becoming a plain-clothes sentinel now (once more) of his realm instead of being quondam august keeper!
Most are lost in a ferment.

But I don't understand. Why should there be a ferment about this affair among the "most"? What is Edward Windsor to them or they to Edward Windsor? He has very sensibly kicked over the traces and chucked the unpleasant work of being a King who can do nothing except nod his head like a marionette to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and preferred to have his own life as a man and not a pseudo-king. Quite natural. What is said is that he was too democratic and socialistic for the British Parliamentarians, wanted to create a free and united Ireland, give full Dominion autonomy without reserve to India, do something for the workers etc. and generally made himself a vigorous nuisance to Baldwin and Co. Hence they took the first opportunity to put him in the dilemma "Be a puppet or go." It is very probable. Anyhow it seems that the new George will suit them very well. So all is for the best in the best possible of all possible Baldwinian worlds and there is nothing to be in a ferment over.

12 December 1936

Remarks on Indian Affairs 1930–1946

The Civil Disobedience Movement

I have received a letter from my father. He says he read Pandit Sunderlal's speech published in a newspaper, in which he has reportedly stated that you have asked your disciples to join the Civil Disobedience Movement.

You can write to your father that Sri Aurobindo has given no such orders to his disciples. The statement of Sunderlal has no foundation.

4 May 1930

Indian Independence and the Muslims

The Hindu mentality in politics is such that they would a thousand times prefer British rule to any Mahomedan influence, even if it be only a little.

That was never the view of the Nationalists, even those who were ardent Hindus who would prefer Moslem to British rule.

Even if Swaraj itself were postponed for a long time, it would be less of a shock to anybody in the Ashram than if Mahomedans got a little right.

The Asram is not concerned with politics; but I cannot believe without proof that this is the state of their mentality.

17 November 1932

Dominion Status

The Mother has said that only a minor portion of the government will remain in British hands.

That seems to be a description of "Dominion Status". In the Dominions the British Government have only a nominal power, not any real sovereignty.

It is not the time to speak of these things — for we have kept politics out of our scope. What we have to do is not to trouble ourselves about it but to get the spiritual realisation. The rest will work itself out according to the Divine Decree.

26 January 1935

India and the Expected World War

If England is involved in the war, she will naturally call on India for men and money. And to obtain it, she will have to hold out the bait of freedom. But India won't commit the same foolish mistake she was led to commit during the last war.

What India? The Legislative Assembly? You think it has force enough to exact freedom as a price of some military help? Must have changed much if they can do that. 5 October 1935

Prospects for India after Independence

In the *Times*, there are some predictions by Mme Laila saying that India's civilisation, philosophy, culture etc. will spread in the world very slowly but at last it will be recognised as the best culture. She has however also predicted that India will always remain under Britain. Perhaps it is not advisable for India to get freedom soon, because even before getting it there is so much competition for power.

The spread of India's spirit is obviously the essential. As for freedom it is necessary and certainly no empire is everlasting — but I expect the first days of freedom will be rather trying. Perhaps a Mussolini will have to rise to get rid of the corruption and mutual quarrelling and disorder. 18 April 1935

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You know it is the confounded Raj that has fomented this communal incident [*in Bengal, as described in a newspaper report that the correspondent summarised for Sri Aurobindo*].

It looks as if it were going to be like that everywhere. In Europe also.

In your scheme of things do you definitely see a free India? You have stated that for the spreading of spirituality in the world India must be free. I suppose you must be working for it! You are the only one who can do something really effective by the use of your spiritual Force.

That is all settled. It is a question of working out only. The question is what is India going to do with her independence? The above kind of affair? Bolshevism? Goonda-raj? Things look ominous.

16 September 1935

*

Please don't go on thinking like others about what India is going to do with her independence. Give her that first and let her decide her fate however she likes.

You are a most irrational creature. I have been trying to logicise and intellectualise you but it seems in vain. Have I not told you that the independence is all arranged for and will evolve itself all right? Then what's the use of my bothering about that any longer? It's what she will do with her independence that is not arranged for — and so it is that about which I have to bother.

18 September 1935

*

Can't you say something a little more definite about independence than that it "will evolve itself"? Such a phrase can stretch itself out to the end of the cosmos. When the yogi Baroda Babu was asked about this, he replied "Independence? Not within 50 years!" We live in time and space and would like to hear something in terms of time.

I am not a prophet like Baroda Babu. All I can say is that the coming of independence is now sure (as anyone with any political sense at all can see). As you do not accept my "play of forces", I can say no more than that — for that is all that can be said by the "human time-sense".

20 September 1935

The Communal Problem

As regards Bengal, things are certainly very bad; the conditions of the Hindus there are terrible and they may even get worse in spite of the interim *mariage de convenience* at Delhi. But we must not let our reaction to it become excessive or suggest despair. There must be at least 20 million Hindus in Bengal and they are not going to be exterminated,—even Hitler with his scientific methods of massacre could not exterminate the Jews who are still showing themselves very much alive and, as for Hindu culture, it is not such a weak and fluffy thing as to be easily stamped out; it has lasted through something like 5 millenniums at least and is going to carry on much longer and has accumulated quite enough power to survive. What is happening did not come to me as a surprise. I foresaw it when I was in Bengal and warned people that it was probable and almost inevitable and that they should be prepared for it. At that time no one attached any value to what I said although some afterwards remembered and admitted, when the trouble first began, that I have been right; only C.R. Das had grave apprehensions and he even told me when he came to Pondicherry that he would not like the British to go out until this dangerous problem had been settled. But I have not been discouraged by what is happening, because I know and have experienced hundreds of times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God's victory. I have never had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world — I am not speaking of personal things — which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster. There was a time when Hitler was victorious everywhere and it seemed certain that a black yoke of the Asura would be imposed on the whole world; but where is Hitler now and where is his rule? Berlin and Nuremberg have marked the end of that dreadful chapter in human history. Other blacknesses threaten to overshadow or even engulf mankind, but they too will end as that nightmare has ended. I cannot write fully in this letter of all things which justify my confidence — some day perhaps I shall be able to do it.

19 October 1946

Remarks on the World Situation 1933–1949

Intellectual Idealists, World Events and the New Creation

I cannot persuade myself that all the things that are happening — including the triumph of the British policy and deterioration of Gandhi's intellect — are meant for the best. . . . Bengal is now benighted and there is no sign of light anywhere. Tagore too has just written an article of despair in which he forebodes gloomily an end of the world, *pralaya-kalpānta*, as perhaps the quickest and most satisfactory solution to the mess we are in. Add to this my own lack of devotion and faith. . . . I do sometimes even feel that in the end you will give up this wicked world and wish with Tagore for the *pralaya* and retire into extracosmic samadhi.

I have no intention of doing so — even if all smashed; I would look beyond the smash to the new creation. As for what is happening in the world, it does not upset me because I knew all along that things would happen in that fashion. I never had any illusions about Gandhi's satyagraha — it has only fulfilled my prediction that it would end in a great confusion or a great fiasco and my only mistake was that I put an “or” where there should have been an “and” — and as for the hopes of the intellectual idealists I have not shared them, so I am not disappointed.

10 August 1933

Gandhi, Tagore and the New Creation

A friend writes: “Tagore and the Tagorians have by now all but given up Sri Aurobindo for lost — as one irreclaimable. . . . They no longer have the faith they once had that Sri Aurobindo was going to inaugurate a new era of creation in the world of fact.” I feel that Tagore has come to this conclusion after reading your *Riddle of This World*, which must have appeared to him more of a riddle than an explanation. For formerly he

wrote enthusiastically to me about you as a *creator*. I suspect also that Romain Rolland's retraction has something to do with Tagore's retraction. But I expect sooner or later he will write somewhere about your becoming a thorough introvert. There of course the whole Bengal intelligentsia (such as it is) will agree with him. Are you staggered at such a lugubrious prospect?

I cannot find any symptom of a stagger in me, not even of a shake or a quake or a quiver — all seems quite calm and erect, as far as I can make out. And I don't find the prospect lugubrious at all — the less people expect of you and bother you with their false ideas and demands, the more chance one has to get something real done. It is queer these intellectuals go on talking of creation while all they stand for is collapsing into the *Néant* without their being able to raise a finger to save it. What the devil are they going to create and from what material? and of what use if a Hitler with his cudgel or a Mussolini with his castor oil can come and wash it out or beat it into dust in a moment? 23 March 1934

The World Situation before World War II

I was discussing the Ethiopian problem with some friends. One suggested it would result in a world war. He thought such a war would clear the way for the supramental and supposes that Mussolini would help precipitate the war. Perhaps after the war everybody will be so tired out that they will begin to read the *Arya* or else go to the Wardha Ashram to get peace.

I don't think! They will only gasp and talk peace for a bit and then get ready for another war. I don't see why the supramental should need a general carnage for its appearance — if it were so it should surely have appeared in 1919. But perhaps that was sufficient only for the overmind to look in and it needed Mussolini and a general extermination by all sorts of poison gases to persuade the supramental to follow suit? For the poison gases by aeroplane were not ready to make their "descent" in the last war.

8 September 1935

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The adage “Honesty is the best policy” was invented in a semi-barbarous age when mankind had not made so much progress as now, an age which no longer exists — except perhaps in the wilds of Abyssinia, and now Mussolini is out to finish with it and bring in the blessings of civilisation even there. Nowadays the saying is notoriously out of date; it only means that with honesty you have less chances of going to jail — provided you are lucky and also provided you have not met Mahatma Gandhi. But Rockefellers and the rest of the commercial aristocracy were not born for jail but for palaces with marble water closets and the immortality of Rockefeller institutes and honour in the land of the gangsters and the free. All this is not meant to tempt you out of the paths of virtue.

7 November 1935

*

You write as if what is going on in Europe were a war between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness — but this is no more so than during the Great War. It is a fight between two kinds of Ignorance.¹ Our aim is to bring down a higher Truth, but that Truth must be able to live by its own strength and not depend upon the victory of one or other of the forces of the Ignorance. That is the reason why we are not to mix in political or social controversies and struggles; it would simply keep down our endeavour to a lower level and prevent the Truth from descending which is none of these things but has a quite different law and basis. You speak of Brahmatej being overpowered by Kshatratej, but where is that happening? None of the warring parties incarnates either.

17 February 1937

On World War II

You have said that you have begun to doubt whether it was the Mother’s war and ask me to make you feel again that it is. I affirm again to you most strongly that this is the Mother’s war. You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against

¹ The reference is to the Nationalist and Republican forces, and their Fascist and Communist backers, during the Spanish Civil War. — Ed.

others or even for India; it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. It is no use concentrating on the defects or mistakes of nations; all have defects and commit serious mistakes; but what matters is on what side they have ranged themselves in the struggle. It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act according to the light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the Spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there would be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.²

29 July 1942

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I just received a long letter from Krishnaprem. He evidently wants to qualify his statement about violence. For myself I have no doubt as *you* who *know* have said so. Only one point gave rise to doubts in me, in regard to what Nolini wrote in his

² This letter and the one that follows were later revised and issued as messages, first to the members of the Ashram, then to the general public. They are published, as revised, in Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 463–68. In the present volume they are published as originally written. —Ed.

mastery analysis of the values at stake, comparing this war to Kurukshtetra.³ This is exactly what troubles Krishnaprem. How can the Allied Powers be compared to the Pandavas? I never doubted the wisdom of all efforts being directed against Hitler, but is it not unwise to compare him to Duryodhana and the Allied Powers to the Pandavas? I have received of late from correspondents and friends objections to that effect — that the Allies can hardly be dubbed “modern Pandavas”. The Pandavas were protagonists of virtue and unselfishness, which can hardly be said of the Allies who are all selfish (more or less) and exploiters of weaker races and imperialistic.⁴

What I have said is not that the Allies have never done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces. I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have shown that side in their dealings with each other,—at least all who had the strength or got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous Governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? It is only individuals and not too many of them who can be described in that style. But there is the other side also. Your correspondents are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; but looked at like that, all big nations and many small ones have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England — the present Allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their

³ The reference is to the essay “Dharmakshetra Kurukshtetra” written in Bengali by Nolini Kanta Gupta and published along with other material in a pamphlet entitled Sri Aurobindo o Bartaman Yuddha (“Sri Aurobindo and the Present War”) in Bengali year 1349 (1942–43). The title “Dharmakshetra Kurukshtetra” is taken from the Bhagavad Gita and evokes the Kurukshtetra war. At the end of the essay, the writer mentions Duryodhana and his ninety-nine brothers, who were on one side in that war, and the five Pandava brothers and Sri Krishna, who were on the other side. — Ed.

⁴ Here Sri Aurobindo wrote between two lines of the correspondent’s letter: “Good Heavens, but so were the Pandavas, even if less than more! They were human beings, not ascetics or angels.” — Ed.

past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and introduced self-governing bodies and parliamentary institutions where they did not exist; and whatever the relative worth of these things, they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage, in a forward evolution. (What of the others? What about the Axis' new order? Hitler swears it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples, they must be kept as serfs and labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be free without seeking any personal gain; she has conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, to Iraq without a struggle. On the whole she has been for some time moving away steadily from Imperialism towards a principle of free association and cooperation; the British Commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction. She is turning in spirit in the direction of a world-union of some kind after the war; her new generation no longer believes in an "imperial mission"; she has offered India Dominion Independence (even, if she prefers it, she can choose or pass on to isolated independence) after the war, on the base of an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves; though this, it has been feared, leaves a loophole for reactionary delay, it is in itself extremely reasonable and it is the Indians themselves with their inveterate habit of disunion who will be responsible if they are imbecile enough to reject the opportunity. All that is what I call evolution in the right direction—however slow and imperfect and hesitating. As for America she has forsaken her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, in Cuba, the Philippines,—everywhere apart from some islands in the Pacific which would go plop into other hands, if she withdrew from them. It is perhaps possible, some suggest, that she may be tempted towards a sort of financial imperialism, the rule of the Almighty American Dollar, by her new sense of international power, or led into other mistakes, but if so we may fairly assume from her other strong tendencies that she will soon withdraw from it. The greater danger is that she may retire again into a selfish isolationism after the war and so destroy or delay the chance of

a possible beginning that may lead eventually to some beginning of a free world-union. But still there again is the evolutionary force. Is there a similar trend on the part of the Axis? The answer is plain enough both from their own declarations and their behaviour. Avowedly and openly, Nazi Germany today stands for the reversal of this evolutionary tendency, for the destruction of the new international outlook, the new Dharma, for a reversion not only to the past, but to a far-back primitive and barbaric ideal. She fully intended to reimpose it on the whole earth, but would have done so if she had had, as for a time she seemed to have, the strength to conquer. There can be no doubt or hesitation here; if we are for the evolutionary future of mankind, we must recognise that it is only the victory of the Allies that can save it. At the very least, they are at the moment the instruments of the evolutionary Forces to save mankind's future, and these declarations of their own show that they are conscious of it. Other elements and motives there are, but the main issue is here. One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once more, it is the forces working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface details. The future has first to be safeguarded; only then can present problems and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated.

Krishnaprem too has become doubtful about the Allies being compared to the Pandavas. Would you kindly throw some light on the question?

For us the question put by you does not arise. The Mother made it plain in a letter which has been made public that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations or governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions (past or present or possible

backslidings in the future) which are common to human nature and to all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces; the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly and might lead even, at the worst, to its failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least stand for human values, though they may often have acted against their own best ideals (human beings always do that); Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (e.g. the "virtues" of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race). That does not make the English or Americans nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a decisive importance.

Nolini, I should suppose, gave the Kurukshetra example not as an exact parallel but as a traditional instance of a War between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because its leaders made themselves his instruments. I don't suppose he envisaged it as a battle between virtue and wickedness or between good and evil men or intended to equate the British with the Pandavas, nations with individuals or even individuals with individuals,— shall we say, Stafford Cripps with Yudhisthir, Churchill with Bhima and General Montgomery with Arjuna! After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, calm and holy and quite unselfish and without passions? There are many incidents in the Mahabharat which seem to show to the contrary that they had their defects and failings. And in the Pandava army and its leaders there must have been many who were not angels or paragons of virtue, while there were plenty of good men and true on Duryodhana's side. Unselfishness? But were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests— just and right, no doubt, but still personal claims and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharmya yuddha*, but it was for right and justice in their own case. The Allies have as good or even a better case and reason to call theirs a righteous quarrel, for they are fighting

not only for themselves, for their freedom and very existence, but for the existence, freedom, maintenance of natural rights of other nations, Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Belgians, Dutch, French, Greece, Yugoslavia and a vast number of others not yet directly threatened; they too claim to be fighting for a Dharma, for civilised values, for the preservation of great ideals and in view of what Hitler represents and openly professes and what he wishes to destroy, their claim has strong foundations. And if imperialism is under all circumstances a wickedness, then the Pandavas are tainted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter (alas for Ahimsa!) that they might establish their sole imperial rule over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India? Such a criticism would be grotesquely out of place, but it would be a natural result of weighing ancient happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact, such an empire was a step in the right direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now,— and in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter.

Who are the people who have such a tenderness for Hitler and object to his being compared to Duryodhana? I hope they are not among those—spiritual people among them, I am told, —who believe—or perhaps once believed?—Hitler to be the new Avatar and his religion (God help us!) to be the true religion which we must all help to establish throughout the wide world or among those who regard Hitler as a great and good man, a saint, an ascetic and all that is noble and godlike. I don't see why Hitler should not be compared to Duryodhana, except that Duryodhana, if alive, might complain indignantly that the comparison was a monstrous and scandalous injustice to him and that he never did anything like what Hitler has done. By the way, what about Krishna's *jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samyddham?* An unholy and unethical bribe? Or what on earth did he mean by it? But battle and conquest and imperial rule

were then a *dharma* and consecrated by a special form of sacrifice. We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or medieval times and even quite recently but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was envisaged, but nothing more—exploitation was not excluded. No doubt, many nations in the past were jealous of their own independence and some like the Greeks and later the English had the ideal of freedom, more especially of individual liberty. But the passion for individual liberty went along in ancient times with the institution of slavery which no Greek democrat ever thought to be wrong; no Greek state or people thought it an injustice to take away the freedom of other Greek states, still less of foreign peoples, or deemed it immoral to rule over subject races. The same inconsistency has held sway over human ideas until recent times and still holds sway over international practice even now. The modern ideas on the subject, the right of all to liberty both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or, short of such absolutist ideas, such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement, a new Dharma which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice,—an infant Dharma that would be throttled for good if Hitler succeeded in his “Avataric” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject nations naturally accept the new Dharma and severely criticise the old imperialisms; it is to be hoped that they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world-order evolves which will make the old things impossible,—a difficult task, but not, with God’s grace, absolutely impracticable.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses them as his instruments even if they are not flawless in character, without stain or sin or fault, exemplary in virtue, or angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done.

Even if I knew that the Allies (I am speaking of the “big” nations, America, Britain, China) would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities opened to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate, things could not be one hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real issue and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important and tragic issue before us.

P.S. This is an answer to what is implied in your letter and, I suppose, in those of your correspondents, not to anything in K's letter. His observations are all right, but circumstances alter cases. Ours is a sadhana which involves not only devotion or union with the Divine or a perception of him in all things and beings, but also action as workers and instruments and a work to be done in the world, a spiritual force to be brought on the world, under difficult conditions; then one has to see one's way and do what is commanded and support what has to be supported, even if it means war and strife carried on whether through chariots and bows and arrows or tanks and cars and American bombs and aeroplanes, in either case a *ghoram karma*: the means and times and persons differ, but it does not seem to me that Nolini is wrong in seeing in it the same problem as in Kurukshetra. As for war, violence, the use of force to maintain freedom for the world, for the highest values of human civilisation, for the salvation of humanity from a terrible fate, etc., the old command rings out once again after many ages for those who must fight or support this battle for the right, *mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātram bhava savyasācin*.

2 September 1943

The War and Sri Aurobindo's Work

The other day X said that Hitler had so arranged things that the Allies will not be able to make any headway in Italy. Also that in Russia he has shortened his front so that the Russians will not move any further.

Well, they seem to be making some headway in spite of Hitler's arrangement. I seem to remember Hitler made arrangements for taking Stalingrad; the result was that he has been kicked out almost entirely from old Russia.

Also he said that Japan was going to crush China in three months.

It doesn't look like it; but perhaps they have confidential information?

Then the day before yesterday I heard about Y's remark about the Allied paratroops having been wiped out. X categorically declared that Y had said no such thing. I wondered about this, made inquiries and was told that he had said something. Did he? What?

People say that he did — on the authority of the man to whom he said it. Does Y deny his saying it?

Write to me if you find a little time whether I am right in feeling that speculating intellectually about Allied reverses is not a right movement as it may easily lead us, unawares, into sympathy with the hostile hordes who are against your work.

All these things are silly utterances in which the wishes of the mind are presented as truth and fact. That is a common habit in this very imperfect humanity and ordinarily it would be of no importance, except that such inventions and falsehoods are most improper in the mouth of a sadhaka and the habit must be a great obstacle to any progress. But here the wish behind, whether they are conscious of it or not, is that the Asura shall prevail against the Divine. That means a most dangerous giving of oneself to the Falsehood that is seeking to prolong its hold on the world and establish definitely the reign of Evil over the whole world. That is what the victory of Hitler would have meant — it would have meant also the destruction of my work. You are quite right therefore in resenting this kind of attitude (also there is the fact that it establishes a centre of support for the Falsehood and Evil

in the Asram). The propagation of this Falsehood, false ideas, false feelings, false actions and persuading people that they are right is the chief instrument of the Asura and its prevalence and success a sign of the growth of darkness on the earth. Fortunately the intensity of the peril is over, however long the struggle may still last. Other perils and manoeuvres of the Asura may follow afterwards; so it is good to discourage firmly the tendency so that it may not do harm hereafter.

10 June 1944

The Situation after the War

All that [*answers to various questions*] is however another matter than the question about the present human civilisation. It is not this which has to be saved; it is the world that has to be saved, and that will surely be done, though it may not be so easily or so soon as some wish or imagine or in the way that they imagine. The present civilisation must surely change, but whether by a destruction or a new construction on the basis of a greater truth, is the issue. The Mother has left the question hanging and I can only do the same. After all, the wise man, unless he is a prophet or the Director of the Madras Astrological Bureau, must often be content to take the Asquithian position. Neither optimism nor pessimism is the truth, they are only modes of the mind or moods of the temperament. Let us then, without either excessive optimism or excessive pessimism, “wait and see”.

2 September 1945

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This is no time for patting the Germans on the back or embracing and consoling them. If they are allowed to get on their legs again without trouble or without making an atonement for the horror of darkness and suffering they have inflicted on the world, they will rise only to repeat their performance,—unless somebody else forestalls them. The only help we can give to Germany now is silence.

19 March 1946

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I know that this is a time of trouble for you and everybody. It is so for the whole world; confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things. The better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil and the worse are prominent everywhere. The one thing is to hold on and to hold out till the hour of light has come.

2 June 1946

Capitalism and Socialism

Sri Aurobindo is in no way bound by the present world's institutions or current ideas whether in the political, social or economic field; it is not necessary for him either to approve or disapprove of them.⁵ He does not regard either capitalism or orthodox socialism as the right solution for the world's future; nor can he admit that the admission of private enterprise by itself makes the society capitalistic, a socialistic economy can very well admit some amount of controlled or subordinated private enterprise as an aid to its own working or a partial convenience without ceasing to be socialistic. Sri Aurobindo has his own view as to how far Congress economy is intended to be truly socialistic or whether that is only a cover, but he does not care to express his view on that point at present.

15 April 1949

⁵ Sri Aurobindo dictated this note to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.
—Ed.

Part Two
His Sadhana or Practice of Yoga

Section One

Sadhana before Coming to Pondicherry in 1910

Ordinary Life and Yoga

Faith and Knowledge

Is it true that only those who have obtained a clear knowledge of their spiritual possibility through a definite glimpse, received by the Grace of the Divine, are able to stick to the path till the end?

At least I had no such glimpse before I started Yoga. I can't say about others — perhaps some had — but the glimpse could only bring faith, it could not possibly bring knowledge; knowledge comes by Yoga, not before it.

Those who had no such glimpse may get some experience but will not be able to stick to their sadhana.

I repeat that all one needs to know is whether the soul in one has been moved to the Yoga or not. 5 May 1933

Education, Belief and Yoga

I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you and I have had too my period of agnostic denial, but from the moment I looked at these things I could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe. Abnormal, otherwise supraphysical experiences and powers, occult or Yogic, have always seemed to me something perfectly natural and credible. Consciousness in its very nature could not be limited by the ordinary physical human-animal consciousness; it must have other ranges. Yogic or occult powers are no more supernatural or incredible than is supernatural or incredible the power to write a great poem or compose great music. Few people can do it, as things are, — not even one in a million; for poetry and music come from the inner

being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have the passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. That is why you got the poetic power as soon as you began Yoga — Yoga-force made the passage clear. It is the same with Yogic consciousness and its powers; the thing is to get the passage clear, — for they are already there within you. Of course the first thing is to believe, aspire and, with the true urge within, make the endeavour.

2 September 1931

Ordinary Consciousness and Awakening

Somebody writing a biography of Confucius in Bengali says:
“Why do the Dharmagurus marry, we can’t understand. Bud-dha did and his wife’s tale is heart-rending [হাদয়-বিদারক].”

Why? What is there বিদারক in it?

He goes on: “Aurobindo Ghose, not a Dharmaguru, though he may be called Dharma-mad [ধর্মপাগল]” — how do you feel about that, Sir? — “has done it too.”

Well, it is better to be ধর্মপাগল than to be a sententious ass and pronounce on what one does not understand.

“We don’t understand why they marry and why this change comes soon after marriage.”

Perfectly natural — they marry before the change — then the change comes and the marriage belongs to the past self, not to the new one.

“The wives of Buddha and Ramakrishna felt proud when they were deserted.”

Then what’s the harm?

“If married life is an obstacle to spirituality, then they might as well not marry.”

No doubt. But then when they marry, there is not an omniscient ass like this biographer to tell them that they were going to be ধর্মপ্রকৃত or ধর্মপাগল or in any way concerned with any other ধর্ম than the biographer's.

So, according to the biographer, all of you, except Christ, showed a lack of wisdom by marrying.

Well, if a biographer of Confucius can be such an unmitigated ass, Confucius may be allowed to be unwise once or twice, I suppose.

I touch upon a delicate subject, but it is a puzzle.

Why delicate? and why a puzzle? Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives the ordinary life—when the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it—nothing puzzling in that.

27 April 1936

Meditation as a Means

What do you call meditation? Shutting the eyes and concentrating? It is only one method for calling down the true consciousness. To join with the true consciousness or feel its descent is the only thing important and if it comes without the orthodox method, as it always did with me, so much the better. Meditation is only a means or device, the true movement is when even walking, working or speaking one is still in sadhana.

10 June 1933

Meditation and Purification

In an article Krishnaprem says that meditation can't be fruitful for those who have not achieved a high degree of inner development and purification.

I do not know what Krishnaprem said or in which article, I do not have it with me. But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation or realise anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it; it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result. I have seen many get important, even fundamental realisations by meditation who could not be said to have a great inner development. Are all Yogis who have meditated to effect and had great realisations in their inner consciousness perfect in their nature? It does not look like it to me. I am unable to believe in absolute generalisations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it no matter how long it takes or what are the difficulties or impediments — because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.

17 May 1936

Early Experiences

An Experience in England

Someone told me that it is written somewhere that you had a realisation in 1890 when you were 18. Is this true?

A realisation in 1890? It does not seem possible. There was something, though I was not doing Yoga and knew nothing about it in the year of my departure from England; I don't remember which it was but probably 1892–3 which would make 20 years, not 18. I don't remember anything special in 1890. Where did he see this written? 22 August 1936

First Experience of the Self

For, as to this “Grace”, we describe it in that way because we feel in the infinite Spirit or Self of existence a Presence or a Being, a Consciousness that determines — that is what we speak of as the Divine, — not a separate Person, but the one Being of whom our individual self is a portion or a vessel. But it is not necessary for everybody to regard it in that way. Supposing it is the impersonal Self of all only, yet the Upanishad says of the Self and its realisation, “This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body.” Well, that is the same thing as what we call the Divine Grace, — it is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movement. We can call it the Divine Grace; we can call it the Self within choosing its own hour and way to manifest to the mental instrument on the surface; we can call it the flowering of the inner being or inner nature into self-realisation and self-knowledge. As something in us approaches it or as it presents itself to us, so the mind sees it. But in reality,

it is the same thing and the same process of the being in the Nature.

I could illustrate my meaning more concretely from my own first experience of the Self, long before I knew even what Yoga was or that there was such a thing, at a time when I had no religious feeling, no wish for spiritual knowledge, no aspiration beyond the mind, only a contented agnosticism and the impulse towards poetry and politics. But it would be too long a story, so I do not tell it here.

29 October 1935

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I have seen your letter to X [*the letter of 29 October 1935 published immediately above*]. When I finished reading it, I let out a sigh and exclaimed "How cruel!" — after raising our hopes you mercilessly cut them off because the letter would be too long! Nothing is too long for us, especially such personal examples which are more valuable for the likes of us than any promises and possibilities.

Good Lord! I never said it was too long for you to read, I meant it was too long for me to write now. And I can't write such things by themselves as an autobiographical essay — it is only if they turn up in the course of something that I can do so. Last night I had no blessed time to illustrate. I thought of writing it because it seemed very appropriate, but when I couldn't, I just mentioned it in order to hint that what I had written was not mere theory, but provable by solid experience. No fell intention to tantalise.

30 October 1935

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But it is unthinkable and almost unbelievable to have any experience of the Self in the circumstances you have described [*in the letter of 29 October 1935*].

I can't help that. It happened. The mind's canons of the rational and the possible do not govern spiritual life and experience.

But can you not tell us what the experience was like? Was it by any chance like the one you speak of in your *Uttarpara*

Speech — Vasudeva everywhere?

Great Jumble-Mumble! What has Vasudeva to do with it? Vasudeva is a name of Krishna, and in the Uttarpara Speech I was speaking of Krishna, if you please.

But how can that be? Didn't you begin Yoga later on in Gujarat?

Yes. But this began in London, sprouted the moment I set foot on Apollo Bunder, touching Indian soil, flowered one day in the first year of my stay in Baroda, at the moment when there threatened to be an accident to my carriage. Precise enough?

By the Self, I suppose, you mean the individual Self!

Good Lord, no. I mean the Self, sir, the Self, the Adwaita, Vedantic, Shankara self. Atman, Atman! A thing I knew nothing about, never bargained for, didn't understand either. 31 October 1935

This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness

One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and intimate bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical

worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is the Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview, the spiritual and the material, and to try to establish the divine Consciousness and the divine Power in men's hearts and in earthly life, not for personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness excluding any kind of this-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible. My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach him with love and devotion and bhakti,

to serve him with one's works and to know him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral Yoga.

28 April 1949

An Experience in Kashmir

Kashmir is a magnificent place, its rivers unforgettable and on one of its mountains with a shrine of Shankaracharya on it I got my second realisation of the Infinite (long before I started Yoga).

June 1934

Signs of Yogic Opening

Your bells etc. mentioned by you as recent experiences were already enumerated as long ago as the time of the Upanishads as signs accompanying the opening to the larger consciousness, *brahmaṇyabhivyaktikarāni yoge*. If I remember right your sparks come in the same list. The fact has been recorded again and again in yogic literature. I had the same experience hundreds of times in the earlier part of my sadhana. So you see you are in very honourable company in this matter and need not trouble yourself about the objections of physical science.

13 March 1931

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I remember, when I first began to see inwardly (and outwardly also with the open eye), a scientific friend of mine began to talk of after-images — “these are only after-images!” I asked him whether after-images remained before the eye for two minutes at a time — he said, “no”, to his knowledge only for a few seconds; I also asked him whether one could get after-images of things not around one or even not existing upon this earth since they had other shapes, another character, other hues, contours and a very different dynamism, life-movements and values — he could not reply in the affirmative. That is how these so-called scientific explanations break down as soon as you pull them out of their cloudland of mental theory and face them with the

actual phenomena they pretend to decipher. 19 February 1932

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It is only at the beginning that concentration is necessary to see these colours, afterwards it comes of itself. There was a long time when I used to see colours spontaneously or wherever I cast my eyes, just as you do now, and at every time of concentrated meditation they used to fill the room. Many, indeed, begin to see them spontaneously without any concentration at all, first with closed eyes, afterwards with the eyes open. Seeing them with the eyes closed happens often enough to people who have never practised or even heard of Yoga; but in such cases it proves that there is some kind of occult vision there very near to the surface.

25 February 1932

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If seeing the Divine depended on the developed occult faculty, how do you explain people's seeing Ram, Krishna, Shiva, etc. in you at Darshan? — I mean by people who have apparently no such faculty. We've heard about Krishna presenting himself before small boys, taking them to school, etc. — fables?

With many people the faculty of this kind of occult vision is the first to develop when they begin sadhana. With others it is there naturally or comes on occasions without any practice of Yoga. But with people who live mainly in the intellect (a few excepted) this faculty is not usually there by nature and most have much difficulty in developing it. It was so even with me.

What I understand of the matter is that if you intend that somebody should see the Divine in you — be it a blind man — he is able to see. No faculty is required.

It would be something of a miracle to see things without the faculty of seeing. We don't deal much in miracles of that kind.

30 July 1935

Practice of Pranayama

You yourself had to concentrate for 4 or 5 hours a day for so many years, after which everything flowed in a river . . .

By the way what is this story about my four or five hours' concentration a day for several years before anything came down? Such a thing never happened, if by concentration you mean laborious meditation. What I did was four or five hours a day pranayam — which is quite another matter. And what flow do you speak of? The flow of poetry came down while I was doing pranayam, not some years afterwards. If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the pranayam for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed. And it came as a result not of years of pranayam or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace either of a temporary guru (but it wasn't that, for he was himself bewildered by it) or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna. So don't try to turn me into an argument against the Divine; that attempt will be perfectly ineffective.

20 January 1936

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You have often inveighed against my using you as an argument against the Divine. But what is the history of your sadhana in your own words—a Herculean practice of Pranayam, concentration and what not and then after years and years of waiting the Grace of Brahman.

What a wooden head! What is the use of saying things if you deliberately misinterpret what I write? I said clearly that the pranayam brought me nothing of any kind of spiritual realisation. I had stopped it long before. The Brahman experience came when I was groping for some way, doing no sadhana at all, making no effort because I didn't know what effort to make, all having failed. Then in three days I got an experience which most Yogis get only at the end of a long Yoga, got it without wanting or trying for it, got it to the surprise of Lele who was

trying to get me something quite different. But I don't suppose you are able to understand — so I say no more. I can only look mournfully at your ununderstanding pate. 24 January 1936

Beginning of the Practice of Yoga

I wonder if any interesting incident took place in the Mother's or Sri Aurobindo's Yoga or life in the year 1905.

I think it was the year in which I began my Yoga — that is, the practice of Yoga — for I had had experiences before without knowing what they were. 17 January 1934

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How did your intellect become so powerful even before you started Yoga?

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

13 November 1936

The Realisation of January 1908

General Remarks

It is not that there is anything peculiar to you in these difficulties; every sadhaka entering this Way has to get over similar impediments. It took me four years of inner striving to find a real Way, even though the Divine help was with me all the time, and even then it seemed to come by an accident; and it took me ten more years of intense Yoga under a supreme inner guidance to find *the Way* — and that was because I had my past and the world's Past to assimilate and overpass before I could find and found the future.

5 May 1932

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I think you have made too much play with my phrase “an accident” [*in the preceding letter*], ignoring the important qualification, “it *seemed* to come by an accident”. After four years of *prāṇāyāma* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss. At this juncture I was induced to meet a man without fame whom I did not know, a bhakta with a limited mind but some experience and evocative power. We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he never intended — for they were Adwaitic and Vedantic and he was against Adwaita Vedanta — and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms

in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. The final upshot was that he was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will, a principle or rather a seed-force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or system or dogma or Shastra to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter. Yet he understood so little what he was doing that when he met me a month or two later, he was alarmed, tried to undo what he had done and told me that it was not the Divine but the Devil that had got hold of me. Does not all that justify my phrase "it seemed to come by an accident"? But my meaning is that the ways of the Divine are not like that of the human mind or according to our patterns and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for Him what He shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we do. If we admit the Divine at all, both true reason and bhakti seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender. I do not see how without them there can be *avyabhicārī bhakti* (one-pointed adoration).

7 May 1932

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I am rather astonished at your finding Wordsworth's realisation, however mental and incomplete, to be abstract and vague or dictated by emotional effervescence. Wordsworth was hardly an emotional or effervescent character. As for an abstract realisation, it sounds like a round square; I have never had one myself and find it difficult to believe in it. But certainly a realisation in its beginning can be vague and nebulous or it can be less or more vivid. Still, Wordsworth's did not make that impression on me and to him it certainly came as something positive, powerful and determinative. He stayed there and went no farther, did not get to the source, because more was hardly possible in his time and surroundings, at least to a man of his mainly moral and intellectual temper.

In a more deep and spiritual sense a concrete realisation is that which makes the thing realised more real, dynamic,

intimately present to the consciousness than any physical thing can be. Such a realisation of the personal Divine or of the impersonal Brahman or of the Self does not usually come at the beginning of a sadhana or in the first years or for many years. It comes so to a very few; mine came fifteen years after my first pre-Yogic experience in London and in the fifth year after I started Yoga. That I consider extraordinarily quick, an express train speed almost—though there may no doubt have been several quicker achievements. But to expect and demand it so soon and get fed up because it does not come and declare Yoga impossible except for two or three in the ages would betoken in the eyes of any experienced Yogi or sadhaka a rather rash and abnormal impatience. Most would say that a slow development is the best one can hope for in the first years and only when the nature is ready and fully concentrated towards the Divine can the definitive experience come. To some rapid preparatory experiences can come at a comparatively early stage, but even they cannot escape the labour of the consciousness which will make these experiences culminate in the realisation that is enduring and complete. It is not a question of my liking or disliking your demand or attitude. It is a matter of fact and truth and experience, not of liking or disliking, two things which do not usually sway me. It is the fact that people who are grateful and cheerful and ready to go step by step, even by slow steps, if need be, do actually march faster and more surely than those who are impatient and in haste and at each step despair or murmur. It is what I have always seen—there may be instances to the contrary and I have no objection to your being one,—none at all. I only say that if you could maintain “hope and fervour and faith”, there would be a much bigger chance—that is all.

This is just a personal explanation—a long explanation but which seemed to be called for by your enhancement of my glory—and is dictated by a hope that after all in the long run an accumulation of explanations may persuade you to prefer the sunny path to the grey one. My faith again perhaps? But, sunny path or grey one, the one thing wanted is that you should push through and arrive.

June 1934

Meeting with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele

It is not the human defects of the Guru that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence and surrender. The Guru is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine that one opens in opening to him, and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple an inferior spiritual source and the rest will grow up in the sadhak of itself by the grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the Guru cannot give it. It is this that Krishnaprem appears to have done perhaps from the first; but in most nowadays this attitude seems to come with difficulty, after much hesitation and delay and trouble. In my own case I owe the first decisive turn of my inner life to one who was infinitely inferior to me in intellect, education and capacity and by no means spiritually perfect or supreme; but, having seen a Power behind him and decided to turn there for help, I gave myself entirely into his hands and followed with an automatic passivity the guidance. He himself was astonished and said to others that he had never met anyone before who could surrender himself so absolutely and without reserve or question to the guidance of the helper. The result was a series of transmuting experiences of such a radical character that he was unable to follow and had to tell me to give myself up in future to the Guide within with the same completeness of surrender as I had shown to the human channel. I give this example to show how these things work; it is not in the calculated way the human reason wants to lay down, but by a more mysterious and greater law.

23 March 1932

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To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts — very cer-

tainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body — for the Yoga, and not for the Yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master, — the mental Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa*, *sākṣī*, *anumantā*, *iśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least a certain part of its movements: it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulsions and desires; but to sit, like the Tantrik Yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts is less facile. Nevertheless it can be done; all developed mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the Master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *svārājya*.

The Yogi goes still farther; he is not only a master there, but even while in mind in a way, he gets out of it, as it were, and stands above or quite back from it and free. For him the image of the factory of thoughts is no longer quite valid; for he sees that thoughts come from outside, from the universal Mind or universal Nature, sometimes formed and distinct, sometimes unformed and then they are given shape somewhere in us. The principal business of our mind is either a response of acceptance or refusal to these thought-waves (as also vital waves, subtle physical energy waves) or this giving a personal-mental form to

thought-stuff (or vital movements) from the environing Nature-Force. It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. "Sit in meditation," he said, "but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts *coming into it*; before they can enter throw them away from you till your mind is capable of entire silence." I had never heard before of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think of either questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw a thought and then another thought coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free Intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought or a labourer in a thought-factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free too to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought-empire.

I mention this only to emphasise that the possibilities of the mental being are not limited and that it can be the free Witness and Master in its own house. It is not to say that everybody can do it in the way I did and with the same rapidity of the decisive movement (for of course the later fullest development of this new untrammelled mental Power took time, many years); but a progressive freedom and mastery over one's mind is perfectly within the possibilities of anyone who has the faith and will to undertake it.

5 August 1932

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Literature and art are or can be first introductions to the inner being—the inner mind and vital; for it is from there that they come. And if one writes poems of bhakti, poems of divine seeking etc., or creates music of that kind, it means that there is a bhakta or seeker inside who is supporting himself by that self-expression. There is also the point of view behind Lele's answer to me when I told him that I wanted to do Yoga but for work,

for action, not for Sannyasa and Nirvana,—but after years of spiritual effort I had failed to find the way and it was for that I had asked to meet him. His first answer was, “It should be easy for you as you are a poet.”

18 November 1936

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I don’t understand why Lele told you that because you are a poet, sadhana will be easy for you through poetry, or why you quote it either. Poetry is itself such a hard job and sadhana through poetry — well, the less said the better! Or perhaps he saw within your soul the Sri Aurobindo of future Supramental glory?

Because I told him I wanted to do Yoga in order to get a new inner Yogic consciousness for life and action, not for leaving life. So he said that. A poet writes from an inner source, not from the external mind, he is moved by inspiration to write, i.e. he writes what a greater Power writes through him. So the Yogi Karma-chari has to act from an inner source, to derive his thoughts and movements from that, to be inspired and impelled by a greater Power which acts through him. He never said that sadhana will be easy for me through poetry. Where is the “through poetry” phrase? Poetry can be done as a part of sadhana and help the sadhana — but sadhana “through” poetry is a quite different matter.

23 May 1938

Mental Silence

To get rid of the random thoughts of the surface physical mind is not easy. It is sometimes done by a sudden miracle as in my own case, but that is rare. Some get it done by a slow process of concentration, but that may take a very long time. It is easier to have a quiet mind with things that come in passing on the surface, as people pass in the street, and one is free to attend to them or not — that is to say, there develops a sort of double mind, one inner silent and concentrated when it pleases to be so, a quiet witness when it chooses to see thoughts and things, — the other meant for surface dynamism. It is probable in your case

that this will come as soon as these descents of peace, intensity or Ananda get strong enough to occupy the whole system.

16 November 1932

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I find nothing either to add or to object to in Prof. Sorley's comment on the still, bright and clear mind; it adequately indicates the process by which the mind makes itself ready for the reflection of the higher Truth in its undisturbed surface or substance. But one thing perhaps needs to be kept in view — that this pure stillness of the mind is indeed always the required condition, the desideratum, but for bringing it about there are more ways than one. It is not, for instance, only by an effort of the mind itself to get clear of all intrusive emotion or passion, to quiet its own characteristic vibrations, to resist the obscuring fumes of a physical inertia which brings about a sleep or a torpor of the mind instead of its wakeful silence, that the thing can be done. This is indeed an ordinary process of the Yogic path of knowledge; but the same end can be brought about or automatically happen by other processes — for instance, by the descent from above of a great spiritual stillness imposing silence on the mind and heart, on the life stimuli, on the physical reflexes. A sudden descent of this kind or a series of descents accumulative in force and efficacy is a well-known phenomenon of spiritual experience. Or again one may start a mental process of one kind or another for the purpose which would normally mean a long labour and yet may pull down or be seized midway, or even at the outset, by an overmind influx, a rapid intervention or manifestation of the higher Silence, with an effect sudden, instantaneous, out of all proportion to the means used at the beginning. One commences with a method, but the work is taken up by a Grace from above, by a response from That to which one aspires or by an irruption of the infinitudes of the Spirit. It was in this last way that I myself came by the mind's absolute silence, unimaginable to me before I had the actual experience.

circa 1934

Nirvana and the Brahman

I have never said that things (in life) are harmonious now — on the contrary, with the human consciousness as it is harmony is impossible. It is always what I have told you, that the human consciousness is defective and simply impossible — and that is why I strive for a higher consciousness to come and set right the disturbed balance. I am glad you are getting converted to silence, and even Nirvana is not without its uses — in my case it was the first positive spiritual experience and it made possible all the rest of the sadhana; but as to the positive way to get these things, I don't know if your mind is quite ready to proceed with it. There are in fact several ways. My own way was by rejection of thought. "Sit down," I was told, "look and you will see that your thoughts come into you from outside. Before they enter, fling them back." I sat down and looked and saw to my astonishment that it was so; I saw and felt concretely the thought approaching as if to enter through or above the head and was able to push it back concretely before it came inside.

In three days — really in one — my mind became full of an eternal silence — it is still there. But that I don't know how many people can do. One (not a disciple — I had no disciples in those days) asked me how to do Yoga. I said: "Make your mind quiet first." He did and his mind became quite silent and empty. Then he rushed to me saying: "My brain is empty of thoughts, I cannot think. I am becoming an idiot." He did not pause to look and see where these thoughts he uttered were coming from! Nor did he realise that one who is already an idiot cannot become one. Anyhow I was not patient in those days and I dropped him and let him lose his miraculously achieved silence.

The usual way, the easiest if one can manage it at all, is to *call down* the silence from above you into the brain, mind and body.

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About Nirvana:

When I wrote in the *Arya*, I was setting forth an overmind view of things to the mind and putting it in mental terms, that was why I had sometimes to use logic. For in such a work — mediating between the intellect and the supra-intellectual — logic has a place, though it cannot have the chief place it occupies in purely mental philosophies. The Mayavadin himself labours to establish his point of view or his experience by a rigorous logical reasoning. Only, when it comes to an explanation of Maya he, like the scientist dealing with Nature, can do no more than arrange and organise his ideas of the process of this universal mystification; he cannot explain how or why his illusionary mystifying Maya came into existence. He can only say, "Well, but it is there."

Of course, it is there. But the question is, first, "What is it? is it really an illusionary Power and nothing else, or is the Mayavadin's idea of it a mistaken first view, a mental imperfect reading, even perhaps itself an illusion?" And next, "Is illusion the sole or the highest Power which the Divine Consciousness or Superconsciousness possesses?" The Absolute is an absolute Truth free from Maya, otherwise liberation would not be possible. Has then the supreme and absolute Truth no other active Power than a power of falsehood and with it, no doubt, for the two go together, a power of dissolving or disowning the falsehood, — which is yet there for ever? I suggested that this sounded a little queer. But queer or not, if it is so, it is so — for as you point out, the Ineffable cannot be subjected to the laws of logic.

But who is to decide whether it is so? You will say, those who get there. But get where? To the Perfect and the Highest, *pūrṇam param*. Is the Mayavadin's featureless Brahman that Perfect, that Complete — is it the very Highest? Is there not or can there not be a higher than that highest, *parātparam*? That is not a question of logic, it is a question of spiritual fact, of a supreme and complete experience. The solution of the matter must rest not upon logic, but upon a growing, ever heightening, widening spiritual experience — an experience which must

of course include or have passed through that of Nirvana and Maya, otherwise it would not be complete and would have no decisive value.

Now to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world — only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above, — no abstraction — it was positive, the only positive reality — although not a spatial physical world, pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drowning this semblance of a physical world, leaving no room or space for any reality but itself, allowing nothing else to seem at all actual, positive or substantial. I cannot say there was anything exhilarating or rapturous in the experience, as it then came to me, — the ineffable Ananda I had years afterwards, — but what it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom. I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusionary world gave place to one in which illusion¹ is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow. And this was

¹ In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence.

no reimprisonment in the senses, no diminution or fall from supreme experience, it came rather as a constant heightening and widening of the Truth; it was the spirit that saw objects, not the senses, and the Peace, the Silence, the freedom in Infinity remained always with the world or all worlds only as a continuous incident in the timeless eternity of the Divine.

Now that is the whole trouble in my approach to Mayavada. Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale. It came unasked, unsought for, though quite welcome. I had no least idea about it before, no aspiration towards it, in fact my aspiration was towards just the opposite, spiritual power to help the world and do my work in it, yet it came — without even a “May I come in” or a “By your leave”. It just happened and settled in as if for all eternity or as if it had been really there always. And then it slowly grew into something not less but greater than its first self! How then could I accept Mayavada or persuade myself to pit against the Truth imposed on me from above the logic of Shankara?

But I do not insist on everybody passing through my experience or following the Truth that is its consequence. I have no objection to anybody accepting Mayavada as his soul's truth or his mind's truth or their way out of the cosmic difficulty. I object to it only if somebody tries to push it down my throat or the world's throat as the sole possible, satisfying and all-comprehensive explanation of things. For it is not that at all. There are many other possible explanations; it is not at all satisfactory, for in the end it explains nothing; and it is — and must be unless it departs from its own logic — all-exclusive, not in the least all-comprehensive. But that does not matter. A theory may be wrong or at least one-sided and imperfect and yet extremely practical and useful. That has been amply shown by the history of science. In fact a theory whether philosophical or scientific is nothing else than a support for the mind, a practical device to help it to deal with its object, a staff to uphold it and make it walk more confidently and get along on its difficult journey. The

very exclusiveness and one-sidedness of the Mayavada make it a strong staff or a forceful stimulus for a spiritual endeavour which means to be one-sided, radical and exclusive. It supports the effort of the Mind to get away from itself and from Life by a short cut into superconsciousness. Or rather it is the Purusha in Mind that wants to get away from the limitations of Mind and Life into the superconscious Infinite. Theoretically, the most radical way for that is for the mind to deny all its perceptions and all the preoccupations of the vital and see and treat them as illusions. Practically, when the mind draws back from itself, it enters easily into a relationless peace in which nothing matters—for in its absoluteness there are no mental or vital values—and from which the mind can rapidly move towards that great short cut to the Superconscious, mindless trance, *susupti*. In proportion to the thoroughness of that movement all the perceptions it had once accepted become unreal to it—illusion, Maya. It is on its road towards immergence.

Mayavada, therefore, with its sole stress on Nirvana, quite apart from its defects as a mental theory of things, serves a great spiritual end and, as a path, can lead very high and far. Even, if the Mind were the last word and there were nothing beyond it except the pure Spirit, I would not be averse to accepting it as the only way out. For what the mind with its perceptions and the vital with its desires have made of life in this world, is a very bad mess, and if there were nothing better to be hoped for, the shortest cut to an exit would be the best. But my experience is that there is something beyond Mind; Mind is not the last word here of the Spirit. Mind is an ignorance-consciousness and its perceptions cannot be anything else than either false, mixed or imperfect—even when “true”, a partial reflection of the Truth and not the very body of Truth herself. But there is a Truth-Consciousness, not static only and self-introspective, but also dynamic and creative, and I prefer to get at that and see what it says about things and can do rather than take the short cut away from things offered as its own end by the Ignorance.

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I do not think . . . that the statement of supra-intellectual things necessarily involves a making of distinctions in the terms of the intellect. For, fundamentally, it is not an expression of ideas arrived at by speculative thinking. One has to arrive at spiritual knowledge through experience and a consciousness of things which arises directly out of that experience or else underlies or is involved in it. This kind of knowledge, then, is fundamentally a consciousness and not a thought or formulated idea. For instance, my first major experience—radical and overwhelming, though not, as it turned out, final and exhaustive—came after and by the exclusion and silencing of all thought—there was, first, what might be called a spiritually substantial or concrete consciousness of stillness and silence, then the awareness of some sole and supreme Reality in whose presence things existed only as forms but forms not at all substantial or real or concrete; but this was all apparent to a spiritual perception and essential and impersonal sense and there was not the least concept or idea of reality or unreality or any other notion, for all concept or idea was hushed or rather entirely absent in the absolute stillness. These things were known directly through the pure consciousness and not through the mind, so there was no need of concepts or words or names. At the same time this fundamental character of spiritual experience is not absolutely limitative; it can do without thought, but it can do with thought also. Of course, the first idea of the mind would be that the resort to thought brings one back at once to the domain of the intellect—and at first and for a long time it may be so; but it is not my experience that this is unavoidable. It happens so when one tries to make an intellectual statement of what one has experienced; but there is another kind of thought that springs out as if it were a body or form of the experience or of the consciousness involved in it—or of a part of that consciousness—and this does not seem to me to be intellectual in its character. It has another light, another power in it, a sense within the sense. It is very clearly so with those thoughts that come without the need of words to embody them, thoughts that are of the nature of a direct seeing in the consciousness, even a kind of intimate

sense or contact formulating itself into a precise expression of its awareness (I hope this is not too mystic or unintelligible); but it might be said that directly the thoughts turn into words they belong to the kingdom of intellect—for words are a coinage of the intellect. But is it so really or inevitably? It has always seemed to me that words came originally from somewhere else than the thinking mind, although the thinking mind secured hold of them, turned them to its use and coined them freely for its purposes. But even otherwise, is it not possible to use words for the expression of something that is not intellectual? Housman contends that poetry is perfectly poetical only when it is non-intellectual, when it is nonsense. That is too paradoxical, but I suppose what he means is that if it is put to the strict test of the intellect, it appears extravagant because it conveys something that expresses and is real to some other kind of seeing than that which intellectual thought brings to us. Is it not possible that words may spring from, that language may be used to express—at least up to a certain point and in a certain way—the supra-intellectual consciousness which is the essential power of spiritual experience? This however is by the way—when one tries to explain spiritual experience to the intellect itself, then it is a different matter.

14 January 1934

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You ask me whether you have to give up your predilection for testing before accepting and to accept everything in Yoga *a priori*—and by testing you mean testing by the ordinary reason. The only answer I can give to that is that the experiences of Yoga belong to an inner domain and go according to a law of their own, have their own method of perception, criteria and all the rest of it which are neither those of the domain of the physical senses nor of the domain of rational or scientific enquiry. Just as scientific enquiry passes beyond that of the physical senses and enters the domain of the infinite and the infinitesimal about which the senses can say nothing and test nothing—for one cannot see or touch an electron or know by the evidence of the sense-mind whether it exists or not or decide by that evidence whether the

earth really turns round the sun and not rather the sun round the earth as our senses and all our physical experience daily tell us — so the spiritual search passes beyond the domain of scientific or rational enquiry and it is impossible by the aid of the ordinary positive reason to test the data of spiritual experience and decide whether those things exist or not or what is their law and nature. As in science, so here you have to accumulate experience on experience following faithfully the methods laid down by the Guru or by the systems of the past, you have to develop an intuitive discrimination which compares the experiences, see what they mean, how far and in what field each is valid, what is the place of each in the whole, how it can be reconciled or related with others that at first sight seem to contradict it, etc. etc. until you can move with a secure knowledge in the vast field of spiritual phenomena. That is the only way to test spiritual experience. I have myself tried the other method and found it absolutely incapable and inapplicable. On the other hand if you are not prepared to go through all that yourself — as few can do except those of extraordinary spiritual stature — you have to accept the leading of a Master, as in science you accept a teacher instead of going through the whole field of science and its experimentation all by yourself — at least until you have accumulated sufficient experience and knowledge. If that is accepting things *a priori*, well, you have to accept *a priori*. For I am unable to see by what valid tests you propose to make the ordinary reason the judge of what is beyond it.

You quote the sayings of Vivekananda and Kobiraj Gopinath. Is this Kaviraj the disciple of the Jewel Sannyasi or is he another? In any case, I would like to know before assigning a value to these utterances what they actually did for the testing of their spiritual perceptions and experiences. How did Vivekananda test the value of his spiritual experiences — some of them not more credible to the ordinary mind than the translation through the air of Bijoy Goswami's wife to Lake Manas or of Bijoy Goswami himself by a similar method to Benares? I know nothing of Kobiraj Gopinath, but what were his tests and how did he apply them? What were his methods? his criteria? It

seems to me that no ordinary mind could accept the apparition of Buddha out of a wall or the half hour's talk with Hayagriva as valid facts by any kind of testing. It would either have to accept them *a priori* or on the sole evidence of Vivekananda which comes to the same thing or to reject them *a priori* as hallucinations or mere mental images accompanied in one case by an auditive hallucination. I fail to see how it could "test" them. Or how was I to test by the ordinary mind my experience of Nirvana? To what conclusion could I come about it by the aid of the ordinary positive reason? How could I test its validity? I am at a loss to imagine. I did the only thing I could, — to accept it as a strong and valid truth of experience, let it have its full play and produce its full experiential consequences until I had sufficient Yogic knowledge to put it in its place. Finally, how without inner knowledge or experience can you or anyone else test the inner knowledge and experience of others?

8 November 1934

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One may be aware of the silent static self without relation to the play of the cosmos. Again, one may be aware of the universal static self omnipresent in everything without being supra-sensuously awake to the movement of the dynamic *viśva-prakṛti*. The first realisation of the Self or Brahman is often a realisation of something that separates itself from all form, name, action, movement, exists in itself only, regarding the cosmos as only a mass of cinematographic shapes unsubstantial and empty of reality. That was my own first complete realisation of the Nirvana in the Self. That does not mean a wall between Self and Brahman, but a scission between the essential self-existence and the manifested world.

9 March 1936

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Don't you think your realisation of the Self helped you in your crucial moments of struggle, kept up your faith and love?

That has nothing to do with love. Realisation of Self and love

of the personal Divine are two different movements.

My struggle has never been about the Self. All that is perfectly irrelevant to the question which concerns the Bhakta's love for the Divine.

The sweet memory of that experience of the Self must have sustained you.

There was nothing sugary about it at all. And I had no need to have any memory of it, because it was with me for months and years and is there now though in fusion with other realisations.

We poor people in dark times which pay us frequent visits, fall back on our petty capital of Ananda, even on some of your jokes, to fortify ourselves. If such things can bring back a momentary wave of love and devotion, restored faith, how much would decisive experience not do?

My point is that there have been hundreds of Bhaktas who have the love and seeking without any concrete experience, with only a mental conception or emotional belief in the Divine to support them. The whole point is that it is untrue to say that one must have a decisive or concrete experience before one can have love for the Divine. It is contrary to the facts and the quite ordinary facts of the spiritual experience.

17 March 1936

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I quite agree with you in not relishing the idea of another attack of this nature. I am myself, I suppose, more a hero by necessity than by choice—I do not love storms and battles—at least on the subtle plane. The sunlit way may be an illusion, though I do not think it is—for I have seen people treading it for years; but a way with only natural or even only moderate fits of rough weather, a way without typhoons surely is possible—there are so many examples. दुर्गं पथस्त् may be generally true and certainly the path of laya or nirvana is difficult in the extreme to most (although in my case I walked into nirvana without intending it or rather nirvana walked casually into me not so

far from the beginning of my Yogic career without asking my leave). But the path *need* not be cut by periodical violent storms, though that it *is* so for a great many is an obvious fact. But even for these, if they stick to it, I find that after a certain point the storms diminish in force, frequency, duration. That is why I insisted so much on your sticking — for if you stick, the turning-point is bound to come. I have seen some astonishing instances here recently of this typhonic periodicity beginning to fade out after years and years of violent recurrence. 22 January 1937

*

No aspiration, no nothing — says your teaching.

Never taught anything of the kind. I got the blessed Nirvana without even wanting it. Aspiration is first or usual means, that is all. 13 April 1937

*

I myself had my experience of Nirvana and silence in the Brahman, etc. long before there was any knowledge of the overhead spiritual planes; it came first simply by an absolute stillness and blotting out as it were of all mental, emotional and other inner activities — the body continued indeed to see, walk, speak and do its other business but as an empty automatic machine and nothing more. I did not become aware of any pure "I" — nor even of any self, impersonal or other, — there was only an awareness of That as the sole Reality, all else being quite unsubstantial, void, non-real. As to what realised that Reality, it was a nameless consciousness which was not other than That;² one could perhaps say this, though hardly even so much as this, since there was no mental concept of it, but no more. Neither was I aware of any lower soul or outer self called by such and such a personal name that was performing this feat of arriving at the consciousness of Nirvana. Well then, what becomes of

² Mark that I did not think these things, there were no thoughts or concepts nor did they present themselves like that to any Me; it simply just was so or was self-apparently so.

your pure "I" and lower "I" in all that? Consciousness (not this or that part of consciousness or an "I" of any kind) suddenly emptied itself of all inner contents and remained aware only of unreal surroundings and of Something real but ineffable. You may say that there must have been a consciousness aware of some perceiving existence, if not of a pure "I", but, if so, it was something for which these names seem inadequate.

22 July 1937

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Sri Aurobindo has no remarks to make on Huxley's comments with which he is in entire agreement. But in the phrase "to its heights we can always reach" very obviously "we" does not refer to humanity in general but to those who have a sufficiently developed inner spiritual life.³ It is probable that Sri Aurobindo was thinking of his own experience. After three years of spiritual effort with only minor results he was shown by a Yogi the way to silence his mind. This he succeeded in doing entirely in two or three days by following the method shown. There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movements of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movements of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone which was not felt as belonging to oneself. But the perception which remained saw all things as utterly unreal; this sense of unreality was overwhelming and universal. Only some undefinable Reality was perceived as true which was beyond space and time and unconnected with any cosmic activity but yet was met wherever one

³ In his book *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946, p. 74), Aldous Huxley quoted and commented on the following passage from Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, pp. 13–14: "The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness — to its heights we can always reach — when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. 'Earth is His footing,' says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe." — Ed.

turned. This condition remained unimpaired for several months and even when the sense of unreality disappeared and there was a return to participation in the world-consciousness, the inner peace and freedom which resulted from this realisation remained permanently behind all surface movements and the essence of the realisation itself was not lost. At the same time an experience intervened; something else than himself took up his dynamic activity and spoke and acted through him but without any personal thought or initiative. What this was remained unknown until Sri Aurobindo came to realise the dynamic side of the Brahman, the Ishwara and felt himself moved by that in all his Sadhana and action. These realisations and others which followed upon them, such as that of the Self in all and all in the Self and all as the Self, the Divine in all and all in the Divine, are the heights to which Sri Aurobindo refers and to which he says we can always rise; for they presented to him no long or obstinate difficulty. The only real difficulty which took decades of spiritual effort to carry out towards completeness was to apply the spiritual knowledge utterly to the world and to the surface psychological and outer life and to effect its transformation both on the higher levels of Nature and on the ordinary mental, vital and physical levels down to the subconscious and the basic Inconscience and up to the supreme Truth-consciousness or Supermind in which alone the dynamic transformation could be entirely integral and absolute.

4 November 1946

Silence, Thought and Action

While at the top of the staircase, after leaving my letter for you, I felt an intense force of thought coming in. I felt it in the head — but as if it was an open space.

That is a liberation, if completed. Since 1908 when I got the silence, I never think with my head or brain — it is always in the wideness generally above the head that the thoughts occur.

17 October 1933

*

Is what I feel really yogic emptiness or has my mind misunderstood it? It has lasted for a long time. In other people, I believe, it only lasts for a day or two.

When I got the emptiness, it lasted for years. Whatever else came, came in the emptiness and I could at any time withdraw from the activity into the pure silent peace. 21 September 1934

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You write: "When I got the emptiness, it lasted for years. Whatever else came, came in the emptiness. . ." In my case, I do not see anything coming in. It remains always the same, or grows. But of course it may be preparing the nature for a higher descent.

I had the sheer emptiness with nothing in it for many months together. It is not emptiness really—for there is no such thing as emptiness—but the pure experience of the Self. Your mind accustomed to all sorts of movements looks at it in a negative way, that is all. 22 September 1934

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I found it difficult to read, because the higher consciousness was trying to come down and I felt much pressure on the head.

It ought to be possible to read with the inner consciousness looking on and, as it were, seeing the act of reading. In the condition of absolute inner silence I was making speeches and conducting a newspaper, but all that got itself done without any thought entering my mind or the silence being in the least disturbed or diminished. 27 October 1934

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Sometimes I feel a sort of void, as if I was just an immobile statue. My mind, life and body are emptied of energy. As a result I find it almost impossible to work.

What you describe is not at all a drawing away of life-energy; it is simply the effect of voidness and stillness caused in the lower parts by the consciousness being located above. It is quite

consistent with action, only one must get accustomed to the idea of the possibility of action under these conditions. In a greater state of emptiness I carried on a daily newspaper and made a dozen speeches in the course of three or four days — but I did not manage that in any way; it happened. The Force made the body do the work without any inner activity.

I am not able to distinguish this voidness caused by the drawing of life-energy and that produced by a spiritual emptiness.

The drawing of the life-energy leaves the body lifeless, helpless, empty and impotent, but it is attended by no experience except a great suffering and unease sometimes.

13 May 1936

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You had the emptiness for several years together. But yours seemed to be of a different kind than mine. For you could use it as a wall against anything undesirable.

I never used it as a wall against anything. You seem to know more about my sadhana than I do.

4 June 1936

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I believe I have as many hours of hard external work to do as almost anyone in the Asram and I am not aware that I have any leisure or spend even the very short time I have for concentration in a blissful quietism communing with the silent Brahman. Even my concentration is of the nature of action and it is not an airy quietistic contemplation as your informants seem to imagine.

I may add that I have not spent my life shouting down the quietistic ideal and sadhana without knowing why they followed it. All the experiences that the quietistic sadhana can give, I have had, the realisation of the featureless Parabrahman, Maya, Sunya, the illusoriness of the world, the Akshara Purusha. I know also perfectly well why they turned away from the world and have gone through all the million difficulties which they did not care to face. None of the difficulties of which you enumerate one or two are strange to me — only I did not put the blame of

them on anybody or on the Yoga and I overcame them.

Anybody can do the quietistic Yoga, who wants to do it. But if anyone imagines that they [*the quietistic yogas*] are easy and that these difficulties do not occur there or that the sadhakas of these paths are all of them perfected saints free from the human passions and defects which you see here among the sadhakas, he is labouring under a great delusion. No path of Yoga is easy and to imagine that by leaving the world and plunging inside oneself one automatically shuffles off the vital and external nature is an illusion. If I ask you to develop equanimity and egolessness by work done with opening to the Divine, it is because it is so that I did it and it is so that it can best be done and not by retiring into oneself and shutting oneself away from all that can disturb equanimity and excite the ego. As for concentration and perfection of the being and the finding of the inner self, I did as much of it walking in the streets of Calcutta to my work or in dealing with men during my work as alone and in solitude.⁴

⁴ This incomplete letter-draft was not sent in this form to the intended recipient. It was written sometime in the mid-1930s.—Ed.

Experiences in Alipur Jail 1908–1909

Pain and Ananda

As for divine rapture, a knock on head or foot or elsewhere *can* be received with the physical Ananda of pain or pain + Ananda or pure physical Ananda — for I have often, quite involuntarily, made the experiment myself and passed with honours. It began, by the way, as far back as in Alipur jail when I got bitten in my cell by some very red and ferocious looking warrior ants and found to my surprise that pain and pleasure are conventions of our senses. But I do not expect that unusual reaction from others. And I suppose there are limits, e.g. the case of a picketer in Madras or Dr. Noel Paton. In any case, this way of having rapture is better off the list and the Lilliputian doorway [*against which the correspondent bumped himself*] was not a happy contrivance.

13 February 1932

The Principle of Levitation

You told me [*in a private interview*]: “I haven’t had the experience of levitation itself but an experience I had could not have been true if there was no levitation.” Could you kindly tell me what the experience was if, that is, it is tellable. I remember X once told me that it was at Alipur you found your body in equilibrium in a lifted angle. Is that it?

There were other things but not at present tellable! You can put it like this. “I take levitation as an acceptable idea, because I have had myself experience of the natural energies which if developed would bring it about and also physical experiences which would not have been possible if the principle of levitation were untrue.”

11 March 1943

Opening to Painting

I can quite understand that the inner knowledge comes with the growth and heightening of consciousness. But what about the outer knowledge — what we ordinarily call knowledge?

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

29 December 1934

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Don't be desperate about your incapacity as a connoisseur of painting. I was worse in this respect, knew something about sculpture, but blind to painting. Suddenly one day in the Alipur jail, while meditating saw some "pictures" on the wall of the cell and lo and behold, the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of the technique. I don't always know how to express though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper expressions, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation. So, there you are. All things are possible.

25 July 1936

Contact with Vivekananda

I was wondering if you had seen or met Vivekananda somewhere.

No, not in the body. My contact with him was in the jail when he was speaking with me for about 15 days, giving me the first insight into the Intuition plane (not the intuitive mind which is mental and not supramental) as the first opening to Supermind.

21 October 1934

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If it is not indiscreet would you ask Sri Aurobindo if it is true that in 1909 — in Alipore jail — seven years after his death — Swami Vivekananda came to him, not in vision, but in actual fact, to ask him to continue the work, that he had not yet finished?

Sri Aurobindo says that Vivekananda came to him not in a visible form but as a presence which was with him for a fortnight during which V. spoke certain things about the processes of the higher Truth-Consciousness.¹

21 December 1938

¹ This reply was written by the Mother at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or under his instructions. — Ed.

Section Two
Sadhana in Pondicherry
1910–1950

The Early Years in Pondicherry 1910–1926

Sitting on the Path?

It is not clear what your Guru meant by my sitting on the path; that could have been true of the period between 1915 and 1920 when I was writing the *Arya*, but the sadhana and the work were waiting for the Mother's coming. In 1923 or 1924 I could not be described as sitting on the path, so far as the sadhana was concerned, but it may perhaps be only a metaphor or symbol for the outward form of the work not yet being ready. The statement about my having gone too high to redescend for work in the world was made in almost the identical terms by another Yogi also; it referred to my condition at the time and cannot be taken as anything more.

16 September 1935

Seeking the Way

X seems to have told Y that the old sadhaks, who were here before the Mother took up the work in 1926, had many experiences of Cosmic Consciousness, etc., meaning to convey that their sadhana was much better and more serious than what people are doing now.

Before the Mother came all were living in the mind with only some mental realisations and experiences. The vital and everything else were unregenerated and the psychic behind the veil. I am not aware that anyone of them at that time entered the cosmic consciousness. At that time I was still seeking my way for the transformation and the passage to the supramental (all the part of the Yoga that goes beyond the ordinary Vedanta) and acted very much on a principle of *laissez faire* with the few sadhaks who were there. X is one of those who have never ceased regretting that *laissez faire* — he regrets the vital liberty and absence of discipline they then had.

27 July 1934

The Realisation of 24 November 1926

Descent of the Overmind

Ever since I came here this time I have been experiencing a very intense atmosphere, a very strong pressure, similar in intensity and depth to what I felt in 1926 (months of October to December). It appears to me that the Supermind is about to descend a second time. Is this an entirely wrong feeling on my part or there is some truth in it, if not the full truth?

There is some truth in it — but the descent in 1926 was rather of the Overmind, not of the Supermind proper. 21 August 1935

The Significance of the 24th November

Today I shall request you to “stand and deliver” on a different subject. What is exactly the significance of the 24th of November? Different people have different ideas about it. Some say that the Avatar of the Supramental plane descended in you.

Rubbish! whose imagination was that?

Others say that you were through and through overmentalised.

Well, it is not quite the truth, but nearer to the mark.

I myself understood that on that day you achieved the Supermind.

There was never any mention of that from our side.

If you did not achieve the Supermind at that time, how is it possible for you to talk about it or know anything about it?

Well, I'm hanged. You can't know anything about a thing before you have "achieved" it?

Because I have seen it and am in contact with it, O logical baby that you are! But achieving it is another business.

But didn't you say that some things were getting supramentalised in parts?

Getting supramentalised is one thing and the achieved supramental is another.

You have unnerved a lot of people by that statement that you haven't achieved the supermind.

Good Lord! And what do these people think I meant when I was saying persistently that I was trying to get the supermind down into the material? If I had achieved it on Nov. 24. 1926, it would have been there already for the last nine years, isn't it?

X seems to have declared on that day that you had conquered sleep, food, disease and death. On what authority did she proclaim it then?

I am not aware of this gorgeous proclamation. What was said was that the Divine (Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like) had come down into the material. It was also proclaimed that I was retiring — obviously to work things out. If all that was achieved on the 24th [November] 1926, what on earth remained to work out, and if the Supramental was there, for what blazing purpose did I need to retire? Besides are these things achieved in a single day? If X said anything like that she must have been in a prophetic mood and seen the future in the present!

I have stood, but I have not delivered. I had time for standing a moment, but none for a delivery — however pregnant my mind or my overmind may be. But really what a logic! One must become thoroughly supramental first (achieve supermind) and then only one can begin to know something about supermind?

Well! However if I have time one day, I will deliver—for evidently with such ideas about, an *éclaircissement* is highly advisable.

29 August 1935

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What exactly is the significance of the 24th November? Overmental, supramental realisation or what? You say it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material. Some say the descent was in you but you are not matter, are you? Not very clear.

Why not? Why can't I be matter? or represent it at least? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the quantum theory) with matter in general? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material?

15 September 1935

*

Some say November 24th is a day of victory. By that some mean that the Supermind (supramental consciousness) descended into the physical consciousness of Sri Aurobindo. Others say it was the coming down of Krishna into the physical consciousness. If it was the descent of Krishna, does that mean the descent of the supramental light?

Krishna is not the supramental light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.

I believe that on the 24th November Sri Aurobindo realised that the Mother is the Divine Consciousness and the Force.

No. I knew that long before.

2 November 1935

*

I knew that Krishna is not the Supermind. But because some say it was the descent of the supramental light and some say it was the descent of Krishna, I asked you to make it clear to me. What I wanted to know was whether the 24th November was the descent of the supramental light or of Krishna's light. Why are we observing the 24th as a special day?

It was the descent of Krishna into the physical.

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I do not know the significance of the 24th November 1926; some say it is the immortality day while others say it was the descent of Krishna's personality.

It has nothing to do with immortality. It is the descent of Krishna.

13 November 1935

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[A disciple of Sri Aurobindo's wrote an article on the significance of the realisation of 24 November 1926, in which he quoted the following passage from *The Life Divine*:]

In order that the involved principles of Overmind and Supermind should emerge from their veiled secrecy, the being and powers of the superconsciousness must descend into us and uplift us and formulate themselves in our being and powers; this descent is a *sine qua non* of the transition and transformation.¹

[*The disciple concluded:*] This is referred to in the Vedas as the birth of the gods in men, *devānāṁ janimāni*; Sri Aurobindo regards it as indispensable for supramental realisation on earth. It was this that occurred on the 24th November, 1926, and it is only then that Sri Aurobindo started his Ashram, being sure that with the cooperation of the gods the supermind can descend upon earth.

What happened on the 24th November prepared the possibility of this descent and on that day he retired into seclusion and entered into deep and powerful meditation. 20 November 1950

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, volume 22 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 955–56.

The Sadhana of 1927–1929

Sadhana on the Physical Level

Last night during my meditation I saw a cat — probably one of the Mother's cats, the one which sleeps on the staircase — come and enter the room where I was meditating. But I at once opened my eyes. Would you very kindly let me know the meaning of this cat and why I opened my eyes.

If it is the cat Bushy, she has some strange connection with the siddhi in the physical consciousness. It was she who ushered us into our present house running before us into each room. The change to this house marked the change from the sadhana on the vital to the sadhana on the physical level.¹ 7 July 1936

Bringing Down the Powers of Transformation

Once X said about Y that the Mother had said that she was a "Vedic Goddess" — that is, Saraswati or another.

I never heard of this Vedic Goddess affair before. There was a time when the Mother was trying to bring down certain powers in the sadhaks here, but there was never any question of the Saraswati power in Y. 6 October 1934

*

Come down, Sir, — for heaven's sake give us something and make life more substantial and concrete. I am really beginning to doubt that things like divine Love, Knowledge, etc. can be brought down in me.

In the old days long before you came² plenty of things were

¹ Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved into 28 rue François Martin, the "Meditation House", on 7 February 1927. — Ed.

² The recipient of this letter first visited the Ashram in 1930 and came to stay in 1933. — Ed.

brought down — including the love. Hardly one could bear it and even then only in a small measure. Is it any better now, I wonder? It does not look like it. That is why I want the supermind first, — and especially the peace, the balance in an intensity unshakable. There are several who have been trying to push on with the intensities, but — . Well, let us hope for the best. For God's sake, peace, balance, an unshakable supramental poise and sanity first. Ecstasies and intensities of other kinds can come afterwards.

8 April 1935

The Creation Postponed

I have answered the actual points in your letter separately, on the letter itself. But there is besides one thing that you must understand clearly. Things are no longer what they were before, when you were last here.³ At that time the Mother was bringing down a rapid (collective as well as individual) transformation and creation into the mental, vital and physical planes from above, by the power of a supramental Light and Force acting through the higher illumined mind and the psychic being. For that purpose she was calling down beings of a higher plane (like the one of which you speak) as an indispensable aid in that process. All went on well enough so long as the work was on the mental, psychic and higher vital levels. But as soon as it began in the lower vital, it appeared at once that the lower vital and physical nature of human beings (at least of those here) was too small, obscure and full of rebellious impurities to admit of so great a working. One after another failed in the test and you were among the first to fall. The creation had to be postponed, the process changed, and, instead of doing all from above, it became necessary to come down into the lower vital and material nature for a long, slow, patient and difficult work of opening and change.⁴

This is the sadhana that has been going on here. Are you prepared for this opening and change which needs an absolute

³ The recipient of this letter lived in the Ashram between October 1926 and March 1927, before going away for two and a half years. — Ed.

⁴ Compare the letter of 18 October 1934 on pages 330–32. — Ed.

sincerity and a work in which there is no room for pretence, self-deception or a half-hearted will? You are very evidently deep down in your lower vital and material self, "cooped up" there; but you seem to have been fairly content and self-satisfied in this dark and unswept lodging. Talk of surrender or a mere idea or tepid wish for integral consecration will not do; there must be the push for a radical and total change.

It is not by taking a mere mental attitude that this can be done or even by any number of inner experiences which leave the outer man as he was. It is this outer man who has to open, to surrender and to change. His every least movement, habit, action has to be surrendered, seen, held up and exposed to the divine Light, offered to the divine Force for its old forms and motives to be destroyed and the divine Truth and the action of the transforming consciousness of the Divine Mother to take their place.

If you want to make any progress while you are here, you will first have to realise how much time you have lost and how far you are from this. Afterwards, you will have to see whether you can light a fire of aspiration strong enough to burn up all that is unclean and obscure in you. Then only can you speak of the transformation of your lower vital nature.

29 September 1929

General Remarks on the Sadhana of the 1930s

“A Far Greater Truth”

In a letter dated November 1928, you speak of “a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth”. Does this mean that the realisation of the Divine which this world is witnessing at present in the person of Sri Aurobindo eclipses the Light of all the previous Divine Descents of which humanity is aware? Or, is it to be construed as meaning that Sri Aurobindo does not call himself the Avatar but the Divine, having realised the Divine on earth?

“A far greater Truth” has nothing to do with Avatarhood or anything of the kind. I meant by it the descent of the supramental Consciousness upon earth; all truths below the supramental (even that of the highest spiritual on the mental plane, which is the highest that has yet manifested) are either partial or relative or otherwise deficient and unable to transform the earthly life, they can only at most modify and influence it. The supermind is the last Truth-consciousness of which the ancient seers spoke; there have been glimpses of it till now, sometimes an indirect influence or pressure, but it has not been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there. To bring it down is the aim of our Yoga.

25 April 1930

*

In spite of his very deep respect for Sri Aurobindo, X holds the view that the earth did previously attain to the Supramental Consciousness. We reject any such suggestion.

Write to them that it is better not to enter into sterile intellectual discussions. The intellectual mind cannot even realise what the supermind is; what use, then, can there be in allowing it to discuss what it does not know? It is not by reasoning, but by constant experience, growth of consciousness and widening into

the Light that one can reach those higher levels of consciousness above the intellect from which one can begin to look up to the Divine Gnosis. These levels are not yet the supermind, but they can receive something of its knowledge.

As to X's statement I do not catch what he means by *previously*, unless he means that the Vedic Rishis attained to the supermind for the Earth. But that is precisely what they failed to do or perhaps did not even attempt. They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth consciousness. Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of Supermind) and yet retain an earthly body. It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada. Our Yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the supermind. Only when that can be brought down is a divine transformation possible in the earth consciousness.

5 May 1930

Sadhana for the Earth Consciousness

Does not the "earth consciousness" include all humanity? And also animals, the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, etc.? Will the higher consciousness be established only in a few people?

Yes, all that is the earth consciousness — mineral = matter, vegetable = the vital-physical creation, animal = the vital creation, man = the mental creation. Into the earth consciousness so limited to mind, vital, matter has to come the supramental creation. Necessarily *at first* it cannot be in a great number — but even if it is only in a few at first, that does not mean that it will have no effect on the rest or will not change the whole balance of the earth-nature.

3 May 1933

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What is the earth consciousness? Is it Cosmic Matter? Or only this globe?

The consciousness of this Earth alone. There is a separate global consciousness of the earth (as of other worlds) which evolves with the evolution of life on the planet.

29 July 1933

*

Is the establishment of the supramental activity in the earth consciousness a separate process from its establishment in individuals?

It is first through the individual that it becomes part of the earth consciousness and afterwards it spreads from the first centres and takes up more and more of the global consciousness till it becomes an established force there.

29 July 1933

*

The spiritual work of Krishna, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and others achieved nothing permanent.

Whose work? So far as bringing in spiritual forces goes, I suppose their work was fairly successful.

I am not aware that Ramakrishna or any other of those you speak of wanted to change the earth consciousness — they were concerned to raise people out of it, not to bring down anything into it, except spiritual force for personal salvation.

Are we to expect the same results for us — unsteadiness, fall and fiasco?

It does not matter very much what you expect. It depends on whether the greater consciousness can be brought down and fixed here (as mind fixed itself in the vital life of earth) or not.

4 January 1934

*

It seems to me that the purpose of the supramental yoga is to dissipate ignorance from the entire cosmos and remove the

darkness of earthly nature, in order to make the divine life possible.

Not from the entire cosmos — from the earth consciousness, — because the earth is the place of evolution.

Through the descent and manifestation of the supermind, a new race will be born — a new creation. But what exactly will this new creation be?

The supramental being on earth, as man is the mental being, the animal the vital etc.

8 May 1934

*

When I hear people talking about the supramental descent it makes me somewhat sceptical. They expect that when the descent happens everything will soon be spiritualised and even in the most outward political life all that is now wrong will immediately be set right. Such expectations create a great curiosity and flutter.

All that is absurd. The descent of the supramental means only that the Power will be there in the earth consciousness as a living force just as the thinking mental and the higher mental are already there. But an animal cannot take advantage of the presence of the thinking mental Power or an undeveloped man of the presence of the higher mental Power — so too everybody will not be able to take advantage of the presence of the supramental Power. I have also often enough said that it will be at first for the few, not for the whole earth, — only there will be a growing influence of it on the earth life.

15 December 1934

*

Do you seriously want me to swallow this mountainous absurdity that any man can be made a Krishna or a Sri Aurobindo, any woman a Mother, any X a Tyagaraj, any Y a Tansen, any Z a Shakespeare, any A a Raphael, any B a Vyasa or a Valmiki? . . .

I have never said any or all of these things. These egoistic terms

are not those in which I think any more than these egoistic ambitions are those in which my vital moves. It is a higher Truth I seek, whether it makes men greater or not is not the question but whether it will give them truth and peace and light to live in and make life something better than a struggle with ignorance and falsehood and pain and strife. Then even if they are less great than the men of the past, my object will have been achieved. For me mental conceptions cannot be the end of all things. I know that the supermind is a truth.

You really want me to swallow this even if I suffocate? Your logical proposition is "Everything is possible", but this makes all human experience look so hopeless, so childish and so frightening. It is difficult to believe that any amount of the divine force will turn a C into a Sri Aurobindo or a D into a Sri Mira. I am not joking. I mean it.

You do not seem to have followed the sense of my reasoning very well—perhaps because I clothe my arguments with *E* in a tone of humour.¹ You have taken my humorous comment about Muthu with a portentous seriousness—if you really are not joking: but I suppose you are in spite of your disclaimer.

It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth consciousness—I see it above and know what it is—I feel it overgleaming my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth-evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human

¹ See the letters of 9 and 10 February 1935 on pages 402–10.—Ed.

reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of C or D or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others. (This is not to be circulated.)

10 February 1935

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Your “superman” reminds me of an interesting debate we had. Some people ridicule us for our aspiration after supermanhood. They say it is not a sober aspiration. We don’t even have the divine realisation, and we want the supramental! I replied that it is Sri Aurobindo who wants the supermind for us.

By divine realisation is meant the spiritual realisation—the realisation of Self, Bhagavan or Brahman on the mental-spiritual or else the overmental plane. That is a thing (at any rate the mental-spiritual) which thousands have done. So it is obviously easier to do than the supramental. Also nobody can have the supramental realisation who has not had the spiritual. So far your opponent is right.

They say that one must see what one is aspiring for. When our movements and consciousness are as externalised as they are, what is the point of aspiring for the Supermind? But I don’t see why I shouldn’t aspire for the highest, in spite of my weaknesses. We rely on the Divine Grace. It is the central sincerity that is needed.

It is true that neither can be got in any effective way unless the whole being is turned towards it—unless there is a real and very serious spirit and dynamic reality of sadhana. So far you are right and the opponent also is right.

It is true that I want the supramental not for myself but for

the earth and souls born on the earth, and certainly therefore I cannot object if anybody wants the supramental. But there are the conditions. He must want the Divine Will first and the soul's surrender and the spiritual realisation (through works, bhakti, knowledge, self-perfection) on the way. So there everybody is right.

Any flaws in my argument?

The central sincerity is the first thing and sufficient for an aspiration to be entertained,—a total sincerity is needed for the aspiration to be fulfilled. Amen!

15 April 1935

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If it is reasonable for those who follow other gurus to expect divine realisation — that is, union with the spiritual consciousness — is it not reasonable for us here to expect something beyond that — assuming you intend to give it and we truly follow your lead? The answer to this depends, I believe, on whether it is your intention to give the supramental for others after achieving it yourself.

I have no intention of achieving the supramental for myself only — I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the supramental to the earth consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile. But it does not follow either that if or when I become supramental, everybody will become supramental. Others can so become who are ready for it, when they are ready for it — though of course the achievement in myself will be to them a great help towards it. It is therefore quite legitimate to have the aspiration for it — provided (1) one does not make too personal or egoistic an affair of it turning it into a Nietzschean or other ambition to be a superman, (2) one is ready to undergo

the conditions and stages needed for the achievement, (3) one is sincere and regards it as part of the seeking for the Divine and a consequent culmination of the divine Will in one and insists on no more than the fulfilment of that Will whatever it may be, psychisation, spiritualisation or supramentalisation. It should be regarded as the fulfilment of God's working in the world, not as a personal chance or achievement.

20 April 1935

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I have been pondering over your letter [pp. 346–47]. I trust I have grown wiser, not less so as a result of the irony in your letter in regard to us mental beings. But you have expressed yourself, willy-nilly, in the language which the mental has invented after all. So you are in no less of a fix than I.

Why should I be in a fix for that? I use the language of the mind because there is no other which human beings can understand, — even though most of them understand it badly. If I were to use a supramental language like Joyce, you would not even have the illusion of understanding it; so, not being an Irishman, I don't make the attempt. But of course anyone who wants to change earth-nature must first accept it in order to change it. To quote from an unpublished poem of my own:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.²

23 August 1935

*

Would you say something in brief about how the Supermind works on the earth consciousness in order to transform it?

No. I have never written on that except in *Arya* and do not propose to start now. It would be mere words to the mind which would be likely to make its own wrong constructions about it.

² Lines from "A God's Labour", in Collected Poems, volume 2 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 534.—Ed.

The sadhak should first get the higher consciousness down and know something by experience of the higher planes before trying to know what is the Supermind.

10 January 1936

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Somewhere you said that it would be sufficient for most sadhaks to become psychised. This would mean that only a very few will be able to reach the Intuition and fewer still the Overmind. If this is so, who will be able to reach the Supermind and how will it be established in the earth consciousness?

Well, what I meant is that taking in view their present nature the psychisation would be a big change that is quite enough for them to concentrate on. To aim at the Intuition plane or Overmind now would be useless. But the result of psychisation of the whole nature is not small; it can bring about or embrace most of what have been celebrated as the great spiritual realisations. Only these are got by a sort of reflection in the human consciousness (mind, life, body), not by a *permanent* ascension of the consciousness to the highest planes or a *permanent* descent from above. There are upgoings and downflowings from there only. If that much is gained one may think of the rest afterwards. On the other hand there are others in whom there is the clear possibility of rising above after a sufficient psychisation (when completed) of the being and then these two things go on together — psychisation and spiritualisation of the being, the latter process opening up the highest planes entirely.

29 September 1936

*

If the preparatory work for the supramental descent into the earth consciousness goes on so slowly, will it not be years before the earth consciousness is wholly transformed?

There is no proposal to transform the whole earth consciousness — it is simply to introduce the supramental principle there which will transform those who can receive and embody it.

16 December 1936

Descent and the Supramental Yoga

Was there not anything like descents of peace in Ramakrishna or Chaitanya? It seems like they had intense realisations and visions and depths of Samadhi, but we do not read of their having descents of peace. Perhaps their realisations brought with them the peace and Light during Samadhi or intense emotional moments, so that it was not particularly noted—and for supporting and stabilising all that, there must have been a basis of calm and peace.

It happens that people may get the descent without noticing that it is a descent because they feel the result only. The ordinary Yoga does not go beyond the spiritual mind—people feel at the top of the head the joining with the Brahman, but they are not aware of a consciousness above the head. In the same way in the ordinary Yoga one feels the ascent of the awakened inner consciousness (Kundalini) to the *brahmarandhra* where the Prakriti joins the Brahman-consciousness, but they do not feel the descent. Some may have had these things, but I don't know that they understood their nature, principle or place in a complete sadhana. At least I never heard of these things from others before I found them out in my own experience. The reason is that the old Yogins when they went above the spiritual mind passed into samadhi, which means that they did not attempt to be conscious in these higher planes—their aim being to pass away into the Superconscious and not to bring the Superconscious into the waking consciousness, which is that of my Yoga.

26 July 1935

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We do not find the process of descent elsewhere—not in Patanjali or Sankhya or Hathayoga, not even in the Upanishads that I have read. In the Tantras there is the rising of the Kundalini but not the descent of peace or force. Why then do people not recognise the newness of your Yoga?

They will perhaps say that there are “equivalents” in the old things or if the descent is not spoken of as descent it still happens

in the old Yogas.

21 March 1936

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In other Yogas does the silence *descend* or is it rather the mind that goes into the silence? It does not seem that there is anything like a process of descent in Rajayoga or Vedantic Jnanayoga. Moreover, in Rajayoga there is nowhere any mention of silence in the waking consciousness — always it is a question of going into Samadhi. In Jnanayoga, however, it does seem as though the waking state becomes illumined and full of peace and *brahmānanda*.

I never heard of silence descending in other Yogas — the mind goes into silence. Since however I have been writing of ascent and descent, I have been told from several quarters that there is nothing new in this Yoga — so I am wondering whether people were not getting ascents and descents without knowing it! or at least without noticing the process. It is like the rising above the head and taking the station there — which I and others have experienced in this Yoga. When I spoke of it first, people stared and thought I was talking nonsense. Wideness must have been felt in the old Yogas because otherwise one could not feel the universe in oneself or be free from the body consciousness or unite with the Anantam Brahman. But generally as in Tantrik Yoga one spoke of the consciousness rising to the Brahmarandhra, top of the head, as the summit. Rajayoga of course lays stress on Samadhi as the means of the highest experience. But obviously if one has not the Brahmi sthiti in the waking state, there is no completeness in the realisation. The Gita distinctly speaks of being *samāhita* (which is equivalent to being in samadhi) and the Brahmi sthiti as a waking state in which one lives and does all actions.

9 June 1936

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Such a concrete process of ascent and descent could not have escaped notice if other Yogis had it. They do mention a rising of Kundalini to the Brahmarandhra. Why then do they not mention a coming down of, say, a current of *brahmānanda*

or of light from the Brahmarandhra into the Kundalini to the Muladhara? If we suppose they did not mention it because it was a secret, then how could they mention the rising up of the Kundalini? If there is nothing new in this Yoga, those who believe so should quote something which is similar to descent — either in Patanjali or the *Hathayoga Pradipika* or in the *Panchadashi* and other Vedantic books wherein experiences are mentioned.

So I have always thought. I explain this absence of the descent experiences myself by the old Yogas having been mainly confined to the psycho-spiritual-occult range of experience — in which the higher experiences come into the still mind or the concentrated heart by a sort of filtration or reflection — the field of this experience being from the Brahmarandhra downward. People went above this only in samadhi or in a condition of static mukti without any dynamic descent. All that was dynamic took place in the region of the spiritualised mental and vital-physical consciousness. In this Yoga the consciousness (after the lower field has been prepared by a certain amount of psycho-spiritual-occult experience) is drawn upwards above the Brahmarandhra to ranges above belonging to the spiritual consciousness proper and instead of merely receiving from there has to live there and from there change the lower consciousness altogether. For there is a dynamism proper to the spiritual consciousness whose nature is Light, Power, Ananda, Peace, Knowledge, infinite Wideness and that must be possessed and descend into the whole being. Otherwise one can get mukti but not perfection or transformation (except a relative psycho-spiritual change). But if I say that, there will be a general howl against the unpardonable presumption of claiming to have a knowledge not possessed by the ancient saints and sages and pretending to transcend them. In that connection I may say that in the Upanishads (notably the Taittiriya) there are some indications of these higher planes and their nature and the possibility of gathering up the whole consciousness and rising into them. But this was forgotten afterwards and people spoke only of the buddhi as the highest thing with the Purusha or Self just above, but there was no clear idea of these higher planes.

Ergo, ascent possibly to unknown and ineffable heavenly regions in samadhi, but no descent possible — therefore no resource, no possibility of transformation here, only escape from life and mukti in Goloka, Brahmaloka, Shivaloka or the Absolute.

11 June 1936

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What good is the dynamic descent if it needs years and years merely to touch the heart centre? What exactly is this descent?

It is a thing which is new and has to be worked out by this Yoga.

12 June 1936

The Supramental Yoga and Humanity

I can say little about the method he [Krishnaprem] speaks of for getting rid of dead concepts. Each mind has its own way of moving. My own has been a sort of readjustment or rectification of positions and I should rather call it discrimination accompanied by a rearrangement of intuitions. At one time I had given much too big a place to "humanity" in my scheme of things with a number of ideas attached to that exaggeration which needed to be put right. But the change did not come by doubt about what I had conceived before, but by a new light on things in which "humanity" automatically stepped down and got into its right place and all the rest rearranged itself in consequence. But all that is probably because I am constitutionally lazy (in spite of my present feats of correspondence) and prefer the easiest and most automatic method possible. I have a suspicion however that Krishnaprem's method is essentially the same as mine, only he does it in a more diligent and conscientious spirit. For his remark about the concepts as flags and not the means of advance seems to indicate that.

26 October 1934

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I certainly hope to bring down an effective power of the Truth which will replace eventually the Falsehood that has governed the minds and hearts of men for so long. The liberation of a few

individuals is a thing that is always possible and has always been done — but, to my seeing, it cannot be the sole aim of existence. Whatever the struggles and sufferings and blunders of humanity, there is still in it an urge towards the Light, an impulse towards a greater Truth not only of the soul but the life. If it has not been done yet, it is surely because those who reached the Light and the greater Truth, rested there and saw in it more a means of escape for the soul than a means of transformation for the life. The liberation of the spirit is necessary, nothing can be done without it — but the transformation is also possible. 26 January 1935

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I am disgusted with the world and would have preferred to go away from it to some subtler existence had it not been for your programme of changing the world and bringing some better things into it. But does the world want to change and buy your wares at the heavy cost of giving up all it is and has and does?

It wants and it does not want something that it has not got. All that the supramental could give, the inner mind of the world would like to have, but its outer mind, its vital and physical do not like to pay the price. But after all I am not trying to change the world all at once but only to bring down centrally something into it it has not yet, a new consciousness and power.

31 July 1935

*

It seems that wherever one turns one sees the same humanity — with all its ignorance and incapacity.

Of course. That's what I have been telling you all along. It is not without reason that I am eager to see something better in this well-meaning but woe-begone planet. 3 August 1935

*

But you are surely mistaken in thinking that I said that we work spiritually for the relief of the poor. I have never done that. My work is not to intervene in social matters within the frame of the

present humanity but to bring down a higher spiritual light and power of a higher character which will make a radical change in the earth consciousness.

22 December 1936

Physical Transformation

You have written that particular creations each have a beginning and an end. Will there be an end to this creation even after you manifest the Divine in the physical?

That is not a question of any importance, since the earth has millions of years of life before it and, if the Divine creation begins, it will develop at that time and itself decide the question.

Will anyone leave his body even after manifesting the Divine in his physical body?

It will depend upon the person whether he wants to leave it or not.

19 November 1933

*

You have said that the Overmind is not sufficient to deal with the physical.³ Does this mean that the physical is not liberated or spiritualised even by the Overmind?

There is an inner liberation and a strong spiritualisation of the mind and vital and a partial effect on the physical especially the physical mind, but mostly subjective. A mixture of the Ignorance, or at the very least a limitation of the active Knowledge, power, Ananda etc. remains always. At the same time if one withdraws from the outward physical consciousness, one can feel always the wide spiritual liberation, peace, living in the silent Divine.

29 November 1933

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Some say that Sri Aurobindo brought down the Supermind

³ See the letter of 20 November 1933 on pages 145–46.—Ed.

even into his physical cells and is only preparing others to manifest it in them.

Some say it is not yet manifested in his physical cells but he is bringing it down and only after he gets it fully will he give it to others.

Some say that since 1927 he has been describing how his body has been changing after the Supramental Light began to come down, and so we have to think that the Supermind is not yet manifested fully in his body.

Some say Sri Aurobindo normally lives in the Overmind and whenever he wants he will go into the Supermind. . . .

These are questions and statements which people idly make as a matter of talk. They do not even know what it means or what is the difference between Supermind and Overmind. It is better therefore to leave all such questionings alone at present.

circa 1935

*

Have you written anywhere what would be the nature of the physical transformation?

I have not, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject.

What would it be like? Change of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Grecian? Bald head into luxuriant growth? Old men into gods of eternal youth?

Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head—everybody different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet, etc.; hair luxuriant but vermillion and flying erect skywards; other details to match? Amen.

15 September 1935

*

I have been thinking about the physiological chemistry of transformation. It seems to me that there are two possibilities. (1) The chemical composition of the body would remain the same, but the chemicals would become more Peace-active, Light-active, Force-active (radio-active, as they say). (2) The

chemical composition of the blood, glands, secretions, nervous materials would undergo a radical change, leading to a complete, if gradual, transformation into a supramental body.

It has been the idea of many who have speculated on the subject that the body of the future race will be a luminous body (*corps glorieux*) and that might mean radio-active. But also it has to be considered (1) that a supramental body must necessarily be one in which the consciousness determines even the physical action and reaction to the most material and these therefore are not wholly dependent on material conditions or laws as now known, (2) that the subtle process will be more powerful than the gross, so that a subtle action of Agni will be able to do the action which would now need a physical change such as increased temperature.

18 November 1935

*

I agree that the action would not be “wholly dependent on material conditions or laws as now known”, but that it will necessarily change material conditions or laws. If this necessity was not there, it could act under present conditions and laws — but it doesn’t.

But how is it going to change material conditions and laws without acting on the body as it is?

Will the “subtle action of Agni” take place in our present bodies?

The subtle action of Agni is part of the workings of the Yoga-shakti even now; only its action is at present for perfecting and transformatory.

Certainly it is understood that “the subtle process will be more powerful than the gross”, but will not the subtle process change the present character of the gross process?

If the consciousness cannot determine the physical action and reaction in the present body, if it needs a different basis, then that

means this different basis must be prepared by different means. By what means? Physical? The old Yogis tried to do it by physical tapasya; others by seeking the elixir of life etc. According to this Yoga, the action of the higher Force and consciousness which includes the subtle action of Agni has to open and prepare the body and make it more responsive to Consciousness-Force instead of being rigid in its present habits (called laws). But a different basis can only be created by the supramental action itself. What else but the supermind can determine its own basis?

20 November 1935

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Either I have not been clear or you have missed my point. What I meant is this: how is it possible for the Supramental to act in the body with its present chemical and physiological processes? A new composition and a new activity of various organs will be the proper basis for a Supramental action—if at all there is to be one.

What I did not understand is why the Supramental Force should not act at all on the present basis of the body. That it cannot act fully without changing many things is obvious.

You are evading the question of the physiological and chemical side of the thing when you say, "What else but the supermind can determine its own basis?" The real question is whether this "own basis" will have a different character, chemical composition, physicochemical activity, etc. Do you mean to say that the Supermind can work in ordinary bodies of ordinary people?

I did not intend to evade anything, except that in so far as I do not yet know what will be the chemical constitution of the changed body, I could not answer anything to that. That was why I said it needed investigation.

I was simply putting my idea on the matter which has always been that it is the supramental which will create its own physical basis. If you mean that the supramental cannot *fulfil itself* in the present body with its present processes that is true. The processes will obviously have to be altered. How far the constitution

of the body will be changed and in what direction is another question. As I said it may become as you suggest radio-active: Théon (Mother's teacher in occultism) spoke of it as luminous, *le corps glorieux*. But all that does not make it impossible for the supramental to act in the present body for change. It is what I am looking forward to at present.

Of course a certain preliminary transformation is necessary, just as the psychic and spiritual transformation precedes the supramental. But this is a change of the physical consciousness down to the submerged consciousness of the cells so that they may respond to higher forces and admit them and to a certain extent a change or at least a greater plasticity in the processes. The rules of food etc. are meant to help that by minimising obstacles. How far this involves a change of the chemical constitution of the body I cannot say. It seems to me still that whatever preparatory changes there may be, it is only the action of the supramental Force that can confirm and complete them.

21 November 1935

The Conquest of Death

In one of your talks in the early days you seem to have acclaimed yourself as immortal except under three conditions — accident, poison or *icchā martyu*.

It must have been a joke taken as a self-acclamation. Or perhaps what I said was that I have the power to overcome illness, but accident and poison and the I.M. still remain as possible means of death. Of course, the Mother and myself have hundreds of times thrown back the forces of illness and death by a slight concentration of force or even a use of will merely.

Another conviction which all of us share is that you could never have any illness; but your eye problem, due to whatever cause, has shattered it.

It is long since I have had anything but slight fragments of illness — (e.g. sneezes, occasional twitches of rheumatism or neuralgia:

but the last is mostly now outside the body and does not penetrate)—with the exception of the eye and the throat (only one kind of cough though, the others can't come) which are still vulnerable points. Ah yes, there is also prickly-heat; but that has diminished to almost nothing these last years. There is sometimes an attempt at headache, but it remains above the head, tries to get in and then recedes. Giddiness also the same. I don't just now remember anything else. Those are the facts about "having no illness". As for the conclusion, well, you can make a medical one or a Yogic one according to your state of knowledge.

26 March 1935

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From whatever you have said in joke or in earnest, it logically follows that you are immortal. Because if you say that the Supramental can alone conquer death, one who has become that is evidently and consequently immortal. So if one is immortal or has conquered death, no poison or accident can affect him.

Your syllogism is:

“One who becomes supramental, can conquer death.
Sri Aurobindo has become supramental.
Sri Aurobindo has conquered death.”

1st premiss right; second premiss premature; conclusion at least premature and in any case excessive, for “can conquer” is turned into “has conquered” = is immortal. It is not easy, my dear doctor, to be a logician; the human reasoning animal is always making slight inaccuracies like that in his syllogisms which vitiate the whole reasoning. This might be correct:

“One who becomes wholly supramental conquers death.
Sri Aurobindo is becoming supramental.
Sri Aurobindo is conquering death.”

But between “is conquering” and “has conquered” is a big difference. It is all the difference between present and future, logical possibility and logical certitude.

I hope I haven't made a rigid mental conclusion.

The premiss is false. I have never said that I am supramental—I have always said that I have achieved the overmind and am bringing down the supramental. That is a process and until the process is complete it cannot be said that "I am supramental". Of course when I say "I"—I mean the instrument—not the Consciousness above or the Person behind which contain all things in them.

27 March 1935

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My logic again: Sri Aurobindo is bound to become wholly supramental and is being supramentalised in parts. If that is true—and it is—well, he can't die till he is supramental—and once he is so, he is immortal.

It looks very much like a non sequitur. The first part and the last are all right—but the link is fragile. How do you know I won't take a fancy to die in between as a joke?

30 March 1935

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By the way, none of those perverse "fancies" please. If at all you think of going, let us know beforehand, so that we may disappear before you!

Where would be the fun if I told you beforehand? However, I have no bad intentions for the moment.

31 March 1935

The Supramental Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths

Indian Systems and the Cabbala

I do not think exact correlations can always be traced between one system of spiritual and occult knowledge and another. All deal with the same material, but there are differences of standpoint, differences of view-range, a divergence in the mental idea of what is seen and experienced, disparate pragmatic purposes and therefore a difference in the paths surveyed, cut out or followed; the systems vary, each constructs its own schema and technique. I have looked at the diagrams you sent me; I do not know whether I have grasped them rightly and many of the details are not clear to me. I suppose however that the three supernals are at the top, that the two below them (led to by Justice and Prudence from the psychic centre) are mind-planes or mind-centres, that Tiphareth in the middle is the psychic, the three between it and the earth are vital planes. In the absence of precise information I cannot carry the correlation farther.

Now as to the three Supernals. I do not quite understand L.O.E.'s sentence about them — for she speaks of two only, the real and higher man and the separated man. Should I understand that these are the two on either side and that at the top is the Divine? If not, which are they and what is the third? In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. The Indian systems did not distinguish between the Overmind and the Supermind, which is the reason why they got confused about Maya (Overmind-Force), took it for the supreme creative power and lost the secret of the transformation — although the Vaishnava and Tantra Yogas groped to find it again and were

sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the gnosis — with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no farther, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into the Supreme.

Again, what may be meant is rather the three fundamentals of the present manifestation. In the Indian system, these are Ishwara, Shakti and Jiva, or else Sachchidananda, Maya and Jiva. But in our system which seeks to go beyond the present manifestation, these could very well be taken for granted and, looked at from the point of view of the planes of consciousness, the three highest — Ananda (with Sat and Chit resting upon it), Supermind and Overmind might be called the three Supernals. My difficulty in correlating them with the three Cabbalistic supernals is twofold. First, white may very well be the symbolic hue of Sachchidananda, but black and grey have no suitability for the two others; the symbol hue of Supermind is gold, and Overmind, which is in contact with Supermind, has an iridescent brilliance which is anything but grey. Unless we are to understand it like the Christian mystics of the negative path (see the Christa Seva Sangha journal) to whom the Divine is a supreme Darkness and the plane of consciousness through which he is reached a supreme Ignorance! Then again, here the Supermind and Overmind would be parallel worlds (?), but in fact these two are one above, one below the other, and you have to pass through and beyond Overmind, if you would reach Supermind, while still above and beyond Supermind are the worlds of Sachchidananda.

Tiphareth is certainly the psychic, not the emotional only. It is central, (in our system the psychic stands behind the others, supporting them from behind the heart-centre); it is also in direct connection with all except the earth-centre (in ours it is not quite so, but still in the earth consciousness the psychic is so covered with the darkened vital that to get to it from the outer physical consciousness you have usually to make your way through the

covering vital). All this makes it pretty clear that Tiphareth is either the psychic or else the psychic + the emotional plane or centre.

You speak of the flaming sword and the gulf below the Overmind. But is there a gulf—or any other gulf than human unconsciousness? In all the series of the planes or grades of consciousness there is nowhere any real gulf, always there are connecting gradations and one can ascend from step to step. Between the Overmind and the human mind there are a number of more and more luminous gradations; but, as these are superconscious to human mind (except one or two of the lowest of which it gets some direct touches) it is apt to regard them as a superior Inconscience. So one of the Upanishads speaks of the Ishwara consciousness as *susupta*, deep Sleep, because it is only in Samadhi that man usually enters into it, so long as he does not try to turn his waking consciousness into a higher state.

Finally, I may observe that the Cabbala system seems to look at and describe the whole from a certain spiritual-mental or spiritual-psychic view from below the supernals. This is quite natural so long as we live in the human centres. There are two systems, one concentric with the psychic at the centre; another vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind + Overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine. In our system there are not multiple paths of interconnection, or rather there are, but these are a subsidiary and not the central knowledge. For us there is one way, one path; first, a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature; next, an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts. When one has made the inward conversion, one psychics the whole lower nature so as to make it ready for the divine change. Going upwards, one passes beyond the human mind and at each stage of the ascent there is a conversion into a new consciousness and an infusion of this new consciousness into the whole of the nature.

Thus rising beyond intellect through illuminated higher mind to the intuitive consciousness, we begin to look at everything not from the intellect range or through intellect as an instrument, but from a greater intuitive height and through an intuitivised will, feeling, emotion, sensation and physical contact. So, proceeding from intuition to a greater overmind height, there is a new conversion and we look at and experience everything from the overmind consciousness and through a mind, heart, vital and body surcharged with the overmind thought, sight, will, feeling, sensation, play of force and contact. And the last conversion is the supramental, for once there, once the nature is supramentalised, we are beyond the Ignorance and conversion of consciousness is no longer needed, though a farther divine progression is still possible.

15 April 1931

The Path of the Vedic Rishis

In an article written by a Swami on your book *The Riddle of This World*, he remarks that you have the boldness to say that you have done what the Vedic Rishis could not do.

It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?

19 December 1934

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Is it a fact that some ancient sages and Rishis have taken birth here in order to help your work?

If so, it is not a fact of much importance. 27 October 1935

Vedanta and Other Paths of Self-Realisation

The following doubt came to me: "Is not the realisation of the Self sufficient? Hearing about your yoga, a Vedantin who sought the Self might say that it was only because you had

not reached the highest that you wanted to do something on earth by means of the divine power, but that this aim had to be rejected before one could reach the highest."

These doubts come from the mind — for which action is inferior to thought and thought itself something that comes out from the Silence. It cannot understand the supramental view of things in which there is no division or opposition between the Supreme Existence and the supreme Power that sees, thinks, acts and creates.

7 December 1933

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I was reading in Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* about certain yogis that he met. I don't find anything new in them. They just repeat the old yogas, and the old yogas stopped short at self-realisation, which is not a very difficult stage.

Wonderful! The realisation of the Self which includes the liberation from ego, the consciousness of the One in all, the established and consummated transcendence out of the universal Ignorance, the fixity of the consciousness in the union with the Highest, the Infinite and Eternal is not anything worth doing or recommending to anybody — is "not a very difficult stage"!

Nothing new? Why should there be anything new? The object of spiritual seeking is to find out what is eternally true, not what is new in Time.

From where did you get this singular attitude towards the old Yogas and Yogis? Is the wisdom of the Vedanta and Tantra a small and trifling thing? Have then the sadhaks of this Asram attained to self-realisation and are they liberated Jivan-muktas free from ego and ignorance? If not, why then do you say "it is not a very difficult stage" "their goal is not high" "Is it such a long process?"

I have said that this Yoga was "new" because it aims at a change in this world and not only beyond it and at a supramental realisation. But how does that justify a superior contempt for the spiritual realisation which is as much the aim of this Yoga as of any other?

What I fail to comprehend is how they spend their whole lives in the pursuit of self-realisation. Is it such a long process?

It is not a long process? The whole life and several lives more are often not enough to achieve it. Ramakrishna's guru took 30 years to arrive and even then he was not satisfied that he had realised it.

I also read that some yogis like "the sage who never speaks" remain in samadhi day and night, coming out of it only occasionally for food. What do they do in such a long samadhi, since their goal is not so high?

Do? why should he want to do anything if he was in the eternal peace or Ananda or union with the Divine? If a man is spiritual and has gone beyond the vital and mind, he does not need to be always "doing" something. The self or spirit has the joy of its own existence. It is free to do nothing and free to do everything — but not because it is bound to action and unable to exist without it.

Still harder is it to understand how a self-realised yogi can help others. For self-realisation does not grant such powers.

Do you think that self-realisation is a tamasic state — a complete incapacity and inertia?

13 April 1936

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Do you think then that Yogis can attain a full self-realisation without the help of the supramental planes?

Certainly they can realise the self. It is not at all necessary to go to the supramental planes for that.

I see now that I had some fundamentally wrong ideas about the old Yogas and Yogins. They were actually not my own but borrowed from some sadhaks. Still I am not quite clear about the old Yogas.

I have heard that people from outside often find the sadhaks

here full of an insufferable pride and arrogance, looking on all others outside as far below them! If it is so, it is a most foolish and comically ridiculous attitude.

As for the depreciation of all the old Yogas as something quite easy, unimportant and worthless, and the consequent depreciation of Buddha and Yajnavalkya and other great spiritual figures of the past, is it not evidently absurd on the face of it?

When I asked, "What do they do?", I did not mean physical or mental action. Rather I wanted to know if by merely remaining in a samadhi of eternal Peace and Ananda, it is possible to liberate oneself completely from the ego. Would that bring about other necessary changes like purification and transformation?

Without purification it is not possible to live always in the Brahman consciousness. While living in that Brahman consciousness one is free from the sense of a separative ego. As for the transformation of the nature, that is not their object.

My question was this: How can one bring down the higher force and apply it to one's nature if one remains in the impersonal Peace or Ananda?

All that is not necessary for those who seek only liberation.

14 April 1936

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When you write, "Certainly they can realise the self. It is not at all necessary to go to the supralental planes for that" [p. 303], I suppose what you mean is that in such cases it is the mind that realises the self; it is not an integral realisation. But when the mind alone realises the self, the vital and physical will constantly disturb it. A separation will become necessary. But can they be separated without the help of the supralental planes?

There are many planes above man's mind — the supralental is not the only one, and on all of them the self can be realised,— for they are all spiritual planes.

Mind, vital and physical are inextricably mixed together only in the surface consciousness—the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical are separate from each other. Those who seek the self by the old Yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self apart from these things. It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the need of supermind. It is done by the ordinary Yogas.

The difference between this and the old Yogas is not that they are incompetent and cannot do these things—they can do them perfectly well—but that they proceed from realisation of self to Nirvana or some Heaven and abandon life, while this does not abandon life. The supramental is necessary for the transformation of terrestrial life and being, not for reaching the self. One must realise self first—only afterwards can one realise the supermind.

If any Yogi can bring about this separation without the supramental, that is really something. For here we are helped by the supramental planes, sometimes there is even a direct action, but still we find it difficult to detach our mind from the life and body.

Who here has a direct action from the Supermind? It is the first news I have of it. Even indirect action from the supramental is rare. Whatever comes to most comes from the intermediate planes.

16 April 1936

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With your help I have been able to make this progress: whatever my state, I can rise into the higher consciousness and, so long as I am inactive, remain there undisturbed by revolt, resistance, impulses or desire.

The men who live in the Self are always there at all times. Nothing in the outer nature can affect that.

You write, "Those who seek the self by the old Yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self

apart from these things.” How do they manage to separate themselves from mind, life and body so easily? Will not these things interfere with their realisation? In allowing them to do this, will not the mind, vital and physical have to withdraw from their ordinary movements of tamas, rajas and sattwa?

Of course they will—it can only be prevented by the lower movements if you assent to the lower movements; one who refuses to accept them as his real being, can always withdraw from them to the self. The movements of Nature become for them an outer thing not belonging to their true being and having no power to pull them down from it.

Is there any difference between our way of seeking the self and that of the old Yogas?

Only that they often sought it by one line alone, the line varying in different Yogas, while in ours it may come in several ways.

I suppose that one who wants to realise the self can only do it by separating himself from mind, life and body.

Naturally.

You write, “It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the need of supermind” [p. 305]. But you should have seen that by “supramental planes” I did not mean supermind, but any of the spiritual planes above the mind. Is there no need of the higher spiritual planes for separating the mind, vital and physical from one another?

Spiritual and supramental are not the same thing. The spiritual planes from higher mind to Overmind are accessible to the old sadhanas so there is no difficulty about that. If they were not accessible there would have been no Yoga at all and no Yogis in the past in India.

17 April 1936

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It is not always discreet to speak of all these things to the visitors who come here from abroad. X is a man with a trained

intellect; he must be left to see for himself and judge. He has a great respect for the Ramakrishna Mission as the creation of Vivekananda and the continuer of the work of Ramakrishna and for Europeans like him these metaphysical differences of opinion — for so he would regard them — are of no importance, — it is the opportunity for a spiritual approach to the Divine Reality that they are looking for and all that opens the way commands their respect. So, to lay emphasis on a difference with regard to the doctrine or the exact course of the Path followed might in his idea be a sign of a sectarian spirit. All ways lead to the Divine; the importance for us of not subscribing to the Shankara idea is that we need freedom to move towards the dynamic realisation of the Divine in the world and the idea of the Great Illusion bars the road to that. But for them the important thing is to reach the Divine. It was therefore not at all useful to point the difference before him at this time.

18 January 1937

Traditional Paths of Yoga

How is it that Patanjali has given such an unusual definition of Yoga: *yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ* [Yoga Sutra 1.2]? Was “divine union” not the aim of Yoga in those days?

Divine union, yes — but for the ascetic schools it was union with the featureless Brahman, the Unknowable beyond existence or, if with the Ishwara, still it was the Ishwara in a supracosmic consciousness. From that point of view Patanjali’s aphorism is sound enough. When he says Yoga, he means the process of Yoga, the object which has to be kept in view in the process — for by the cessation of *cittavṛtti* one gets into *samādhi* and *samādhi* is the only way of uniting solely and completely with the Brahman beyond existence.

3 May 1933

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There is a Sutra in Patanjali, *prātibhādvā sarvam* [Yoga Sutra 3.34], on which Vivekananda comments: “Everything comes to him [to a man with Pratibha] naturally without making

Samyama.”¹ Is it that he brings the highest knowledge down into the outer consciousness rather than being compelled to go into Samadhi? But in that case he is probably aware of the supermind.

It has nothing to do with the supermind, for nobody can be aware of the supermind without opening the higher reaches in him first—the supermind is superconscious to the human consciousness. The man in question is in touch with the higher consciousness, so he has not to put any kind of inner pressure on himself to oblige the mind and other parts to admit the higher state or movements—it needs only a turning of himself upward or a slight movement of opening to set the higher consciousness in motion and get results. This statement is of course true only up to a certain point and within limits. If the same man wanted to reach the supermind or transform his body it would not be possible for that to come to him naturally.

4 June 1933

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In the Sutra *bhuwanajñānāni sūrye samyamāt* [Yoga Sutra 3.27], where does the knowledge of the worlds by Samyama come from, and what has Surya to do with it?

Surya is the symbol of the Divine Light, the Divine Truth, ultimately of the Supermind. Samyama is a process of pressure on the consciousness by which the secret Truth, the involved intuition is released—so by a constant pressure on the consciousness by which the Divine Truth is liberated the Knowledge of the worlds can come.

4 June 1933

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I suppose if some yogis outside the Asram heard about the Supermind and the higher realms they would think that they had passed these worlds or left them behind as a side-issue. They might regard the idea of a divine manifestation as a desire for Karma. Do you think there are any who have

¹ Swami Vivekananda, Raja-Yoga, in The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), p. 280.

enough plasticity to be prepared, at least theoretically, to accept Supermind and the possibility of its manifestation on earth?

I doubt if there are many — they would give the answers you suggest. As for Overmind and Intuition, there are some who are in contact with these planes, I suppose. Those who live in them must be very rare.

20 March 1934

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There appears to be so much self-concentration in the people of the world that hardly a few would think of doing this yoga. Perhaps a larger number would go (and are going) for the old Hathayoga and Rajayoga, which may bring some small immediately satisfying result. Even of those who are sincere truth-seekers, not many would be able to see the truth of our yoga of transformation.

I suppose they are not intended to take it up — only an opening can be given for those who want to rise into a somewhat higher consciousness than they have now.

5 April 1934

Buddhism and Other Religions

I find it difficult to emerge from the peace I found in meditation. How difficult it must be to come out of the peace of Nirvana or Samadhi! I think that is why Yoga could not be made dynamic up till now.

It is only because they make the peace an end, not, as we aim at doing, a basis for the divine consciousness and all its dynamisms.

25 May 1933

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It seems to me that there would hardly be any difference between the consciousness of peace, light, bliss and wideness in Nirvana and in the transformed supramental status, except perhaps in detail.

There is a great difference in consciousness, because Nirvana means absorption into a static Brahman on the level of spiritual

mind—the other would mean identification with the integral Divine in the much higher Truth of Supermind.

It seems to me that the number of people in the world accepting our Yoga of transformation would not be as large as those who accepted Buddhism, Vedanta or Christianity.

Nothing depends on the numbers. The numbers of Buddhism and Christianity were so great because the majority professed it as a creed without its making the least difference to their external life. If the new consciousness were satisfied with that, it could also and much more easily command homage and acceptance by the whole earth. It is because it is a greater consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, that it will insist on a real change.

Since the spread of the Yoga throughout the world will proceed slowly, its creations in art, literature, architecture, etc., may be inferior to those of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim creators.

Your argument assumes that the greater consciousness will be in its creations inferior to the inferior consciousness.

Ordinary people may obtain more immediate results from the traditional systems than from our Yoga. Many may feel they have benefited from the “miracles” these systems offer. In our Yoga they would find the way closed for that. Naturally they would shrink from it.

It would on the contrary be impossible for them not to feel that a greater Light and Power had come on the earth.

Thus on the whole there would seem to be scope for very few people in our Yoga, and the world would hardly interest itself in it.

How do you know that it will have no effect on the ordinary people? It will inevitably increase their possibilities and even though all cannot rise to the highest, that will mean a great change for the earth.

29 April 1934

Tibetan Yoga

The other day I read the book *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* by W. Y. Evans-Wentz. . . . The following is an interesting statement of his—not a text, but probably his own understanding of the Mahayana: “So long as there is one being, even the lowliest, immersed in suffering and sorrow, or in Ignorance, there remains one note of disharmony which cannot but affect all beings, since all beings are the One; and until all are Liberated there cannot possibly be true Bliss for any.”² The ideal is excellent, but I find it hard to swallow the whole of this altruism. It looks like an exaggeration to me because (1) it would not be possible to eliminate suffering from, say, animals or men who have just begun their human evolution and (2) true bliss cannot depend on the suffering or liberation of others. . . .

Your objections are sound. It is the usual overstatement by which the human mind tries to give an added and superlative force and value to its ideas and tenets, but only succeeds in making them vulnerable.

What the compassionate Bodhisattva ought to do is to become a superscientist and find some way of releasing atoms in such style that the whole earth would be blown to smithereens —this would release all beings on it from their sufferings. But unfortunately the force of karma would, I suppose, create a new earth and bring them all back there to suffer. So no release that way either. Still it would give a respite during which he might go to Nirvana and come back again when needed to repeat his compassionate action.

“Until all are Liberated” implies that not a worm will remain unliberated and then only will there be bliss. A grave difficulty presents itself here—or rather a new idea never conceived of by all the Upanishads—liberation for animals before they reach a human incarnation. Would that liberation be the same

² W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, or Seven Books of Wisdom of the Great Path, according to the Late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup’s English Rendering (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 11.

as for humans or have a different set of codes? Will they get liberation gratis by a free distribution from the Bodhisattva?

Next, “since all beings are the One”. Is there any “the One” in Buddhism? Do they admit any such thing? The author seems to have got his information from authoritative sources and texts, but he does not make it clear whether this “One” is to be understood in the sense of a Cosmic Divine or a Supracosmic.

Of course the animal difficulty is insuperable, because animals must enter the human stage first before liberation — unless of course either animals become humanised and begin talking and thinking in philosophical terms (perhaps it will not be necessary for them to write poetry and paint pictures or make music), or else animals disappear altogether being no longer necessary to the evolution.

About the One there are different versions. I just read somewhere that the Buddhist One is a Superbuddha from whom all Buddhas come — but it seemed to me a rehash of Buddhism in Vedantic terms born of a modern mind. The Permanent of Buddhism has always been supposed to be Supracosmic and Ineffable — that is why Buddha never tried to explain what it was; for, logically, how can one talk about the Ineffable? It has really nothing to do with the Cosmos which is a thing of sanskaras and Karma.

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Evans-Wentz writes: “According to the Buddha, the belief that the soul (Skt. *ātmā*), as an eternally individualized, unchanging, and indissoluble spiritual essence, is immortal, even though its preexistence logically be admitted, mentally fetters man and keeps him enslaved to the incessant round of births and deaths. Not until man transcends this belief, in virtue of Right Knowledge, can there come Liberation” [p. 4]. If belief in the soul fetters man, what about the idea that the world is full of misery and that *karma bandhana* keeps man bound to the idea of misery and pain?

According to both Buddha and Shankara liberation means *laya* of the individual in some transcendent Permanence that is not

individualised — so logically a belief in the individual soul must prevent liberation while the sense of misery in the world leads to the attempt to escape.

This implies that those who believed in “Soul” never achieved liberation. Was there no liberation before Buddha?

Buddha said he was repeating an ancient knowledge that had existed before him and restoring its true form, so he evades this objection.

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At the same time, despite Buddha’s idea that belief in soul fetters man, Buddhists are in some way compelled to believe something like it. Evans-Wentz writes: “But the impersonal consciousness-principle is not to be in any way identified with the personality represented by a name, a bodily form, or a *sangsāric* mind; these are but its illusory creations. It is in itself non-*sangsāric*, being uncreated, unborn, unshaped, beyond human concept or definition; and, therefore, transcending time and space, which have only relative and not absolute existence, it is beginningless and endless” [p. 5]. Whether by pressure of arguments against the non-acceptance of soul, or through modernisation, they have to accept some such principle. The last sentence quoted above hardly differs from the description of “soul”.

There is no difference between such a description and what is meant by soul, except that it is called “impersonal” — but evidently here impersonal is used as opposed to the thing dependent on name, body and form, which is called personality. Europeans especially, but also people without philosophic ideas would easily mistake this outward personality for the soul and then they would deny the name of soul to the unborn and endless entity. Do they then consider it as spirit or self — *ātman*? But the difficulty is that the old Buddhists rejected the conception of *ātman* also. So we are left entirely at sea. The Nihilistic Buddhist teaching is plain and comprehensible that there is no soul, only a bundle of Sanskaras continuing or a stream of them renewing themselves

without dissolution (Nirvana). But this Mahayanist affair seems a sort of loose and covert compromise with Vedanta.

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Evans-Wentz writes: “There is . . . according to Mahāyānic Buddhism . . . unending evolutionary progression; so that *Nirvāṇa* is to be regarded as a Spiritual Rest-House on the Highway through Eternity” [p. 149]. And also: “Man, then no longer man, will . . . help to fulfil the Law of the Higher Evolution, of which *Nirvāṇa* is but the beginning” [p. 12]. The above indicate that Nirvana is not the final aim — but whether this is a compromise with Vedanta or with modern ideas is very doubtful. There is almost a contradiction with the following:

“When the Ignorance which was to be overcome hath been dispersed, the effort to overcome it ceaseth, and the Path cometh to an end and the Journey is completed.

“The Journeying having ceased, there is no place beyond the ending of the Path to explore; and one obtaineth the Supreme Boon of the Great Symbol, the Unabiding State of *Nirvāṇa*.³

The two statements [*i.e. the two sentences from Evans-Wentz's commentary and the two paragraphs from the Tibetan text*] are not only almost but absolutely contradictory. Nirvana cannot be at once the ending of the Path with nothing beyond to explore and yet only a rest house or rather the beginning of the Higher Path with everything still to explore. I think that different views of different Buddhist minds or schools must have been jumbled together without reconciliation. The reconciliation would be that it is the end of the lower Path through the lower Nature and the beginning of the Higher Evolution. In that case it would accord exactly with the teaching of our Yoga.

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It would seem that such a reconciliation would be impossible unless someone had overpassed Nirvana or seen something of

³ These two paragraphs are from “The Epitome of the Great Symbol” as translated by Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup and Evans-Wentz and published in Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, p. 149. — Ed.

the Higher Evolution or Higher Nature. Perhaps the author had some sort of insight, otherwise he could not state that Nirvana is a spiritual rest-house and that there is a Higher Evolution. For he writes: "The Great Ones and the *Bodhisattvas* . . . renounce their right to pass on to a still Higher Evolution and remain within the Cosmos for the good of all sentient beings. It is these *Bodhic* Forces, thus active in the Cosmos, which . . . lead mankind, step by step, towards a perfected social order on Earth" [p. 149]. This indicates that they come down or back from Nirvana to lead mankind up to Nirvana. Perhaps it would have been better if they had seen something of the Higher Evolution and then come back to perfect society on earth.

The phrase "to pass on" shows that what is meant by them is an evolution not on earth but somewhere beyond, God knows where. In that case Nirvana would be a place or world on the way to other worlds and the soul evolves from one world to another — e.g. from earth to Nirvana and from Nirvana to some Beyond-Nirvana. This is an entirely European idea and it is most unlikely that it was held by the Buddhists. The Indian idea was that the evolution is here and even the Gods if they want to go beyond their Godhead and get liberation have to come down on earth for the purpose. It is the Western spiritualists and others who think that the birth on earth is a stage of progress from some place inferior to earth and after once being born on earth one does not return but goes to some other world and remains there till one can progress to some other better world and so on and on and on and up and up and up as Ramsay MacDonald would say. Again, this "perfected social order on Earth" is certainly not a Buddhist idea, the Buddhas never dreamed of it — their preoccupation was with helping men towards Nirvana, not towards a perfected order here. All that is a sheer contradiction of Buddhism and smells Europe from 3 miles off.

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Evans-Wentz writes: "Thus the Doctrine of the *Shūnyatā*, underlying the whole of the *Prajñā-Pāramitā*, posits . . . an Absolute as inherent in phenomena; for the Absolute is the

source and support of phenomena; and, in the last analysis of things, by the *Bodhi*-illuminated mind, freed of Ignorance, duality vanishes, and there remains but the One in All, the All in One. . . . This supreme doctrine of Emancipation may be summarized by saying that all things are eternally immersed in *Nirvāna* . . ." [p. 351]. But how does the doctrine of Shunyata posit an Absolute as the source and support of phenomena and how does it allow a "One in All" or "All in One"?

The phrase "source and support of phenomena" sounds like your Overmind, which is the support of the Cosmos. Perhaps someone had some such perception while experiencing the silence leading to Nirvana.

How is this Absolute different from the Absolute of the Vedanta? or this emancipation different from the Vedantic mukti? If it were so, there would never have been all this quarrel between Buddhism and the Vedantic schools. It must be a new-fangled version of Buddhism or else it was a later development in which Buddhism reduced itself back to Adwaita.

The phrase "all things are eternally immersed in *Nirvāna*" seems to me at once bold and beautiful and gives an idea of the Silence. From this it is clearer that the realisation of Nirvana, if put in your terminology, is just the realisation of the Silence behind the Cosmos — from which Overmind would be two or three steps. But by "renouncing their right to pass on to a still Higher Evolution" they have managed to miss Overmind for two or three thousand years.

Yes. But is this Higher Evolution really a Buddhistic idea or only a European version of what Nirvana might be?

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"Think not of the past. Think not of the future. Think not that thou art actually engaged in meditation. Regard not the Void as being Nothingness.

"At this stage do not attempt to analyse any of the impressions felt by the five senses, saying, 'It is; it is not.' But at least for a little while observe unbroken meditation, keeping the body as calm as that of a sleeping babe, and the mind in

its natural state [i.e. free of all thought-processes].” . . .

“Whatever thoughts, or concepts, or obscuring [or disturbing] passions arise are neither to be abandoned nor allowed to control one; they are to be allowed to arise without one’s trying to direct [or shape] them. If one do no more than merely to recognize them as soon as they arise, and persist in so doing, they will come to be realized [or to dawn] in their true [or void] form through not being abandoned.”⁴

“The Clear Light . . . symbolizes the unconditioned pure *Nirvānic* Consciousness, the transcendent, Supramundane Consciousness of a Fully Awakened One. It is a Mystic Radiance of the *Dharma-Kāya*, of the *Nirvānic* Consciousness free of all *sangsāric* or conditioned obscuration. It cannot be described; It can only be known; and to know It is to know the Thatness of all things. As being colourless, or without qualities, It is the Clear Light; as being without limitations, It is All-Pervading Intelligence; as being unknowable in terms of *sangsāric* consciousness, and without form, It is the Formless Void.”⁵

The extracts you have sent are very interesting and quite sound — the processes recommended can, if one can carry them out, help greatly in the quieting of the mind.

The Tibetan Nirvana as described in the last extract is very much like the Tao of Laotse. It is more and more said now that that is the real teaching of Buddha and of Buddhism.

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People here became very enthusiastic about that book by Evans-Wentz. But I think their reading of it may be a bit uncritical. They found many things in it that are similar to our

⁴ These are the first and second to last of fourteen extracts from “The Epitome of the Great Symbol” as translated by Dawa-Samdup and Evans-Wentz and published in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, pp. 119–39, which were typed and sent to Sri Aurobindo by a correspondent.—Ed.

⁵ This is the third of three extracts from Evans-Wentz’s commentary on texts published in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (p. 166). These were typed immediately after the extracts mentioned in footnote 4 and sent along with them to Sri Aurobindo. The correspondent did not mention that the first set of extracts were from the translation and the second set from the commentary.—Ed.

yoga, but they may be missing whatever defects or misrepresentations the book may contain.

Somebody sent me some extracts about ways of meditation which were good. There are elements in most Yogas which enter into this one, so it is not surprising if there is something in Buddhism also. But such notions as a Higher Evolution beyond Nirvana seem to me not genuinely Buddhistic, unless of course there is some offshoot of Buddhism which developed something so interpreted by the author. I never heard of it as part of Buddha's teachings—he always spoke of Nirvana as the goal and refused to discuss metaphysically what it might be.

12 July 1936

Theosophy

I am reading *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, a Theosophical book. It seems like the principles are quite reasonable. Only there is too much of Buddhism, which they seem to want to make into a world cult.

It is a movement that has taken from each previous movement European or Asiatic some of its knowledge and mixed it with much error and imagination of a rather vital character. It is that mixture and the mental character of its knowledge that prevent it from being a sound thing. Many start with it, but have to leave it if they want to get to real spiritual life and knowledge.

4 November 1933

Remarks on the Current State of the Sadhana, 1931–1947

1931

I am surprised at Tagore's remark¹ about the *two years*; he must have greatly misunderstood or misheard me. I did tell him that I would expand only after making a perfect (inner) foundation here, but I gave no date. I did give that date of two years long before in my letter to Barin,² but I had then a less ample view of the work to be done than I have now — and I am now more cautious about assigning dates than I was once. To fix a precise time is impossible except in the two regions of certitude — the pure material which is the field of mathematical certitudes and the supramental which is the field of divine certitudes. In the planes in between where life has its word to say and things have to evolve under shock and stress, Time and Energy are too much in a flux and apt to kick against the rigour of a prefixed date or programme.

16 August 1931

1932

You will say, "But at present the Mother has drawn back and it is the supramental that is to blame, because it is in order to bring down the supramental into matter that she retires." The supramental is not to blame; the supramental could very well have come down into matter under former conditions, if the means created by the Mother for the physical and vital contact had not been vitiated by the wrong attitude, the wrong reactions in the Asram atmosphere. It was not the direct supramental Force

¹ Rabindranath Tagore remarked to someone in 1931 that Sri Aurobindo told him in 1928 that he would "expand" after two years.—Ed.

² In a letter written in Bengali to his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose in 1920, Sri Aurobindo said that it might take him "another two years" to complete his sadhana.—Ed.

that was acting, but an intermediate and preparatory force that carried in it a modified Light derived from the supramental; but this would have been sufficient for the work of opening the way for the highest action, if it had not been for the irruption of these wrong forces on the yet unconquered lower (physical) vital and material plane. The interference was creating adverse possibilities which could not be allowed to continue. The Mother would not have retired otherwise; and even as it is it is not meant as an abandonment of the field but is only (to borrow a now current phrase from a more external enterprise) a temporary strategic retirement, *reculer pour mieux sauter*. The supramental is therefore not responsible; on the contrary, it is the descent of the supramental that would end all the difficulty. 12 January 1932

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Our object is the supramental realisation and we have to do whatever is necessary for that or towards that under the conditions of each stage. At present the necessity is to prepare the physical consciousness; for that a complete equality and peace and a complete dedication free from personal demand or desire in the physical and the lower vital parts is the thing to be established. Other things can come in their proper time. What is the real need now is not insistence on physical nearness, which is one of those other things, but the psychic opening in the physical consciousness and the constant presence and guidance there.

16 February 1932

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If the attainment of supermind does not take us to the last stage of perfection in the objective side of life, if even after its attainment we have to satisfy ourselves with a little more clarity with possibilities and probabilities (as you yourself have said), how can it be called the last and the perfect truth?

I have never said that I wrote from the supermind, so the question does not arise.

You seem to be very much in a hurry to get at the supermind. I have said that it cannot be done like that, a patient preparation

of the nature is needed and I am concerned with that now.

If divinisation of life keeps us in the same condition of death, disease and physical incapacity, how can it be called divinisation at all?

What do you mean by divinisation of life? Death and disease can only disappear by divinisation of the *body*—and that is not yet here.

2 March 1932

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I am not very impatient about the supermind, but the patient preparation of the nature that you want will go on even if other sides are developing.

I don't know what you mean by developing sides. I am concerned with preparing the nature for the supramental possibility —however long that may take—and I have no time or energy to waste on side issues. That preparation is the only thing I can recommend to you; all the “sides” necessary will come with it.

I know that the supermind is not near and I know that I am impatient—but not especially for supermind.

My answer stands. I have repeatedly said recently that we are trying against great difficulties to bring down the supramental into the physical plane. If the supramental were already there, the body divinised, matter transformed, there would be no difficulty and no need of the endeavour.

I would recall to you what I said in my letter to X³ that it was not the direct supramental Force which was working up till now but a preparatory Force that carried in it a modified Light derived from the supramental. The direct Force can begin working only when the mind, vital and physical are sufficiently ready.

3 March 1932

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³ See the letter of 12 January 1932 on pages 319–20.—Ed.

I must remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts — both the Mother and myself have had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We could never have been contented with the shining ideas and phrases which a Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth. We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith — and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him? — we do not find ourselves on faith alone but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane. That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconcerted by the often successful fury of the adverse Forces who increase in their rage as the Light comes nearer and nearer down to the field of earth and Matter.

If I believe in the probability and not only the possibility, if I feel practically certain of the supramental descent — I do not fix a date, — it is because I have my grounds for the belief, not merely a faith in the air. I *know* that the supramental descent is inevitable — I have faith in view of my experience that the time can be and should be now and not in a later age.

But even if I knew it to be for a later time, I would not swerve from my path or be discouraged or flag in my labour. Formerly I might have been, but not now after all the path I have traversed. When one is sure of the Truth, or even when one believes the thing one pursues to be the only possible solution, one does not stipulate for an immediate success, one travels towards the Light taking as well worth facing every risk of the adventure. Still, like you, it is now in this life that I insist on it and not in another or in the hereafter.

30 August 1932

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I pray for the quiet strength, faith and wisdom I need to help me pass over this exceedingly difficult period of worries and unquietness and the feeling of physical unwellness and other unpleasantnesses.

But those are the ideas and feelings that always rise up in you when the adverse force presses on you and you give ear or even partly listen to its suggestions. You yourself have given the answer to it—the solutions suggested by these forces are not solutions at all. No doubt, the period is very difficult, not only for you but for everybody,—but the struggle in the material plane was bound to be difficult and prolonged, it is the cause of the whole problem, the critical stage of the whole action, because the victory there would decide everything for good and all.

24 November 1932

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Is it possible for you to give us an idea when the supramental descent will come to pass? Will it be within a decade? And will the result of the completion of your yoga be, as I once asked Mother also, a power to transform us in spite of ourselves? Even at present your power does nothing else, but you leave us still the possibility to resist.

I suppose the (vital's) will to resist will disappear: I don't know about the date—dates are things that one ought not to fix too rigidly; but I certainly hope we won't have to wait for a decade! Let us be more sanguine and put the beginning of the decade and not its end as the era of the Descent. It is more likely then to make haste.

December 1932

1933

As for faith, you write as if I had never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than anyone living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. Even if I still saw the

chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I should go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe. But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week and day — once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour — brings me so much nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and the Night itself carries in it the burden of the light that has to be.

As for your own case, it comes to this that experiences come and stop, there are constant ups and downs, in times of recoil and depression no advance at all seems to have been made, there is as yet no certitude. So it was with me also, so it is with everyone, not with you alone. The way to the heights is always like that up to a certain point, but the ups and downs, the difficulties and obstacles are no proof that it is a chimera to aspire to the summits.

5 January 1933

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I am afraid I cannot endorse your reading of the situation, at least so far as the Mother and myself and the prospects of the work are concerned. I can agree only that we have had a heavy time of it recently and that there has been a strong attack on the plane of the physical and material — but that (heavy attacks) is a thing we have been accustomed to for the last 20 years and it has never prevented us from making any necessary advance. I have never had any illusions about the path being comfortable and easy — I knew all along that the work could only be done if all the essential difficulties rose and were faced — so their rising cannot tire or dishearten me — whatever obstinacy there may be in the difficulties whether our own or in the sadhaks or in Nature. . . .

No, I am not tired or on the point of giving up. I have made inwardly steps in front in the last two or three months which had seemed impossible because of the obstinate resistance for

years together and it is not an experience which pushes me to despair and give up. If there is much resistance on one side, there have been large gains on the other — all has not been a picture of sterile darkness. You yourself are kept back only by the demon of doubt which bangs on you each door as you are opening it — you have only to set about resolutely slaying the Rakshasa and the doors will open to you as they have done to many others who were held up by their own mind or vital nature.

12 January 1933

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When shall the victory of Supermind manifest on Earth?

One can only say that it advances, but to fix — or at least to proclaim — a time is not permitted — for which there are many good occult reasons.

23 March 1933

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What are the conditions for the descent of the Higher Consciousness in the Asram atmosphere? Or is it already there? Is it good to call it down for all?

The Higher Consciousness is there already — it depends on the sadhak how much (or little) he receives of it and in what way. The supramental consciousness is not yet down in the material, but it is no use calling that for all, — hardly anyone could receive it at present. But up to just below that all is there. It is a question of receiving, not of calling down, for that each has to open — by whatever degrees — and call it into himself.

30 June 1933

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Is it mostly the Mahasaraswati aspect of the Mother that works in our sadhana here?

At present since the sadhana came down to the physical consciousness — or rather it is a combination of Maheshwari-Mahasarawati forces.

25 August 1933

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You wrote to me yesterday, "Now there is a sufficient descent of Light and Power."⁴ Does this show that the psychisation of the sadhaks is advancing?

Yes, there has been some progress in that respect and all progress in the psychic or spiritual consciousness of the sadhaks makes the descent more easy. But the main cause is that the Overmind principle which is the immediate secret support of the present earth-nature with all its limitations is more and more undergoing the pressure of the Supramental and letting through a greater Light and Power. For so long as the Overmind intervenes (the principle of the Overmind being a play of forces, each trying to realise itself as the Truth) the law of struggle remains and with it the opportunity for the adverse Forces. 10 November 1933

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You say [*in the preceding letter*] that the Overmind, as a result of a pressure of the Supramental, is "letting through a greater Light and Power." Does this mean that a greater spiritual movement is going on at present in various places on earth where the people are receiving the new Light and Power?

No. It is only here that it can act for the present—in the forces outside, there is no preparation to receive it. 10 November 1933

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No, the supramental has not descended into the body or into matter—it is only at the point where such a descent has become not only possible but inevitable—I am speaking of course of my own experience. But as my own experience is the centre and condition of the rest, that is sufficient for the promise.

I am not able to answer your letter just now for it is full of bristling questions, but I shall do it today—in the course of the day. Only my difficulty is that you all seem to expect some kind of miraculous faery-tale change and do not realise that it is a rapid and concentrated evolution which is the aim of

⁴ See the letter of 9 November 1933 on page 640.—Ed.

my sadhana and that there must be a process for it, a working of the higher on the lower and a dealing with all the necessary materials — not a sudden fiat of the Creator by which everything is done on a given date. It is a suprarational but not an irrational process. What is to be done, will happen — perhaps with a rush even — but in a workmanlike way and not according to fancy.

However I will try to explain all that as far as possible — in principle only of course — as far as it can be explained to the physical mind which has not yet any notion of what the supramental is. For the rest, I will try to meet the points you make.

14 November 1933

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As the moment of the possibility of the supramental Descent grows nearer, these forces have become more eager to keep hold on the Asram atmosphere and break the sadhana of anyone they can touch. Their main aim is to get as many as possible to leave the Asram so that they may not share in the descent and so that the descent itself may be delayed and disturbed by a constant tempest in the atmosphere. That is why I put the notice⁵ suggesting that the sadhaks should not admit these forces and need not. To be on guard and admit no violent and irrational movements, to be calm and insistent in faith and self-opening to us is all that is needed.

15 November 1933

1934

Is there any occult significance of yesterday's date — the succession 1-2-34? The next date in this series will come in 11 years: 2-3-45.

1.2.34. It is supposed to be always a year of manifestation. 2.3.45 is the year of power — when the thing manifested gets full force. 4.5.67 is the year of complete realisation.

2 February 1934

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⁵ The letter of 8 November 1933 on page 639 was posted on the Ashram notice board.
— Ed.

It is true that there is an increasingly powerful descent of the Higher Force. Many now see the lights and colours around the Mother and her subtle luminous forms—it means that their vision is opening to supraphysical realities, it is not a phantasy. The colours or lights you see are forces from various planes and each colour indicates a special force.

The supramental Force is descending, but it has not yet taken possession of the body or of matter—there is still much resistance to that. It is a supramentalised Overmind Force that has already touched and this may at any time change into or give place to the Supramental in its own native power. 14 September 1934

*

I dreamed that I was at the Pranam ceremony this morning and at the time of making the usual obeisance to the Mother I offered her some flowers which she took in her hands. At that time she broke her customary silence and spoke to me some words of advice and encouragement, the purport of which was that I should stay here until a certain event which was to come after a few days (she mentioned the event but I do not remember what it was), about when I might return home and that even though I would not be living in the Asram, the progress of my sadhana would be assured.

There is indeed something preparing to descend and the dream was probably a suggestion to you to stay so as to receive its touch after which your sadhana could proceed at home without difficulty, as there would be Something else within you doing the sadhana with your constant assent as the one necessity. The only difficulty in the way of health is a certain obscurity in the body consciousness itself which makes it consent readily to habitual touches of the force that makes for illness; otherwise if the body consciousness as well as the mind and vital were open any illness that came would immediately be dissipated. Keep a quiet and steady will for the opening of the consciousness and the union and do not allow depression or any idea of frustration. Keep also a concentrated call in the heart. With those two things the result is sure.

18 September 1934

*

X told me that this is the year of the manifestation of the Purushottama, Sri Aurobindo.⁶ Also that the Supramental Force is just now coming down. I feel my previous dream of darshan of Sri Aurobindo in a motor car and another dream of Sri Aurobindo signify this manifestation and the coming down of the Force before long. Am I right?

The motor car by itself only means a rapid progress. It is true that the Supramental Force is preparing its descent.

20 September 1934

*

X speaks in very definite terms about this descent that has already come so close. He says it will bring about the final change. Is what he says true? If so, why am I still ignorant of it?

It would not necessarily be known by everybody beforehand. Besides even if the descent were here one would have to be ready before one could get the final change. 14 October 1934

*

It feels as if the Pure Existence is descending into the being. I can feel it manifesting—but then something asks how this can be possible, for the vital and the physical are not yet filled with it.

The Pure Existence is not something abstract but substantial and concrete. Moreover it is descending into the body, so it is quite natural to feel it materially. 16 October 1934

*

I do not know who was X's informant, but certainly the Mother never said to anybody that the Supermind was to descend on the 24th November. Dates cannot be fixed like that. The descent of the supermind is a long process or at least a process with a long preparation and one can only say that the work is going

⁶ *The person referred to here as X was the recipient of the letter of 2 February 1934, published on page 327.—Ed*

on sometimes with a strong pressure for completion, sometimes retarded by the things that rise from below and have to be dealt with before farther progress can be made. The process is a (spiritual) evolutionary process concentrated into a brief period — it could be done otherwise (by what men would regard as a miraculous intervention) only if the human mind were more flexible and less attached to its ignorance than it is. As we envisage it, it must manifest in a few first and then spread, but it is not likely to sweep over the earth in a moment. It is not advisable to discuss too much what it will do and how it will do it, because these are things the Supermind itself will fix, acting out of that Divine Truth in it, and the mind must not try to fix for it grooves in which it will run. Naturally, the release from subconscious ignorance and from disease, duration of life at will, and a change in the functioning of the body must be among the ultimate results of a supramental change; but the details of these things must be left for the supramental Energy to work out according to the truth of its own nature.

18 October 1934

*

When I wrote in my letter about the supermind and the obstinate resistance,⁷ I spoke of course of something I had already spoken of before. I did not mean that the resistance was of an unexpected character or had altered anything essential. But in its nature the descent is not something arbitrary and miraculous, but a rapid evolutionary process compressed into a few years which proceeds by taking up the present nature into its Light and pouring its Truth into the inferior planes. That cannot be done in the whole world at a time, but is done like all such processes first through selected Adharas and then on a wider scale. We have to do it through ourselves first and through the circle of sadhakas gathered around us in the terrestrial consciousness as typified here. If a few open, that is sufficient for the process to be possible. On the other hand if there is a general misunderstanding and resistance (not in all, but in many), that makes it difficult and

⁷ See the letter of 17 October 1934 on pages 44–45.—Ed.

the process more laborious, but it does not make it impossible. I was not suggesting that it has become impossible, but that if the circumstances are made unfavourable by our being unable to concentrate enough on this thing of capital importance and having too much work to do of an irrelevant kind, the descent was likely to take longer than it would do otherwise. Certainly, when the supramental does touch earth with a sufficient force to dig itself in into the earth consciousness, there will be no more chance of any success or survival for the Asuric Maya.

The rest that I spoke of about the human and the divine had to do with the intermediate period between before it is down. What I meant was that if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being, as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Asram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when the Mother was either receiving the sadhaks for meditation or otherwise working and concentrating all night and day without sleep and very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with a lightning swiftness. The power used was not that of the Supermind, but of the Overmind, but it was sufficient for what was being done. Afterwards because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers through which she was doing the action behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that meant difficulty, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia. All has been for long slow, difficult, almost sterile in appearance. Nevertheless our work was going on behind that appearance and now it is again becoming possible to go forward. But for the advance to be anything like general or swift in its process, the attitude of the sadhaks, not of a few only, must change. They must cling less to the conditions and feelings of the external physical consciousness and open themselves to the true consciousness of the Yогин and sadhaka. If they did that,

the inner eye would open and they would not be bewildered or alarmed if the Mother again manifested externally something of the Divine Personalities and Powers as she did before. They would not be asking her to be always on their level, but would be glad to be drawn swiftly or gradually up towards hers. The difficulties would be ten times less and a larger easier securer movement possible.

This was what I meant and I suppose I manifested some impatience at the slowness of so many to realise what is after all a logical conclusion from the very principle of our Yoga which is that of a transformation, all that is disharmonious in human nature being enlightened out of existence, all that makes for harmony being changed into its divine equivalent, purer, greater, nobler, more beautiful and much being added which has been lacking to the human evolution. I meant that things could move more swiftly towards this if the sadhaks had a less ignorant attitude, but if they could not yet reach that, we had of course to go on anyhow until the supramental descent came down to the material level.

Finally, you must get rid of this gratuitous tendency to despair. The difficulty for you has been created by the indulgence given to this formation I speak of; that finally dismissed, the difficulty would disappear. Progress might be slow at first, but progress would come; it would quicken afterwards and, with the supramental force here, there would be for you as for others the full speed and certitude.

18 October 1934

*

I was reading a book about the Great War, which I found interesting. I hope you don't mind if I read such books. Do not punish me for that. I mean, there seems to be a counterpart of punishment in the supramental, a withdrawing of its protection or help which results in attacks, depressions, illnesses, etc.

But it is not the supramental that is acting at present — the supramental won't act until it is rooted and established in Matter. If it were the supramental, you would not be having these difficulties. It is at most the cosmic Overmind that is able to act now, but

even there there is no idea of punishment; it is a play of forces and when the force of the physical consciousness becomes too prominent it acts according to its dharma and the other forces are covered over for the time. Our own force acts in this play of forces to help the sadhak through till he gets himself into the silence within and the cosmic consciousness as a whole with the Higher Force action to regulate and harmonise the progress — after which it is plainer sailing. There can be no question of our withdrawing protection and help. As for your reading these books, we have no objection at all, so long as you feel the need of it. When the inner life becomes more active again, you can either drop them again or make all mental activity a part of the sadhana according to your condition and inner impulse at the time.

25 October 1934

*

I have felt bound to explain so much [*about the behaviour of certain sadhaks*] though I would have preferred not to write about these things. I do hope you will throw all that behind you. I feel a great longing that the sadhaks should be free of all that. For so long as the present state of things continues with fires of this kind raging all around and the atmosphere in a turmoil, the work I am trying to do, certainly not for my own sake or for any personal reason, will always remain under the stroke of jeopardy and I do not know how the descent I am labouring for is to fulfil itself. In fact, the Mother and I have to give nine-tenths of our energy to smoothing down things, to keeping the sadhaks tolerably contented etc. etc. etc. One-tenth and in the Mother's case not even that can alone go to the real work; it is not enough. It is not surprising either that you should feel it difficult to get on in all this. But then why not push these things away from you and keep a clear field in you for the Divine? That, if everybody, or even a sufficient number could do it, would be the greatest help I could receive.

26 October 1934

*

I have already spoken about the bad condition of the world; the usual idea of the occultists about it is that the worse they are, the more is probable the coming of an intervention or a new revelation from above. The ordinary mind cannot know—it has either to believe or disbelieve or wait and see.

As to whether the Divine seriously means something to happen, I believe it is intended. I know with absolute certitude that the supramental is a truth and that its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable. The question is as to the when and the how. That also is decided and predestined from somewhere above; but it is here being fought out amid a rather grim clash of conflicting forces. For in the terrestrial world the predetermined result is hidden and what we see is a whirl of possibilities and forces attempting to achieve something with the destiny of it all concealed from human eyes. This is however certain that a number of souls have been sent to see that it shall be now. That is the situation. My faith and will are for the now. I am speaking of course on the level of the human intelligence—mystically-rationally, as one might put it. To say more would be going beyond that line. You don't want me to start prophesying, I suppose? As a rationalist, you can't.

25 December 1934

*

What did you imply when you wrote to me that I was in the physical consciousness? Did you mean that I am living like an animal or vegetating like a plant and did you suggest that I should come out of the physical consciousness and live on the mental level?

I am myself living in the physical consciousness and have been for several years. At first it was a plunge into the physical—into all its obscurity and inertia, afterwards it was a station in the physical open to a higher and higher consciousness and slowly having fought out in it the struggle of transformation of the physical consciousness with a view to prepare it for the supramental change.

It is possible to go back to the mental level where one receives all the mental realisations readily enough if the mind is

open and bright. But it is not the course that the sadhana usually follows.

29 December 1934

*

When the sadhana is going on in the physical plane, is it necessary for all the sadhaks to come down into the physical consciousness, or only those who have much inertia and impurity in them, as in my case?

It is a little difficult to say whether all have to come down totally into the physical. The Mother and I had to do it because the work could not be otherwise done. We had tried to do it from above through the mind and higher vital, but it could not be because the sadhaks were not ready to follow—their lower vital and physical refused to share in what was coming down or else misused it and became full of exaggerated and violent reactions. Since then the sadhana as a whole has come down along with us into the physical consciousness. Many have followed—some unluckily without sufficient preparation in the mind and vital, some holding on to the vital and mind and living still between the three, some totally but with a prepared mind and vital. The total descent into the physical is a very troublesome affair—it means a long and trying period of difficulty, for the physical is normally obscure, inert, impervious to the Light. It is a thing of habits, very largely a slave of the subconscious and its mechanical reactions. It is less open to violent attacks than the vital except in the way of illness and some other movements, but it is dull and dreary to have these—until the Light, the Peace, the Power, the Joy can come down from above and fix themselves. We would have preferred to do all the hard work ourselves there and called others down only when an easier movement was established, but it did not prove possible.

I don't think it has anything to do with impurity. Only you came down a little too soon. At the moment it happened, the peace and silence of the Atman and the movement upward to realisation of the Self above the head in the higher consciousness were about to establish themselves. If that had been done first, it would have been less difficult. It means a great struggle

against the inertia to get these things done — but you have only to persevere and done they will surely be. Then things will be much more easy for you.

31 December 1934

1935

After November the push for descent stopped and the resistance of material Nature arose — that is always a sign of something that has still to be conquered before the descent can be complete. In the silence the necessary preparation is being done. No doubt, I expect something to be done by the 21st, but I say nothing because I do not want to raise the buzz again — it is not good for the realisation that there should be any buzz about it.

2 February 1935

*

I hear you are having a tough fight with the forces.

Very beastly — these forces. One can't advance a single step without their throwing their shells and stink-bombs. However like General Joffre, I advance. "Nous progressâmes."

1 March 1935

*

This [February] darshan day was not so marvellous as November and I thought that during the interval I had not made much progress.

The period since November has been a general period of difficulty and the resistance of the physical Nature to the change demanded of it. That is the reason why there was not the same movement as before November in you, — it is not due to any cause personal to you.

11 March 1935

*

Why so many illnesses all of a sudden? Is the supramental too near?

No, it is the material which has become too uppish.

People are saying that the supramental has come down into the physical, evidenced by greater peace and calm.

Into whose physical? I shall be very glad to know — for I myself have not got so far, otherwise I would not have a queasy eye. But if you know anybody who has got it (the Supramental in the physical, not the eye) tell me like a shot. I will acclaim him “Grand First Supramental” at once. 17 March 1935

*

It seems to take a lot more effort to free myself from sexual and other problems now than ever before. Even in the very beginning it was easier for me.

The greater difficulty is because the sadhana is now taking place directly on the physical plane, where the force of a habit or habitual movement once formed is very great. When the sadhana is taking place on the mental or vital plane, it is more easy to control or change, because the mind and vital are more plastic than the physical. But on the other hand if something is definitely gained on the physical plane, there is a more lasting and complete fulfilment than when it is on the mental or vital alone. 19 March 1935

*

What does supramentalisation mean exactly? We know by your own statements that you have achieved that. Is it then supramentalisation in parts? You want transformation of everything — mental to physical?

Achieved what? What statement? What are these wild assertions? I spoke of an overmind Force which is getting supramentalised in parts.

Does it mean that some parts of your being are supramental but that the physical is not yet supramentalised?

Overmind in process of supramentalisation, not supramental.

How can it be possible — realisation in parts — in your case?

Why not? Always the idea that there must be an instantaneous absolute miracle or else nothing! What about process in things? You are ignorant of all that is between supreme Spirit and matter, it seems. You know nothing of the occult processes of mind, life and all the rest — so you can think only of miraculous divinity or else law of matter as known to Science. But for supramental Spirit to work itself out in matter it must go through a process of transforming the immediate mental, vital and other connections, must it not — so why should not the process be in parts? Immortality also can come by parts. First the mental being becomes immortal (not shed and dissolved after death), then the vital, while the physical comes only last. That is a possible evolution, recognised by occult science.

27 March 1935

*

Above all, you have the direct Intuition to fall back upon.

I haven't — not just now at any rate. I am too busy handling the confounded difficulties of Matter. The material is subconscious and I would have to be subconscious myself to get its true intuition. I prefer to wait for the supramental.

4 April 1935

*

The way you are hammering the supramental on us in everything, every problem, every difficulty, as the solution to all riddles, panacea for all ills, one almost thinks that its descent will make all of us "big people" overnight.

My insistence on the supramental is of course apo-diaskeptic. Don't search for the word in the dictionary. I am simply imitating the doctors who when they are in a hole protect themselves with impossible Greek. Peace, supramental if possible, but peace anyhow — a peace which will become supramental if it has a chance. The atmosphere is most confoundedly disturbed, that is why I am ingeminating "peace, peace, peace!" like a summer dove or an intellectual under the rule of Hitler. Of course, I am not asking you to become supramental offhand. That is my

business, and I will do it if you fellows give me a chance, which you are not doing just now (you is not personal, but collective and indefinite) and will do less if you go blummerring into buzzific intensities. (Please *don't* consult the dictionary, but look into the writings of Joyce and others.)

9 April 1935

*

It is you who will bring down the Supramental but my question was whether that descent is quite independent of the conditions of the sadhaks; whether our impurities, turmoil, crowings for “buzzific intensities”, our social talks, social dinners now and then are going to stand in the way or whether it will come anyhow.

I presume it will come anyhow, but it is badly delayed because, if I am all the time occupied with dramas, hysterics, tragi-comic correspondence (quarrels, chronicles, lamentations), how can I have time for this—the only real work, the one thing needful? It is not one or two, but twenty dramas that are going on.

11 April 1935

*

People say that it will be one century, if not more, before the supramental descends!

One day, one week, one month, one year, one decade, one century, one millennium, one light year—all is possible. Then why do people choose one century?

12 April 1935

*

It seems something very striking and luminous has happened today. Have you achieved some great victory? How many millions of hostile forces have you crushed? At evening meditation the Mother had an appearance sparkling like gold beams. On other days she looks tired, tired of the job, and would like to give it up saying, “Oh, you sadhaks, you are all hopeless!”

It would be very natural if Mother felt like that! Never has there been such an uprush of mud and brimstone as during the past

few months. However the Caravan goes on and today there was some promise of better things.

19 April 1935

*

I was surprised to hear that such a bad time was hanging over our head. But surely it means that the greater the light descending, the greater the velocity, the greater the resistance — law of physics, isn't it?

In a certain sense it is true, but it was not inevitable — if the sadhaks had been a less neurotic company, it could have been done quietly. As it is there is the Revolt of the Subconscious.

In one letter you wrote that you were able to push on; in another that the hostile forces were out of date [p. 639]. That was a year ago. When we read this we thought that it would be merry Christmas henceforth. But now I again feel a bit despondent because you speak of the confounded atmosphere, "the uprush of mud" and the attacks.

When I said "out of date", I did not mean that they are not going on, but they ought not to be going on — they were only kept up by the sadhaks opening themselves to them and so retaining them in the atmosphere. I thought that was clear from what I said — but the sadhaks seem always to put a comfortable interpretation even on uncomfortable statements.

I have heard that even X had a terrible attack recently. He almost left the Ashram! Y wanted to commit suicide, and Z is in revolt!

There are only 2 or 3 in the Ashram to whom this word "even" would apply. I won't mention their names less the devil should be tempted to try with them also. A solid mind, a solid nervous system and a steady psychic flame seem to be the only safeguard against "terrible attacks".

And all this despite your continuous day and night fight!

If such things did not happen, there would be no need of a fight

day and night. You put the thing in an inverse order. (I take no responsibility for the statements you make, of course. They stand on the credit of the reporters.)

Since the descent of the Supermind will quicken up all the processes, why not take an axe of retrenchment . . .

How? I am not Hitler.

and cut off all impeding elements ruthlessly so that among a very few chosen disciples, the whole work may go on most concentratedly and rapidly? When the miracle is achieved, all of us will flock back and achieve everything as by a miracle!

Things cannot be done like that. You might just as well ask the Mother and myself to isolate ourselves in the Himalayas, get down the supramental, then toss everybody up in a blanket into the Supreme. Very neat but it is not practical. 20 April 1935

*

Since yesterday evening there has been a strong uprising of the subconscious inertia.

The subconscious difficulty is *the* difficulty now — because the whole struggle in the general sadhana is now there. It is in the subconscious, no longer in the vital or conscious physical that the resistance is all massed together. 30 April 1935

*

Between last November and February I suffered a good deal on account of my emotional and vital defect. Now the chief difficulty is in the gross physical — weakness, pain, lethargy and sicknesses.

The main difficulty in the general sadhana also is now in the physical. From November last there has been much struggle and obstruction on the most physical plane — the material consciousness. 7 May 1935

*

It seems another victory has been won by you? Some people saw a red-crimson light around the Mother a few days back. What does it signify?

??? Great Heavens! which? who? But there is nothing new in that. It was coming down before Nov. 24, but afterwards all the damned mud arose and it stopped. But there are two red-crimson lights. One is supramental Divine Love. The other is the supramental physical Force.

14 May 1935

*

It seems to me that my sadhana has come to a standstill. Is it because of the physical *tamas*?

It is probable that you have come in contact with a new layer of the physical consciousness which is more material than the rest, perhaps with the subconscious itself (it is with the subconscious that the sadhana is now concerned in the Asram itself). The first result is the purely negative or stand-still condition you describe. You have to call down the Force and the Light here, so that this too may become a part of the Divine Consciousness. If it is the subconscious, then you must be on your guard against all negative feelings such as the sense that all is gone, or the uselessness of life or the frustration or uselessness of sadhana, helplessness, incapacity etc. These things come naturally to one who does not understand. But they are false appearances. Remaining quiet and keeping the faith that there is the Divine Guidance behind, one has to do what is needed till the phase is over.

27 May 1935

*

We hear you are tremendously busy; hot speculations are in the air about near descents.

No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them — the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of subconscious mud.

In the upshot many crashes and shipwrecks are apprehended.

What an appetite for crashes!

Please tell us something so that we may prepare ourselves in time to bear the pressure of the descent.

No pressure! I am simply busy trying to get out of the mud — in other words to see if the damned subconscious can be persuaded to subside into something less dangerous, less complexful and more manageable.

27 May 1935

*

A number of people have left recently. Is it “sifting”, or is it the “pressure”? But does the pressure work to oust people, or is it a corresponding pressure from other forces which makes them go?

The “Pressure” from above does not work to send people away — it is the pressure of the wrong forces. As for sifting, that is an idea which is very widespread; — but what is meant by sifting? Were the people who have gone out the most unfit for Yoga and are those who remain the ones fit for Yoga — is that the idea? I don’t think anybody could make the facts work out to mean that. Then what is the idea? It is true that this has been a very difficult time, but that is only because the sadhana has proceeded by a descent into a lower and lower plane where the forces of Darkness are more and more at home, and it is now in the subconscious where lies the root of all the difficulties. But on the other hand the Power descending also is greater. If many people have gone and many are having great difficulties, also many have opened to experience and progress who were stagnant for years together. There is a loss account but a gain account also.

8 June 1935

*

They say that you are now handling the lower vital and so the general trouble. True?

Subconscious vital physical — the lower vital is irrational, but not so utterly “without reason” as that.

8 July 1935

*

Some time back you wrote to me: "Never has there been such an uprush of mud and brimstone as during the past few months. However the Caravan goes on and today there was some promise of better things."⁸ What about the uprush of mud? Has it settled down, and are people now floating in the flood of the Supramental?

It is still there, but personally I have become superior to it and am travelling forward like a flash of lightning, that is to say, zigzag, but fairly fast. Now I have got the hang of the whole hanged thing — like a very Einstein I have got the mathematical formula of the whole affair (unintelligible as in his case to anybody but myself) and am working it out figure by figure.

As for people, no! they are not floating in the supramental — some are floating in the higher mind, others rushing up into it and flopping down into the subconscious alternately, some swinging from heaven into hell and back into heaven, again back into hell ad infinitum, some are sticking fast contentedly or discontentedly in the mud, some are sitting in the mud and dreaming dreams and seeing visions, some have their legs in the mud and their head in the heavens, etc. etc., an infinity of combinations, while many are simply nowhere. But console yourself — these things, it seems, are inevitable in the process of great transformations.

16 August 1935

*

You say, "I have become superior to it and am travelling forward . . . fast," but you have been always superior and always travelling fast all your life.

[Underlining "always superior and always travelling fast":]
Rubbish!

How is it going to affect us?

If my being able to solve the problem of the subconscious in the sadhana is of no importance, then of course it won't affect anybody. Otherwise it may.

⁸ See the letter of 19 April 1935 on pages 339–40.—Ed.

From the condition of the people you enumerate, there is not much hope left nor does it show that your travelling fast has speeded them up.

That is of no importance at present. To get the closed doors open is just now the thing to be done and I am doing it. Speeding people through them can come in its own time when the doors and the people are ready.

What is the mathematical formula that you have all of a sudden found out? Let us have it in a tangible form, if possible.

I told you it was unintelligible to anybody but myself, so how the deuce do you expect me to give it to you in a tangible form?

17 August 1935

*

I beg to be pardoned for one thing. Today I mentioned to somebody what you said about yourself that you are travelling fast. Has it been a great mistake to let it out? Is it absolutely private?

No—only you must not tell it to too many people. It is only because I don't want speculation or gossip about such things as that spoils the atmosphere.

20 August 1935

*

The darshan atmosphere and its influence seem to be waning away so soon! Old friends or foes are stepping in.

There is always an adverse movement after the darshan, the *revanche* of the lower forces. I had a stoppage myself, but I am off again riding on the back of my Einsteinian formula.

23 August 1935

*

Do tell me please if you are getting anything solid from this nebulous supramental. X⁹ tells me you have scaled and winged

⁹ *The recipient of the letters of July and August 1935 on pages 343–45.—Ed.*

like lightning on its pinions. Have you really? Was it something like motion on a sort of marvellous Calm which seems *like* motion through some supramental jugglery of consciousness? Some enlightenment on this bewildering problem would be highly edifying even to the mentals and humans, you may be sure. Also, Y has to be gagged somehow. He talks of nothing but the supramental. And what am I to answer?

You have created your own “bewildering problem” by supplying your own data! There is nothing nebulous about the supramental, its action depends on the utmost precision possible. As for solidity, since I have got many solid things from much lower forces, I do not see why the highest ones should only give nebulosities. But that seems the human mind’s position, only what is earthy is solid, what is high is misty and unreal — the worm is a reality, but the eagle is a vapour!

However, I have not told X that I am scaling and winging — on the contrary I am dealing with very hard practical facts. I only told him I had got the formula of solution for the difficulty that had been holding me up since last November and I am working it out.

To return to the supramental — the supramental is simply the direct self-existent Truth-Consciousness and the direct self-effective Truth-Power. There can therefore be no question of jugglery about it. What is not true is not supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, twenty-seven years ago and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough without any need of supramentality to make it more so! Again, a calm that “seems like motion” is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence which can support or produce action — that I know and that is what I have had — the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for four months and wrote $6\frac{1}{2}$ volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc. etc. I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action or motion but only something that seems like it, a jugglery

of the consciousness,—well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted a pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Asram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which of course metaphysically you can), then you land yourself plump into Shankara's illusionism, and there I will leave you.

You will say however that it is not the Supramental but at most the Overmind that helped me to these non-nebulous motions. But the Supermind is by definition a greater dynamic activity than mind or Overmind. I have said that what is not true is not supramental; I will add that what is ineffective is not supramental. And finally I will conclude by saying that I have not told X that I have taken possession of the supramental—I only admit to be very near to it or at least to its tail. But "very near" is—well, after all a relative phrase like all human phrases.

I don't know how you are to "gag" Y. You might perhaps try my two formulas, but it is doubtful. Or perhaps you might tell him that the supramental is silence—only, it would be untrue! So I leave you in your fix—there is no other go. At least until I have firm physical hold of the tail of the supramental and can come and tell the mentals and humans—no doubt in language which will be unintelligible to them, for they have totally misunderstood even the little I have already written about it.

23 August 1935

*

Are there many sadhaks here who are under the same spell of inertia as I?

Yes—it is a natural result of the consciousness's descent into the physical and the struggle with the subconscious resistance. Only its form varies with different people. 4 September 1935

*

How curious it is that something prevents my ascension. For everything in the lower nature can best be dealt with from above. So why does it hinder my ascent?

It happened in the same way with myself. I had to come down into the physical to deal with it instead of keeping the station always above. Of course if you can keep the station above so much the better, but as almost everybody is down in the physical, it is a little difficult perhaps.

5 September 1935

*

A suggestion has come to me that you are working directly with the supramental power. That is why the resistance is so stormy and the attacks so violent. Is this true?

I suppose so. Only that must not be accepted as a reason for passive acquiescence.

7 September 1935

*

When will our difficulties be over?

That cannot be said. The difficulties are not likely to cease until the material resistance has been entirely conquered in principle.

11 September 1935

*

X has made the following remark: "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo." Is it correct?

[*Sri Aurobindo bracketed "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical", and wrote:*] Not quite correct in all points. The things to be brought down were in us no doubt—but not all outwardly manifested, from the beginning. Of course X's statement is altogether true only as far as the bracket goes.

14 September 1935

*

When you wrote "as far as the bracket goes", did you not notice that you cut off the last part of X's statement?

Yes, of course. What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the supermind in the earth consciousness down

to Matter itself, so it can't be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone.

Most of us know that the Supermind will be brought down into “the physical”. But what X means is that the present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind not into our physical but into yours and the Mother's.

If it comes down into our physical it would mean that it has come down into matter and so there is no reason why it should not manifest in the sadhaks.

X says further: “The Supermind will not descend into any of the sadhaks. I have read in the *Arya* about the nature of the Supermind. It is so great that no human being can bear it in itself.”

I do not know to what passage of the *Arya* the reference is. It is certain that the Supermind is far above the human mind and cannot be grasped by the human mind. That is the reason why this Yoga has to be undertaken—so as to make man grow out of the human mind and prepare him for supermind.

For myself all I have to say is that if you were not already supramentalised you would never have called yourself a superman.

I don't know that I have “called” myself a superman. But certainly I have risen above the ordinary human mind, otherwise I would not think of trying to bring down the supermind into the physical.

I refuse to accept what you wrote yesterday: “The things to be brought down were in us no doubt” [p. 348]. Those things were not only *in you* but were created *by you*. If you put it like that it can only be because of the conditions of the earth-nature. From the point of view of the supramental truth, you are the creator of the supramental plane.

That is another matter. The supermind plane is a plane above, its nature is not yet manifested in the material world, which has manifested matter, life and mind, and something of what is between mind and supermind, but not supermind itself.

15 September 1935

*

I don't think X was referring to any particular passage of the *Arya*. But he has the impression that you have said that the supermind is so far above the human mind that the mind cannot grasp it. So he says that it is impossible for the supermind to come down into a human being. Have you spoken to him about this?

No. It was the old idea that human consciousness can reach and merge in the Sun (Supermind) — by Samadhi, I suppose — but cannot redescend from there.

15 September 1935

*

You wrote a few days ago: "The difficulties are not likely to cease until they are conquered in principle" [cf. p. 348].¹⁰

I do not remember having written "in principle" or if so, there must have been other words also.

A week earlier you wrote: "as almost everybody is down in the physical, it is a little difficult perhaps" [p. 348]. But I was under the impression that some, like X, Y and Z, are always on the intuitive plane.

I am not aware that they or anybody lives constantly on the intuitive plane. All are at grips with the difficulties of the physical consciousness at present — though of course to one like Y the suggestion of revolt cannot come — at least it has never done so up to now.

16 September 1935

*

What you wrote [on 11 September] was: "The difficulties

¹⁰ Quoting from memory, the correspondent omitted several words from Sri Aurobindo's reply of 11 September 1935.—Ed.

are not likely to cease until the material resistance has been entirely conquered in principle."

I see, but that was about another matter altogether. I meant that the difficulties in the physical (generally speaking, not in a particular case) could not be entirely absent so long as the material resistance to the supramental descent had not been overcome in principle. In principle means in essence, not in every detail of the coming development.

17 September 1935

*

It seems to me that a direct Supermind Force is working, and that the lower nature is trying to accommodate itself to it.

Direct Supermind Force is not possible at this stage. It is only when the whole being down to the physical has accepted and assimilated the higher consciousness that it can come.

I understand that the transformation of the lower nature is not possible without the Supramental Force coming down and preparing the vessel for the complete perfection.

Complete perfection is another matter. What must first be done is the fullness of the higher consciousness between the mind and supermind.

17 September 1935

*

When I wrote recently about a "direct Supermind Force", I was thinking about something you wrote a week or two ago. When I asked whether the direct Supermind Force was acting in the Asram, you replied, if I remember correctly, "I suppose so, but it should not be an excuse for a passive acquiescence."¹¹ Also, when I began to feel a powerful, fiery keen force, I took it to be the Supermind.

Acting in the Asram means only acting in the earth consciousness to prepare its own possibility. The forces above the human

¹¹ See the question and answer of 7 September 1935 on page 348. Quoting from memory, the correspondent made small but significant errors in his question and in Sri Aurobindo's answer.—Ed.

mind, especially Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind can be very intense and fiery. They have divine powers in them.¹²

18 September 1935

*

You wrote that you are “trying to get the supermind down into the material”.¹³ We understand from this that the ascent has been done but the descent remains. It is something like our going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy, Ananda, and then trying to bring these things down and not lose them as soon as one leaves your room. Also, you say in another letter that you have seen the supermind and are in contact with it without achieving it, while in your letter to X¹⁴ you write that you are very near the tail of the supermind. Sounds funny, no? Contact and no contact.

But supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be probable that I should come down again at the risk of losing it? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again? So it was better to be in contact with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail, can’t you approach the tail of an animal without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter—there is no doubt of it. If I throw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of Mr. S that will come near me is his tail dangling down as he descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of him by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can’t I? So there is nothing funny about it—perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

15 September 1935

*

You know we are hanging our hopes and aspirations on the invisible tail of the supramental. But do tell us how this

¹² The preceding replies of 4–18 September were written to one correspondent. Those of 15 and 18 September that follow were written to another.—Ed.

¹³ See the letter of 29 August 1935 on pages 270–72.—Ed.

¹⁴ See the letter of 23 August 1935 on pages 345–47.—Ed.

omnipotent Mr. S will make us great sadhaks overnight. Is he going to burn up all our impurities by his blazing flame as Hanuman did Lanka or what?

If you expect to become supramental overnight, you are confoundedly mistaken. The tail will keep the H.F. [*hostile forces*] at a respectful distance and flap at you until you consent to do things in a reasonable time instead of taking 200 centuries over each step as you seem to want to do just now. More than that I refuse to say. What is a reasonable time in the supramental view of things I leave you to discover.

Your Overmental Force seems to have utterly failed in cases of idiots like us. Where then is the chance of this Mr. S which is only one step higher?

Overmind is obliged to respect the freedom of the individual — including his freedom to be perverse, stupid, recalcitrant and slow.

Supermind is not merely a step higher than Overmind — it is beyond the line, that is a different consciousness and power beyond the mental limit.

18 September 1935

*

Someone has told me that at present the Mother and you have started to send us down into the depth of the lower nature (for the purpose of transformation). Is it a fact?

We are sending nobody nowhere. The sadhana itself has come down into the depth of the physical and subconscious to make them open to what has to come down from above. That is all.

Is it true that the nearer the supramental descent, the greater the difficulties of those in whom it is to come down?

It is true, unless they are so surrendered to the Mother, so psychic, plastic, free from ego that the difficulties are spared to them.

4 October 1935

*

Why not write something about the Supermind which these people find so difficult to understand?

What's the use? How much would anybody understand? Besides the present business is to bring down and establish the Supermind, not to explain it. If it establishes itself, it will explain itself — if it doesn't, there is no use in explaining it.

I have said some things about it in past writings, but without success in enlightening anybody. So why repeat the endeavour?

9 October 1935

*

To X's comment about "near descents", you replied: "No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them — the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of subconscious mud."¹⁵ Are our present difficulties, attacks, etc. the result of the descent?

Not of the descent, but of the resistance to it.

What descent did you mean? The descent of what?

The general descent of the Supermind into Matter was the subject on which I was writing.

6 November 1935

*

Yesterday you said that the Supermind descent into Matter is what is being attempted. If that is so, has the Supermind already conquered the mental plane, the vital plane and the subtle physical plane?

There can be no conquest of the other planes by the supermind, but only an influence, so long as the physical is not ready. Besides the Supermind did not attempt — it is we who are attempting.

Unless the mind and the vital are perfectly prepared how is it possible to bring the Supermind down into the physical or into Matter itself?

¹⁵ See the letter of 27 May 1935 on pages 342–43. — Ed.

And how is it possible to perfect the mind and vital unless the physical is prepared — for there is such a thing as the mental and vital physical and mind and vital cannot be said to be perfectly prepared until these are ready.

7 November 1935

*

If the progress of the transformation of the body is so slow that it cannot keep pace with that of the higher parts, it seems that at any given time it would always be behind the higher parts. For example, when the higher parts are overmentalised the body would be just beginning to be intuitivised. In the same way, when the higher parts are supramentalised, the physical consciousness would be just beginning to receive the overmental influence. The body would always be behind unless one stopped at each stage in order to deal with the body at that level, and proceeded only when that work was finished.

That is hardly possible. The body consciousness is there and cannot be ignored, so that one can neither transform the higher parts completely leaving the body for later dealing nor make each stage complete in all its parts before going to the next. I tried that method but it never worked. A predominant overmentalisation of mind and vital is the first step, for instance, when overmentalising, but the body consciousness retains all the lower movements unovermentalised and until these can be pulled up to the overmental standard, there is no overmental perfection, always the body consciousness brings in flaws and limitations. To perfect the overmind one has to call in the supramental force and it is only when the overmind has been partially supramentalised that the body begins to be more and more overmental. I do not see any way of avoiding this process, though it is what makes the thing so long.

18 November 1935

*

Well sir, what about your brand new formula?¹⁶ How has it worked out? Are you still stuck up in the middle? Judging

¹⁶ See the letter of 16 August 1935 on page 344. — Ed.

from my own experience this Darshan [24 November 1935], it is hard to say.

My formula is working out rapidly, but it has nothing to do with any Darshan descent. It is my private and particular descent, if you like, and that's enough for me at present. The tail of the supermind is descending, descending, descending. It is only the tail at present, but where the tail can pass, the rest will follow.

After so much expectation everything seemed so quiet. Already it seems as if the Darshan passed away long ago!

Quiet was all I wanted — there were so many alarums and excursions. Just before that it looked as if the 24th would be a day of mud, whirlpools and tempests (in certain quarters of course). However all quieted down by magic — and everything was peaceful, peaceful.

I hope others felt the Force, the Descent. Some say there was a descent; others say no.

How do they know either of them? Personal experience? Then it was a personal descent or a personal non-descent. No General de Bono yet.

Some say there was so much resistance that Sri Aurobindo could not do much in spite of himself.

Didn't try, sir, so that's bosh. The attempt to bring a great general descent having only produced a great ascent of subconscious mud, I had given up that as I already told you. At present I am only busy with transformation of overmind (down to the subconscious) into supermind; when that is over, I shall see if I can beat everyone with the tail of the supermind or not. At present I am only trying to prevent people from making hysterical subconscious asses of themselves, so that I may not be too much disturbed in my operations — not yet with too much success.

25 November 1935

*

We are very happy — I believe it is due to the joy and harmony you have brought down in the atmosphere. Are the Mitra and Bhaga powers preparing to come down?

Well, it is what I am trying to bring down into the Asram atmosphere, for it is the condition for anything effective being collectively done.

25 November 1935

*

The descent of the Silence is not usually associated with sadness, though it does bring a feeling of calm detachment, unconcern and wide emptiness, but in this emptiness there is a sense of ease, freedom, peace. The absorption as if something were drawing deep from within is evidently the pull of the inmost being, the psychic. There is a psychic sadness often when this inmost soul opens and feels how far the nature and the world are from what they should be, but this is a sweet and quiet sorrow, not distressing. It must be something in the mind and vital which is not yet awake to what has happened within you and gives this colour of dissatisfied and distressed seeking.

You have certainly made a great progress since you came and there is no reason to fear any setback of the sadhana.

I don't think you need attach any value to what X professes to think about the supramental. The descent of the supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of "inconscient" Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth's beginning would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimaera; so too afterwards he would have repeated his mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimaera. It is the same now with the appearance of supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance. I do not know that the descent depends

on the readiness of the sadhaks of this Asram. It is likely that these things are determined from above rather than from below. That the descent is preparing and progressing is a fact; it is that which you feel and are justified in feeling.

1 December 1935

1936

A certain inertia, tendency to sleep, indolence, unwillingness or inability to be strong for work or spiritual effort for long at a time, is in the nature of the human physical consciousness. When one goes down into the physical for its change (that has been the general condition here for a long time), this tends to increase. Even sometimes when the pressure of the sadhana in the physical increases or when one has to go much inside, this temporarily increases — the body either needing more rest or turning the inward movement into a tendency to sleep or be at rest. You need not, however, be anxious about that. After a time this rights itself; the physical consciousness gets the true peace and calm in the cells and feels at rest even in full work or in the most concentrated condition and this tendency of inertia goes out of the nature.

9 January 1936

*

Is there any direct Supramental action upon the earth consciousness? Is that the reason why the resistance has increased? The earth consciousness seems to be too inert and obstinate. I gather that you started bringing down the Supramental into it in 1923.

Why not 1623? or since the beginning of the evolution?

7 February 1936

*

I gave 1923 as the year for the bringing down of the Supermind because I read that in 1923 you said that you were bringing it down. How can we presume that you started bringing it down much earlier unless we definitely know you have yourself spoken to this effect?

But who said that I started in 1923? The aim of bringing down the supramental was there long before. The effort to bring it down into the physical is on the contrary quite recent, during the last few years only.

8 February 1936

*

X wrote to you that he saw the Supermind descending into the earth consciousness. You wrote to him in reply that his vision and feeling were justifiable. But before the Supermind descends into the earth consciousness, do not the planes between mind and Overmind have to descend first?

They descended long ago. It does not mean that they are available to everybody or developed anywhere in their full power—only that they can be counted among the things to which one can reach by tapasya. For Supermind, it may be descending, but it may take long before it is available to the race. 7 April 1936

*

A friend wants to know many things:

(1) Descent of the Supra M. Tail—on the slightest news of which he will give a gorilla jump to Pondy to set his nerves right! Is the Tail in view?

Of course. Coming down as fast as you fellows will allow.

(2) He wants your remarks on him which will prove “precious”.

Tell him I have grown chary of remarks. Remarks frighten the Sm. T. 17 May 1936

*

I shall see what can be done [*about a promised piece of writing*]. For some time however it has been difficult for me to put myself to any sustained intellectual work, because I am strongly taken up by a push to finish inwardly in myself what remained to be done in the way of transformation of the consciousness and, though this part of it is terribly difficult and arduous, I was

making so unexpected a progress that the consciousness was unwilling to turn away from it to anything else. So much hangs on this, the decisive victory, the power to remove the difficulties of others as well as my own (those that are still there, physical and other) that I was pushing for it like Mussolini for Addis Ababa before the rains. However, any night when there is a lull, I will see.

19 May 1936

*

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy, I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things — in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it. 29 May 1936

*

Is it true that a greater and vaster Force descended this Darshan [15 August 1936]?

It is not a question of descent. We are nurturing the Force and it grows necessarily stronger and has more effect.

21 August 1936

*

The last Darshan was good on the whole. I am not now trying to bring anything sensational down on these days, but I am watching the progress in the action of the Force and Consciousness that are already there, the infiltration of a greater Light and Power from above, and there was a very satisfactory crossing of a difficult border which promises well for the near future. A thing has been done which had long failed to accomplish itself and which is of great importance. I don't explain now, because it forms part of an arranged whole which is explicable only when it is complete. But it gives a sort of strong practical assurance that the thing will be done.

26 August 1936

*

All in the Ashram are not suffering from the sense of dullness

and want of interest, but many are because the Force that is descending is discouraging the old movements of the physical and vital mind which they call life and they are not accustomed to accept the renunciation of these things, or to admit the peace or joy of silence.

9 September 1936

*

We hear your Supermind is very near — not 50 years, we hope!
Time to push us up a little, Sir, so that we may give you a proper
reception, what?

That's what the Force seems to be trying to do.

Don't forget to make us feel at least the Descent. 30 years'
sadhana,¹⁷ by Jove!

30 years too little or too many? What would have satisfied
your rational mind — 3 years? 3 months? 3 weeks? Considering
that by ordinary evolution it could not have been done even
at Nature's express speed in less than 3000 years, and would
ordinarily have taken anything from 30,000 to 300,000, the
transit of 30 years is perhaps not too slow. 10 September 1936

*

In the evening meditation I saw a white cock in the physical
and heard it crowing. I felt it as an indication of the dawn of
the Supramental Descent. Was this a right feeling? What does
the symbol indicate?

That is of course a symbol of triumph. It is true that a Force
came down full of an intense white light which the Mother
had never known to come down before and it seemed to have
a supramental authority. Your feeling therefore was probably
right. 10 September 1936

*

Yesterday after dusk, I felt as if some welcome revolution

¹⁷ See the letter of 4 April 1935 on page 374. — Ed.

had taken place in the Divine order of things. I attended the meditation and felt the whole place filled with calm and silence. . . . Then descended a *virāṭ mahāpuruṣa*, Himalayan in proportions, in the form of Sri Aurobindo, who, as if finding the earth incapable of bearing his weight, stood behind the Mother and placed his hands on her shoulders. The whole world was surcharged with silence and Ananda. The sight is beyond my powers to describe. An immeasurable force rushed into me, wave upon wave. . . . Was my experience true?

The experience you had was a true one, for something came down at that meditation which had not come down before and your experience was a translation of this descent in your consciousness. That you should have become aware of it in this way shows that your stay here has been very profitable to you and prepared your consciousness for the true realisation. The capacity for it is now there in you. Your future sadhana should be a development from the experience to the realisation.

11 September 1936

*

I hear that you are now trying more for transformation of nature than for experience.

Because without transformation of nature, the blessed experience is something like a gold crown on a pig's head — won't do. Picturesque perhaps, but —

16 September 1936

*

The awakening in the subconscious is now the great and urgent necessity and it is that for which I am pressing most.

24 September 1936

*

If the pressure here has an effect on the outside world in some way, have incidents here any connections with outside happenings? For example, I noted that on the day X and Y went from here the Italians finally conquered Abyssinia. There is a story about an occultist in Ahmedabad (in the 16th century

or so) in which it is related that he was making and unmaking mats and accordingly the wall around the city which had been built during the day fell down during the night—at the time when he was taking away the chips of the mat.

The story of the occultist contains a truth, and it would be a mistake to suppose that there is no connection between the pressure here and outside happenings. But I don't know about particular coincidences. The departure of X and Z does not seem easily relatable to the event in Abyssinia. 10 October 1936

*

I have just received your telegram communicating your disapproval of my proposed visit in November. Is it due to any wrong attitude on my part that you have not sanctioned the visit?

It is due to the fact that there have been for some time much struggle and tense conditions in the forces working in the Asram and your stay here would not be profitable to you at the moment.

3 November 1936

1937

One misgiving is pressing heavily on my soul. I sense and feel that the tone of your letters has suddenly become very grave—the owl-like severity with which you had once threatened me. I don't know what I have done to deserve such a punishment. Or is it because you are getting supramentalised day by day that you are withdrawing yourself so? There must be a reason if my “sense feel” is correct. Well, if you want to press me between two planks and pulverize me . . .

I think your sense feel has been indulging in vain imaginations, perhaps with the idea of increasing your concrete imaginative faculty and fitting you for understanding the unintelligible. Anyhow disburden your soul of the weight. I am not owled yet, and my supramentalisation is going on too slowly to justify such apprehensions. Neither am I withdrawing, rather fitting myself for a new rush in the near or far future. So cheer up and send the

Man of Sorrows with his planks to the devil. 8 January 1937

*

What have you kept in store for us, Sir? Will the sadhaks tumble in this way one by one as your Supramental comes nearer and nearer? Then with whom will you enjoy your Supramental? Night and day you are soaring and soaring.

Romantic one! I am not soaring and soaring — I am digging and digging. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard” sort of affair.

11 March 1937

*

Do you see the great Tail yet?

Tail is there — but no use without the head. 16 March 1937

1938

Since we have to lead a life in a concentrated atmosphere, all the ugly things become at once prominent, and add to it the action of the Force on the subconscious for purging of all dross.

No doubt. Also in this atmosphere pretences and social lies are difficult to maintain. But if things become prominent, it is that people may see and reject them. If instead they cling to them as their most cherished possessions, what is the use? How is the purging to be done with such an attitude? 3 April 1938

*

You need not be afraid of losing anything great by postponing your return to Pondicherry. A general descent of the kind you speak of is not in view at the moment and even if it comes, it can very easily catch you up into itself whenever you come if you are in the right openness; and if you are not, then even its descending would not be of so urgent an importance, since it would take you some time to become aware of it or receive it. So there is no reason why you should not in this matter cleave

to common sense and the sage advice of the doctors.

1 August 1938

*

By the way, you had better hurry up with your Supermind descent, Sir. Otherwise Hitler, Mussolini & Co. will gunfire it like — !

What has Supermind to do with Hitler or Hitler with Supermind? Do you expect the Supermind to aviate to Berchtesgaden? How the devil can they gunfire S; their aeroplanes can't even reach Pondicherry, much less the Supermind. The descent of S depends on S, not on Hitler or no Hitler. 16 September 1938

1944

There is another cause of the general inability to change which at present afflicts the sadhak. It is because the sadhana, as a general fact, has now and for a long time past come down to the Inconscient; the pressure, the call is to change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient, the fixed habits, the automatic movements, the mechanical repetitions of the nature, the involuntary reactions to life, all that seems to belong to the fixed character of a man. This has to be done if there is to be any chance of a total spiritual change. The Force (generally and not individually) is working to make that possible, its pressure is for that,— for, on the other levels, the change has already been made possible (not, mind you, assured to everybody). But to open the Inconscient to light is a herculean task; change on the other levels is much easier. As yet this work has only begun and it is not surprising that there seems to be no change in things or people. It will come in time, but not in a hurry.

As for experiences, they are all right but the trouble is that they do not seem to change the nature, they only enrich the consciousness — even the realisation, on the mind level, of the Brahman seems to leave the nature almost where it was, except for a few. That is why we insist on the psychic transformation

as the first necessity — for that does change the nature — and its chief instrument is bhakti, surrender, etc.

27 April 1944

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I have explained to you why so many people (not by any means all) are in this gloomy condition, dull and despondent. It is the tamas, the inertia of the Inconscient, that has got hold of them. But also it is the small physical vital which takes only an interest in the small and trivial things of the ordinary daily and social life and nothing else. When formerly the sadhana was going on on higher levels (mind, higher vital etc.), there was plenty of vigour and verve and interest in the details of the Asram work and life as well as in an inner life; the physical vital was carried in the stream. But for many this has dropped; they live in the unsatisfied vital physical and find everything desperately dull, gloomy and without interest or issue. In their inner life the tamas from the Inconscient has created a block or a bottleneck and they do not find any way out. If one can keep the right condition and attitude, a strong interest in work or a strong interest in sadhana, then this becomes quiescent. That is the malady. Its remedy is to keep the right condition and to bring gradually or, if one can, swiftly the light of the higher aspiration into this part of the being also, so that whatever the conditions of the environment, it may keep also the right poise. Then the sunlit path should be less impossible.

16 June 1944

1945

I have no intention, I can assure you, of cutting off connection in the future. What restrictions there have been, were due to unavoidable causes. My retirement itself was indispensable; otherwise I would not now be where I am, that is, personally near the goal. When the goal is reached, things will be different. But as far as you are concerned, I have given to you what I have not given to others; what you have quoted about my connection with you is perfectly true; if it were false, why should I have persistently pressed you to remain with me always? Inwardly,

I have been constant in my desire and my effort to help you, not only from time to time, but daily and always. If you had an unprecedented peace for so long a time, it was due to my persistent inner pressure; I refuse to give up all the credit to my double, Krishna.

14 August 1945

1947

The extreme acuteness of your difficulties is due to the yoga having come down against the bedrock of Inconscience which is the fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work that is leading toward that victory. The difficulties themselves are general in the Ashram as well as in the outside world. Doubt, discouragement, diminution or loss of faith, waning of the vital enthusiasm for the ideal, perplexity and a baffling of the hope for the future are the common features of the difficulty. In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure to the exclusion of higher things and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come.

9 April 1947

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If I had been standing on the Supermind level and acting on the world by the instrumentation of Supermind, that world would have changed or would be changing much more rapidly and in

a different fashion from what is happening now. My present effort is not to stand up on a high and distant Supermind level and change the world from there, but to bring something of it down here and to stand on that and act by that, but at the present stage the progressive supramentalisation of the Overmind is the first immediate preoccupation and a second is the lightening of the heavy resistance of the Inconscient and the support it gives to human ignorance which is always the main obstacle in any attempt to change the world or even to change oneself. I have always said that the spiritual force I have been putting on human affairs such as the War is not the supramental but the overmind force, and that when it acts in the material world it is so inextricably mixed up in the tangle of the lower world forces that its results, however strong or however adequate for the immediate object, must necessarily be partial. That is why I am getting a birthday present of a free India on August 15, but complicated by its being presented in two packets as two free Indias: this is a generosity I could have done without, one free India would have been enough for me if offered as an unbroken whole.

7 July 1947

Section Three

Some Aspects of the Sadhana in Pondicherry

Inner Vicissitudes and Difficulties

Undeterred by Difficulty

I suppose all spiritual or inner experiences can be denounced as merely subjective and delusive. But to the spiritual seeker even the smallest inner experience is a thing of value. I stand for the Truth I hold in me and I would still stand for it even if it had no chance whatever of outward fulfilment in this life. I should go on with it even if all here abandoned and repudiated me and denounced it to the world as a delusion and a folly. I have never disguised from myself the difficulties of what I have undertaken, it is not difficulties or the threat of failure that can deter me.

7 April 1935

Oscillating or Up and Down Movement

My inner condition is not quite a vacancy, but rather a sort of stillness, with some mechanical movement of thought.

That is to say, the Power is still working on the physical consciousness (the mechanical mind and the subconscious) to bring stillness there. Sometimes the stillness comes but not complete, sometimes the mechanical mind reasserts itself. This oscillation usually takes place in a movement of the kind. Even if there is a sudden or rapid transforming shock or downrush, there has to be some working out of this kind afterwards — that at least has always been my experience. For most, however, there comes, first, this slow preparatory process.

29 August 1934

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The “failure” I speak of is a failure to respond in the right way when there is a particular pressure. This is a clear sign of unfitness. The very first thing you wrote about me was that I was not prepared or ready for the sadhana.

I do not at all agree about the unfitness. When you came here first you were too raw still, but since then you have developed much and, whatever difficulties may remain, it cannot be said that the ground is not there! I do not quite understand what you mean by the pressure, but if you mean the pressure of the universal forces, sex, anger etc., it is always under that pressure that the recurrences occur. There is nothing new or peculiar in that which would justify a conclusion of individual unfitness. These things have also often a periodicity in them which helps them to recur and the up and down movement is characteristic of the course followed by the nature in the sadhana which I myself felt for many years together. It is only after one reaches a certain height that one gets rid of it or rather it changes into an oscillation the reason and utility of which one can understand. Until that happens one has to go on and the one thing one must avoid is this feeling of despondency and self-distrust. If one perseveres, the final success is sure.

24 October 1934

*

I hope that you will soon acquire the faith and patience for which you aspire and that the oscillations cease. For me the path of Yoga has always been a battle as well as a journey, a thing of ups and downs, of light followed by darkness followed by a greater light—but nobody is better pleased than myself when a disciple can arrive out of all that to the smooth and clear path which the human physical mind quite rightly yearns for.

24 December 1935

Stoppage of Sadhana

The worst thing for sadhana is to get into a morbid condition, always thinking of "lower forces, attacks etc." If the sadhana has stopped for a time, then let it stop, remain quiet, do ordinary things, rest when rest is needed—wait till the physical consciousness is ready. My own sadhana when it was far more advanced than yours used to stop for half a year together. I did not make a fuss about it, but remained quiet till the empty or

dull period was over.

8 March 1935

*

The inertia, physical weakness, endless subconscious recurrences have covered up my sadhana again and made such a confusion that I don't know how to pull myself out of it.

By calling down the Descent, since the Ascent is impossible. At least that is how I dealt with the situation in my own case.

5 October 1935

*

I think the sadhana by itself does not refuse to go farther. It is some part of our being that determines the action of the sadhana.

If so then there is no need of any other force than the sadhak's own. My own experience is different, that the sadhana very often does refuse to go on except under certain conditions or until those conditions are realised. But yours may be different.

16 November 1935

*

No joy, no energy. Don't like to read or write—as if a dead man were walking about. Do you understand the position? Any personal experience?

I quite understand; often had it myself devastatingly. That's why I always advise people who have it to cheer up and buck up.

Since one has to pass the time somehow, what is one to do?
To bear the Cross gloomily, hoping for a resurrection?

To cheer up, buck up and the rest if you can, saying "Rome was not built in a day"—if you can't, gloom it through till the sun rises and the little birds chirp and all is well.

Looks however as if you were going through a training in vairagya. Don't much care for vairagya myself—always avoided the beastly thing, but had to go through it partly, till I

hit on samata as a better trick. But samata is difficult, vairagya is easy, only damnably gloomy and uncomfortable. 3 June 1936

*

Suddenly to drop without doing anything wrong — why such a setback?

Everybody drops. I have dropped myself thousands of times during the sadhana. What roseleaf-princess sadhaks you all are!

2 April 1937

No Resorting to Miracles

How can one train oneself to have a direct intuition?

It can be done, — but I should have to write an essay on the Intuition to make any explanation intelligible.

I thought whatever is necessary will grow of itself through growth of consciousness or something else. Must one train oneself for things one after another? Why should they not open up like your painting vision?¹

It can or it may not. Why did not everything open up in me like the painting vision and some other things? All did not. As I told you I had to plod in many things. Otherwise the affair would not have taken so many years (30). In this Yoga one can't always take a short cut in everything. I had to work on each problem and on each conscious plane to solve or to transform and in each I had to take the blessed conditions as they were and do honest work without resorting to miracles. Of course if the consciousness grows all of itself, it is all right, things will come with the growth, but not even then pell-mell in an easy gallop.

4 April 1935

*

You had Nirvana in three days. Still you say there was no spirituality in you!

¹ See the letter of 29 December 1934 on page 264. — Ed.

None, before I took up Yoga.

You said [*in the preceding letter*] that nothing comes at an “easy gallop”, that one has to plod on and develop faculties.

No, I did not say nothing comes in an easy gallop. Some things do. But one can't count on that as a rule. 5 April 1935

The Censor

I don't find it a noble voice at all, it is the voice of the usual defeatist suggester using any and every reasoning to instil weakness, flight and self-destruction. There is no strong reasoning, either, it is the usual round of sophistries always the same and repeated to every sadhak in turn. “Give up, give up, give up! run, run, run! die, die, say die, say die.” That is always the substance of it, the rest is only skin and shell to give it a good presentation. I don't reason with the creature; you may reason like Socrates and be as convincing as the Buddha, but after a little it will soon come back and sing the same song over again. It pretends to reason, but doesn't care a damn for either truth or reason — I know too well the ways of the fellow — I have paid heavily to know. In my own sadhana I have heard his chant of death a million times and several hundreds of times from this or that sadhak. So I simply refuse to listen to him and I advise you to do the same.

February 1935

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There is no reason to think that the movement of strength and purity was a make-believe. No, it was a real thing. But with these strong forward movements the vital enthusiasm often comes in with a triumphant “Now it is finished”, which is not quite justified, for “Now it will soon be finished” would be nearer to it. It is at these moments that the thrice-damned Censor comes in with a jog, raises up a still shaky bit of the nature and produces a result that is out of all proportion to the size of the little bit, just to show that it is not finished. I have had any number of times that experience myself. All this comes from the complexity

and slowness of our evolutionary nature which Yoga quickens but not as a whole at a stroke. But in fact, as I said, these crises are out of all proportion to their cause in the nature. One must therefore not be discouraged, but see the exaggeration in the adversary's successful negation as well as the exaggeration in our own idea of a complete and definitive victory already there.

24 August 1936

Depression and Despair

Fits of despair and darkness are a tradition in the path of sadhana —in all Yogas oriental and occidental they seem to have been the rule. I know all about them myself—but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose. That is why whenever they come in you or others I try to lift up before them the gospel of faith. If still they come, one has only to get through them as soon as possible and get back into the sun.

9 April 1930

Exacerbation of Vital Movements

The exacerbation of certain vital movements is a perfectly well-known phenomenon in Yoga and does not mean that one has degenerated, but only that one has come to close grips instead of to a pleasant nodding acquaintance with the basic instincts of the earthly vital nature. I have had myself the experience of this rising to a height, during a certain stage of the spiritual development, of things that before hardly existed and seemed quite absent in the pre-Yogic life. These things rise up like that because they are fighting for their existence—they are not really personal to you and the vehemence of their attack is not due to any "badness" in the personal nature. I dare say seven sadhaks out of ten have a similar experience. Afterwards when they cannot effect their object, which is to drive the sadhak out of his sadhana, the whole thing sinks and there is no longer any vehement trouble. I repeat that the only serious thing about it is the depression created in you and the idea of inability in the

yoga that they take care to impress on the brain when they are at their work. If you can get rid of that, the violence of the vital attacks is only the phenomenon of a stage and does not in the end matter.

24 June 1932

*

God knows when I shall be above all this vital desire, sex, etc.
I heave a sigh thinking of such retrogression.

There is nothing peculiar about retrogression. I was also noted in my earlier time before Yoga for the rareness of anger. At a certain period of the Yoga it rose in me like a volcano, and I had to take a long time eliminating it. As for sex — well. You are always thinking that the things that are happening to you are unique and nobody else ever had such trials or downfalls or misery before.

13 November 1936

*

You surprise me very much by this volcanic anger of yours. People say that they never heard a single harsh, rude, angry word from your mouth here in Pondicherry. But how is it that this "volcano" flared up in Yoga when you were noted for its rareness in pre-Yoga? Subconscious surge?

I was speaking of a past phase. I don't know about subconscious, must have come from universal Nature.

14 November 1936

*

I heard an interesting thing, that you gave X a big shout! Ah, I wish I had heard it! But I thought you had lost your capacity to shout?

The supramental (even its tail) does not take away any capacity, but rather sublimates all and gives those that were not there. So I gave a sublimated supramental shout. I freely admit that (apart from the public platform) I have shouted only four or five times in my life.

23 July 1938

Overcoming Adverse Movements

I cannot believe that the soul in you can be broken to pieces and, so long as that is there, it is always possible to recover. It must be something in the surface consciousness that is feeling like that. But from that it is perfectly possible to arise, even though it may seem difficult or impossible at the time. Nor can I see why there should be this devastating sense of humiliation because of an adverse movement that some of the greatest Yogis have passed through, not to speak of myself in my earlier days or some of the most forceful sadhaks here. One gets caught unawares and thrown down and feels broken — but after a time the shock passes and one gets up and pursues the Way — till one reaches the “straight and thornless path where there is no more wall or obstacle”.

15 September 1934

The Descent into the Physical

What you are experiencing is the condition which comes when the whole consciousness has come down into the physical — with the object of bringing down the higher consciousness into the external nature. At first there seems to be the external nature only with a tendency to more peace and quiet than before, but no new positive experience. The first thing the physical consciousness is worked on to acquire is quiet, peace and equanimity as a basis for other things — but what comes is a tendency to neutral quiet which looks like inertia with occasional peace and silence. What is necessary is to bring down peace and silence and a strong equanimity within into the external nature and the very cells of the body. But the difficulty is that the physical nature has little tendency to aspiration, its habit is to wait for the higher forces to do their work and remain passive. I think it is this difficulty that you are feeling. I felt it myself very often and for long periods at that stage of the sadhana. A steady development of the habit of a very quiet but persistent tapasya in the form of a quiet concentration of will to progress could be very helpful at this stage.

1 July 1934

*

Was there in me a continuous real sadhana in 1933? Was it not rather only a mental experience without any real solidity in it? Otherwise why should such a fall have come during these two years?

There was certainly a real sadhana then and a very persistent preparation on the mental and vital planes. If there had not been, the descents of peace would not have begun. The fall came because when you descended into the physical consciousness to complete the preparation there, you became too passive, not continuing your will of tapasya, with the result that this sex force took advantage of the inertia of the physical consciousness to assert itself fully. That kind of passivity to the forces comes upon many when there is the descent into the physical; one then feels different forces playing in the consciousness without having the same power of reaction as one had in the mind and the vital—sometimes peace etc. from above, sometimes disturbing forces. I had to pass through the same stage myself and it took me 2 years at least to get out of it. To develop in the physical itself a constant will for the drawing down of the higher consciousness—especially the Peace and Force from above, is the best way out of it.

8 July 1935

Transforming *Tamas* into *Sama*

Either because the silence deepened or because the dullness increased, I felt a little sleepy after work. After waking I found my thoughts were moving about very slowly in a dull way. During meditation the mental lethargy passed away, but something of it remained in the body.

It is sometimes a little difficult to say whether it is silence or the physical's translation of the silence into a kind of inertia. I have experienced that very often in the rather difficult task of turning the *tamas* into *sama*, physical *tamas* into spiritual rest and peace which is its divine counterpart.

11 March 1934

Dizziness or Giddiness

I still feel dizzy sometimes, but I would like to do some work in the evenings.

You can try. I used to feel dizziness at one time for months together, but it never prevented me from walking or doing my work — but for that you must have a consciousness which observes the dizziness and is not lost in it.

*

Giddiness can come from many causes. I used to walk about for hours with my head going round or going up in a most exhilarating way. It gave me a perverse Ananda but did not inconvenience me otherwise.

17 March 1935

Persistence of Dreams from the Subconscious

For the last few days I am having frequent dreams of eating. Does it indicate greed for food or a need in the body, or is it a sign of coming illness as they believe in the villages?

I don't think so — it is probably old impressions from the subconscious material (not vital — therefore a memory rather than a desire) rising up in sleep. I remember a time when I was always seeing dishes of food even though I did not care a hang about food at the time.

2 April 1934

*

I do not find any change in the character of my dreams as yet — I get the usual kind of dreams about home life, eating, meeting strange people, moving about, etc. Why has there been no change in this respect in spite of my three years of sadhana here?

Dreams of this kind can last for years and years after the waking consciousness has ceased to interest itself in things of that kind. The subconscious is exceedingly obstinate in the keeping of its old impressions. I find myself even recently having a dream of

revolutionary activities or another in which the Maharaja of Baroda butted in, people and things I have not even thought of passingly for the last twenty years almost. I suppose it is because the very business of the subconscious in the human psychology is to keep all the past inside it and, being without conscious mentality, it clings to its office until the light has fully come down into it, illumining even its corners and crevices.

17 December 1934

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Even though I have stopped corresponding with my relatives, I still get useless memories of them. Others who do correspond with their relatives don't seem to get disturbed by it. How solid these people seem to be.

I suppose it acts differently with different natures. Some benefit greatly by not writing; after a time they lose all contact with the old life. There are others who go on thinking and dreaming of relatives, old places and scenes, old faces etc. etc.; others dream of these things half the night although in the daytime they never think of them. I myself found myself sometimes (not so long ago) dreaming of the Gaekwar and even now sometimes Barin turns up in a most unexpected way. The impressions of the subconscious fade out very slowly. But all the same I think not renewing them does help. I am not so sure about the solidity of the persons you speak of—I know that in some cases it keeps up old attachments and prevents the physical consciousness from being free as it would have been otherwise.

14 June 1935

Sadhana and the Subconscious

I concentrate so much on reading French that no room is left for sadhana-thinking, with the result that as soon as I come out of that concentration anything can enter in my mind. Should I continue to read during work time or not?

The Mother says she has no objection to your reading French during the work time.

I should say however that if you could divide your attention

between the reading and sadhana-thought and concentration more, it might be better from the point of view you mention. I mean that there should be sufficient concentration to create in your mind a sadhana atmosphere which you can bring up to the surface as soon as you leave reading or whenever it is needed to set right an invading movement. Otherwise the subconscious forces have free play and gain power. Besides the condition becomes subconscious, i.e. inert and like a drift. At least that is what I have seen recently in my dealings with my own subconscious, so I pass on the hint to you.

27 May 1935

Unusual Experiences and States of Consciousness

Visions of Unknown People

Yes, of course, I remember about Baroda Babu—I can't say I remember him because I never saw him, at least in the flesh. What he probably means by the Supramental is the Above Mind — what I now call Illumined Mind—Intuition—Overmind. I used to make that confusion myself at the beginning.

There is not enough to go upon to say whether he really sees the Mother or an image of her is reflected in his own mind. But there is nothing extraordinary, much less impossible in seeing a person whom one has never seen — you are thinking as if the inner mind and sense, the inner vision were limited by the outer mind and sense, the outer vision, or were a mere reflection of that. There would be not much use in an inner mind and sense and vision if they were only that and nothing more. This faculty is one of the elementary powers of the inner sense and inner seeing and not only Yogins have it, but ordinary clairvoyants, crystal-gazers etc. The latter can see people they never knew, saw or heard of before, doing certain precise things in certain very precise surroundings, and every detail of the vision is confirmed afterwards by the persons seen — there are many striking and indubitable cases of that kind. The Mother is always seeing people whom she does not know; some afterwards come here or their photographs come here. I myself have these visions, only I don't usually try to remember or verify them. But there were two curious instances which were among the first of their kind and which therefore I remember. Once I was trying to see a recently elected deputy here and saw someone quite different from him, someone who afterwards came here as Governor. I ought never to have met him in the ordinary course, but a curious mistake happened and as a result I went and saw him in his bureau and at once recognised him. The other was a certain V. Ramaswamy

whom I had to meet, but I saw him not as he was when he actually came, but as he became after a year's residence in my house. He became the very image of that vision, a face close-cropped, rough, rude, energetic, the very opposite of the dreamy smooth-faced enthusiastic Vaishnava who came to me. So that was the vision of a man I had never seen, but as he was to be in the future — a prophetic vision.

24 October 1934

The Stone-Throwing Incident

These stone-throwing or stone-producing incidents and similar extraordinary occurrences which go outside the ordinary course of physical Nature happen frequently in India and are not unknown elsewhere; they are akin to what are called poltergeist phenomena in Europe. Scientists don't say or think anything of such supernormal happenings except to pooh-pooh them or to prove that they are simply the tricks of children simulating supernatural manifestations. It was only three or four stones that fell inside a room, the others were thrown from outside and in the last period banged day after day against the closed door of Bijoy Nag who was sheltering inside the servant boy who became the centre of the phenomena. As the boy got wounded by two of the last stones, we sent him away to another house with the idea that then the phenomena would cease and it so happened. As a rule these things need certain conditions to happen — e.g. a house which becomes the field of the action of these supernormal forces and a person (usually psychologically ill-developed) who is very often their victim as well as their centre. If the person is removed elsewhere, the phenomena often stop but sometimes his aura is so strong for these things that the house aura is not needed — they continue wherever he or she goes. As for the other necessary factor it is supposed to be elemental beings who are the agents. Sometimes they act on their own account, sometimes they are controlled and used by a person with occult powers. It was supposed here that some magic must have been used — such magic is common in the Tamil country and indeed in all South India. The stones were material enough, a huge heap of them

were collected and remained at the staircase bottom for two or three days, so they were not thoughts taking a brick form. It was evidently a case of materialisation probably preceded by a previous dematerialisation and “transport”—the bricks became first visible in their flight at a few feet from the place where they fell.

Scientific laws only give a schematic account of material processes of Nature—as a valid scheme they can be used for reproducing or extending at will a material process, but obviously they cannot give an account of the thing itself. Water for instance is not merely so much oxygen and hydrogen put together—the combination is simply a process or device for enabling the materialisation of a new thing called water; what that new thing really is is quite another matter. In fact there are different planes of substance, gross, subtle and more subtle going back to what is called causal (*kāraṇa*) substance. What is more gross can be reduced to the subtle state and the subtle brought into the gross state; that accounts for dematerialisation and materialisation and rematerialisation. These are occult processes and are vulgarly regarded as magic. Ordinarily the magician knows nothing of the why and wherefore of what he is doing, he has simply learned the formula or process or else controls elemental beings of the subtler states (planes or worlds) who do the thing for him. The Tibetans indulge widely in occult processes; if you see the books of Madame David-Neel who has lived in Tibet you will get an idea of their expertness in these things. But also the Tibetan Lamas know something of the laws of occult (mental and vital) energy and how it can be made to act on physical things. That is something which goes beyond mere magic. The direct power of mind-force or life-force upon matter can be extended to an almost illimitable degree—but that has nothing to do with the stone-throwing affair which is of a lower and more external order. In your (2) and (3) different operations seem to be confused together, (1) the creation of mere (subtle) images which the one who sees may mistake for real things, (2) the temporary materialisation of subtle substance into forms capable of cognition not only by the sight but by material

touch or other sense, (3) the handling of material objects by mind-energy or vital force, e.g. making a pencil move and write on paper. All these things are possible and have been done. It must be remembered that Energy is fundamentally one in all the planes, only taking more and more dense forms, so there is nothing *a priori* impossible in mind-energy or life-energy acting directly on material energy and substance; if they do they can make a material object do things or rather can do things with a material object which would be to that object in its ordinary poise or "law" unhabitual and therefore apparently impossible.

I do not see how cosmic rays can explain the origination of matter; it is like Sir Oliver Lodge's explanation of life on earth that it comes from another planet; it only pushes the problem one step farther back — for how do the cosmic rays come into existence? But it is a fact that Agni is the basis of forms as the Sankhya pointed out long ago, i.e. the fiery principle in its three powers radiant, electric and gaseous (the Vedic trinity of Agni) is the agent in producing liquid and solid forms of what is called matter.

Obviously a layman can't do these things, unless he has a native "psychic" (that is, occult) faculty and even then he will have to learn the law of the thing before he can use it at will. It is always possible to use spiritual force or mind-power or will-power or a certain kind of vital energy to produce effects in men, things and happenings; but knowledge and much practice is needed before this possibility ceases to be occasional and haphazard and can be used quite consciously, at will or to perfection. Even then to have "a control over the whole material world" is too big a proposition; a local and partial control is more possible or, more widely, certain kinds of control over matter. 24 October 1938

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About the occult phenomenon of the house and the stones etc.
What was it?

I gave this as one instance of actual occult experience and action in accordance with occult law and practice, showing that these

things are not imaginations or delusions or humbug, but can be true phenomena. The stone-throwing began unobtrusively with a few stones thrown at the Guest House kitchen — apparently from the terrace opposite, but there was no one there. The phenomenon began before the fall of dusk and continued at first for half an hour, but daily it increased in frequency, violence and the size of the stones and the duration of the attack till it lasted for several hours until it towards the end became in the hour or half hour before midnight a regular bombardment. It was no longer at the kitchen only, but thrown too in other places, e.g. the outer verandah. At first we took it for a human-made affair and sent for the police, but the investigation lasted only for a very short time; when one of the constables in the verandah got a stone whizzing unaccountably between his legs, the police abandoned the case in a panic. We made our own investigations, but the places whence the stones seemed to be or might be coming were void of human stone-throwers. Finally, as if to put us kindly out of doubt, the stones began falling in closed rooms; one huge one (I saw it immediately after it fell) reposed flat and comfortable on a cane table as if that was its proper place. To wind up, they became murderous. The stones had hitherto been harmless in result except for a daily battering of Bijoy's door which (in the last days) I had watched for half an hour the night before the end. They appeared in mid-air a few feet above the ground, not coming from a distance but suddenly manifesting, and from the direction from which they flew, should have been thrown close in from the compound of the Guest House or the verandah itself, but the whole place was in a clear light and I saw that there was no human being there and could not have been. At last the semi-idiot boy-servant who seemed to be the centre of the attack and was sheltered in Bijoy's room under Bijoy's protection began to be severely hit and was bleeding from a wound by stones thrown from inside the closed room. I went in at Bijoy's call and saw the last stone fall on the boy; Bijoy and he were sitting side by side and the stone was thrown at them from in front, but there was no one visible to throw it — the two were alone in the room. So unless it was Wells's invisible man — ! We had

been only watching or sometimes scouting around till then, but this was a little too much, it was becoming dangerous, and something had to be done. The Mother from her knowledge of the process of these things decided that the process here must depend on a nexus between the boy-servant and the house and if the nexus were broken, the servant and the house separated, the stone-throwing would cease. We sent him away to Hrishikesh's place and immediately the whole phenomenon ceased; not a single stone was thrown after that, peace reigned. That shows that these occult phenomena are real, have a law or process, as definite as that of any scientific operation and a knowledge of these processes can not only bring them about but put an end to or annul or dissolve them.

6 February 1943

Unconsciousness of the Body

When the consciousness merges in the Self very little sense of my body remains. I do not know what it does or holds or even where it lies.

That is usual. I was in that way unconscious of the body for many years.

15 October 1934

Thinking Outside the Body

Owing to much reading I feel a strain and dryness in the head and find it difficult to sleep. But while reading and remembering I feel as if the process goes on somewhere in the chest, not in the head, and yet the strain is felt in the head. Why is this so?

The chest action is rather curious, because it is the vital mind that is there and the Romans always spoke of the mind as if it were in the heart. But memory and reading would rather be in the physical mind. But anyhow the brain is a conveying instrument for all these activities and can feel the strain if there is any. The best relief for the brain is when the thinking takes place outside the body and above the head (or in space or at other levels but still outside the body). At any rate it was so in my case; for as

soon as that happened there was an immense relief; I have felt body strain since then but never any kind of brain-fatigue. I have heard the same thing from others.

19 December 1934

Part Three

The Leader and the Guide

Section One

The Guru and the Avatar

The Guru

The Guru and the Divine

It is not usual to use the word Guru in the supramental yoga, here everything comes from the Divine himself. But if anybody wants it he can use it for the time being. November 1929

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The relation of Guru and disciple is only one of many relations which one can have with the Divine, and in this Yoga which aims at a supramental realisation, it is not usual to give it this name; rather, the Divine is regarded as the Source, the living Sun of Light and Knowledge and Consciousness and spiritual realisation and all that one receives is felt as coming from there and the whole being remoulded by the Divine Hand. This is a greater and more intimate relation than that of the human Guru and disciple, which is more of a limited mental ideal. Nevertheless, if the mind still needs the more familiar mental conception, it can be kept so long as it is needed; only do not let the soul be bound by it and do not let it limit the inflow of other relations with the Divine and larger forms of experience.

12 December 1929

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Those who consciously carry in them ideas about becoming equal in status with the Divine or with their guru may be detained long, if not in the larger planes, at least in the Overmind, so long as the ego is there.

They cannot get beyond unless they lose it. Even in these planes it prevents them from getting the full consciousness and knowledge. For in the Overmind cosmic consciousness too ego is absent, though the true Person may be there. 27 April 1935

Surrender to the Guru

Surrender to the Divine and surrender to the Guru are said to be two different things. Is it really so?

No. In surrendering to the Guru, it is to the Divine in him that one surrenders—if it were only to a human entity it would be ineffective. But it is the consciousness of the Divine Presence that makes the Guru a real Guru, so that even if the disciple surrenders to him thinking of the human being to whom he surrenders, that Presence would still make it effective.

Does surrender to the formless Divine leave the being subject to the gunas and ego to a certain extent?

Yes—because only the static part would be free in formlessness, the active Nature would be still in the play of the gunas. Many think they are free from the ego because they get the sense of the formless Existence, they do not see that the egoistic element remains in their action just as before.

Is not surrender to the Divine in form—as the Guru—higher than the surrender to the formless Divine?

It is more dynamic.

What makes the surrender to the Guru so grand and glorious as to be called the surrender beyond all surrenders?

Because through it you surrender not only to the impersonal but to the personal, not only to the Divine in yourself but to the Divine outside you; you get a chance for the surpassing of ego not only by retreat into the Self where ego does not exist, but in the personal nature where it is the ruler. It is the sign of the will to complete surrender to the total Divine, *samagram mām, mānuṣīn tanum āśritam*. Of course it must be a genuine spiritual surrender for all this to be true.

If absolute surrender to the Guru leaves one helpless like a puppet in the hands of forces — what good is it? I think what is harmful is to surrender only to the Divine in the Guru and not to the Divine in one's Self. It is this one-sided surrender which is harmful.

What is harmful is to surrender to something in yourself which flatters your ego and which you call the Divine. It is that which makes you a puppet in the hands of Forces. 20 November 1933

Need of the Guru's Help

An old man of sixty began practising Yoga by reading your books. Eventually he developed signs of insanity. His son describes his condition and asks for advice. I am sending his letter.

As for the letter, I suppose you will have to tell the writer that his father committed a mistake when he took up Yoga without a Guru — for the mental idea about a Guru cannot take the place of the actual living influence. This Yoga especially, as I have written in my books, needs the help of the Guru and cannot be done without it. The condition into which his father got was a breakdown, not a state of siddhi. He passed out of the normal mental consciousness into a contact with some intermediate zone of consciousness (not the spiritual) where one can be subjected to all sorts of voices, suggestions, ideas, so-called aspirations which are not genuine. I have warned against the dangers of this intermediate zone in one of my books. The sadhak can avoid entering into this zone — if he enters, he has to look with indifference on all these things and observe them without lending any credence, by so doing he can safely pass into the true spiritual light. If he takes them all as true or real without discrimination, he is likely to land himself in a great mental confusion and, if there is in addition a lesion or weakness of the brain — the latter is quite possible in one who has been subject to apoplexy — it may have serious consequences and even lead to a disturbance of the reason. If there is ambition, or other motive of the kind

mixed up in the spiritual seeking, it may lead to a fall in the Yoga and the growth of an exaggerated egoism or megalomania — of this there are several symptoms in the utterances of his father during the crisis. In fact one cannot or ought not to plunge into the experiences of this sadhana without a fairly long period of preparation and purification (unless one has already a great spiritual strength and elevation). Sri Aurobindo himself does not care to accept many into his path and rejects many more than he accepts. It would be well if he can get his father to pursue the sadhana no farther — for what he is doing is not really Sri Aurobindo's Yoga but something he has constructed in his own mind and once there has been an upset of this kind the wisest course is discontinuance.

21 April 1937

A Reluctant Guru

I have prayed a lot today. Some comfort to dwell on that, though Krishnaprem advocates the Upanishadic attitude — “Awake! Arise!” — and not to trust too much to Divine Grace.

Krishnaprem's objection to Grace would be valid if the religionists mattered, but in spiritual things they don't. Their action naturally is to make a formula and dry shell of everything, not Grace alone. Even “Awake, Arise” leads to the swelled head or the formula — can't be avoided when Mr. Everyman deals with things divine. I had the same kind of violent objection to Gurugiri, but you see I was obliged by the irony of things or rather by the inexorable truth behind them to become a Guru and preach the Guruvada. Such is Fate.

16 January 1936

The Question of Avatarhood

The Guru and the Avatar

About the question of the Avatar, I do not think it is useful to press in the matter. It has become very much the tendency, especially in Bengal, to regard the Guru as the Avatar. To every disciple the Guru is the Divine, but in a special sense—for the Guru is supposed to live in the divine consciousness, to have attained union and when he gives to the disciple, it is the Divine that gives and what he gives is the consciousness of the Divine who is within the Guru. But that and Avatarhood are two different things. It is mostly in East Bengal recently that those have come who were acclaimed as Avatars; those who came had each of them the idea of a work to be done for the world and the sense of a Divine Power working through them, which shows that there was a pressure for manifestation there and something came in each case, for something of the Divine Power always comes when it is called, but it does not look as if there was anywhere the complete descent. It is this that may have created the idea that the Avatar was born there. It has always been said of the Advent that is to come now that there would be many in whom it would seem that it had come, but the real Avatar would work behind a veil until the destined hour came.

I do not gather from what is quoted as said by your Guru that he claimed to be the Avatar. It seems to me that he claimed to be a Power preparing the way for the work of the Divine Mother and even to indicate that all that he meant would be manifested not only by his own followers but by other groups (সমন্বয়), consisting evidently of those who had not had him for Guru but had some other Head and Teacher. This is also confirmed by the saying that some other one than his disciples might be the means of his প্রকাশ—that is to say, would be the means of carrying on his work and aiding the manifestation of

the Mother. If this meant proclaiming him as the Avatar, I do not see how it can agree with the other saying that after his leaving his body the Avatar would come to the Asram he had created.

I do not quite know what is meant by *ayoni-sambhava*. An incarnation is always through a human mother, though there have been one or two cases in which a virgin birth has been proclaimed (Christ, Buddha). The only other meaning — unless we suppose an unprecedented miracle — might be a descent such as sometimes happens, the Godhead manifesting in somebody who at birth was a Vibhuti, not at once the full incarnation. But in the absence of a clear statement from your Guru himself, these are only speculations.

I have written this much as an answer to your question, but I doubt whether it is necessary or advisable to write anything of it to your friends. They have their own feeling about the matter; it seems to me better not to challenge or disturb it.

25 August 1935

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Elsewhere people try to find out various qualities in their Guru to prove him an Avatar; here some try to find out reasons to disprove even the possibility.

It is a modern Asram, that's why!

14 November 1935

The Avatar and Human Ideas of Space

How can the Divine, who is the All or Omnipresent, containing the Infinite, incarnate in the small space of a human body? I believe it is because this seems impossible to the mind that the Arya Samajists do not accept the possibility of incarnation.

The objection is founded on human three-dimensional ideas of Space and division in spaces, which are again founded upon the limited nature of the human senses. To some beings space is one-dimensional, to others two-dimensional, to others three-dimensional — but there are other dimensions also. It is well recognised in metaphysics that the Infinite can be in a point and not only in extension of space — just as there is an eternity of

extension in Time but also an Eternity which is independent of Time so that it can be felt in the moment — one has not to think of millions and millions of years in order to realise it. So too the rigid distinction of One against Many, a One that cannot be many or of an All that is made up by addition and not self-existent are crude mental notions of the outer finite mind that cannot be applied to the Infinite. If the All were of this material and unspiritual character, tied down to a primary arithmetic and geometry, the realisation of the universe in oneself, of the all in each and each in all, of the universe in the Bindu would be impossible. Your Arya Samajists are evidently innocent of the elements of metaphysical thinking or they would not make such objections.

1 April 1936

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When the Divine descends here as an incarnation, does not that very act mould his infinity into a limited finite? How then does he still continue to rule over the universe?

Do you imagine that the Divine is at any time not everywhere in the universe or beyond it? or that he is living at one point in space and governing the rest from it, as Mussolini governs the Italian Empire from Rome?

11 May 1937

The Avatar and the Vibhuti

Is it true that the Avatar is the full manifestation of the Divine Vibhuti?

If you consider it from the earth's point of view. But it may be truer to say that the Avatar holds himself back and manifests as a Vibhuti in many lives till the time comes for his manifesting as the Avatar.

27 September 1933

The Avatar and Human Birth

Does an Avatar create a new mind, life and body from the cosmos for himself, or take hold of some liberated human being and use his outer personality for his manifestation?

That would be a possession, not an Avatar. An Avatar is supposed to be from birth. Each soul at its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the Divine from doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being.

18 December 1935

The Avatar and the Earth Consciousness

We are a little puzzled when you give your own example to prove your arguments and defend your views, because that really proves nothing. I need not explain why: what Avatars can achieve is not possible for ordinary mortals like us. So if you had a sudden “opening” to the appreciation of painting, or if you freed your mind from all thoughts in three days, or transformed your nature, it is a very poor consolation for us. Then again, when you state that you developed something that was not originally there in your nature, can it not be said that it was already there in your *divya amīśa*?

I do not know what the devil you mean. My sadhana is not a freak or a monstrosity or a miracle done outside the laws of Nature and the conditions of life and consciousness on earth. If I could do these things or if they could happen in my Yoga, it means that they can be done and that therefore these developments and transformations are possible in the terrestrial consciousness.

There are many who admit that faculties which are latent can be developed, but they maintain that things which are not there in latency cannot be made manifest. My belief is that even that could be done. Still, I don’t think that I could be turned into, say, an artist or a musician!

How do you know that you can’t?

As for your statement, “All is possible”—e.g. “an ass may be changed into an elephant, but it is not done”¹—people say it is a pointless statement.

¹ See the letter of 7 February 1935 on page 488.—Ed.

[Underlining “but it is not done”:] You had said it can’t be done or somebody had said it.

About your changing “cowards into heroes” [p. 488], they put forward the same latency theory.

How do they prove their theory — when they don’t know what is or what is not latent? In such conditions the theory can neither be proved nor refuted. To say “O, it was latent” when a thing apparently impossible is done, is a mere *post factum* explanation which amounts to an evasion of the difficulty.

They state very strongly that a paid Ashram worker, like Muthu, for example, cannot be changed into a Ramakrishna . . .

Well, Ramakrishna himself was an ignorant, unlettered rustic according to the story.

or into a Yogi for that matter, even by the Divine.

If he were, they would say “O, it was latent in him.”

One can’t say categorically and absolutely that the Divine is omnipotent, because there are different planes from which he works. It is when he acts from the supramental level that his Power is omnipotent.

If the Divine were not in essence omnipotent, he could not be omnipotent anywhere — whether in the supramental or anywhere else. Because he chooses to limit or determine his action by conditions, it does not make him less omnipotent. His self-limitation is itself an act of omnipotence.

The fact that X was not changed by the mental-spiritual force put on him proves that.

It does not prove it for a moment. It simply proves that the omnipotent unconditioned supramental force was not put out there — any more than it was when Christ was put on the cross

or when after healing thousands he failed to heal in a certain district (I forget the name) because people had no faith (faith being one of the conditions imposed on his work) or when Krishna after fighting eighteen battles with Jarasandha failed to prevail against him and had to run away from Mathura.

Why the immortal Hell should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What if the gentleman in question had to be given his chance as Duryodhan was given his chance when Krishna went to him as ambassador in a last effort to avoid the massacre of Kurukshetra? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine! And what about my explanation of how the Divine acts through the Avatar?² It seems all to have gone into water.

By the way about the ass becoming an elephant — what I meant to say was that the only reason why it can't be done is because there is no recognizable process for it. But if a process can be discovered whether by a scientist (let us say transformation or redistribution of the said ass's atoms or molecules — or what not) or by an occultist or by a Yogi, then there is no reason why it should not be done. In other words certain conditions have been established for the game and so long as those conditions remain unchanged certain things are not done — so we say they are impossible, can't be done. If the conditions are changed, then the same things are done or at least become licit — allowable, legal, according to the so-called laws of Nature, — and then we say they can be done. The Divine also acts according to the conditions of the game. He may change them, but he has to change them first, not proceed while maintaining the conditions to act by a series of miracles.

9 February 1935

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You say that since "these things" have been possible in you, they are possible in the terrestrial consciousness [p. 402]. Quite true; but have they been done?

² The "explanation" Sri Aurobindo refers to here is probably the one presented in Essays on the Gita, First Series, Chapters XV to XVII. — Ed.

The question was not whether it had been done but whether it could be done.

Has any sweeper or street-beggar been changed into a Buddha or a Chaitanya?

The street-beggar is a side issue. The question was whether new faculties not at all manifested in the personality up to now in this life could appear, even suddenly appear, by force of Yoga. I say they can and I gave my own case as proof.³ I could have given others also. The question involved is also this — is a man bound to the character and qualities he has come with into this life — can he not become a new man by Yoga? That also I have proved in my sadhana, it can be done. When you say that I could do this only in my case because I am an Avatar (!) and it is impossible in any other case, you reduce my sadhana to an absurdity and Avatarhood also to an absurdity. For my Yoga is done not for myself who need nothing and do not need salvation or anything else, but precisely for the earth consciousness, to open a way to the earth consciousness to change. Has the Divine need to come down to prove that he can do this or that or has he any personal need of doing it? Your argument proves that I am not an Avatar but only a big human person. It may well be so as a matter of fact, but you start your argument from the other basis. Besides, even if I am only a big human person, what I achieve shows that that achievement is possible for humanity. Whether any street-beggar can do it or has done it, is a side issue. It is sufficient if others who have not the economic misfortune of being street-beggars can do it.

We see in the whole history of humanity only one Christ, one Buddha, one Krishna, one Sri Aurobindo and one Mother. Has there been any breaking of this rule? Since it has not been done, it can't be done.

What a wonderful argument! Since it has not been done, it

³ See the letter of 7 February 1935 on page 488.—Ed.

cannot be done! At that rate the whole history of the earth must have stopped long before the protoplasm. When it was a mass of gases, no life had been born, ergo life could not be born—when only life was there, mind was not born, so mind could not be born. Since mind is there but nothing beyond, as there is no supermind manifested in anybody, so supermind can never be born. Sobhanallah! Glory, glory, glory to the human reason!! Luckily the Divine or the Cosmic Spirit or Nature or whoever is there cares a damn for the human reason. He or she or it does what he or she or it has to do, whether it can or cannot be done.

Can a Muthu or a sadhak ever be a Sri Aurobindo, even if he is supramentalised?

What need has he to be a Sri Aurobindo? He can be a supramentalised Muthu!

If anybody comes and says “Why not?” I would answer, “You had better rub some Madhyam Narayan oil⁴ on your head.”

I have no objection to that. Plenty of the middle Narayan is needed in this Asram. This part of your argument is perfectly correct—but it is also perfectly irrelevant.

You are looked on by us here, and by many outside, as a full manifestation of the Divine. The sadhaks here at best are misty sparks of the Divine.

The psychic being is more than a spark at this stage of its evolution. It is a flame. Even if the flame is covered by mist or smoke, the mist or smoke can be dissipated. To do that and to open to the higher consciousness is what is wanted, not to become a Sri Aurobindo or equal to the Mother.

So to say that parts can be equal to the whole is geometrically and logically impossible.

⁴ An Ayurvedic oil used in the treatment of insanity. The literal meaning of madhyam is “middle”. — Ed.

But if we are the Divine, what is the harm of evolving into a portion of the Divine, living in the divine Consciousness even if in a lesser degree? No middle Narayan will then be needed for anybody's head.

Once when X had said she wanted to be like the Mother you thundered saying, "How can it be? That is an ambition!" Do you say now it's possible?

Certainly not, it is not intended and I never said that she could as a practical matter.

All this is really too much for me. Please give a more direct answer—is it possible or not? Can a Muthu be changed into a being as great as an Avatar? If he can be, I have nothing further to say; if not, there is a limit to the omnipotence of the Divine.

Not at all. You are always making the same elementary baby stumble. It is not because the Divine cannot manifest his greatness anywhere, but because it is not in the conditions of the game, because he has chosen to manifest his centrality in a particular line that it is practically impossible.

Next point: it is hoped that the sadhaks will be supramentalised. Since it is a state surpassing the Overmind, am I to deduce that the sadhaks would be greater than Krishna, who was the Avatar of the Overmind level? Logically it follows, but looking at others and at myself, I wonder if such a theory will be practically realised.

What is all this obsession of greater or less? In our Yoga we do not strive after greatness.

Past history does not seem to prove it. In Krishna's time no disciple of his was a greater spiritual figure than the preceding Avatar Rama, even though Krishna was an Avatar of a higher plane.

It is not a question of Sri Krishna's disciples, but of the earth

consciousness — Rama was a mental man, there is no touch of the overmind consciousness (direct) in anything he said or did, but what he did was done with the greatness of the Avatar. But there have since been men who did live in touch with the planes above mind — higher mind, illumined mind, Intuition. There is no question of asking whether they were “greater” than Rama; they might have been less “great”, but they were able to live from a new plane of consciousness. And Krishna’s opening the overmind certainly made it possible for the attempt at bringing Supermind to the earth to be made.

I would not mind your fury in revenge if only you would crush me with a convincing assault. I hoped to close the chapter on “Divine Omnipotence” with this last letter, but you keep me hoping with that promise of yours to write at length some day.

“Peace, peace, O fiery furious spirit! calm thyself and be at rest.” Your fury or furiousness is wasted because your point is perfectly irrelevant to the central question on which all this breath (or rather ink) is being spent. Muthu and the sadhaks who want to equal or distance or replace the Mother and myself and so need very badly Middle Narayan oil — there have been several — have appeared only as meaningless foam and froth on the excited crest of the dispute. I fear you have not grasped the internalities and modalities and causalities of my high and subtle reasoning. It is not surprising as you are down down in the troughs of the rigidly logically illogical human reason while I am floating on the heights amid the infinite plasticities of the overmind and the lightninglike subtleties and swiftnesses of the intuition. There! what do you think of that? However!!

More seriously, I have not stated that any Muthu has equalled Ramakrishna and I quite admit that Muthu here *in ipsa persona* has no chance of performing that feat. I have not said that anyone here can be Sri Aurobindo or the Mother — I have explained what I meant when I objected to your explaining away my sadhana as a perfectly useless piece of Avatarien fireworks. So in my comment on the Muthu logic, I simply pointed out that it was bad logic — that someone

quite ignorant and low in the social scale can manifest a great spirituality and even a great spiritual knowledge. I hope you are not bourgeois enough to deny that or to contend that the Divine or the spiritual can only manifest in somebody who has some money in his pockets or some University education in his pate? For the rest as I myself have been pointing out all the time there is a difference between essential truth and conditional truth, *paramārtha* and *vyāvahārika*, the latter being relative and conditional and mutable. In mathematics one works out problems in infinite and in unreal numbers which exist nowhere on earth and yet are extremely important and can help scientific reasoning and scientific discovery and achievement. The question of a Muthu becoming a Ramakrishna, i.e. a great spiritual man may look to you like being an exercise in unreal numbers or magnitudes because it exceeds the actual observable facts in the case of *this* Muthu who very evidently is not going to be a great spiritual man—but we were arguing the matter of essential principle. I was pointing out that in the essentiality all things are possible—so you ought not to say the Divine *can* not do this or that. But at the same time I was pointing out too that the Divine is not bound to show his omnipotence without rhyme or reason when he is working by his own will under conditions. For by arguing that the Divine cannot, that he is impotent, that he cannot do what has never yet been done etc., you deny the possibility of changing conditions, of evolution, of the realisation of the unrealised, of the action of the Divine Power, of Divine Grace, and reduce all to a matter of rigid and unalterable *status quo*, which is an insolent defiance to both fact and reason (!) and suprareason. See now?

About myself and the Mother,—there are people who say, “If the supramental is to come down, it can come down in everyone, why then in them first? Why should we not get it before they do? Why through them, not direct?” It sounds very rational, very logical, very arguable. The difficulty is that this reasoning ignores the conditions, foolishly assumes that one can get the supramental down into oneself without having the least knowledge of what the supramental is and so supposes an

upside-down miracle — everybody who tries it is bound to land himself in a most horrible cropper — as all have done hitherto who tried it. It is like thinking one need not follow the Guide, but can reach up to the top of the mountain from the narrow path one is following on the edge of a precipice by simply leaping into the air. The result is inevitable.

About greater and less, one point. Is Captain John Higgins of S.S. Mauretania a greater man than Christopher Columbus because he can reach America without trouble in a few days? Is a university graduate in philosophy greater than Plato because he can reason about problems and systems which had never even occurred to Plato? No, only humanity has acquired greater scientific power which any good navigator can use or a wider intellectual knowledge which anyone with a philosophic training can use. You will say greater scientific power and wider knowledge is not a change of consciousness. Very well, but there are Rama and Ramakrishna. Rama spoke always from the thinking intelligence, the common property of developed men; Ramakrishna spoke constantly from a swift and luminous spiritual intuition. Can you tell me which is the greater? the Avatar recognised by all India? or the saint and Yogi recognised as an Avatar only by his disciples and some others who follow them?

10 February 1935

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I did not mean that anyone here could replace or equal myself and the Mother, much less the persons you name — or the actual Muthu equal the actual Ramakrishna. But certainly it is possible for X and Y and Z (I won't repeat the names) to change, to throw off their present perversities or limitations and come nearer to us than they are now — if they have the sincere will and make the endeavour. I have explained my meaning to X⁵ — so I do not repeat it here. Of course in my writing to X, there is a certain note of persiflage and humorous insistence of which you

⁵ The disciple to whom the letters of 9 and 10 February 1935 on pages 402–10 were written. — Ed.

must take account if you want to get the exact measure of my reasoning and its significance.

10 February 1935

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I would like to know something about my “bad logic” [*p. 408*] before I write anything further to you.

Helps to finding out your bad logic. I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

” ” ” 2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.

” ” ” 3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana cannot happen in anybody else’s sadhana (i.e. neither descent, nor realisation, nor transformation, nor any intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties) — because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not.

” ” ” 4. A street-beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate — because, well, one does not know why the hell not.

” ” ” 5. (and last because of want of space) Because I [*the recipient*] am a doctor, I can’t see a joke when it is there.

11 February 1935

*

About your personal example. You speak of the evolution theory to prove that “it can be done”, though the domain I touched upon was only the spiritual. If the scientists say that man has not been able to create living things up to now, and therefore he will not be able to do so in the future — that it “can’t be done”, what will be your answer?

I have brought in the evolution theory or rather fact of evolution, to disprove your argument that because a thing has not been done, it is thereby proved that it could not be done. I don’t understand your argument. If a scientist says that, he is using bad logic. I have never said it can’t be done. I dare say some day

in the right conditions the creation of life will become possible.

And if similarly I say that a Tom, Dick or Harry cannot be a Ram, Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, what reply will you give? My point is that Avatars are born not made.

They may not be Ram or Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, but they may become a spiritualised super-Tom, super-Dick or super-Harry. I have answered about the Avatar.

I have never said that you are only a big human person. On the contrary, you are not, and hence nobody can be like you. Nevertheless, I don't quite follow what you mean when you state that whatever you achieve is possible for humanity to achieve, your attainments opening the way for others to follow.

It is singular that you cannot understand such a simple thing. I had no urge towards spirituality in me, I developed spirituality. I was incapable of understanding metaphysics, I developed into a philosopher. I had no eye for painting—I developed it by Yoga. I transformed my nature from what it was to what it was not. I did it by a special manner, not by a miracle and I did it to show what could be done and how it could be done. I did not do it out of any personal necessity of my own or by a miracle without any process. I say that if it is not so, then my Yoga is useless and my life was a mistake—a mere absurd freak of Nature without meaning or consequence. You all seem to think it a great compliment to me to say that what I have done has no validity for anybody except myself—it is the most damaging criticism on my work that could be made.

If a man has transformed his nature, he couldn't have done it all by himself, as you have done.

I also did not do it all by myself, if you mean by myself the Aurobindo that was. He did it by the help of Krishna and the Divine Shakti. I had help from human sources also.

I should say that Avatars are like well-fitted, well-equipped Rolls-Royce machines.

All sufficient to themselves—perfect and complete from the beginning, hey? Just roll, royce and ripple!

They do have plenty of difficulties on their journey, but just because they are like Rolls-Royces they can surmount them—whilst the rest of humanity are either like loose and disjointed machines or else wagons to be dragged along by Avatars and great spiritual personages.

Great Scott! What a penal servitude for the great personages and the Avatars! And where are they leading them? All that rubbish into Paradise? How is that any more possible than creating a capacity where there was none? If the disjointed machines cannot be jointed, isn't it more economical to leave them where they are, in the lumber-shed?

I don't know about Avatars. Practically what I know is that I had not all the powers necessary when I started, I had to develop them by yoga, at least many of them which were not in existence in me when I began, and those which were I had to train to a higher degree. My own idea of the matter is that the Avatar's life and action are not miracles and if they were, his existence would be perfectly useless, a mere superfluous freak of Nature. He accepts the terrestrial conditions, he uses means, he shows the way to humanity as well as helps it. Otherwise what is the use of him and why is he here?

I was not always in the overmind, if you please. I had to climb there from the mental and vital level.

Really, Sir, you have put into my mouth what I never mentioned or even intended to.

You may not have mentioned it but it was implied in your logic without your knowing that it was implied. Logic has its own consequences which are not apparent to the logiciser. It is like a move in chess by which you intend to overcome the opponent but it leads, logically, to consequences which you didn't

intend and ends in your own checkmate. You can't invalidate the consequences by saying that you didn't intend them.

Let me remind you of what I wrote about the Avatar. There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness behind and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature, under the conditions of Nature, and it uses it according to the rules of the game — though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipotent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

As for the Muthu affair, that was only a joke as ought to have been clear to you at once. Nobody has any intention of making Muthu a saint or an Avatar. But that is only because the Divine is not going to play the fool, not because he is impotent. Muthu's only business in life is to prepare himself for something better hereafter and exhaust some of his lowest tendencies in the meantime. That is not the question — the question is whether as a general rule rigid and unalterable man is bound down to his outward nature as it appears to be built at the moment and the Divine cannot or will not under any circumstances change it or develop something new in it, something not yet "evident", not yet manifested, or is there a chance for human beings becoming more like the Divine, *sādr̥syamukti, sādharmyam āgatāḥ?* If not, there is no use in anybody doing this Yoga; let the Krishnas and Ramakrishnas rocket about gloriously and uselessly in the empty Inane and the rest wriggle about for ever in the clutch of the eternal Devil. For that is the logical conclusion of the whole matter.

13 February 1935

*

I am afraid you are making me admit something I never wrote, neither implied nor intended in what I wrote. However, I shall consult your *Essays on the Gita* to see what your Avatar says about the Avatar.

Can you not understand that it was the natural logical result of the statements made on either side about the unbridgeable distance between the Man Divine and the human being moving in the darkness towards the Divine? If you admit the utility of my sadhana, the controversy ceases. But so long as you declare that what I have done in my sadhana has no connection with what can be done, I shall go on beating you. (What the Avatar says in the *Essays* is only an explanation of the Gita; it is not a full statement of the issue. But still if you read three or four chapters there, you will get some idea of the general principles.) For the rest I propose that all discussion be postponed till after the 21st (not immediately after). This will give time for you to clear your ideas and for me to pursue my "Avataric" sadhana (not for myself, but for this confounded and too confounded earth race).

14 February 1935

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You say, if I understand you right, that since the inner being is open to the universal, anything can manifest through it even if it is not there latent; you further add that it is impossible to say what will or will not manifest once the universal acts upon it. But is this impossible for Yogis also? For example, can't you say whether a man has a capacity for Yoga or for something else? Do you simply gamble when you accept someone?

I have never said anything about how I choose people. I was answering the argument that what has not been or is not in manifestation, cannot be. That was very clearly put in the discussion—that the Divine cannot manifest what is not yet there—even He is impotent to do that. He can only manifest what is either already manifest or else latent in the field (person) he is working on. I say no—he can bring in new things. He can bring it in from the universal or he can bring it down from the transcendent. For in the Divine cosmic and transcendent all things are. Whether He will do so or not in a particular case is quite another matter. My argument was directed towards dissipating this "can't, can't" with which people try to stop all possibility of progress.

15 February 1935

The Avatar and Terrestrial Conditions

I am sending with this note a typewritten MS on the Avatar.
Please write an exhaustive reply, but in ink.

On the back the rational and logical result of your arguments. I shall write certain irrational answers on your MS — in ink.⁶

You have won all along the line. Who could resist such a lava-torrent of logic? Slightly mixed, but still! You have convinced me (1st) that there never was nor could be an Avatar, (2) that all the so-called Avatars were chimerical fools and failures, (3) that there is no Divinity or divine element in man, (4) that I have never had any true difficulties or struggles, and that if I had any, it was all my fun (as K. S. said of my new metres that they were only Mr. Ghose's fun), (5) that if ever there was or will be a real Avatar, I am not he — but that I knew before, (6) that all I have done or the Mother has done is a mere sham — sufferings, struggles, conquests, defeats, the Way found, the Way followed, the call to others to follow, everything — it was all make-believe since I was the Divine and nothing could touch me and none follow me. That is truly a discovery, a downright knock-out which leaves me convinced, convicted, amazed, gasping. I won't go on, there is no space; but there are a score of other luminous convictions that your logic has forced on me. But what to do next? You have put me in a terrible fix and I see no way out of it. For if the Way, the Yoga is merely sham, fun and chimera — then?

6 March 1935

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When did I say that you are not an Avatar? On the contrary I wrote to you that you are an Avatar.

⁶ Sri Aurobindo wrote these two sentences on the front side of a small sheet of paper sent by the correspondent, above the correspondent's comments. On the back of the same sheet Sri Aurobindo wrote the paragraph that follows. This paragraph is a brief reply to questions posed by the correspondent in his "typewritten MS". Sri Aurobindo returned the small sheet containing his paragraph-long reply to the correspondent on 6 March 1935. This became the basis of the questions and answers of 7 March that are reproduced on pages 416–19. Sri Aurobindo also wrote long and detailed replies to the questions on the "typewritten MS"; they are reproduced on pages 420–29.—Ed.

You don't say, but if your theory or description of the Avatar is right, I am not one. I am proceeding on the necessary consequences of your logic.

I did say that the difficulties and struggles of the Avatar are all shams, put on, so to say.

If they are shams, they have no value for others or for any true effect. If they have no value for others or for any true effect, they are perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if these sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. It is strange that you cannot understand or refuse to admit so simple and crucial a point. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of it?

I never said that there could be no Avatars nor that they are failures.

Good Lord! You said most emphatically that they were all failures and that is why the Divine had to come back again and again—to “atone for his failures”.

If your argument is that the life, actions, struggles of the Avatar (e.g. Rama's, Krishna's) are unreal because the Divine is there and knows it is all a Maya, in man also there is a self, a spirit that is immortal, untouched, divine, you can say that man's sufferings and ignorance are only put on, shams, unreal. But if man feels them as real and if the Avatar feels his work and difficulties to be serious and real?

I don't think I said that there is no divinity in man. In the quotation I gave from the Gita it is said that man is made out

of the divine substance but has a thick coating on him.

If the existence of the Divinity is of no practical effect, what is the use of a theoretical admission? The manifestation of the Divinity in the Avatar is of help to man because it helps him to discover his own divinity, find the way to realise it. If the difference is so great that the humanity by its very nature prevents all possibility of following the way opened by the Avatar, it merely means that there is no divinity in man that can respond to the divinity in the Avatar.

You make a flourish of reasonings and do not see the consequence of your reasonings. It is no use saying "I believe this or that" and then reasoning in a way which leads logically to the very negation of what you believe.

I admitted that Avatars have many difficulties, but because they know, as Mother did, that they are Avatars, because the "real substance" shines through the alloy in all that they do, they have a fixed faith and conviction that they will never fail.

You think then that in me (I do not bring in the Mother) there was never any doubt or despair, no attacks of that kind. I have borne every attack which human beings have borne, otherwise I would be unable to assure anybody "This too can be conquered." At least I would have no right to say so. Your psychology is terribly rigid. I repeat, the Divine when he takes on the burden of terrestrial nature, takes it fully, sincerely and without any conjuring tricks or pretence. If he has something behind him which emerges always out of the coverings, it is the same thing in essence, even if greater in degree, that there is behind others — and it is to awaken that that he is there.

The psychic being does the same for all who are intended for the spiritual way — men need not be extraordinary beings to follow Yoga. That is the mistake you are making — to harp on greatness as if only the great can be spiritual.

Regarding the divinity in man — what is the use of this divinity if it is coated layer after layer with Maya? How many can

really become conscious of it?

Exactly! Why admit any divinity then at all, if their humanity is an insuperable bar to any following in the Way pointed out by the Avatar? That was your contention that humanity and divinity are irreconcilable opposite things, that it is no use the Avatar asking others (except Arjuna) to follow in his Path—they, being human, cannot do it.

You had defeats, struggles, but had at the same time the spirit of absolute surrender, faith which we find shining through Mother's prayers as well. Did you not leave your great work for the country at one word of Krishna?

Lots of people leave things at the word of a human being like Gandhi, they do not need the word of Krishna.

Does the average man have this faith, etc.? If he has not, but has instead struggles, sufferings etc., picture what his condition would be!

If *absolute* surrender, faith etc. from the beginning were essential for Yoga then nobody could do it. I myself could not have done it if such a condition had been demanded of me.

This is only to refute the points you found implied or explicit in my letters.

Let me make it clear that in all I wrote I was not writing to prove that I am an Avatar! You are busy in your reasonings with the personal question, I am busy in mine with the general one. I am seeking to manifest something of the Divine that I am conscious of and feel—I care a damn whether that constitutes me an Avatar or something else. That is not a question which concerns me. By manifestation of course I mean the bringing out and spreading of that Consciousness so that others also may feel and enter into it and live in it.

7 March 1935

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I am eagerly waiting to see what you say in reply to X's questions of tonight.⁷ Often I have wondered why you made your cases equal to ours. Did you ever suffer from desires, passions, ignorance, attachment etc. as we do?

We have had sufferings and struggles to which yours are mere child's play,—I have not made our cases equal to yours. I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness — if nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. X seems to say that there is no Way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug,—there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such an idea makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood — there is no reason in it, no necessity for it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning.

7 March 1935

Following the Leader and Guide

At last I reopen the controversy.⁸ I have read your *Essays on the Gita, Synthesis of Yoga*, letters on Rama, and though I am wiser, my original and fundamental difficulty remains as unsolved as ever. What is so simple to you, as everything is, appears mighty complex and abstruse to my dense intellect. So no alternative but to submit to a fresh beating. . . .

What your view comes to, put in a syllogism, is this: Since I have done it and I am an Avatar, so every other blessed creature can do it.

⁷ The reference is to the series of questions in the letter of 7 March 1935 on pages 416–19.—Ed.

⁸ This is the beginning of the correspondent's "typewritten MS", which he submitted to Sri Aurobindo on 6 March 1935. Sri Aurobindo wrote detailed answers to the questions on the manuscript but never returned it. It was discovered among his papers after his passing.—Ed.

This is idiotic. I have said “Follow my path, the way I have discovered for you through my own efforts and example. Transform your nature from the animal to the spiritual, grow into a higher divine consciousness. All this you can do by your own aspiration and by the force of the Divine Shakti.” That, if you please, is not the utterance of a madman or an imbecile. I have said, “I have opened the Way; now you with the Divine help can follow it.” I have not said “Find the way for yourself as I did.”

In the *Essays on the Gita* you say man “is ignorant because there is upon the eyes of his soul and all its organs the seal of . . . Nature, Prakriti, Maya . . . ; she has minted him like a coin out of the precious metal of the divine substance, but overlaid with a strong coating of the alloy of her phenomenal qualities, stamped with her own stamp and mark of animal humanity, and although the secret sign of the Godhead is there, it is at first indistinguishable. . . .”⁹

Does it follow that the coating cannot be dissolved nor the mark effaced? Then stamp the stamp of the chimaera on all efforts at spirituality and catalogue as asses and fools all who have attempted to rise beyond the human animal — all who have tried to follow the path of the Christ, the Buddha; stigmatise as folly Vedanta, Tantra, Yoga, the way of the Jinas, Christ himself and Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, and any other pathfinder and seeker.

On the other hand you write that in “the Avatar, the divinely-born Man, the real substance shines through the coating; the mark of the seal is there only for form, the vision is that of the secret Godhead, the power of the life is that of the secret Godhead, and it breaks through the seals of the assumed human nature . . .” [*Essays on the Gita*, pp. 158–59].

Does it follow that the breaking through had not to be done or was a mere trifling impediment? The power of the form can be

⁹ Essays on the Gita, volume 19 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 158.

exceedingly great as every thinker and observer of life can tell you.

After this you say that the object of the Avatar's descent is "precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works. . . . Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show . . . how that suffering may be a means of redemption . . ." [Essays, pp. 164–65]. Well, Sir, it will have no go with me, my heart won't leap up at such a divine possibility, such a dream of Paradise!

Your heart not leaping up does not make my statement a falsehood, a non sequitur or a chimaera.

My fellow-brothers may venture to reach there through such a thin hanging bridge but if they do, I am afraid, it will be into a fool's Paradise.

The fool being myself, eh? For it is my Paradise and it is I who call them to it.

The difficulties you face, the dangers you overcome, the struggles you embrace would seem to be mere shams.

[Underlining "mere shams":] Truly then what a humbug and charlatan I have been, making much of sham struggles and dangers — or, in the alternative, since I took them for realities, what a self-blinded imbecile!

Mother knew she was an Avatar at a very early age.

At what age? But I shall say nothing about the Mother—I cannot bring her into such arguments, only myself.

She was thus able to follow the path of travails through volcanoes and earthquakes. But if she says to me, "You can also do it," I will cry out, "Forbear, Mother, forbear."

Nobody asks you to go through volcanoes and earthquakes or

to proceed unhelped. You are simply asked to follow the Leader and Guide with the Divine help and with courage, in the face of whatever difficulties come.

If I knew I were an Avatar (pardon my bold hypothesis) do you think I would cry or wail for fear of any amount of crashes and collisions or would it matter if I began with a nature with not a grain of spirituality in me? I would jump from peak to peak in somersaults, go down the abysses, rise up the steeps without fear of mortal consequences since I would know that I was the Divine.

Would you? I wish you had been in my place then! You would have been a hundred times more fit than myself, if you could really have done that. And how easily things would have been done! While I did them and am still doing them with enormous difficulty because I lead and have to make the path so that others may follow with less difficulty.

There could be no death or failure for me.

The Divine in the body is not subject to death or failure? Yet all those claimed to be Avatars have died — some by violence, some by cancer, some of indigestion etc. etc. You yourself say that they were all failures. How do you reconcile these self-contradictory arguments?

You say, “A physical and mental body is prepared fit for the divine incarnation by a pure or great heredity and the descending Godhead takes possession of it” [Essays, p. 166].

Like my heredity? It was “pure”? But of course I am not a divine incarnation. Only why put all that upon one whom it does not fit?

To his beloved children created in his own image he says with gusto, I send you through this hell of a cycle of rebirths. Don’t lose heart, poor boys, if you groan under the weight of your sins and those of your ancestors to boot. I will come down

and take hold of a pure heredity with no coating around me and say unto you — come and follow my example.

Who gave this message? It is your own invention. The Divine does not come down in that way. It is a silly imagination of yours that you are trying to foist on the truth of things. The Divine also comes down into the cycle of rebirths, makes the great holocaust, endures shame and obloquy, torture and crucifixion, the burden of human nature, sex and passion and sorrow and suffering, manifests many births before he reveals the Avatar. And when he does reveal it? Well, read the lives of the Avatars and try to understand and see.

Nobody ever said there was no coating — that is your invention.

Not a very inspiring message, Sir!

No, of course not — but it is yours, not any Avatar's.

Jatakas tell us that in every life small or great, Buddha's frontal consciousness was always above the level of others.

Jatakas are legends.

Ramakrishna and Chaitanya began yoga in their cradle, it seems.

Did they? I know nothing about it; but if they told you that! Anyhow one died by drowning and the other of a cancer.

I don't know if Avatars ever play the part of the rogue or the eternal sinner in any life.

[Underlining “rogue or the eternal sinner”:] Krishna was a rogue and a sinner even in his Avatar life, if tales are true! Don't you think so?

Now about your absence of urge towards spirituality. Even though that sounds like a story, pray tell us how you could

free your mind from all thoughts in 7 days or be established in Brahmic consciousness in a few days.

3 if you please. You are terribly inaccurate in your statements. It was simply through the Divine Grace, because it had been done by thousands before me throughout the centuries and millenniums, and the Divine did not want me to waste time over that; other things in the Yoga were not so damned easy!

And even apart from spirituality, what of your waiting for the gallows for your country's sake with perfect equanimity?

[Underlining “perfect equanimity”:] Who told you that? I was perfectly sure of release. But even so plenty of ordinary men did it before me.

What of your profoundly bold assertion that you would free the country by a Force that was under your feet?

Never said that, surely. Under my feet?

What of your brilliant career? If one has the essential principle, what does it matter if one has no urge towards spirituality?

My career was much less brilliant than many others'. They ought to have progressed then farther in Yoga than myself, e.g. Mussolini, Lenin, Tilak, Brajendranath Seal, the admirable Crichton, Gandhi, Tagore, Roosevelt, Lloyd George etc. etc. All Avatars or all full of the essential principle!

The inner consciousness is there.

All that does not apply to me alone. There are hundreds of others. The inner consciousness is not so rare a phenomenon as all that.

There are some people, I hear, who are to all external appearance debauchees or moral insolvents but whose psychic is much developed or “can be touched”.

That gives away the whole case. For mark that I have never asked the whole human race to follow me to the supramental—that is your invention, not mine.

Still you go on saying that what you have done is possible for me and not for Arjunas only to whom alone Krishna seems to have addressed the Gita.

What a waste of words and energy! Yet Krishna said “even Chandalas can follow my way.”

I prophesy that your message will reverberate in the rarefied atmosphere evoking a loud rebellious echo from human hearts.

I admit that you have successfully proved that I am an imbecile.

But if you say, “I come to raise you bodily by my divine Omnipotence, not by my example,” I shake hands. If you insist that I follow your example, it would be as well to insist on my leaving you bag and baggage at once.

All this is a purely personal argument concerning yourself. Up to now you were making general assertions—so was I. I was concerned with the possibility of people following the Path I had opened, as Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya etc. opened theirs. You were declaring that no human being could follow and that my life was perfectly useless as an example—like the lives of the Avatars. Path, life, example all useless—even Power useless because all have been failures. These are general questions. Whether X or Y is able or willing to follow the path or depends on divine Omnipotence only is a personal question. Even if X or Y does so, he has no right to pass a general decree of impossibility against others.

There are some who claim that they are here and remain here by their soul’s call. But I am not one of those fortunate ones. Where they hear the soul’s call, I hear the calls of a thousand devils and if it were not for your love—well, no,—for your Power (which I firmly believe in), I would end up myself by

being one of those devils. I hope you will believe that this is not a conceited statement.

It is very conceited. To be a devil needs a considerable personal capacity or else a great openness to the Beyond. If you had said, I can only be an ordinary human being, that might be modest.

We don't mean to give you a compliment when we say these things.

Of course not. It is the reverse of complimentary, since you prove me to be an ignorant and mistaken fellow of an Avatar, who merely wastes his time doing things which are of no earthly use to any human being — except perhaps Arjuna who is not here.

No, we say that the Sun is a thing apart, not to be measured by any human standards.

The Sun's rays are of use to somebody — you say all my acts and life and laborious opening of the Way I thought I had made for spiritual realisation, are of no use to anybody — since nobody is strong enough to follow the path, only the Avatar can do it. Poor lonely ineffective fellow of an Avatar!

We respect him, adore him, lay ourselves bare to his Light, but we do not follow him.

Who is this we? Editorial “we”?

Let me point out one or two facts, in a perfectly serious spirit.

(1) It has always been supposed by spiritual people that divine perfection, similitude to the Divine, *sādrśya, sādharmya*, is part of the Mukti. Christ said “Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect” — the very Divine himself, mind you, not a mere Avatar or luminous projection from him. His followers strive to be Christlike. Thomas à Kempis, meditating and striving, wrote a book on the Imitation of Christ. Francis of Assisi and many

others arrived at Christlikeness. [Krishna in] the Gita insists on *sādharmya*, gives himself as an example, and tells Arjuna that many before him from ancient times reached to it. Buddha in teaching *karuṇā*, the eightfold path, the rejection of sanskaras, gave it as an ideal to all true followers of his path, thus placing before them not only his own path but his own example. All this is trash and humbug? Christ and Buddha were fools? Myself even a bigger fool? It is not a question of greatness—it is a question of acquiring a certain consciousness to which the way is laid open. It is not a question of acquiring cosmic omniscience and omnipotence, but of reaching the essential divine consciousness with all its *spiritual* consequences, peace, light, equality, strength, Ananda etc. etc. If you say that that cannot be done, you deny all possibility of spiritual perfection, transformation or any true Yoga. All that anyone can do is to be helpless and wait for the divine Omnipotence to do something or other. The whole spiritual past of man becomes a fantastic insanity, with the Avatars as the chief lunatics. That is the materialist point of view, but I am unable to envisage it as a basis for sadhana. That example is not all, is true; I have not said it is; there is Influence, there is spiritual help—but the truth of the Way and the Example cannot be belittled in this scornful fashion.

(2) You make nothing of the Divine in man. If there is no divinity in man, then there is no possibility of Avatarhood; also spirituality can just as well pass away into silence—it has no foundation here. If the divinity is there in man, it can break through its coatings. You admit that it can do it in debauchees and moral insolvents—that it can manifest in ignorant and uncultured men and women is a proved fact; the Gita itself declares that all *kinds* of men and women can follow its path. Whether X or Y does or does not do so does not depend then on these things and it is no use trying to bar the path to people because of either their ignorance or their immorality. To do so is to betray a bottomless ignorance of spiritual things. As to the possibility of awakening the psychic being, on what intellectual grounds or by what fixed ethical or rational rules are you going to fix that and declare “No entry here for you”? You cannot

generalise in the way you try to do by an intellectual reasoning.
The mystery of the Spirit is too great for such a puny endeavour.
after 6 March 1935

Fallibility of Avatars

How is it that later Avatars often find fault with the actions
and movements of their predecessors?

Who finds fault with whom? I have not found fault with any
Avatar. To discern what they expressed and what they did not
express, is not to find fault.

Avatars are supposed to be infallible, they are supposed to
have Knowledge directly from Above!

What is infallible? I invite your attention again to Rama and the
Golden Deer. The Avatar need have no theoretical “Knowledge”
from above—he acts and thinks whatever the Divine within
him intends that he should act and think for the work. Was
everything that Ramakrishna said or thought infallible?

22 April 1935

The Avatar and Humanity

Every Avatar descended to relieve the world from falsehood,
darkness, vice, etc. Also, everyone preached against them.

I am not concerned with what the Avatars did or are supposed to
have done (though in that case Krishna seems to have done some
very queer and undivine things). My business is with rising above
the human consciousness and not with fulfilling limited human
ideals; and I look at things from that standpoint. 20 April 1936

*

Avatars, unlike Vibhutis, do not need to satisfy their vital.
Why should they not?

For the Avatar's vital has no cravings and desires as our vital has. He is above them. And if he seems to be satisfying them, it is only to acquire experience and knowledge of the vital world.

All that is wrong. The Avatar takes upon himself the nature of humanity in his instrumental parts, though the consciousness acting behind is divine.

When the Divine descends here (as the Avatar), he has to veil himself and deal with the world and its movements like an ordinary man of the cosmic product.

Exactly.

But behind he is perfectly conscious of what happens. The universal forces cannot make him their tool as they make us.

That does not prevent the Avatar from acting as men act and using the movements of Nature for his life and work.

23 July 1936

*

Avatars can of course be married and satisfy their vital movements. But do they really indulge them as ordinary people? Don't they even before they begin the practice of Yoga, remain conscious of their union with the Divine above even while satisfying their outer being?

There is not necessarily any union above before the practice of Yoga. There is a connection of the consciousness with the veiled Divinity and an action out of that, but this is not dependent on the practice of Yoga.

25 July 1936

The Purpose of Past Avatars

What could be the Divine's purpose in leaving Arjuna in such a helpless condition after his withdrawal from the world?

It is said that it was done to break Arjuna's pride so that he might see his strength was not his, but the Divine's alone.

Throughout the history of human evolution we see that the Avatar brings light into the world. But when he retires, very little of this light remains. There is no substantial change. Does the Divine will it to be so?

You have only to consider what the state of humanity would have been if Krishna and others had not come. They would have been still near to the beast with no openings on the heights of the spirit.

20 October 1933

Recognition of Past Avatars

Were the Avatars — the ten that have already come — known as Avatars in their own times?

Only to a few, according to the accounts. 14 November 1935

Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo

I thought I had already told you that your turn towards Krishna was not an obstacle. In any case I affirm that positively in answer to your question. If we consider the large and indeed predominant part he played in my own sadhana, it would be strange if the part he has in your sadhana could be considered objectionable. Sectarianism is a matter of dogma, ritual etc., not of spiritual experience; the concentration on Krishna is a self-offering to the *ista-deva*. If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine; if you can give yourself to him, you give yourself to me. Your inability to identify may be because you are laying too much stress on the physical aspects, consciously or unconsciously. 18 June 1943

*

You can't expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna's. The question itself would be relevant only if there were two sectarian religions in opposition, Aurobindoism and Vaishnavism, each insisting on its own God's greatness. That is not the case. And then what Krishna must I challenge, — the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent

Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottama, the cosmic Deity, master of the universe, Vasudeva who is all, the immanent in the heart of all creatures, or the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity? All that is not to me something philosophical or mental but a matter of daily and hourly realisation and intimate to the stuff of my consciousness. Then from what position can I adjudicate this dispute? X thinks I am superior in greatness, you think there can be nothing greater than Krishna; each is entitled to have his own view or feeling, whether it is itself right or not. It can be left there; it can be no reason for your leaving the Asram.

25 February 1945

Recognising Divinity

After reading your answers, one part of me tries to justify itself and attribute to you the ordinary humanity.

Of course. Whatever does not say ditto to the human mind cannot be divine. That is the usual maxim of judgment. “The Divine must do what I want and think as I think, judge as I judge and support my ideas, interests or feelings against others, otherwise how can he be Divine? For whatever I think, feel or want must be the TRUTH.” At least that seems to be the attitude of most sadhaks in the Asram.

*

Shall man know of your divinity only after the supermind has descended?¹⁰

There is no necessity of the supermind for that. It is the inner consciousness that has to recognise—it is impossible for the outer mind to know it by its own reasonings.

¹⁰ It is not clear from the context whether the correspondent's “your” refers to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother or both. The same is true of “you” in the next letter.—Ed.

The Divine Incarnate?

I have a strong faith that you are the Divine Incarnate in
bhāgavatī tanu. Am I right?

Follow your faith — it is not likely to mislead you.

12 August 1935

Reticence about the Question of Divinity

One thing. There is coming here in a day or two (perhaps tomorrow) a lady from Switzerland named Madame X who is a friend or acquaintance of Y's mother; she will put up in Boudie House, perhaps for a month, perhaps for a shorter or longer time. We know nothing of her and it is not yet sure whether her profession of seeking the spiritual Truth is really deep or genuine. Therefore till we are fixed about her, Mother wishes that she should not be taken in intimately into the Asram life or told anything about inner matters of the Asram or spoken to about questions such as the divinity of the Mother or myself (for her we are simply spiritual Teachers) or shown freely messages or letters. A certain reserve is necessary until she has been thoroughly tested. I write this in view of the possibility of your and other sadhaks meeting her and an acquaintance forming, so as to put you on your guard. It is not a case like Z or even the A's. 9 December 1936

*

Do you really think it necessary or advisable to publish an exegesis of this kind?¹¹ The last paragraphs are about things that concern only disciples or even only sadhaks of the Asram, it is not desirable to discuss them and publish to outsiders or the general public. What you write about my books would be considered as extravagant by most readers. Also we do not usually encourage sadhaks of the Asram to write about us as divine, though one or another may have done it — there is a certain reticence in this matter which is desirable in writing for the general public.

¹¹ This is Sri Aurobindo's comment on an article that was submitted to him for approval.
— Ed.

Section Two

Help and Guidance

Help from the Guide

Satsanga

It is a traditional belief that satsanga has great effect — the nearness or the personal contact of a spiritual person is supposed to produce great benefit to those who are in his company. How is it then that your earliest companions here did not derive any benefit from your company?

I don't know that the theory of satsanga can be taken so rigorously as that. Company always has an effect, but it may be less or more or even for the most part nullified by things in the person's own consciousness or nature or by other atmospheres. X and the others were greatly influenced by company with me in the old days but it was more in the direction of mental and vital development than spiritually, for at that time I was doing my own sadhana and not putting out any spiritual influence on others — only if anybody asked me, I told him what to do, the result of his effort was his own affair.

17 August 1936

Giving Mental Silence

I wrote something on the subject of peace, which I showed to X. He said there were many errors in it, particularly where I wrote about philosophers and the silence.

There was no error. Ordinary human minds, Europeans especially, are accustomed to regard thought as indispensable and as the highest thing — so they are alarmed at silence. V. V. S. Aiyar when he was here asked for Yoga. I told him how to make his mind silent and it became silent. He immediately got frightened and said "I am becoming a fool, I can't think", — so I took what I had given away from him. That is how the average mind regards silence.

11 December 1935

Non-Intervention

Certainly, it is your full right to believe that I am not infallible. But I must also say that when you are convinced that you know the truth of things and can judge better than myself and are more eager for right and justice, that creates an attitude which makes it difficult for me to help you or for you to receive my help. If you have no reliance on me as guide but rather on your own enlightened consciousness, then surely it is the dictates of your enlightened consciousness that you should follow. As long as there is this, I am drawn back from intervening in any personal way in your life or sadhana. I hope that by following your inner light or by whatever guidance you will attain the realisation you desire.

circa 1928

*

I do not believe in human judgments because I have always found them fallible — also perhaps because I have myself been so blackened by human judgments that I do not care to be guided by them with regard to others. All this however I write to explain my own point of view; I am not insisting on it as a law for others. I have never been in the habit of insisting that everybody must think as I do — any more than I insist on everybody following me and my yoga.

December 1934

*

You hardly take the initiative and ask people to do this or not to do that. It is your principle to give them a long rope either to hang themselves or have a taste of the bitter cup.

I am to put everybody into leading strings and walk about with them — or should it be the rope in their nose? Supermen cannot be made like that — the long rope is needed.

5 January 1935

*

Why do you never write to me about my problems — unless I specifically ask?

I never do that to anybody unless he gives me the occasion. A sadhak must become conscious and lay himself before the light, see and reject and change. It is not the right method for us to interfere and lecture and point out this and point out that. That is the schoolmaster method — it does not work in the spiritual change.

10 May 1936

The Nature of His Help

I do not know what kind of help you want from me. There are two kinds of help in the spiritual field; the invisible help (which you can get for yourself if you know how to do it) and that which a spiritual guide gives to his disciples. The latter I give only to those whom I have accepted for my own path of Yoga.

15 November 1928

*

The doubt about the possibility of help is hardly a rational one, since all the evidence of life and of spiritual experience in the past and of the special experience of those, numerous enough, who have received help from the Mother and myself, is against the idea that no internal or spiritual help from one to another or from a Guru to his disciples or from myself to my disciples is possible. It is therefore not really a doubt arising from the reason but one that comes from the vital and physical mind that is troubling you. The physical mind doubts all that it has not itself experienced and even it doubts what it has itself experienced if that experience is no longer there or immediately palpable to it — the vital brings in the suggestions of despondency and despair to reinforce the doubt and prevent clear seeing. It is therefore a difficulty that cannot be effectively combated by the logical reason alone, but best by the clear perception that it is a self-created difficulty — a self-formed sanskara or mental formation which has become habitual and has to be broken up so that you may have a free mind and vital, free for experience.

As for the help, you expect a divine intervention to destroy the doubt, and the divine intervention is possible, but it comes

usually only when the being is ready. You have indulged to a great extreme this habit of the recurrence of doubt, this mental formation or sanskara, and so the adverse force finds it easy to throw it upon you, to bring back the suggestion. You must have a steady working will to repel it whenever it comes and to refuse the tyranny of the sanskara of doubt — to annul the force of its recurrence. I think you have hardly done that in the past, you have rather supported the doubts when they came. So for some time at least you must do some hard work in the opposite direction. The help (I am not speaking of a divine intervention from above but of my help and the Mother's) will be there. It can be effective in spite of your physical mind, but it will be more effective if this steady working will of which I speak is there as its instrument. There are always two elements in spiritual success — one's own steady will and endeavour and the Power that in one way or another helps and gives the result of the endeavour.

I will do what is necessary to give the help you must receive. To say you cannot would not be true, for you have received times without number and it has helped you to recover.

26 January 1934

*

I am not aware of refusing help; but to receive the help is also necessary. When you are in this condition, you seem at once to shut yourself up against those from whom you seek help by a spirit of bitterness and anger. That is not an attitude which makes it easy to receive or be conscious and it is not easy either for the help to be effective. All I can do is to send you the Force that if received would help you to change your condition; it is what I have always done. But it cannot act effectively — or at least not at once — if the doors are shut against it.

23 May 1936

*

But is it really impossible to give X some experience of peace, silence or meditation? That would mean that the Divine is not omnipotent.

My dear sir, what has the omnipotence of the Divine to do with it? In this world there are conditions for everything — if a man refuses to fulfil the conditions for Yoga, what is the use of appealing to the Divine's omnipotence? He does not believe that the Divine is here. He regards us as Gurus. Yes, but he begins by disputing all my way of Yoga. He does not understand and does not care to understand my processes. He has ideas of his own, does not want peace or equality or surrender or anything else, wants only Krishna and bhakti. He has read things in Rama-krishna and elsewhere as to how to do it, insists on following that. Rejects all suggestions I can make as unpracticable. Erects a sadhana of violent meditation, japa, prayer — for these are the traditional things, has no idea that there are conditions without which they cannot be effective. Meditates, japs, prays himself into pits of dullness and disappears. Also tries in spite of my objections a wrestling tapasya which puts his vital into revolt. Then by a stroke of good luck I succeed unexpectedly in making a sort of psychic opening. Decides to try surrender, purification of the heart, rejection of ego, true humility etc. — tries a little of it and is really progressing. After two months finds that Krishna is not appearing — gets disgusted and drops the beastly thing. And after all that he is always telling me "What an impotent Guru you are! You are evidently able to do nothing for me." Evidently! That's X.

28 May 1936

Special Relation with Disciples: Two Examples

(1)

But after all, without putting forth eighteen visible arms (perhaps, since it is a symbol, by putting them forth internally) I hope to become one day so divine even in the body consciousness that I shall be able to satisfy everybody! But you can't hurry a transformation like that. I must ask for time.

Why do you always insist on cherishing the idea that I refuse all human love? I have surely written to you to the contrary. I don't reject it, neither human nor vital love. But I want that

behind the vital there shall be the constant support of the psychic *human* love (not all at once the divine), because that alone can prevent the movements which make you restless, obscured and miserable. In asking this I am surely not asking anything excessive or beyond your power.

circa 1931

*

I meant that even before I met you for the first time, I knew of you and felt at once the contact of one with whom I had that relation which declares itself constantly through many lives and followed your career (all that I could hear about it) with a close sympathy and interest. It is a feeling which is never mistaken and gives the impression of one not only close to one but part of one's existence. The Mother had not heard of you before you came here for the first time, but even on that occasion on seeing you — though without any actual meeting — she had a sympathetic contact. The relation that is so indicated always turns out to be that of those who have been together in the past and were predestined to join again (though the past circumstances may not be known) drawn together by old ties. It was the same inward recognition in you (apart even from the deepest spiritual connection) that brought you. If the outer consciousness does not yet fully realise, it is the crust always created by a new physical birth that prevents it. But the soul knows all the while.

Your poem is very beautiful.

I am aware of the terribly trying period that is upon you as upon us just now, but you must try to stand firmly until we may come through into the sunshine hereafter.

27 February 1935

*

I have not time to write a long letter. I can write only this. You are not to leave Pondicherry by this morning's train or at all. You have to come and see the Mother at 9.30 and speak to her heart to heart. Both the Mother and myself have lavished much love and care on you and you are certainly not going to make a return like this — it is impossible. Do not believe all you hear or allow yourself to be driven off your balance by falsehoods of

the kind that have been retailed to you. You do not belong to yourself and have not the right to do what you propose to do: you belong to the Divine and to myself and the Mother. I have cherished you like a friend and a son and have poured on you my force to develop your powers — until the time should come for you to make an equal development in the Yoga. We claim the right to keep you as our own here with us. Throw away this despair — rise above the provocations of others — turn back to the Mother.

16 May 1937

(2)

I want to love and love completely and lose myself in love. If one can think of losing oneself for mortal love, why not for the love of the Divine?

Well, why not? But it must be done in the divine way, not in the mortal. Otherwise —

Let me then say definitely that I love you and you love me a little and let us meet somewhere in this matter. You may remark, "This man has gone mad, otherwise why all these asthmatic gaspings?" Yes, I am mad, Sir, and impatient too.

Ummm! don't you think there are enough people in that condition already here without the Asram doctor adding himself to the collection?

Who can be and remain otherwise unless and until one is divine oneself?

Unfortunately, experience seems to show that one must be divine oneself before one can bear the pressure of divine love.

8 April 1935

*

The Divine loves all equally but there seem to be some who are dearer to Him. You seem to say some such thing in *Essays on the Gita* — that Arjuna was dearer to Krishna because he

came nearer to the Divine and those who do that will always be dearer to Him.

I don't say; it is the Gita that says it—or rather there are two separate slokas; one says that the Divine makes no difference, the other says that Arjuna is specially dear to him.

It seems to me that if X and myself, for example, were to transgress some vital rules of the Asram, I would get a thunderbolt from you while he would get nothing. In my saner moments I have tried to look at it more rationally.

That does not stand. Sometimes you might get nothing except perhaps an invisible stare; sometimes I might say "Now look here, Y, don't make an immortal ass of yourself—that is not the transformation wanted." Still another time I might shout "Now! now! What the hell! what the blazes!" So it would depend on the occasion, not only on the person.

There are many instances to show that some persons are dearer to the Divine than others. Besides Krishna and Arjuna, we have the instance of Buddha and Ananda.

There is also St. John, the beloved disciple.

Then again, Vivekananda was dearer to Ramakrishna than other disciples. Chaitanya showered his grace on Madhai and Jagai, but were they closer to him than Nitai?

But he had love for them (তাই বলে কি প্রেম দিব না?).

Some say that because through one person, chances of manifestation are greater, or because he is more open, or is a Vibhuti, he will be nearer to the Divine. That, I think, can be swept aside since degrees of manifestation can never be a criterion. What is it that determines this? I really don't know.

Of course you don't—nor does anybody. Is love a creation of the reason? or dealt out by this or that scale? Or does the Divine calculate "This fellow has so much of this or that quality. I will give him just so much more love than to that other"?

This question is not only of theoretical interest to us, but also of practical importance, since in our stumblings and gropings the Divine here may have a soft corner for some, and not perhaps for others to the same extent.

All that is rather beside the point. There is a universal divine love that is given equally to all—but also there is *a special relation* with each man—it is not a question of more or less, though it may appear so. But even that less or more cannot be judged by human standards. The man who gets a blow may, if he has a certain relation, feel it as a divine caress; he may even say, erecting his own standard, “She loves me more than others, because to others she would not give that blow, to me she felt she could give it,” and it would be quite as good a standard as the kind treatment one—as standards go. But no standards apply. For in each case it is according to the relation. The cause of the relation? It differs in each case. Cast your plummet into the deep and perhaps you shall find it—or perhaps you will hit something that has nothing at all to do with it. 9 June 1935

No Partiality

The worst suggestion of the hostile forces is that you are partial in your dealings. When this is accepted a wall comes between you and the sadhak and there is a revolt and then there may be an end of the sadhana!

Yes, that is their aim—for it is their one short cut to success, to separate the sadhak from his soul. 3 May 1935

Sri Aurobindo's Compassion

Why is the flower symbolising your compassion so delicate and why does it wither away so soon?

No, the compassion does not wither with its symbol—flowers are the moment's representations of things that are in themselves eternal. 9 August 1936

Outward and Inward Guidance

The outward touch is helpful; but the inward is still more helpful when one is accustomed to receive it with a certain concreteness — and the outward touch is not always fully possible, while the inward can be there all the time.

*

The outer guidance is meant only as an aid to the inner working, especially for the correction of any erroneous movement and sometimes in order to point out the right road. It is not meant except at a very early stage to satisfy mental questionings or to stimulate a mental activity.

26 March 1935

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Once I asked you to give some advice as regards the treatment of a patient. You replied: "I have no medico in me, not even a latent medico."¹

Of course not. If it were there, I would develop it and run the Dispensary myself. What would be the need of X or Y or Z?

The other day, in regard to that baby, you wrote that Mother has no intuition for infants.

No intuition for stuffing infants with heterogeneous medicines.

Well then, if you have no latent medico and Mother has no intuition for infants, can you tell me how by the force of devotion, faith, surrender, etc., is one going to get guidance from you?

What logic! Because Mother and myself are not engineers, therefore A can't develop the right intuition in engineering? or because neither I nor Mother are experts in Gujarati prosody, therefore B can't develop the inspiration for his poems?

¹ See the letter of 1 April 1935 on page 505. — Ed.

If the divine can't guide me externally, which is much easier,
how can he guide me internally?

Oh Lord! what a question! To guide internally is a million times easier than to guide externally. Let us suppose I want General Miaja to beat Franco's fellows back at Guadalajara (please pronounce properly), I put the right force on him and he wakes up and, with his military knowledge and capacity, does the right thing and it's done. But if I, having no latent or patent military genius or knowledge in me, write to him saying "do this, do that", he won't do it and I would not be able to do it either. It is operations of two quite different spheres of consciousness. You absolutely refuse to make the necessary distinction between the two fields and their processes and then you jumble the two together and call it logic.

If the medico can be revealed from within, why could it not
be revealed from without and tell me what to do?

Damn it, man! Intuition and revelation are inner things — they don't belong to the outer mind.

If you or Mother can't guide me concretely, how will the guidance come later on, I wonder?

Do you imagine that I tell you inwardly or outwardly what expressions to use in your Bengali poems when you are writing? Still you write from an inspiration which I have set going.

6 April 1937

Help through Writing and through Other Means

I must point out to you that the value of your staying here does not depend on my writing to you or not, but on whether you have the true inner relation with us, whether you are able to receive anything from us and whether you can profit spiritually

by what you receive. All that depends in the last resort on you.

12 September 1932

*

My touch is always there; but you must learn to feel it not only with the outward contact as a medium — a touch of the pen — but in its direct action on the mind and heart and vital and body. There would then be very much less difficulty — or no difficulty at all.

27 March 1933

*

Letters and answering of letters are not indispensable for the sadhana; the sadhak's reception of silent help is much more important; the written word is only a minor means, and to expect answers because others have them is quite a wrong idea. The only necessity in this sadhana is to open yourself to the Divine Force; if one is open the necessary understanding or knowledge will come of itself through spiritual experience. 23 May 1933

*

Sometimes I think it would be better not to ask you questions about my difficulties, but simply to state them. But I find that if I can't put things in the form of questions, I hardly write anything.

Out of one thousand mental questions and answers there are only one or two here and there that are really of any dynamic assistance — while a single inner response or a little growth of consciousness will do what those thousand questions and answers could not do. The Yoga does not proceed by *upadeśa* but by inner influence. To state your condition, experiences etc. and open to the help is far more important than question-asking — especially the questions about why and how which your physical mind so persistently puts.

I have realised that if we surrender ourselves to you once and open inwardly, you pour into us as much knowledge as we can hold.

What I write usually helps only the mind and that too very little, for people do not really understand what I write — they put their own constructions on it. The inner help is quite different and there can be no comparison with it, for it recreates the substance of the consciousness, not the mind only.

4 June 1936

*

You said, "What I write usually helps only the mind and that too very little, for people do not really understand what I write." Is this because you are writing from too high a plane for us to understand?

It is because the mind by itself cannot understand things that are beyond it. It constructs its own idea out of something that it catches or thinks it has caught and puts that down as the whole meaning of what has been written. Each mind puts its own ideas in place of the Truth.

6 June 1936

*

For some time I have not written to you, but whether you think of this child or not, every minute I think of you.

No, I don't forget you if you don't write. I think of you and concentrate for you every day.

Guidance through Correspondence

Utility of Correspondence

It would be a great mistake for you to stop writing in the book;¹ it is a means of direct and concrete contact with me and the help I can give you — apart from that which I always send you at all times. It is an adverse suggestion and influence which wants you to stop writing, because it wishes to cut the connection established through the book so that you might find it more difficult to feel my help coming to you.

It is absurd to break off because you are for the time being unsuccessful in keeping up an uninterrupted progress; the interruptions come, they have to be passed through and then the progress begins again. The difficulties will be got rid of, but they cannot be got rid of in a moment.

Keep the book and write in it whenever you can.

12 March 1932

*

There is no reason why you should stop writing letters — it is only one kind of letter that is in question and that is not a very good means of contact; you yourself felt the reaction was not favourable. I asked you to write because your need of unburdening the perilous matter in you was very great at the time and, although it did not relieve you at once, it kept me exactly informed of the turns of the fight and helped me to put a certain pressure on the attacking forces at a critical moment. But I do not believe any of these necessities now exists. It is rather a discouragement from within yourself of the source of these movements that is now the need; putting them into words would rather, as I have said, give them more body and substance.

¹ *The notebook in which the correspondent recorded her activities and experiences and asked questions, which she submitted periodically to Sri Aurobindo. — Ed.*

It is an undoubted fact proved by hundreds of instances that for many the exact statement of their difficulties to us is the best and often, though not always, an immediate, even an instantaneous means of release. This has often been seen by sadhaks not only here, but far away, and not only for inner difficulties, but for illness and outer pressure of unfavourable circumstances. But for that a certain attitude is necessary — either a strong faith in the mind and vital or a habit of reception and response in the inner being. Where this habit has been established, I have seen it to be almost unfailingly effective, even when the faith was uncertain or the outer expression in the mind vague, ignorant or in its form mistaken or inaccurate. Moreover, this method succeeds most when the writer can write as a witness of his own movements and state them with an exact and almost impartial precision as a phenomenon of his nature or the movement of a force affecting him from which he seeks release. On the other hand if in writing his vital gets seized by the thing he is writing of, and takes up the pen for him, — expressing and often supporting doubt, revolt, depression, despair, it becomes a very different matter. Even here sometimes the expression acts as a purge; but also the statement of the condition may lend energy to the attack at least for the moment and may seem to enhance and prolong it, exhausting it by its own violence perhaps for the time and so bringing in the end a relief, but at a heavy cost of upheaval and turmoil — and at the risk of the recurring decimal movement, because the release has come by temporary exhaustion of the attacking force, not by rejection and purification through the intervention of the Divine Force with the unquestioning assent and support of the sadhak. There has been a confused fight, an intervention in a hurly-burly, not a clear alignment of forces — and the intervention of the helping force is not felt in the confusion and the whirl. This is what used to happen in your crises; the vital in you was deeply affected and began supporting and expressing the reasonings of the attacking force — in place of a clear observation and expression of the difficulty by the vigilant mind laying the state of things in the light for the higher Light and Force to act upon it, there was a vehement statement of the case for the Opposition.

Many sadhaks (even "advanced") had made a habit of this kind of expression of their difficulties and some still do it; they cannot even yet understand that it is not the way. At one time it was a sort of gospel in the Asram that this was the thing to be done, —I don't know on what ground, for it was never part of my teaching about the Yoga,— but experience has shown that it does not work; it lands one in the recurring decimal notation, an unending round of struggle. It is quite different from the movement of self-opening that succeeds, (here too not in a moment, but still sensibly and progressively) and of which those are thinking who insist on everything being opened to the Guru so that the help may be more effectively there. 17 December 1932

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About the correspondence, I would be indeed a brainless fool if I made it the central aim of my life to con an absurd mountain of letters and leave all higher aims aside! If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it was an effective instrument towards my central purpose— there are a large number of sadhaks whom it has helped to awake from lethargy and begin to tread the way of spiritual experience, others whom it has carried from a small round of experience to a flood of realisations, some who have been absolutely hopeless for years who have undergone a conversion and entered from darkness into an opening of light. Others no doubt have not profited or profited only a little. Also there were some who wrote at random and wasted our time. But I think we can say that for the majority of those who wrote, there has been a real progress. No doubt also it was not the correspondence in itself but the Force that was increasing in its pressure on the physical nature which was able to do all this, but a canalisation was needed, and this served the purpose. There were many for whom it was not necessary, others for whom it was not suitable. If it had been a mere intellectual asking of questions it would have been useless, but the substantial part was about sadhana and experience and it was that that proved to be of great use.

But as time went on the correspondence began to grow too

much and reached impossible proportions — yet it was difficult to stop the flood or to make distinctions which would not have been understood — so we have to seek a way out and as yet have only found palliatives. The easy way would be if those who have opened would now rely mainly on the inner communication with only a necessary word now and then — some have begun to do so. I suppose in the end we shall be able to reduce the thing to manageable proportions.

12 January 1933

*

Sometimes I feel I should not write about my experiences, etc. to you because you know everything. But at times something in me insists on writing. What should I do? Does writing in detail about everything help? In what way?

You need not write every day but from time to time — first, that there may be a direct control on your experiences and, secondly, a more precise help from us not only in general but in particulars.

31 March 1933

*

For some time I have been thinking about ceasing to write to you. Today I was overcome by vital problems. Finally at 4.30 I sent the letter I had written earlier. Why should the idea of not writing or not sending the letter cause so much difficulty?

It is because the idea came from a wrong source and was an attempt of the wrong forces to enter and disturb. It was not so much the idea in itself, but the idea as an expression of dissatisfaction and impatience. Immediately the hostiles took hold of it as a line of entry for all the old movements once associated with this kind of dissatisfaction and impatience. Moreover these letters of yours and my answers have been a strong means of canalising our help and making it habitually available to you and effective — not by the words themselves alone but by the forces behind them.

17 April 1933

*

Is it not true that the letters we receive from you are full of power?

Yes, power is put into them.

8 June 1933

*

Before reading your answers to my letters I feel as if I would never be able to read or understand them. What is this activity in me?

A useless activity of the vital mind. You should keep it quiet and receive with a silent mind waiting for light. In the silent mind one can receive an answer even if I write nothing. 9 June 1933

*

I have the idea that since we can communicate everything to you by prayer, why do we need to write? Is there any fallacy in my reasoning?

It is always well to write what goes on in you — but it need not be done every day. The essential is to keep nothing concealed.

4 August 1933

*

I have now made it a rule to write to you every evening. I will not, however, expect any replies — I will be quite satisfied with the writing, because I have experienced that the writing itself is sufficient to dissolve 95 percent of the struggle or the difficulty.

This I quite approve. You should certainly do so and stick to the rule. I shall answer at least once a day, twice whenever I find it necessary or an answer occurs to me. 8 September 1933

*

Someone told me that those who write to you do not or are not able to receive more help than they would otherwise get, and that therefore there is not much use in writing. Do not such ideas hamper your work?

Of course they do. It is a useless activity of the mind always

trying to pass judgment on things because it does not understand them. If the sadhaks' writing to me about their sadhana were useless would I spend half the day and more in reading and answering, putting aside much other work? — if it were useless I would ask them to stop, not encourage them to write.

12 September 1933

*

It seems as if those who are not writing to you daily are not worse off for it. What is this due to?

Either they have not that same push for the sadhana or they feel less need to lay open their difficulties because they have some line of positive experience which they confidently follow.

24 September 1933

*

Even for those who confidently follow a line of positive experience, and do not write to you often, is there not the danger of wrong suggestions and constructions coming to them and also of an absence of variety or integrality of experience?

Yes, there are both these dangers. Those even who are not visited by serious difficulties, are exposed to the latter danger of remaining always on the same plane of experience. But again many do not write because they are not yet prepared for the pressure on them to progress rapidly which that would mean.

25 September 1933

*

I keep writing one and the same thing. Why? Because some part of me pushes me to do so. What is this part?

It may be the inner mental, it may be the psychic.

28 November 1933

*

Writing is needed by some, it is not needed or only a little by others. On the whole those who write get a more steady incentive to progress than if they did not write — some could hardly go

on without this tangible support. It seems to me that writing is very necessary for you still.

31 January 1934

*

Is the asking of questions a help to Yoga?

Questions are meant for getting light on the things that are going on in one. It is the statement of what is going on that helps to surrender.

3 April 1934

*

No letter in the evening also, nor did Mother see you at the meditation. Whatever depression or other disturbing attack may come, do not absent yourself from pranam or evening meditation or stop writing. All attacks can be met and overcome, but it is by taking our help close and tangible that they can go quickly. I hope that you will not fail to write tomorrow (Sunday) and let us know all.

5 May 1934

*

What is your purpose in encouraging the sadhaks to write to you? Why did you create this channel?

It was created in order that they may have some direct connection and help. It depends on how they use their opportunity.

12 May 1934

*

If I have to answer fully all the points in your long letter, I fear it will take me until Doomsday — though that, according to some calculations, is not far off. I will try to do it in a comparatively brief and unsatisfactory way, I have indeed written a good deal already. But as it may take me time to finish, I send an interim note.

I do not know why you should be suddenly bewildered by what I wrote — it is nothing new and we have been saying it since a whole eternity. I wrote this short answer in reference to a question which supposed that certain “perfections” must be

demanded of the Divine Manifestation which seemed to me quite irrelevant to the reality. I put forward two propositions which appear to me indisputable unless we are to revise all spiritual knowledge in favour of modern European ideas about things.

First, the Divine Manifestation even when it manifests in mental and human ways has behind it a consciousness greater than the mind and not bound by the petty mental and moral conventions of this very ignorant human race — so that to impose these standards on the Divine is to try to do what is irrational and impossible. Secondly, this Divine Consciousness behind the apparent personality is concerned with only two things in a fundamental way — the Truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation and it does what is necessary for that in the way its greater than human consciousness sees to be the necessary and intended way. I shall try if I can develop that when I write about it — perhaps I shall take your remarks about Rama and Krishna as the starting-point — but that I shall see hereafter.

But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the divine purpose, it has to be done. Ramakrishna himself whom you quote for the futility of asking questions answered thousands of questions, I believe. But the answers must be such as Ramakrishna gave and such as I try to give, answers from a higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not lucubrations of the logical intellect trying to coordinate its ignorance; still less can they be a placing of the Divine or the Divine Truth before the judgment of the intellect to be condemned or acquitted by that authority — for the authority here has no sufficient jurisdiction or competence. This also I shall try to explain — it is what I have started to do in a longer letter.

20 May 1934

*

Someone asked me if it would be possible to have direct communication with you and dispense with writing letters to get your guidance. I replied that it would not be possible unless

one had developed the power of telepathy and was able to receive your replies inwardly. But even then there would be the possibility of obscuration and distortion in reception, unless there was a complete psychisation of the consciousness. Even with complete psychisation it would not be possible to know all from within, for example about the experiences of higher stages like Overmind and Supermind, because the psychic has no instrumentality to know about them. Communication through letters would, therefore, still be necessary. But if a person had a perfect *rappor*t with the Mother, he might be able to dispense with the need of communicating through letters. But would even a person who had realised the Overmind have such a perfect *rappor*t?

I think it would need the Supermind itself to establish such a complete *rappor*t. The psychic can do much in that direction but on condition it has a complete control. Overmind and Intuition could do it on their own plane, but here they have to descend into the physical consciousness and that interferes with its immense obscurity in addition to the distortions of mind and vital.

27 May 1934

*

I am sorry I could not write to you all these days. The fact is that something prevented me from approaching you. I have not been able to make out what it was. Will you kindly enlighten me?

It may be some indolence in the physical consciousness. It is always best to write at least thrice a week, even if there is nothing very special to say, so as to maintain the physical as well as the inner contact.

19 June 1934

*

Everyone thinks that as soon as you read our letters we get the necessary help. In my own case I get relief only after Mother's touch at Pranam. Prayers are not heard then?

It depends on how far the inner being is awake — otherwise one needs a physical *avalambana*. There are some people who get

the relief only after we read a letter, others get it immediately they write or before it has reached us or after it has reached but before we have read. Others get it simply by referring the whole matter to us mentally. Idiosyncracies!

20 March 1935

*

I cannot undertake to be telling you all the time all that is not perfectly Yogic in the details of your action from morning to night. These are things to see to yourself. It is the movements of your sadhana that you place before me and it is these that I have to see whether they are the right thing or not.

7 May 1936

*

When I wrote that while reading your answers I experienced something coming out of my heart, you replied, "It depends on the nature of the movement. Something from the psychic?" I think it was something from the psychic. But how did it get connected with my reading your answers?

The psychic can be connected with anything that gives room for love or bhakti.

When I was reading these answers with love and joy, I felt some sort of psychic opening which was the most important part of my reaction. Could you explain this?

You have explained it yourself — it is the psychic contact with what is in or behind the answers — what comes out into them from myself.

26 June 1936

*

No need to cut down your letters — I am a quick reader (at least of English, provided the handwriting is not on my own model) — it is only writing that takes time. So you must not mind short or at least comparatively short answers. It is quite the best to let the pen run and say everything.

26 June 1936

*

I do not understand your point about raising up a new race by writing trivial letters. Of course not — nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place — an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in their place they are indispensable to the building up of a world, — it cannot be made up only of mountains and sunsets and streamings of the aurora borealis — though these have their place there. All depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action — and that is known to the Cosmic Spirit which is at work, — and it works, I may add, not by the mind or according to human standards but by a greater consciousness which, starting from an electron, can build up a world and, using “a tangle of ganglia”, can make them the base here for the works of the Mind and Spirit in Matter, produce a Ramakrishna, or a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare. Is the life of a great poet, either, made up only of magnificent and important things? How many “trivial” things had to be dealt with and done before there could be produced a *King Lear* or a *Hamlet*! Again, according to your own reasoning, would not people be justified in mocking at your pother — so they would call it, I do not — about metre and scansion and how many ways a syllable can be read? Why, they might say, is X [*the recipient of this letter*] wasting his time in trivial prosaic things like this when he might have been spending it in producing a beautiful lyric or fine music? But the worker knows and respects the material with which he must work and he knows why he is busy with “trifles” and small details and what is their place in the fullness of his labour.

December 1936

*

You say certain things that human nature does not find so easy or natural.

If I said only things that human nature finds easy and natural, that would certainly be very comfortable for the disciples, but there would be no room for any spiritual aim or endeavour.

Spiritual aims and methods are not easy or natural (e.g. as quarrelling, sex-indulgence, greed, indolence, acquiescence in all imperfections are easy and natural) and if people become disciples, they are supposed to follow spiritual aims and endeavours, however hard and above ordinary nature, and not the things that are easy and natural.

3 May 1937

*

Why do you lay so much stress on our writing everything to you? Can't we pray to you and ask for help? Isn't it as good as writing?

Not writing means trying to conceal. That is a suggestion of the vital.

2 August 1937

*

The Mother is positively opposed to your suspending all correspondence with me, she thinks it is very dangerous at this stage and juncture of your sadhana. I am not, myself also, at ease about it. You have entered into a phase and adopted a method which may be very effective,—solitude, direct pressure for immediate realisation etc. but which can involve also serious risks. We consider it necessary at this time that you should keep me informed of what is going on in you and what you are doing. A general support and protection may not be sufficient at such a time or in such a passage. It is not indispensable to write every day, but some report of these things is necessary so that I may intervene at once if that is needed or give an immediate help or an indication or direction when that is advisable. Since you have turned to me as your guru, and that quite apart from the question of identity with the Divine, and since you acknowledge your inability to go to the end unaided—very few have been able to do that,—it would be illogical and perilous to attempt to take the kingdom of heaven by violence alone and in the dark. I am always after you with my force, even though you don't feel it, but that may not be sufficient at this time.

Suitable Subjects for Correspondence

Is it possible for you to give a private reply to questions on political matters?

It depends on the circumstances. I have for a long time past eschewed politics entirely and I could not answer questions of a political character. Apart from that I avoid usually racial and religious questions, especially if they are controversial, confining myself to things of a spiritual or cultural character (literature, art etc.). There too I write almost entirely to disciples or seekers of the Yoga.

1 February 1936

Useful and Useless Letters

What is meant by vital nature?

These are questions that anybody in the Asram could answer. This and questions such as "what is meant by faithfulness". It is much better if you get these things explained to you by someone in Gujarati so that you can understand and be able to apply your own understanding whenever needed. If I have to answer philosophically, it would take ten pages for each question and you would understand nothing. Otherwise I have to answer off-hand and such an answer also will be of no use to you. You can ask practical questions about your own experiences and I will try to answer.

19 June 1933

*

Would it be all right if I asked questions pertaining to the *Arya*?

It is not possible for me to write answers to such questions as they would have to be very long — the *Arya* was written so that people might get the answers there. I can't write them all over again.

31 January 1934

*

It is better to write what is in one's mind. Some people simply write about their experiences (dreams, visions, descents of force),

but nothing precise about the movements of their mind and vital with the result that these remain pretty much as they were and there is no harmony between the inner and the outer being and as a result the inner also does not get its full or proper development.

17 June 1934

*

I feel no interest in sadhana or even in the outer work. Whatever help or protection you send stops before it can enter me. What is the reason for all that?

The reason is quite clear from what you write in the next para. There is something in the consciousness that wanted the letters and answers not simply for help in sadhana but as a personal satisfaction with egoistic elements in it — pride, jealousy of others (X, Y), desire to be equal with them, demand for special consideration etc. Also it wanted nice, pleasing and elaborate answers. All that is the usual wrong attitude of the vital which is the stumbling-block for so many sadhaks and prevents true psychic love from developing, replacing it by the vital kind full of demand, ego, jealousy, revolt etc. — and it has been the ruin of some. All that you had thrown out of the higher parts, and quieted it elsewhere, but it remained sticking somewhere and when correspondence was suspended, the hostile forces took advantage of the fact that you were not allowed to write every day as before to raise up these feelings and you did not repel them with sufficient force to put an end to the attack. Hence they continue.

25 February 1935

*

I find great difficulty in understanding what is the difference between the inner mind and the vital, physical and outer minds. Also I want to know what is the physical consciousness and what are the different places of these things. If these things have forms but are not material, how am I to get the idea of them?

An answer would mean writing several essays for which I have no time.

You [Sri Aurobindo's secretary] can tell him that it would be a waste of time to think of these things now — it is only when experience comes that it would be possible to distinguish the different parts.

Quietness and calm cannot come all at once — always at the beginning thoughts come and the mind interferes with its activity. One has to persevere, to detach oneself from the mental activity till one feels oneself as separate from it. 29 July 1936

*

You can write whatever is in your mind — but these are outward things and you should not allow outward things to interfere with your inner opening.

Not Always Possible to Answer

I answer letters whenever I consider it necessary; I cannot bind myself to answer every letter I receive. If I did, I would have to be writing all the 24 hours without time for rest or meals or anything else!

28 April 1932

*

You can write whenever you like. But I told you at the beginning I cannot answer all letters — if I did that I would have to work all the 24 hours at nothing else.

15 April 1933

*

Many times questions come to the mind like: "What is the Divine?" Is it not better to write them to you?

Provided you do not expect me to answer always. People write to me not for getting mental information or answering questions but to lay before me their experiences and difficulties and get my help. When it is necessary, I answer questions, but I cannot be doing it all the time.

26 June 1933

*

Continue to write letters giving your experiences and your condition from time to time. Do not however expect an answer always. When it is needed, I will answer. 22 August 1933

*

If an answer is very necessary, I give it even if there is no time. If there is time, I give an answer often even if it is not indispensable.

19 October 1933

*

I told you at the beginning that I will not be able to answer everything you write. You are quite mistaken in thinking that I answer everything other people write in their books. Out of the fifty or more books I get and the sixty or more letters I pass over more than half without any answer and even so it takes me 11 hours to deal with all that correspondence. The other sadhaks do not stop writing on that account — they know that it brings help to them to write. 22 November 1933

*

For the past six years I have not sent you any communications. I would now like to do so once or twice a week: sadhana, experiences, etc.

It is just the time when I am trying to diminish letters and books, so that the Mother has some time to rest at night and myself some time to do the real work instead of passing day and night in sending and answering correspondence. This is not the time to add fresh correspondence.

Moreover it is not worthwhile sending experiences merely to ask whether they are true. The truth has to be found out by their effect in liberating the consciousness and changing the nature, ridding you of ego etc. Observe that in yourself and it will be sufficient. 5 December 1935

*

When what you write is correct, I say nothing — when it is your

physical mind that brings in wrong ideas, I correct.

10 May 1936

*

Sir, you say you keep no files, throw none of my regal documents into the waste paper basket; where then is the last dream-hewn epistle flown?

You do not make the necessary distinctions. I said I don't have any file of your immortal poems, I said nothing about your more mortal epistles.

18 June 1938

*

How is it, Lord, that even the mortal epistles have joyously returned without one blemish? I take it that there was nothing in them to comment upon?

Yes? I was under the impression that I had decorated them with my indecipherable lotus handwriting.

20 June 1938

Time and Correspondence

You do not realise that I have to spend 12 hours over the ordinary correspondence, numerous reports, etc. I work 3 hours in the afternoon and the whole night up to 6 in the morning over this. So if I get a long letter with many questions I may not be able to answer it all at once. To get into such a disturbance over it and want to throw off the Yoga is quite unreasonable.

17 June 1933

*

It is true that the flow of notebooks and letters is becoming so heavy that time is insufficient to deal with them. Mother favoured the movement, but it is becoming excessive in proportions. The best thing would be for you to write *briefly* each thing you have to say — then you can write every day — otherwise it is better to write from time to time, say twice a week. But the first way would be best; if things are briefly and clearly said,

then there will be time.

25 June 1933

*

The books and letters are not going to be discontinued—but I shall have to take one day off in the week (Sunday). The volume of the correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and a good part of the day—apart from the work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work. It is this that makes the pranam later and later, for we do not finish till 7.30 or after. Also much work falls in arrears and piles up and many things that have their importance have had to be discontinued. Some relief is necessary. If all the sadhaks were more discreet, it would be better. But this does not apply to you, for you keep always within the limits.

19 December 1933

*

I have no time for anything just now—I have become a correspondence-reading and answering machine. I hope to make up when things are a little easier.

19 August 1934

*

Absolutely no time tonight. I have been dealing with correspondence since 9.30 p.m. (to say nothing of the afternoon) and am likely to have to go on till 7.00 a.m. or longer.

5 January 1935

*

Someone told me that X is translating Saratchandra's novel into English, half of which is corrected by you. It amounts to this: that X is making you translate somebody's novel instead of himself translating *Arya*, which would be more reasonable. What ordeals for you to pass through! Perhaps the person who remarked in a London paper that you had written five hundred books was not quite wrong; by this time your letters to sadhaks would make three or four books for each of them and if to these are added your poems, translations and other writings the total would not be less than five hundred.

The idea of *X* translating *Arya* makes the hair stand on end! It would be much easier for me to write 500 books. Perhaps I have done so — if all I have scribbled is to be taken into account against me. But as most of it will not see the light of day — at least of public day, I may still escape establishing the record in book-production.

3 February 1935

*

About my essay, you could read the first two pages one day, another pair of pages the next, and so on — if you believe that reading it at a stretch would interfere with your daily work.

I have had to suppress all extra work for the last 2 or 3 days and there is a mountain of arrears awaiting me. If my eye is all right tomorrow, I shall see if anything can be done, but it is not very likely.

9 March 1935

*

I am surprised and sad to hear that you can still be affected by these physical ailments!

What *I* am surprised at is that I have any eye left at all after the last two or three years of half-day and all night work. The difficulty for resting is that the sadhaks have begun pouring paper again without waiting for the withdrawal of the notice — not all of course, but many. And there is a stack of outside correspondence still unanswered! I am persuading my eye, but it is still red and sulky and reproachful. Revolted, what? Thinks too much is imposed on it and no attention paid to its needs, desires, preferences etc. Will have to reason with it for a day or two longer.

How I wish, as a medical man, I mean, I could enforce absolute rest to the eyes and issue a bulletin.

[Underlining “absolute rest”:] It does not exist in this world — not even in the Himalayas — except of course for the inner being which can always be in absolute rest.

9 March 1935

*

I have today fifty letters each 2000 pages long — of course this is not a mathematically accurate statement, but it expresses the impression they make on me — so excuse brevity in my answer to your length.

20 July 1935

*

I couldn't finish copying the poem I want to send to you. Perhaps I will send it tomorrow morning. Since you "sleep" up to 12 a.m., I hear, you will in any case see it after 3 p.m.

It depends on the time I go to sleep. If it is at 9 or 10 a.m. I may sleep beyond 12. As for poetry, I see it only at night. There is no time in the afternoon except for the letters.

31 August 1935

*

No time, no time! It is going to be an eternal problem with you, it seems! After the reduction of correspondence — cutting of the evening mail — it leaves you absolutely free for other things. I suppose you are working at your *Savitri*.

Where is the reduction of correspondence? I have to be occupied with correspondence from 8.0 to 12 p.m. (minus one hour), again after bath and meal from 2.30 to 7 a.m. All that apart from afternoon work. And still much is left undone. And you think I can write *Savitri*? You evidently believe in miracles!

23 January 1936

*

Do you really mean that till 7 a.m. your pen goes on at an aeroplanic speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the supramental freedom from these things not in view?

Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them. Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

24 January 1936

*

What has happened to my typescript?² Hibernating?

My dear sir, if you saw me nowadays with my nose to paper from afternoon to morning, deciphering, deciphering, writing, writing, writing, even the rocky heart of a disciple would be touched and you would not talk about typescripts and hibernation. I have given up (for the present at least) the attempt to minimise the cataract of correspondence; I accept my fate like Ramana Maharshi with the plague of Prasads and admirers, but at least don't add anguish to annihilation by talking about typescripts!

11 March 1936

*

But concentration on "real work"? Good Lord, you do that from 9 or 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. God alone knows what you do then.

What is this transcendental rubbish?

Perhaps you send Force to Germany, Abyssinia, etc., or make a leap to the Supramental?

That is not my real work. Who except the devil is going to give force to Germany? Do you think I am in league with Hitler and his howling tribe of Nazis?

We speculate and speculate. Next you concentrate from 6 p.m. to 11 or 12. Still not enough?

Who gave you this wonderful programme? Invented it all by your ingenious self? From 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. afternoon correspondence, meal, newspapers. Evening correspondence from 7 or 7.30 to 9. From 9 to 10 p.m. concentration. 10 to 12 correspondence, 12 to 2.30 bath, meal, rest. 2.30 to 5 or 6 a.m. correspondence unless I am lucky. Where is the sufficient time for concentration?

4 April 1936

*

² See page 416, footnote 6 and page 420, footnote 8.—Ed.

I fear my answers are scrappy as well as illegible, but this has been also a fell day (one letter 36 pages vernacular, 2 others each 8 pages of foolscap, others less in size (4, 2, 1 etc.) but ample in number — and this is no-correspondence period!) I have had to race against the old man Time.

19 August 1936

*

I request you to clarify certain points in your letter if you have the time tonight. If not, I shall have to disturb your Sunday slumber.

Excuse me. I don't sleep on Sundays; I climb mountains of outside letters which have accumulated for want of weekday time.

30 August 1936

*

God knows what you are busy with now, with the correspondence also reduced.

Who says it is reduced? For a few days, it was — now it has increased to half again its former size and every morning I have to race to get it done in time — and don't get it done in time. Thousand things are accumulating; inner work delayed.

17 September 1936

*

I had to be careful to view this case from all aspects. A considerable drain on the mind might affect the cerebro-spinal system, besides affecting the secretions in consequence. And if one heats up the brain-box in order to reach the Creators or connect up with them, a certain amount of steam has to be let off.

Good Lord! then we shall all "have to be very careful". Myself for instance am putting a terrible drain on the mind by answering tons of correspondence which can't be good for my spine or for the other things either. But it gives me a great idea — why shouldn't I take a medical stop-work from you and declare a six months' holiday? But I am afraid, if I did, I would misuse it

in writing poetry myself, not to speak of trying to connect up with the supramental creators for the benefit of an unprepared humanity. So it is no use.

21 October 1936

*

Got your typescript, but so much overwhelmed by correspondence that no time to answer at any length — so kept. This only to remove any apprehension of disappearance on the stairs. Excuse semi-telegraphic style; when Time presses, verbs and pronouns disappear.

4 April 1937

*

Have you stopped the correspondence because of your eye-trouble or for concentration? You will understand that I don't write for the sake of writing, but for a support from you. Please give me a line in reply, after which I won't bother you any more.

Apart from the eye-question, I have stopped because there are certain things I have positively to get done before I can take up any regular correspondence work again. If I start now, I shall probably have to stop again soon for a long long time. Better get things finished now — that's the idea. You must hold on somehow for the present.

23 November 1937

*

It is time to put up a notice stopping the sending in of correspondence up to the end of August. The Mother must be free during this time at least and, for myself, there is no least chance of a book for the A.P.H. [Arya Publishing House] if some measure of that kind is not taken.

29 July 1938

The Importance of Brevity

You have done well to write more briefly. When you wrote ten times over the same thing, it wasted your time in writing and mine in reading. I had to glance through hastily and try to catch the meaning. Now I can read carefully and see clearly what you

mean — it has much more force like that.

*

In future when you have long letters to write, you should write not in pencil but in ink — as I find it difficult to read 10 or 12 pages so closely written in pencil in Gujarati; it has taken me 2 or 3 days to manage to read your letter. If it is only a short letter, then you can write in pencil, though ink is always the best. Also, you should write in separate letters about sadhana and about other ordinary matters to which you want an immediate answer — such as this question about X and your studies. You can read with X since he is willing.

11 December 1932

*

I don't mind your correspondence. It is a relief. But when people write four letters a day in small hand closely running to some 10 pages without a gap anywhere and one gets 20 letters in the afternoon and forty at night (of course not all like that, but still!) it becomes a little too too.

5 February 1935

Answers Not Meant Equally for All

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga. What I wrote to X was meant for X and fits his case; but supposing a sadhak with a different (coarse) vital nature unlike X's were in question, I might say to him something that might seem the very opposite, "Sit tight on your lower vital propensities, throw out your greed for food, — it is standing as a serious obstacle in your way: it would be better for you to be ascetic in your habits than vulgarly animal in this part as you are now." To one who is not taking enough food or sleep and rest in the eagerness of his spirit, I might say "Eat more, sleep more, rest more; do not overstrain yourself or bring an ascetic spirit into your tapasya." To another with the opposite excess I

might speak a contrary language. Each sadhak has a nature or turn of nature of his own and the movement of the Yoga of two sadhaks, even when there are some resemblances between them, is seldom exactly the same.

Again in applying some truth that is laid down it is necessary to give it its precise meaning. It is quite true that "in our path the attitude is not one of forceful suppression, *nigraha*"; it is not coercion according to a mental rule or principle on an unpersuaded vital being. But that does not mean either that the vital has to go its own way and do according to its fancy. It is not coercion that is the way, but an inner change, in which the lower vital is led, enlightened and transformed by a higher consciousness which is detached from the objects of vital desire. But in order to let this grow an attitude has to be taken in which a decreasing importance has to be attached to the satisfaction of the claims of the lower vital, a certain mastery, *samiyama*, being above any clamour of these things, limiting such things as food to their proper place. The lower vital has its place, it is not to be crushed or killed, but it has to be changed, "caught hold of by both ends", at the upper end a mastery and control, at the lower end a right use. The main thing is to get rid of attachment and desire; it is then that an entirely right use becomes possible. By what actual steps, in what order, through what processus this mastery of the lower vital shall come depends on the nature, the stress of development, the actual movement of the Yoga.

It is not the eating or the not eating of *mohan bhoga* that is the important point — (actually when I gave X what you call his permit, I was thinking of X and not of anybody else). What is important is how that or any of these food matters affects you, what is your inner condition and how any such indulgence, cooking or eating, stands or does not stand in the way of its progress and change, what is best for you as a Yogic discipline. One rule for you I can lay down, "Do not do, say or think anything which you would want to conceal from the Mother." And that answers the objections that rose within you — from your vital, is it not? — against bringing "these petty things" to the Mother's notice. Why should you think that the Mother

would be bothered by these things or regard them as petty? If *all* the life is to be Yoga, what is there that can be called petty or of no importance? Even if the Mother does not answer, to have brought any matter of your action and self-development before her in the right spirit means to have put it under her protection, in the light of the Truth, under the rays of the Power that is working for the transformation — for immediately those rays begin to play and to act on the thing brought to her notice. Anything within that advises you not to do it when the spirit in you moves you to do it, may very well be a device of the vital to avoid the ray of the Light and the working of the Force. It may also be observed that if you open yourself to the Mother by putting the movements of any part of you under her observation, that of itself creates a relation, a personal closeness with her other than that which her general, silent or not directly invited action maintains with all the sadhaks.

All this, of course, if you feel ready for this openness, if the spirit moves you to lay what is in you bare before her. For it is then that it is fruitful — when it comes from within and is spontaneous and true.

18 May 1932

*

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all. In this case the general rules were laid down for one who had made no progress — but everything depends on how the Yoga comes to each person.

26 July 1934

Showing Letters to Others

Occasionally I show a letter from you to some sympathetic friend. Perhaps there may be a little egoistic sense of display, so I want your order on this.

It is better not to show. Apart from the possibility of display

it dissipates the force of the thing and brings in other currents from outside.

13 February 1933

*

It is always a mistake to let another know what we have written privately to you on personal things, for it is likely, as you see, for it to be misinterpreted. It is because we have had so much experience of that that we prefer that personal things should be kept private. Formerly we used to allow people to show if they wanted to, but we found that even the simplest and clearest things were liable to mental constructions and misconceptions, so we have become more prudent. But of course what you quote from what I said was in itself quite harmless. 9 November 1935

Circulation of Letters

It does not at all concern the sadhaks to know to whom the messages are addressed,³ and it is inadmissible to base upon them reflections against the character of the addressee or to assume that he has gone wrong in his sadhana. I write often to confirm and encourage and not only to correct or reprove. In fact, I do not quite know why these communications should be called "messages"; for they are answers to questions or to letters, and only so much is circulated as is considered apposite or of general interest or use from the point of view of sadhana.

Obviously, curiosity and gossip and wrong imaginations cannot be "helpful to sadhana". The messages are not meant as food for gossip, but to give the sadhaks indications that can be of use to them in their sadhana. If they misuse them in this way, it is their own loss.

8 March 1932

*

I would like to have your permission to give the typed copy of your messages that I got from X to a binder in the town.

³ Before Sri Aurobindo's letters began to be published, typed copies of some of them were circulated among members of the Ashram. These were sometimes referred to as "messages". — Ed.

As for the typed copy, I must defer sanction till I have gone through a copy of the same which is with me. I may say at once, however, that such copies ought first to be verified by comparison with the original in Nolini's possession, for I find that the one with me is full of gross errors. 19 September 1932

*

We are asked to take our files of "Communications of Sri Aurobindo" to the library for revision. Should we also take letters that are personal?

You are not asked to take any letters written to you.

It is the collections that were asked for of messages etc.—as it is found that things unauthorised, inaccurate, not mine are often included and afterwards they get copied and end by being circulated even outside the Asram. Also things that are quite private or are not intended to circulate leak out in this way, since some people are unscrupulous in copying (like X who took things he was asked not to take). A control and sifting is necessary therefore, so that we may know what there is in these collections.

9 March 1933

*

[*Sri Aurobindo's secretary:*] Many have the "Bhowanipore File"—letters written to people connected with the Bhowanipore circle.⁴ Is it to be withdrawn? There are also collections of letters before 1925—genuine, but with names and other things of a personal character—though containing useful instructions on Yoga. It would be safe, I think, to withdraw them—one cannot guarantee the correctness of the copies.

It is not necessary to withdraw anything. But those who want to keep these things must keep for themselves and not lend to visitors or newcomers—except by special permission for the messages not exportable. There will be three categories:

⁴ See Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 332–81.

(1) Letters prior to 1927 and personal letters (not circulated as messages) of any date.

(2) Messages authorised for circulation here or outside. (These can be freely shown to all newcomers or visitors with a proviso that permission must be given for copying or possession of copies to outsiders interested in this Yoga. Copies cannot be given to outsiders not interested in this Yoga.)

(3) Messages not authorised for circulation outside. (These can be shown or lent to all resident sadhaks but to visitors only with permission. Copies cannot be issued to outsiders.)

Therefore all who want to have permission to lend their copies must keep separate files for these categories.

11 March 1933

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Can "messages authorised for circulation here or outside"⁵ be shown to people living outside the Asram?

Only disciples — those practising Yoga.

10 August 1933

*

A visitor writes on behalf of a professor living outside, who requests permission to see a copy of the messages that outsiders are allowed to see. The professor is known to X.

I do not quite understand — we do not supply copies of messages. If people want to take copies of the messages that are allowed to be sent outside, they ask for permission. Is it that X has to take the copy for which we gave permission? If so, you might speak to him about it.

27 August 1935

⁵ See the preceding letter, point (2). — Ed.

Sri Aurobindo's Force

Concreteness of the Force

The invisible Force producing tangible results both inward and outward is the whole meaning of the Yogic consciousness. Your question about Yoga bringing merely a feeling of Power without any result was really very strange. Who would be satisfied with such a meaningless hallucination and call it Power? If we had not had thousands of experiences showing that the Power within could alter the mind, develop its powers, add new ones, bring in new ranges of knowledge, master the vital movements, change the character, influence men and things, control the conditions and functionings of the body, work as a concrete dynamic Force on other forces, modify events etc. etc., we would not speak of it as we do. Moreover, it is not only in its results but in its movements that the Force is tangible and concrete. When I speak of feeling Force or Power, I do not mean simply having a vague sense of it, but feeling it concretely and consequently being able to direct it, manipulate it, watch its movement, be conscious of its mass and intensity and in the same way of that of other perhaps opposing forces; all these things are possible and usual by the development of Yoga.

It is not, unless it is supramental Force, a Power that acts without conditions and limits. The conditions and limits under which Yoga or sadhana has to be worked out are not arbitrary or capricious; they arise from the nature of things. These including the will, receptivity, assent, self-opening and surrender of the sadhak have to be respected by the Yoga-force — unless it receives a sanction from the Supreme to override everything and get something done — but that sanction is sparingly given. It is only if the supramental Power came fully down, not merely sent its influences through the Overmind, that things could be very radically altered in this respect — and that is why my main

effort is directed towards that object — for then the sanction would not be rare! For the Law of the Truth would be at work not constantly balanced by the law of the Ignorance.

Still the Yoga-force is always tangible and concrete in the way I have described and has tangible results. But it is invisible — not like a blow given or the rush of a motor car knocking somebody down which the physical senses can at once perceive. How is the mere physical mind to know that it is there and working? By its results? but how can it know that the results were that of the Yoga-force and not of something else? One of two things it must do. Either it must allow the consciousness to go inside, to become aware of inner things, to believe in and experience the invisible and the supraphysical, and then by experience, by the opening of new capacities it becomes conscious of these forces and can see, follow and use their workings just as the scientist uses the unseen forces of Nature. Or one must have faith and watch and open oneself and then it will begin to see how things happen; it will notice that when the Force was called in, there began after a time to be a result, — then repetitions, more repetitions, more clear and tangible results, increasing frequency, increasing consistency of results, a feeling and awareness of the Force at work — until the experience becomes daily, regular, normal, complete. These are the two main methods, one internal, working from in outward, the other external, working from outside and calling the inner Force out till it penetrates and is sensible in the exterior consciousness. But neither can be done if one insists always on the extrovert attitude, the external concrete only and refuses to join to it the internal concrete — or if the physical Mind at every step raises a dance of doubts which refuses to allow the nascent experience to develop. Even the scientist carrying out a new experiment would never succeed if he allowed his mind to behave in that way.

When the Mother said it was just a trick of reversing the consciousness, she meant that — that instead of allowing always the external mind to interfere and assert its own ordinary customary point of view, it should turn itself round, admit that things may work from in outwards, and keep itself sufficiently

quiet to see that developing and being done. For then an inner mind shows itself which is capable of following and being the instrument of the invisible Forces.

It is not that you are incapable of it, for it was several times on the point of being done. But your external mind has interfered always, questioning, doubting, asking for something more external, not waiting for the movement to continue, for the inward to externalise itself and make itself concrete. That is why I object to this worship of Doubt. It is not that I used not to have doubts myself more formidable than any you have ever thought of—but I did not allow them to interfere with the development of my experience. I let it continue until it had sufficient body for me to know what it was and what it could bring me.

2 August 1932

*

Highly delighted (unyogically though) to learn you had put so much force for the sale of my gramophone records! But highly intrigued too. What is this force? A sweet blessing that all should be smooth in this rough world? Or is it a conscious way of directing a control, as one controls the organisation of a music choir? I mean does this force mean concrete business, as the scheming of a schemer does? I ask this naïve question since your force always puzzles me.

Well, I made the mistake of “thinking aloud with my pen” when I wrote that unfortunate sentence about the force I had put for the success of the gramophone records. As my whole action consists of the use of force or forces—except of course my writing answers to correspondence which is concrete; but even that I am made to do by and with a force, otherwise I can assure you I would not and could not do it—I sometimes am imprudent enough to make this mistake. It is foolish to do so because a spiritual force or any other is obviously something invisible and its action is invisible, so how can anyone believe in it? Only the results are seen and how is one to know that the results are the result of the Force? It is not concrete.

But I am myself rather puzzled by your instances of the

concrete. How are the schemes of a schemer concrete? Something happens and you tell me it was the result of a schemer's scheme. But the schemer's scheme was a product of his consciousness and not at all concrete; it was in his mind and another fellow's mind is not concrete to me unless I am a Yogi or a thought-reader. I can only infer from some things he said or did that he had a scheme, things which I have not myself seen or heard and which are therefore not to me concrete. So how can I accept or believe in the scheme of the schemer? And even if I saw or heard, I am not bound to believe that it was a scheme or that which happened was the result of a scheme. He may have acted on a chain of impulses and what happened may have been the result of something quite different or itself purely accidental. Again how do you control the music choir? By words and signs etc., which are of course concrete? But what made you use those words and signs and why did they produce a control? and why did the other fellows do what you told them? what made them do that? It was something in your and their consciousness, I suppose; but that is not concrete. Again, scientists talk about electricity which is, it seems, an energy, a force in action and it seems that everything has been done by this energy, my own physical being is constituted by it and it is at the base of all my mental and life energies. But that is not concrete to me. I never felt my being constituted by electricity, I cannot feel it working out my thoughts and life-processes — so how can I believe in it or accept it? The force I use is not a sweet blessing — a blessing (silent) certainly is not concrete, like a stone or a kick or other things seizable by the senses; it is not even a mere will saying within me "let it be so" — that also is not concrete. It is a force of consciousness directed towards or on persons and things and happenings — but obviously a force of consciousness is not seizable by the physical senses, so not concrete. I may feel it and the person acted on may feel it or may not feel it, but as the feeling is internal and not external and perceivable by others, it cannot be called concrete and nobody is bound to accept or believe in it. For instance, if I cure someone (without medicines) of a fever and send him fresh and full of strength to his work,

all in the course of a single night, still why should any third person believe or accept that it was my force that did it? It may have been Nature or his imagination that made him cure (three cheers for those concrete things, imagination and Nature!)—or the whole thing happened of itself. So, you see the case is hopeless, it can't be proved at all—at all. 6 December 1935

*

Is the force you “put on me” concrete?

Concrete? what do you mean by “concrete”? It has its own concreteness; it can take a form (like a stream for instance) of which one is aware and can send it quite concretely in whatever “direction” or on whatever object one chooses.

In one of your letters to me you wrote: “A Yoga consciousness or spiritual consciousness which has no power or force in it, may not be dead or unreal but it is evidently something inert and without effect or consequence. Equally a man who sets out to be a Yogi or Guru and has no spiritual consciousness or no power in his spiritual consciousness—a Yoga force or spiritual force—is making a false claim and is either a charlatan or a self-deluded imbecile; still more is he so if having no spiritual force he claims to have made a path others can follow. If Yoga is a reality, if spirituality is anything better than a delusion, there must be such a thing as Yoga force or spiritual force.”

That is a general statement about the inherent power of spirituality. What I was speaking of was a willed use of subtle force (it may be spiritual or mental or vital) to secure a particular result at some point in the world. Just as there are waves of unseen physical forces (cosmic waves etc.) or currents of electricity, so there are mind waves, thought currents, waves of emotion, e.g. anger, sorrow etc. which go out and affect others without their knowing whence they come or that they come at all—they only feel the result. One who has the occult or inner senses awake can feel them coming and invading him; influences good or bad can propagate themselves in that way; that can happen without

intention, automatically, but also a deliberate use can be made of them. There can also be a purposeful generation of force, spiritual or other. There can be too the use of the effective will or idea, which is not concrete in that sense, but is all the same effective.

6 February 1943

No Miraculous Force

I tried to convince X that it was your force that cured Y. But X said, "What about instances in which the Divine Force has failed? Why does it succeed in some cases and not in others?"

The mistake is to think that it must be either a miraculous force or else none. There is no miraculous force and I do not deal in miracles. The word Divine here is out of place, if it is taken as an always omnipotently acting Power. Yogic Force is then better; it simply means a higher Consciousness using its power, a spiritual and supraphysical force acting on the physical world directly. One has to train the instrument to be a channel of this force; it works also according to a certain law and under certain conditions. The Divine does not work arbitrarily or as a thaumaturge; He acts upon the world along the lines that have been fixed by the nature and purpose of the world we live in—by an increasing action of the thing that has to manifest, not by a sudden change or disregard of all the conditions of the work to be done. If it were not so, there would be no need of Yoga or time or human action or instruments or of a Master and disciples or of a Descent or anything else. It could simply be a matter for the तथास्तु [*tathāstu*] and nothing more. But that would be irrational if you like and worse than irrational,—childish. This does not mean that interventions, things apparently miraculous, do not happen — they do. But all cannot be like that.

I told X, "I don't see how you can deny the reality of this Force. Were you able to work with such vigour before you came here?" He said, "Yes, I could work a lot, so much so that people were astounded. Was that Sri Aurobindo's Force?"

What is Sri Aurobindo's force? It is not a personal property of this body or mind. It is a higher Force used by me or acting through me.

"And Tagore, Lenin and other greats. Is the Divine Force working in them too?"

Of course it is a Divine Force, for there is only one force acting in the world, but it acts according to the nature of the instrument. Yogic Force is different from others because it is a special power of the spiritual consciousness.

I continued, "It may not be Sri Aurobindo's Force, but how can I exclude the possibility of a Divine Force behind? Because one is an atheist, it doesn't mean the Divine is undivine against him!"

There was an obvious intervention in the case he speaks of—but the agent or process could only be determined if one knew all the circumstances. Such interventions are frequent; e.g. my uncle's daughter was at her last gasp, the doctors had gone away telling him there was no more to be done. He simply sat down to pray—as soon as he had finished, the death symptoms were suspended, the girl recovered without farther treatment (it was a case of typhoid fever). Several cases of that kind have come within my personal observation.

X concluded, "Oh, if you say everything is being done at the divine impulsion, I have nothing to say. But you can't say that I am working because Sri Aurobindo is constantly at my back!" What can I say against this?

I am not very particular about that. It is a personal question and depends on X's feeling. I certainly put force on him for the development and success of his poetry—about the rest I don't want to say anything.

I have marginalised on the Force¹—to write more com-

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote the above answers in the margins of the correspondent's notebook.—Ed.

pletely would need more time than I have tonight. Of course, if it depended on a few cases of illness, it would be a thing of no certitude or importance. If the “Force” were a mere freak or miracle, it would be equally trivial and unimportant, even if well-attested. It is only of importance if it is part of the consciousness and the life used at all times, not only for illness but for whatever one has to do. It manifests in various ways—as a strength of the consciousness evenly supporting the life and action, as a power put forth for this or that object of the outward life, as a special Force from above drawn down to raise and increase the scope of the Consciousness and its height and transform it not by a miraculous, but by a serious, steady, organised action following certain definite lines. Its effectiveness as well as its action is determined first by its own height and intensity or that of the plane from which it comes (it may be from any plane ranging from the Higher Mind upward to the Overmind), partly by the condition of the objects or the field in which it acts, partly by the movement which it has to effect, general or particular. It is neither a magician’s wand nor a child’s bauble, but something one has to observe, understand, develop, master before one can use it aright or else—for few can use it except in a limited manner—be its instrument. This is only a preface.

6 February 1935

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Our idea was that the Divine is always omnipotent, independent of all conditions and not limited by the particular plane from which he acts. But you give so many clauses under which the Force can operate successfully! X then seems to be right when he says that if one has not got a particular possibility in him the Divine cannot make him develop in that direction. Pushing this a little farther, I would say that one must have a talent or capacity as a nucleus in him for the spiritual development he is going to have later. One must have it, the Divine cannot make anything out of *शून्यम्* [*sūnyam*].

What is *शून्यम्*? It is out of the silence that all things originated. All is contained in what you call Shunyam.

But then how is it that you wasted so much Force on Y to no avail? Is it that you did not use the supramental Force, which alone can work irresistibly without the necessity of adapting itself to existing conditions?

Certainly, supramental Force was not the force used in that case, it was mental-spiritual. In such cases the object of the Force has always the right to say No. I put the force on him because he said he wanted to change, but his vital refused — as it had the right to do. If nothing in him had asked for the change, I would not have tried it, but simply put another force on him for another purpose.

You make a distinction between the Yogic Force and the Divine Force; but is not the former an outcome of the latter?

Of course, but all force is the Divine Force. It is only the egoism of the individual which takes it as his own. He uses it, but it is not his.

By the way, Z did not question the reality of your Force for his poetry or other literary activities, but he said he could not admit that all his activities were permeated by your Force, because he used to work with great vigour and energy even before he came here.

Of course not — all the activities cannot be that. It is only in the Yoga realisation that one feels all one's activities to be from the one source — something from above or the Yogashakti or the Guru Shakti or the Cosmic Force or whatever it may be (all names for the same thing in different formations) driving the whole consciousness and being.

Success in life outside is dependent on different things, on one's own energy and the environmental stimulus.

What is one's own energy after all? You mean Nature's energy in you? It may, in new conditions, remain extant in some things, develop in others, fail or change in others. One can't make a rule.

Looking at myself, I wonder how a vitalistic man like me can pass his days in cellular imprisonment without any suffocation!

That kind of change happens.

One may say that a tamasic, indolent man can't be activated by the Divine to that extent.

Of course he can.

Am I really wrong?

No, but there are many sides or aspects to a question.

After the "preface" [p. 486] is any chapter likely to follow?

Perhaps in some weeks or some months or some centuries the chapter may follow! But I used the word preface to characterise the nature of what I had written, not in a prophetic sense.

There are two things — Yoga-Force in its original totality which is that of the Divine spiritual force, always potentially all-powerful, and Yoga-Force doing its work under the conditions of the evolutionary world here.

It is not a question of "can" or "cannot" at all. All is possible, but all is not licit — except by a recognisable process; the Divine Power itself imposes on its action limits, processes, obstacles, vicissitudes. It is possible that an ass may be changed into an elephant, but it is not done, at least physically, because of the lack of a process. Psychologically such changes do take place. I have myself in my time changed cowards into heroes and that can be done even without Yogashakti, merely by an inner force. How can you say what is latent in man or what is incurably absent? I have developed many things by Yoga, often even without any will or effort to do so, which were not in my original nature, I may even say that I have transformed my whole nature and it is in many respects the opposite of what I began with. There can be no question about the power to change, to develop, to awaken faculties that were not there before; this

power exists already, but it can be raised to an acme by being lifted to the spiritual plane.

The force put on the gentleman you speak of at least made it necessary for him to change if he remained here. He had no will in the vital to change and so did not remain here but went to his fate.

The rest is for the indefinable future. One day I shall certainly try to explain methodically and by examples what the spiritual force is; how it has worked on the earth-plane, how it acts and under what conditions — conditions not rigidly fixed, but plastic and mutable.

7 February 1935

Receptivity to the Force

In one of your letters you have written about being “sufficiently open” to receive the Force. What did you mean by this?

I mean simply a certain receptivity in the consciousness — mind, vital, physical, whichever is needed. The Mother or myself send a force. If there is no openness, the force may be thrown back or return (unless we put a great force which it is not always advisable to do) as from an obstruction or resistance: if there is some openness, the result may be partial or slow; if there is the full openness or receptivity, then the result may be immediate. Of course there are things that cannot be removed all at once, being an old part of the nature, but with receptivity these also can be more effectively and rapidly dealt with. Some people are so open that even by writing they get free before the book or letter reaches us.

8 June 1933

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You said, in regard to that Spanish General, “I put the right force on him and he wakes up and, with his military knowledge and capacity, does the right thing” [p. 447]. Exactly, if he has these things, he can receive your *right* force.

It does not follow. Another man may have the knowledge but

receive nothing. If he receives, his knowledge and capacity help the Force to work out the details.

It seems that though you have no patent or latent military capacity . . .

Not in this life.

your Force has, and it wakes up in the man the right judgments etc. This is all a mystery beyond my ken.

May I ask why? Your idea is that either I must inspire him specifically in every detail, making a mere automaton of him, or, if I don't do that, I can do nothing with him? What is this stupid mechanical notion of things?

The Force having military knowledge, poetic power, healing virtues, etc., the embodiment of the Force also must have the latent general, poet, medico, etc.— sounds strange to me otherwise.

Because you have the damnable false idea that nothing can be done in the world except by mental means—that Force must necessarily be a mental Force and can't be anything else.

The strangest thing of all is that if the Divine wills, why can't an effective drug in a case be revealed to him, medico or no medico?

Why the devil should He will like that in all cases? . . .

As to Force let me point out a few elementary notions which you ignore.

(1) The Force is a divine Force, so obviously it can apply itself in any direction; it can inspire the poet, set in motion the soldier, doctor, scientist, everybody.

(2) The Force is not a mental Force—it is not bound to go out from the Communicator with every detail mentally arranged, precise in its place, and communicate it mentally to the Recipient. It can go out as a global Force containing in itself the

thing to be done, but working out the details in the Recipient and the action as the action progresses. It is not necessary for the Communicant to accompany mentally the Force, plant himself mentally in the mind of the Recipient and work out mentally there the details. He can send the Force or put on the Force, leave it to do its work and attend himself to other matters. In the world most things are worked out by such a global Force containing the results in itself, but involved, concealed and working them out in a subsequent operation. The seed contains the whole potentiality of the tree, the gene contains the potentiality of the living form that it initiates, etc. etc., but if you examine the seed and gene ad infinitum, still you will not find there either the tree or the living being. All the same the Force has put all these potentialities there in a certain evolution which works itself out automatically.

(3) In the case of a man acting as an instrument of the Force the action is more complicated, because consciously or unconsciously the man must receive, also he must be able to work out what the Force puts through him. He is a living complex instrument, not a simple machine. So if he has responsiveness, capacity, etc. he can work out the Force perfectly, if not he does it imperfectly or frustrates it. That is why we speak of and insist on the perfectioning of the instrument. Otherwise there would be no need of sadhana or anything else — any fellow would do for any blessed work and one would simply have to ram things into him and see them coming out in action.

(4) The Communicant need not be an all-round many-sided Encyclopaedia in order to communicate the Force for various purposes. If we want to help a lawyer to succeed in a case, we need not be perfect lawyers ourselves knowing all law, Roman, English or Indian and supply him all his arguments, questions, etc., doing consciously and mentally through him his whole examinations, cross-examinations and pleading. Such a process would be absurdly cumbrous, incompetent and wasteful. The rearrangement of the eventual result and the capacity for making him work his instruments in the right way and for arranging events also so as to aid towards the result are put into the Force

when it goes to him, they are therefore inherent in its action and the rest is a question of his own receptivity, experience etc. Naturally the best instrument even is imperfect (unless he is a perfected Adhar) and mistakes may be committed, other suggestions accepted etc. etc., but if the instrument is sufficiently open, the Force can set the thing to rights and the result still comes. In some or many cases the Force has to be renewed from time to time or supported by fresh Force. In some directions particular details have to be consciously attended to by the Communicant. All that depends on circumstances too multitudinous and variable to be reduced to rule. There are general lines, in these matters, but no rules, the working of a non-mental Force has necessarily to be plastic, not rigid and tied to formulas. If you want to reduce things to patterns and formulas, you will necessarily fail to understand the workings of a spiritual (non-mental) Force.

(5) All that I say here refers to spiritual Force. I am not speaking of the Supramental.

(6) Also please note that this is all about the working of Force on or through people: it has nothing to do with intuition which is quite another matter. Also it does not preclude always and altogether a plenary and detailed inspiration from a Communicant to a recipient — such things happen, but it is not necessary to proceed in that way, nor below the Supermind or supramentalised Overmind can it be the ordinary process.

10 April 1937

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You said, in regard to the Spanish General, "Let us suppose . . . I put the right force on him" [p. 447]. Why did you say "right"? Is there also a wrong Force?

Don't remember what exactly I wrote — so can't say very well. But of course there can be a wrong Force. There are Asuric Forces, rajasic Forces, all sorts of Forces. Apart from that one can use a mental or vital Force which may not be the right thing. Or one may use the Force in such a way that it does not succeed or does not hit the General on the head or is not commensurate with the opposing Forces — (opposing Forces need not be

Asuric, they may be quite gentlemanly Forces thinking they are in the right. Or two Divine Forces might knock at each other for the fun of the thing. Infinite possibilities, sir, in the play of the Forces.)

What I want to know is whether the Force applied or directed is always the right Force. Can there be any mistake in the Force, either in its application or in any other way, resulting in its failure to get the desired result?

What is a mistake? Eventually the Force used is always the Force that was destined to be used. If it succeeds, it does its work in the whole and if it fails, it has also done its work in the whole.
ନ ତେ ଶୋଚତେ ବୁଝି।

My main point is the intuition. The Force has evidently a close connection with the intuition or any other faculties which are awakened by the action of the Force.

In what way? A Force may be applied without any intuition — an intuition can come without any close connection with a Force, except the force of intuition itself which is another matter. Moreover a Force may be applied from a higher plane than that of any Intuition.

17 April 1937

Response of the Divine

You can send your Force to whomever you like — Lenin, Kemal, Gandhi, but how people calling Shiva or Krishna for their Ishta Devata get responses from you, I don't understand.

Again who is Shiva? and who is Krishna? and what is an Ishta Devata? There is only one Divine, not a thousand Divines.

It would mean that wherever a sincere heart is aspiring for the Divine, his aspiration reaches your ears.

Why my ears? Ears are not necessary for the purpose. You might just as well say, reaches me by the post.

And you send your responses, because you want to manifest the Divine Rule on earth.

That has nothing to do with it. Besides it is not the Divine Rule on earth that I am after, but the supramental rule. This however has nothing to do with any supramental or Divine Rule on earth. It is only a general question of the response of the Divine and to the Divine.

5 February 1936

Power to Help

I do not ask you to believe that the Divine Grace comes to all or that all can succeed in the sadhana or that I personally have succeeded or will succeed in the case of all who come to me. I have asked you if you cannot develop the faith that the Divine is — you seemed often to doubt it, — that the Divine Grace is and has manifested both elsewhere and here, that the sadhana by which so many profit is not a falsehood or a chimera and that I have helped many and am not utterly powerless — otherwise how could so many progress under our influence? If this is first established, then the doubt and denial, the refusal of faith boils itself down to a refusal of faith in your own spiritual destiny and that of X and some others — does it not? I have never told you that the power that works here is absolute at present; I have on the contrary told you that I am trying to make it absolute and it is for that that I want the Supermind to intervene. But to say that because it is not absolute therefore it does not exist, seems to me a logical inconsequence.

There remains your personal case and you may very well tell me "What does it matter to me if these things are true when they are not true to me, true in my own experience?" But it does make a difference that they are true in themselves. For if your personal want of experience is held as proving that it is all moonshine, then all is finished — there is no hope for you or me or anybody. If on the other hand these things are true but not yet realised by you, then there is hope, a possibility at least. From the point of view of reason you may be right in thinking that because you

have not realised yet, you can never realise — though it does not seem to me an inevitable conclusion. From the same point of view I also may be right in concluding from my experience and that of other Yogis that there is no such inevitability and that with the persistent aspiration in you and the vairagya we have the conditions for a realisation that must come — sooner, for there are sudden liberations, or later.

28 August 1934

Variations in the Action of the Force

Do you think if you put the Force at an exact time, say 9 p.m., it would have a greater chance of immediate success?

One can't make a rule like that. There is nothing more variable than the way the Force acts.

11 July 1936

The Force and Will

I feel a great Force above my head. But it is not coming down. Do you want me to draw it down by my will-force?

The Force must come down, though probably it will do so by stages. The will has to invite it if not draw it. Also the Force has to be used, that is, something of it directed by the will against the obstacles. This training of the will to act in the Yogic way is very important as a stage in the sadhana.

28 July 1935

Sri Aurobindo's Force and World Events

Somebody told X that Sri Aurobindo brought about the Russian revolution through Lenin. X told Y that people here were over-credulous to believe such things. Y insisted that such things were possible, but X seems to be unable to understand the working of occult forces. As far as I can see, if it is possible to cure dangerous diseases of the body by Yogic power, why should it not be possible to act on the mind of another person and pour into him immense vital force which can bring about such results as the Russian revolution?

The statement made to X was not quite correct; it is putting things in too physical a form. A spiritual and occult working supplies forces and can watch over the members of the execution of a world event; but to put it like that makes the actual workers too much of automata which they are not. 25 January 1937

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Certainly, my force is not limited to the Asram and its conditions. As you know it is being largely used for helping the right development of the war and of change in the human world. It is also used for individual purposes outside the scope of the Asram and the practice of Yoga; but that, of course, is silently done and mainly by a spiritual action. The Asram however remains at the centre of the work and without the practice of Yoga the work would not exist and could not have any meaning or fruition. But in the Yoga itself there are different ways of proceeding for different natures, even though the general path is the same, surrender to the Divine and change of nature. But surrender to the Divine in the completest sense cannot be achieved in a short time, nor can the change of the nature. On the whole, one has to go as quickly as one can and as slowly as is necessary — which seems contradictory but is not.

13 March 1944

Therapeutic Force and Healing

Spiritual Force and the Body

It is a pity that X could not write all this time. Formerly when she wrote often she used to get better after writing. It is also a pity that she has been told by the doctors that she is not going to live; even if it is true, such a thing should not be told unless in case of necessity (which does not exist in her case), for it takes away much of the power of resistance and diminishes what chances of cure and survival there were. X's physical destiny has always been against her but this is a thing that *can* be cancelled if one can have sufficient faith and inner strength and openness and receive the spiritual force.¹

27 June 1935

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Perhaps I might say a word about Ramakrishna's attitude with regard to the body. He seems always to have regarded it as a misuse of spiritual force to utilise it for preserving the body or curing its ailments or taking care for it. Other Yogis—I do not speak of those who think it justifiable to develop Yogic siddhis, but of those who think that that should be avoided—have not had this complete disregard of the body: they have taken care to maintain it in good health and condition as an instrument or a physical basis for their development in Yoga. I have always been in agreement with this view: moreover, I have never had any hesitation in the use of a spiritual force for all legitimate purposes including the maintenance of health and physical life in myself and in others—that is indeed why the Mother has given flowers, not only as a blessing but as a help in illness. I put a value on the body first as an instrument, *dharmaśādhana*, or, more fully, as a centre of manifested personality in action, a basis of spiritual life and

¹ *The woman referred to here as X lived until 1993.—Ed.*

activity as of all life and activity upon the earth, but also because for me the body as well as the mind and life is a part of the divine whole, a form of the Spirit and therefore not to be disregarded or despised as something incurably gross and incapable of spiritual realisation or of spiritual use. Matter itself is secretly a form of the Spirit and has to reveal itself as that, can be made to wake to consciousness and evolve and realise the Spirit, the Divine within it. In my view the body as well as the mind and life has to be spiritualised or, one may say, divinised so as to be a fit instrument and receptacle for the realisation and manifestation of the Divine. It has its part in the divine Lila, even, according to the Vaishnava sadhana, in the joy and beauty of Divine Love. That does not mean that the body has to be valued for its own separate sake or that the creation of a divine body in a future evolution of the whole being has to be contemplated as an end and not a means—that would be a serious error which would not be admissible. In any case, my speculations about an extreme form of divinisation are something in a far distance and are no part of the preoccupations of the spiritual life in the near future.

7 December 1949

Grace and Therapeutic Force

The Divine Grace has certainly done something. I [*the Ashram doctor*] acted according to your advice, and X felt better the whole day.

It was not the Divine Grace but the Divine Force. If it had been the Grace, it would simply have said तथास्तु [tathāstu] and the thing would be done. As it is, last night I had to work a damned lot for this result—I only hope it will last and complete itself.

30 January 1935

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But may I ask you why you are wasting such a lot of Force when a word could do the job? Why not cut short our labour and the patients' discomfort by saying तथास्तु? Is it as easily done as it is said? If working “a damned lot” reduces the temperature only by one degree and that too for 12 hours or less, what am I to think?

I did not expect you to take my तथास्तु with such grim seriousness. Speaking semi-seriously, I am not here to do miracles to order, but to try to get in a new consciousness somewhere in the world — which is itself however to attempt a miracle. If physical miracles happen to tumble in in the process, well and good, but you can't present your medical pistol in my face and call on me to stand and deliver. As for the Force, application of my force, short of the supramental, means always a struggle of forces and the success depends on (1) the strength and persistency of the force put out, (2) the receptivity of the subject, (3) the sanction of the Unmentionable—I beg your pardon, I meant the Unnameable, Ineffable, Unknowable. X's physical consciousness is rather obstinate, as you have noticed, and therefore not too receptive. It may feel the Mother inside it, but to obey her will or force is less habitual for it.

31 January 1935

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I still can't understand why you should bother to follow us doctors. The Divine can very easily act from the supramental consciousness directly; you don't really need a diagnosis given by ordinary men!

If things were like that, why the deuce should we have Doctors or a dispensary at all? And what would have been the use of your 20,000?² We don't propose to do the whole business of the inside and outside off our own bat. You are as necessary for this as X for the building or others for their work.

Another thing — why should a mental formation obstruct the supramental?

Who told you we are acting from supramental consciousness? We are not and cannot until the confounded quarrel with Matter is settled.

1 February 1935

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² *The amount (in rupees) paid by the correspondent for his medical education. — Ed.*

What is this “confounded quarrel with Matter” you mention? Does this refer to the lower vital and physical movements of the sadhaks?

I am not speaking of the sadhaks, but the resistance of the Earth nature itself in its material parts. But these are things you people cannot understand unless you have less childlike notions about things.

I am still wondering why there should be doctors and a dispensary at all! Isn’t it a paradox — the Divine sending his disciples to the human physician?

Rubbish! This is a world of the play of forces, sir, and the Doctor is a force. So why should not the Divine use him? Have you realised that if the Divine did everything, there would be no world, only a show of marionettes?

2 February 1935

The Force Works under Conditions

Can’t you send me some force? I am willing to try to believe or à la X remain passive — but I am not so foolish and irrational not to avail myself of any kindly force because of my mental reservations.

As for the Force, I shall write some other time. I have told you that it is not always efficacious, but works under conditions like all forces; it is only the supramental Force that works absolutely, because it creates its own conditions. But the Force I am using is a Force that has to work under the present world conditions. It is not the less a Force for that. I have cured myself of all illnesses except three by it and those too when they come I have kept in check; the fact that I have not succeeded yet in eliminating the fact or probability of those three does not cancel the fact of my success with the others. As for the Mother, she used formerly to cure everything at once by the same Power — now she has no time to think about her body or to concentrate on it. Even so when she makes a certain inner concentration she can see, read etc. perfectly well without glasses, but she has no time to work

out the possibility which that shows. The prevalence of illness just now is a fact; it is part of the struggle that is going on in the domain of Matter. But even so there are plenty of people in the Asram who get rid of their ills by reliance on the Mother. If all cannot do it, what does that prove or disprove? It only proves that the Power does not work absolutely, miraculously, impossibly, but it works by certain given means and under conditions. I have always said that, so what is there in that that is new or that annihilates the truth of the Yoga?

6 February 1935

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I shall see also whether I can explain what I mean by Force (the one which I refer to being neither supramental nor omnipotent nor guaranteed to work like Beecham's pills in every case) and how it acts and in what conditions. I have tried it in hundreds of cases besides X's (on my own body first and always) and I have no doubt of its reality or efficacy under these conditions. However, of that on some later date.

February 1935

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A successful cure of X's mother would be certainly a considerable achievement, and though difficult owing to the tenacity and malignance and extreme intractability of the disease, it is not impossible. What you say is true, the Force was acting before, but it acted with immediate rapidity and completeness only with those who had sufficient faith and receptivity (mainly sadhaks) or in other good conditions.

These cases seem to indicate a new power of the Force and a new technique. Your idea that it may spread and happen elsewhere is not without foundation; for, when once something is there in the earth-atmosphere that was not there before, it begins to work on many sides in an unforeseen way. Thus since the Yoga has been in action, its particular opening movements have come to a number of people who were at a distance and not connected with us and who understood nothing of what was happening to them. These things are to be expected for Nature is still in evolution and new Lights and Powers have to be brought

down in her and made part of the conscious earth-existence.

29 January 1936

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There has been no negligence on our part in putting the force for X's change — the Mother has been doing that daily; nor is the trouble she has contracted one for which we are in any way responsible — it is not imposed as an ordeal or anything else. If there is so obstinate a persistence of her attachment and the demands it makes, it is because there is in her own vital a resistance to the Force that would remove it. If there were the complete consent in the being for giving it up (not only mental wish or prayer, however strong), it could not possibly last — at any rate in this form, — only at most for a time in fragments of the old habit. There is in her vital a certain violence of temperament — I do not mean merely a tendency to violence of speech or act, but an exaggerated intensity in the feelings and vital reactions, and this is the source of the trouble. For it is this that when asked to give up the claim and attachment, has reacted vehemently calling in an outside Force to support its resistance. When this rises, her mind also begins to justify the claim and demand, her vital feels very hurt and angry with the Mother because she does not support it. All that is proof of a very familiar kind of resistance which refuses to yield to the mind's will or the soul's aspiration. It is like that in X; it is so in many others here.

The Divine Force does not act now in an omnipotent ease regardless of conditions — it might do that if it were the pure supramental Force in its native action; but that is not yet. Here conditions have been created and it acts under those conditions. You speak of the Force acting in the case of the illnesses you have treated. No doubt, but here too it is under conditions — only, favourable conditions. For you believe and are conscious of the Force, your whole will is to cure, the patient's will is to get well — the more he assents to the treatment, the more quickly the Force acts — the one obstacle is the force of the illness itself and the patient's habitual subjection to it. But with everything else against it, that does not succeed in remaining. It

is quite otherwise in these things where the consent of the being is far from being complete, where the mind often consents to and justifies the illness when it comes, even takes strongly sides with it, where the vital is there with its revolt and clamour and tempest. It is only if the sadhak's resolution is firm and one-minded, not to assent to the attack when it comes, to refuse all mental justification of it, to detach himself from the vital movement in the very time of its action that the liberation can be done with the clarity and ease which you desire.

Otherwise, the only thing to be done is to keep up the pressure of the force quiet and strong and persistent until it gets into the vital itself and makes it reject its own movement. For that you must help by getting rid of the violence and impatience in your own nature and being yourself patient, firm and persistent. You are here to change your nature and the difficulty is no reason for throwing up the spiritual endeavour. All this talk of going away cannot help — it would be of no advantage to yourself or to X in any way — any more than her talk of going has any sense or is in any way reasonable. Keep firmly to your object, develop that calm and force in the vital as well as the mind which are the basis of the spiritual life. That will help more in getting X's morbid rushes of excitement to subside and the control to come in her also.

9 August 1936

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No need to give up your faith, for it is faith that gets things done and even makes the impossible possible. But it has to be kept when even there is no immediate result. In the physical care of a patient also there are adverse periods when the resistance is great and obstinate and there seems to be more swinging back than going forwards or a persistent recurrence of the trouble. Faith persisting and the call bring down after a time sufficient Force to overcome the obstacle.

11 August 1936

The Force Acts on a Complex Nexus of Forces

I have not yet written about the Force because it is too complex

to be adequately stated in a short space and I had no time these days for anything long. Anyhow, the clue is that the Force does not act in a void and in an absolute way, like a writing on a blank paper or in the air, the "Let there be light and there was light" formula. It comes as a Force intervening and acting on a very complex nexus of forces that were in action and displacing their disposition and interrelated movement and natural result by a new disposition, movement and result. It meets in so doing a certain opposition, very often a strong opposition from many of the forces already in possession and operation. To overcome it three factors are needed, the power of the Force itself, i.e. its own sheer pressure and direct action on the field of action (here the man, his condition, his body), the instrument (yourself) and the instrumentation (treatment, medicine). I have often used the Force alone without any human instrument or outer means, but here all depends on the recipient and his receptivity — unless as in the case of many healers there are unseen beings or powers that assist. If there is an instrument in direct touch with the patient, whether the doctor or one who can canalise the force, then the action is immensely assisted, — how much depends on the instrument, his faith, his energy, his conveying power. Where there is a violent opposition, this is frequently not enough or at least not enough for a rapid or total effect, the instrumentation (treatment or medicine) is needed. It is especially where the resistance of the body or the forces acting on the body-consciousness is strong that the medicine comes in as an aid. But if the doctor is non-psychic or the medicine the wrong one or the treatment unplastic, then they become an added resistance which the Force has to overcome. This is a very summary and inadequate statement, but it gives the main points, I believe.

P.S. I forgot to say that the surroundings, especially the people around the patient, the atmosphere, the suggestions it carries or they give to him, are often of a considerable importance.

24 January 1936

Therapeutic Force and Medical Diagnosis

I was under the impression that it is quite possible for the intuition to know the exact condition of a patient without going through any mental processes like deduction from evidence and so arrive at a diagnosis like a shot.

It can if you can train it to act in that field and if you can make it the real Intuition which sees the things without ranging among potentialities.

But I find that it is not so. In several recent cases you have insisted on knowing this or that about the patient's condition. But what is the need of your knowing these things? Is not Yogic vision more powerful and accurate than our external optical capacities?

As for me, I have no medico in me, not even a latent medico. If I had, I would not need an external one but diagnose, prescribe and cure all by my solitary self. My role in a medical case is to use the force either with or without medicines. There are three ways of doing that — one by putting the Force without knowing or caring what the illness is or following the symptoms — that however needs either the mental collaboration or quiescence of the victim. The second is symptomatic, to follow the symptoms and act on them even if one is not sure of the disease. There an accurate report is very useful. The third needs a diagnosis — that is usually where the anti-forces are very strong and conscious or where the patient himself answers strongly to the suggestions of the illness and unwittingly resists the action of the Force. This last is usually indicated by the fact that the thing gets cured and comes back again or improves and swings back again to worse. It is especially the great difficulty in cases of insanity and the like. Also in things where the nerves have a say — but in ordinary illnesses too.

1 April 1935

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In the case of an illness, how do you decide whether it is the recrudescence of an old illness or the action of a dark force or

even some experience? From the description supplied to you by the doctor?

Yes, certainly — just as you go by the symptoms of a case as seen by you and as related by the patient.

I thought that it is not possible to have spiritual experiences, especially major ones, without your previously having knowledge about it.

Previously? My God, we would have to spend all our time prevising the sadhaks' experiences. Do you think Mother has nothing else to do? As for myself, I never previse anything, I only vise and revise. All that Mother prevised was that there was something not right in X, some part of him at odds with his aspiration. That might lead to trouble. That is why, *entre nous*, I want him to find out what part of him didn't want the descent.

19 October 1936

Therapeutic Force and Medicines

We do not believe in taking too many medicines. One or two effective ones and the Force are better than disturbing the system by 101.

13 August 1934

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- 1) How can the use of medicines be consistent with faith?
- 2) When are medicines really necessary?
- 3) What is excessive use of medicines and what is sparing use?

The use of medicines is permissible, if it is necessitated by an insufficient responsiveness in the body or if the faith itself is of a mixed and insufficient character — i.e. if the mind or vital as well as the body feel uneasy in the presence of illness. It is consistent with faith when it is used only as a physical support to the action of the Force, not as a substitute.

To dose oneself with many medicines or to use strong medicines in ordinary cases or to use them when an opening to the Force or an exercise of the inner Will is sufficient, is

excessive. For a system not accustomed to curing itself the use of mild medicines in just sufficient quantity can be quite effective and that is all that is needed.

19 April 1935

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The enclosed report shows how, without any [*homeopathic*] medicaments, a call to the Mother by me last night was sufficient to relieve what medicaments could hardly have been expected to do overnight. Hence it is better to make a note of the far-reaching possibilities of the action of the Force.

It so happens very often, but there is still an element of uncertainty in the relation of the amount of force put out and the reaction of the patient that allows a considerable *flottement* in the results as the French puts it.

17 April 1936

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In homeopathic treatment there is a slight primary aggravation if the drug is correctly chosen. Does some such primary aggravation happen when you use your Force to heal?

Not necessarily, but if there is a strong force of resistance behind the illness or if there is something hiding there it may come out under the pressure. This is not however the invariable rule. Often the result of the force is immediate and without reactions or there is an oscillation, but no aggravation or increase.

30 May 1936

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The patient is feeling miles better on the whole. Have you been FORCE-ing at last?

I have of course been forcing furiously for the last 3 days. But is it not the medicine that deserves the credit?

28 September 1938

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It is only through your Divine help and the Mother's blessings that it is possible to diagnose correctly and give the right treatment. Kindly therefore press the action of the Force home without considering for a moment that the happy change in the patient is owing to medicinal action.

I see. The previous unreceptivity had led me to think that it was the medicine which made the difference. I will go on with the pressure of the Force. But it needs an unwavering, strong pressure to produce appreciable results in this respect and it is not easy to keep it up. If I had nothing else to do, it would be easy, but my day is full with all kinds of things. However I will try to keep up the continuity — don't want this fellow to peter out on our hands.

29 September 1938

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Should I ever run into a malaria case, I will give you a loud shout and rest assured that I will come out scot free. I intend to scrap all malaria medicines.

Mm! Cromwell said "Trust in God and keep your powder dry!"

10 November 1938

Therapeutic Force and Homeopathy

I felt some improvement in the leg but the pain has not gone completely. Generally the medicines of X [*a homeopath*] are effective, but not in my case. Why is it so? I have heard that he is a wonderful medium. You have worked through him in the case of outside people, why not in me? Does that mean that they were more open to your force than I was? Kindly explain.

X is a remarkable medium, but he is more successful with people outside than with the sadhaks — (not that he has not succeeded with many of them also). For this there are two reasons. People outside are impressed by his apparently miraculous cure and believe implicitly and follow his treatment — the sadhaks question and dispute it; this mental opposition has a reaction upon the result of the treatment (e.g. X told me there had been a great improvement in Y's illness, Y denied that there had been any visible or undoubted improvement, yet today Dr. Z told the Mother that he was amazed by the improvement, he had not thought such a thing possible, but now he knew because he had seen it.) The other reason is that sadhaks ought not to need an intermediary between themselves and the Mother — their bodies

as well as their minds ought by this time to have become sufficiently receptive for that — outside people do need a medium, for they cannot be expected to have the same receptivity.

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Today's case has again convinced me that X doesn't know much about physiology, pathology, dieting, diagnosis, etc. You may say, "Homeopaths are concerned with symptoms." But I shall be the last to believe that he cured this man by relying on symptoms alone.

Because you are tied in your own system and do not understand that Nature is not so rigid as your mental ideas.

All big homeopaths, I have heard, were originally allopaths who knew anatomy, physiology, pathology etc. X is unique and his cures also unique. I am puzzled about the real mystery behind.

Is it not the very principle of homeopathy that it cures the disease by curing the symptoms? I have always heard so. Do you deny that homeopaths acting on their own system, not on yours, have cured illnesses? If they have, is it not more logical to suppose that there is something in their system than to proclaim the sacrosanct infallibility of the sole allopathic system and its principle? For that matter I myself cure more often by attacking the symptoms than by any other way, because medical diagnosis is uncertain and fallible while the symptoms are there for everybody to see. Of course if a correct indisputable diagnosis is there, so much the better — the view can be more complete, the action easier, the result more sure. But even without infallible diagnosis one can act and get a cure.

23 December 1935

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There were evidently three factors at work in this case: Mother's Force, the mediumship of X, which was constituted of faith, confidence, vital power, intuition, etc., and his drug treatment. Now what I am puzzled about is the exact contribution of X's medicines in this case.

Exact? How can one measure exactly where vital and mental and spiritual factors come in? In dealing with a star and atom you may (though it appears you can't with an electron), but not with a man and his living mind, soul and body.

24 December 1935

*

A symptomatic treatment can't be applied in cases where the same symptom is produced by two or three different diseases.

Why can't it? There is a possibility that you can strike at the cause, whatever it be, through the symptoms and you can kill the root through the stalk and leaves and not start by searching for the roots and digging them out. That at any rate is what I do.

24 December 1935

*

I wonder whether our mode of looking at things is altogether wrong. If there really are such drugs in homeopathy that can give results in cases where we [*allopaths*] have almost none, it would be worthwhile trying to study it and combine both systems.

Certainly there are—the universe is not shut up in the four walls of allopathic medicine. There are plenty of cases of illnesses being cured by other systems (not homeopathy alone) when they had defied the allopaths. My experience is not wide but I have come across a good number of such cases.

24 December 1935

*

X gives a high-blood-pressure patient on the verge of heart-failure "moderate" licence in eating, drinking etc. He calls it "leaving to Nature"!

Well, I have followed that system with myself and others and gone on the basis that Nature is very largely what you make of her—or can make of her.

28 December 1935

*

I believe that an allopath would have been as successful as X if he had the backing of your Force.

The Force needs an instrument and an instrumentation also sometimes. The instrument was X, the instrumentation partly at least his drugs. I don't believe in the story of the inefficiency of homeopathic drugs only because they are homeopathic. Also, I don't believe that X knows nothing about them and can't properly apply them. I have noted almost constantly that they have a surprising effect, sometimes instantaneous, sometimes rapid, and this not on X's evidence alone, but in the statement of his patients and the visible results. Not being an allopathic doctor, I can't ignore a fact like that.

Some symptoms like headache, vomiting etc. may be caused by many diseases, such as brain-tumour, syphilis, high blood-pressure, etc. If you tell me that a homeopathic medicine for headache, vomiting etc. will be a panacea for all these diseases, it will be difficult for me to accept it.

Tumour, syphilis etc. are specialities, but what I have found in my psycho-physical experience is that most disorders of the body are connected, though they go by families,—but there is also connection between the families. If one can strike at their psycho-physical root, one can cure even without knowing the pathological whole of the matter and working through the symptoms as a possibility. Some medicines invented by demimystics have the power. What I am now considering is whether homeopathy has any psycho-physical basis. Was the founder a demi-mystic? I don't understand otherwise certain peculiarities of the way X's medicines act.

Allopaths after all are not yogis and have no third eyes! Still I should say that mistaken diagnoses of appendicitis, for example, are very rare.

Good heavens! It happened in scores and scores of cases when there was the appendicitis mania among doctors in France—and they have other manias also.

Why ignore the wonderful things due to thousands of right diagnoses and let sporadic cases of error loom large in your eyes?

Sporadic cases! I have heard of any number of them, they are as plentiful as blackberries in Europe. And as for difference of diagnosis it is almost the rule except when doctors consult together and give concessions to each other. Don't try to throw allopathic dust in my eyes, sir! I have lived a fairly long time and seen something of the world before my retirement and much more after it.

28 December 1935

*

Is there not some occult healing power in homeopathic medicine which effects miraculous cures? Or is it the doctor who has it?

I suppose it is as much the man and the force working through him as the medicine that makes the difference. I doubt if the medicine by itself could do so much.

11 January 1936

*

The Mother and I have no preference for allopathy; the Mother thinks doctors very usually make things worse instead of better, spoiling Nature's resistance to illness by excessive and ill-directed use of their medicines. We have been able to work through X's homeopathy far better than through anything else — though it is likely that the Force working through homeopaths who were not conscious instruments might not have succeeded better than with the allopaths.

September 1936

*

I am taking X's medicine, but there is no marked result as yet in regard to the nervous weakness. The only effect is in the relief of pain. Pray free me from this nervous trouble.

How then was X left for days under the impression that there was nothing the matter in this respect? If you want his treatment to succeed you must inform him from day to day accurately,

without suppression or exaggeration of all the symptoms happening. This treatment is a system which deals with the symptoms as they come from day to day and shapes itself accordingly. In every case in which X succeeded "markedly" daily reports of the utmost fullness were given. Apart from that, in a case like yours of long duration immediate miraculous results cannot be expected. I told you that you must stick patiently to the treatment for a long time, if you wanted a radical cure.

13 September 1936

*

I must say that X's theories about disease are absurd, however successful he may be as a homeopath-physician.

You may say what you like about the homeopathic theories, but I have seen X work them out detail by detail in cases where he had free and unhampered action and the confidence of the patients and their strict obedience and have seen the results correspond to his statements and his predictions based on them fulfilled not only to the very letter but according to the exact times fixed, not according to X's reports but according to the daily long detailed and precise reports of the allopathic doctor in attendance. After that I refuse to believe, even if all the allopaths in the world shout it in unison, that homeopathic theory or X's interpretation and application of it are mere rubbish and nonsense. As to mistakes all doctors make mistakes and very bad ones and kill as well as cure — my grandfather and one of my cousins were patently killed by one of the biggest doctors in Bengal. One theory is as good as another and as bad according to the application made of it in any particular case. But it is something else behind that decides the issue.

Just hear what grave errors he has committed. He said to me that he used his drug to bring about the profuse menstruation in Y's case. Then he asked me whether this profuse flow should be stopped. Yes, I said, it must be stopped.

To bring out the latent illness and counteract it is a recognised principle in homeopathy and is a principle in Nature itself. He misapplied it here because he was in ignorance of the full facts about the menstrual trouble.

3 October 1936

*

Why didn't your Force prove decisive in this case? About the Supermind and its failure over hostile forces, I give you a chance to bombard me or else I will!

What has the Supermind to do here? Who told you that I was using the supramental Force? I have said all along that it was not the supramental Force that was acting. If you want the supramental Force, you had better go to Jogesh Mama of Chittagong. I hear from Chittagong that the supramental Force is descending in him.

I have put down a few comments to throw cold water on all this blazing hot allopathism. But all these furious disputes seem to me now of little use. I have seen the working of both systems and of others and I cannot believe in the sole truth of any. The ones damnable in the orthodox view, entirely contradicting it, have their own truth and succeed—also both the orthodox and heterodox fail. A theory is only a constructed idea-script which represents an imperfect human observation of a line of processes that Nature follows or can follow; another theory is a different idea-script of other processes that also she follows or can follow. Allopathy, homeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy, Kaviraji, hakimi have all caught hold of Nature and subjected her to certain processes; each has its successes and failures. Let each do its own work in its own way. I do not see any need for fights and recriminations. For me all are only outward means and what really works are unseen forces behind; as they act, the outer means succeed or fail—if one can make the process a right channel for the right force, then the process gets its full utility—that is all.

3 October 1936

Lights, Visions, Dreams

Sri Aurobindo's Light

If it is pale blue, it may be my colour. Pale lavender blue, pale blue but very brilliant in its own shade. 6 August 1932

*

Nowadays I see Sri Aurobindo's light for most of the time but in different forms — sometimes like a big star, sometimes like a moon, sometimes like a flash of light. Why do I not see it in the same form?

It varies according to the circumstances. Why should it be always the same? 21 April 1933

*

Two days back in a dream I saw Sri Aurobindo coming towards me. His body and dress were blue. Why did I see him in this colour and not any other?

It is the basic light Sri Aurobindo manifests. 23 June 1933

*

Sri Aurobindo's light is not a light of the illumined mind — it is the divine Illumination which may act on any plane.

7 September 1933

*

Someone was giving an explanation of the legend of the churning of the ocean. He said that blue is the colour of poison, which is why Shiva is called Nilakantha, while whitish blue is the colour of Sri Krishna and therefore of you.

The different blues mean different forces (the real blue has nothing to do with poison). The whitish blue is specially called my

light — but it does not mean that that alone can come from me.

22 November 1933

*

There are many blues and it is difficult to say which these are. Usually deeper blue is higher Mind, a paler blue Illumined Mind — whitish blue Sri Krishna's light (also called Sri Aurobindo's light).

March 1934

*

It depends on the shade of the blue. Ordinary pale blue is usually the light of the illumined Mind or something of the Intuition. Whitish blue is Sri Aurobindo's light or Krishna's light.

6 February 1935

Receiving Sri Aurobindo's Light

How can I receive Sri Aurobindo's light in the mind?

It can always come if you aspire patiently. But the basic condition, if you want that Light, is to get rid of all other mental influences.

29 May 1932

*

What is the meaning of "to get rid of all other mental influences"? Is it this that I had better not read any other books except Sri Aurobindo's or not try to learn anything by hearing or admiring others?

It is not a question of reading books or learning facts. When a woman loves or admires, her mind is instinctively moulded by the one she loves or admires, and this influence can last after the feeling itself has gone or appears to be gone. This does not refer to X's influence merely. It is a general rule given to keep yourself from any other admiration or influence.

30 May 1932

Light in a Photograph

As one approaches your photograph in the Reception Room,

there is a feeling that it is an emanation of yours. There seems to be a special light in it.

The Sadhaks may themselves bring this light by approaching me through the photo.

24 August 1934

Meditation with a Photograph

When the meditation is done with the photo, it is better done with open eyes.

Seeing Sri Aurobindo in Vision

I looked at your photograph in the Reception Room after meditation and clearly saw the portrait move its shoulders and as if breathing.

There was a movement in the vital plane and you opened to an inner vision of it.

22 March 1933

*

As I was sitting in prayer, I saw Sri Aurobindo in a vision coming down the staircase till he came just near to the floor. What does this mean?

It indicates perhaps the bringing of the Divine Consciousness down from level to level till it is now nearer the material.

23 September 1933

*

Today while meditating I saw in a vision that in Sri Aurobindo's light Nataraja Shiva was manifesting with many hands. What does this signify?

It is the sign of the manifestation.

Then I saw that in the sky Sri Aurobindo's light and red light were manifesting in the form of a globe. Does this signify the manifestation of Sri Aurobindo's divine light on the physical plane?

Yes.

Then I saw that Sri Aurobindo's light was manifesting on a sea along with another light of pale blue colour. Does this mean that in the vastness of consciousness Sri Aurobindo's divine light is manifesting through the Intuitive Mind consciousness?

Yes.

15 October 1933

*

I saw Sri Aurobindo last night in a vision seated on a chair and writing something. Behind his head there was a circular green light. What does this mean?

The green light is that of a dynamic vital energy (of work). As I was writing — at work — it is natural that that light should be behind my head.

5 November 1933

*

I have started concentrating in the heart now. Last Sunday while I was meditating I had the vision of your face floating before me for about an hour or so, accompanied by a deep joy. I was fully conscious, but the body became as if dead, all movements stopped, and what a rapture it gave me.

That was very good!

Has anything opened up in me, really? Or is it only a momentary phase of a descent like Peace or Ananda? But I feel as if you have given me a lift forward — the fulfilling of the Mother's promise — "I am coming". Am I right?

It looks like it. At any rate there is evidently an opening in the heart-centre or you would not have had the change or the vision with the stilling of the physical consciousness in the body.

30 October 1934

*

Last night I had a dream that you had come out of your seclusion for once; you were tall, quite young, but very dark. I began to wonder if this was Sri Aurobindo of former years!

No. It is not likely. It is probably some subtle physical form — the one corresponding to the Shiva element in me. I have seen myself like that sometimes and it was always the Shiva formation.

11 December 1934

Help in Dreams

X had a dream of you as shown in the photograph giving him instructions in his engineering work. Two features: (1) Sri Aurobindo has come out of retirement; (2) he has come out as an engineer!

I suppose, the present Sri Aurobindo having left all engineering work to the Mother, the previous Sri Aurobindo had to come to do it in this case. Anyhow what has it to do with coming out? Any number of people meet me in dreams and get instructions or intimations about this or that. It is an activity of the vital plane where I am not in strict retirement — it has nothing to do with any future physical happening.

25 August 1936

*

Do you mean to say that people getting instructions from you in dreams is as real, effective and correct as if you had written them on paper?

Yes, if the record is correct.

26 August 1936

Darshan

Admission to Darshan

Write that usually Sri Aurobindo sees on these days only his disciples, whether those residing in the Asram or those who come to him from outside, and a few others who are either connected in some way with the Asram, its work or its members or else are given permission for special reasons. Permission is not given to all who would like to come, as that would mean an impossible number and it would besides entirely break the principle of Sri Aurobindo's retirement.¹ 5 February 1930

*

You can write to him that he can have permission for himself and his wife — but for the children it depends on their age, whether they are young children under ten or not — young children are not allowed for darshan. 17 July 1935

*

Nobody should ever be *asked* to come for Darshan or Pranam or meditation. If somebody spontaneously asks, it is another matter. Here too as a rule, there should be no eagerness that they should come. Encouragement should be given only in those cases where there is a good or special reason for it. The number of people coming especially in the August darshan, when the Pondicherry people also come, is already very large and we are kept for 7 or 8 hours at a stretch receiving them, so it is not advisable to go on increasing the numbers under the present circumstances. If a man is especially deserving or likely to be a helper or sympathiser of the Asram or there is any other reason

¹ *This and many other letters in this and the next chapters were written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.—Ed.*

for encouraging him, then of course this general rule does not apply.

27 July 1937

*

I have heard about you and read your books and feel impelled to ask for your help. In case you think your darshan will help better, I most humbly request you to grant me one at your convenience.

Tell him it is not necessary. Transformation comes only by inner sadhana and development. A darshan can at best only give some strong experience.

Several times when my mind has become blank I have experienced light descending from higher planes — probably supramental.

But he has the root experience already in the descent of the Light in the state of blankness. The Light is the Divine Light from the plane of spiritual consciousness above. The supramental comes only at the end of a long sadhana.

1 February 1938

*

But who is he? New persons are, as far as possible, refused for November — unknown persons not recommended by someone known are usually not permitted at all.

26 October 1938

*

The most we can concede is that she may be brought for Darshan in the way proposed, but she must simply take the blessing and pass, there must be no lingering. It is a mistake to bring sick people or the insane to the Darshan for cure — the Darshan is not meant for that. If anything is to be done or can be done for them, it can be done at a distance. The Force that acts at the time of Darshan is of another kind and one deranged or feeble in mind cannot receive or cannot assimilate it — it may produce a contrary effect owing to this incapacity if received at all. If the force is withheld, the Darshan is useless, if received by such

people it is unsafe. It is similar reasons which dictate the rule forbidding children of tender years to be brought to the Darshan.

Making Pranam during Darshan

There is no obligation on European visitors to make the pranam [*during darshan*]—very few have done so, none perhaps. Even from those who have stayed here, it was not asked—they were left free to abstain unless they asked for it—e.g. X, Y, Z and A. B must not get the impression that we exact it from anybody. I do not know whether a mere “look” at us will help him—it is only in some cases that that happens, and these usually when there was a previous disposition or habit of response to supraphysical Light or Power as in the case of C. These days have been arranged with a view first to their main object, viz. for myself to give the darshan and blessing to the disciples, and the form of it is designed for that—visitors first came in as a superfluity, though now except in November they are more than half the crowd. But as they are mostly Indians accustomed to this form of the spiritual contact and aware of its meaning, it does not usually matter. It is only when a European comes that this difficulty arises—but it need not be any as he is not asked to make the pranam.

As for the rest, there is nothing much to say. The distance between the man and the Power manifesting through him is not an idea that can trouble the eastern mind, to which the gulf does not exist, but it is natural to the modern intelligence.

20 November 1933

*

Is it possible for darshan to do pranam on behalf of X, Y, my mother, etc.?

It is not possible to make separate pranams. There are nearly 700 people this time, and if all is not rapidly done we shall have to be there till the afternoon 2.30 or 3. Even one minute for each means 6 hours for the first 350.

11 August 1934

Right Attitude towards August Darshan

Someone told me that only ten days were left for the August 15th Darshan. I replied that every day should be considered as the 15th.

That is the right attitude. Every day should be regarded as a day when a descent may take place or a contact established with the higher consciousness. Then the 15th itself would be more successful.

4 August 1934

*

As to the 15th August, well, don't lay too much stress on it which is after all more a general than a personal occasion — for the individual any day in the year may be the 15th — that is, *the* birthday or a birthday of something in the inner being. It is with that feeling that one should do the sadhana.

13 September 1935

Remarks on Darshan

It would be very good if you could come out to give Darshan once a month instead of only three times a year.

If I went out once a month, the effect of my going out would be diminished by one third.

2 March 1933

*

When I came for your Darshan, it seemed as if it was Shiva himself I was seeing. I felt Ananda too. The consciousness of these things remained for two or three days, and then as if evaporated.

There is no reason to be discouraged by what you call the evaporation of the consciousness that you got on the darshan day. It has not evaporated but drawn back from the surface. That usually happens, when there is not the higher consciousness or some experience. What you have to learn is not to allow depression, but remain quiet allowing time for the assimilation

and ready for fresh experience or growth *whenever* it comes.

4 December 1934

*

It was certainly the best Darshan of all yet passed today, though those to come will surely exceed it. I was struck by the rapidity with which your consciousness has grown since last time, much more solid and insistent and with a power to overcome all mixture. One can surely now have the confidence, not prophetic merely or founded only on the spiritual necessity in you but also on what has been accomplished, that what is not of a piece with this growing consciousness will change or disappear! X's feeling about the darshan was quite true.

21 February 1935

Difficulties at the Time of Darshan

I have heard that at the time of Darshan all our hidden subconscious desires and attachments are thrown up.

There is no such inevitable rule. It is true that attacks are frequent at that time, but one need not admit them.

6 July 1934

*

During this Darshan, instead of Ananda, Force or Light I felt a great dryness.

It depends upon your condition whether the Ananda or Force or Light descends or whether the resistance rises. It is the resistance of the ordinary physical consciousness ignorant and obscure that seems to have risen in you. The period of the 15th is a period of great descents but also of great resistances. This 15th was not an exception.

17 August 1934

*

I do not think that the difficulty you are feeling has anything to do with your receiving what your husband sends you. It very often happens that when the Darshan day is approaching the adverse Forces gather themselves for an attack individually or

generally in order to prevent what has to be individually received from being received and what has to be generally brought down from being brought down. Also very often there is a strong attack after the darshan day because they want to undo what has been done or else to stop it from going farther. But as far as the individual is concerned, there is no need of undergoing this attack; if one is conscious of its nature, one can react and throw it away. Or if it still presses one can keep one's will and faith firm and come out of the temporary obstacle with a greater opening and a new progress. The Mother's force and mine will be with you always.

Contact with People Outside the Ashram

Correspondence with Outsiders

You can tell him about the arrangements for correspondence. We do not write ourselves. He can always write to the Mother or to myself (we have received his letters); but answers, if any, are given on our instructions to Nolini who has the general charge of the correspondence or in certain cases by someone else specially deputed for the purpose. 21 August 1931

Does Not Give Advice on Mundane Matters

Since he has sent a stamped envelope, you can write to him (in Bengali) that it is no use putting these matters before Sri Aurobindo, as he makes it a rule not to advise people in their mundane affairs and confines himself only to what is proper to the spiritual life and for the rest to his own path of Yoga.

*

I hope you will help me and send your reply to the following queries:

- (1) How long will the business partnership last with my partner?
- (2) Will I be able to recover my money from him in September?
- (3) What kind of business am I likely to do in future?
- (4) When will I have children and how many in all?

Write to him that these are not questions that ought to be put to me. It is to another class of persons that he should go for the answer. 28 July 1928

*

Reply to him (at X's address) that we cannot tell him what job he should do—it depends on his opportunities, tastes and

capacities. All that we can tell him about is his sadhana. If he progresses in his sadhana, opens his consciousness, can feel a higher and wider consciousness and the Divine Presence or Power at work, he will then be able to get our inner guidance for his life.

27 February 1933

*

Can you induce my Gurudev Sri Aurobindo to think kindly of me, even though the terrible situation I am placed in is of my own folly and creation? I do not know if I am doing the right thing by writing this letter. But with full love and confidence in you I hope to be kindly excused.

Nolini, you can answer him as he has sent a stamp.

Sri Aurobindo does not usually extend any personal help or direction to any but accepted disciples who are practising a serious Yoga. Worldly life is a field of Karma (a field of growth) in which the soul progresses through the play of energies inner and outer, personal and universal producing a complexity of results until it is ready for the spiritual change. Once one practises this Yoga, the life becomes a part of the sadhana. Even so Sri Aurobindo seldom gives directions or advice in specific matters; only the Mother's Force is there to help and if the sadhak is open and sincere, he can receive and become aware of help and guidance. For discipleship a certain readiness is necessary. To be able to bear adverse fortune with a calm equanimity and inner strength (not a tamasic inert acceptance) would be a very strong qualification for it.

19 March 1936

*

Sri Aurobindo has asked me to reply on his behalf to your letter. I informed him at the time of all that your wife told me of your difficulties.

Sri Aurobindo does not as a rule give any advice in secular affairs, but only spiritual advice and spiritual support and blessings. In this matter the trouble seems to be the result of an education or influences, common enough at the present time, which turn the mind away from all living faith in the old beliefs

and standards of life and from any openness to the Truth that was embodied in them. It does not seem likely that a return to them can be brought about easily now. If the mind affected could come to receive that Truth in a new light, that might be the remedy.

For you and your work Sri Aurobindo sends his blessings. Where there is sincerity of heart and selflessness in purpose and an openness to the help from above, difficulties however great can be overcome or turned in course of time. December 1939

Does Not Give Instructions in Yoga to Outsiders

X has sent a letter to you, which I enclose. He would like some *upadeśa* from you.

I do not usually give *upadeśa* like that. I believe he complains of an inability to concentrate his mind or feel bhakti, but that is not due to past karma and cannot be got rid of by any *prāyaścitta* — it is the inherent disability of the human mind that goes outward and not inward.

*

Sri Aurobindo does not usually give instructions of this kind. It is only those who have been accepted into his own path of Yoga to whom he gives spiritual guidance. Suggest to him that as he is a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, he would find his natural guides in the Ramakrishna Mission.

4 February 1931

*

You can write to him that Sri Aurobindo does not intervene by giving instructions in the Yoga of anybody except his own disciples. His own way of Yoga being of a separate kind and not meant for all to follow.

26 November 1932

*

I am instructed by Sri Aurobindo to reply that he does not give advice or instructions to anybody except his own disciples (already accepted by him), those whom he finds fitted and ready

to prepare themselves for his path. This path has neither the same aim nor the same method as the ordinary Yoga, it aims at a realisation of which their results are only component parts; it may be said to begin its capital experiences where these end and its object is one that they would consider impossible. Much of it is virgin ground in which the paths have yet to be cut and built. The obstacles and difficulties in the way of success are formidable and demand either a strength and patience or a faith and unquestioning reliance on the Guru who is the pathfinder and leader. Or otherwise they have to have so strong and clear a call that no difficulties matter, or else to be in some way predestined to follow this path and no other, to cleave to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as Guru and to no other. Your preparation seems to be mainly intellectual and for this Yoga the intellect is not sufficient; relied upon as the chief guide it may become instead a barrier. This Yoga depends upon a supra-intellectual knowledge which can come only from the soul or psychic being within and the secret spirit above. Moreover attachment to ideas, people, things are hampering obstacles in this Yoga. You could perhaps understand for yourself that there may be many obstacles in the way of your accepting this Yoga. All the same, if you still wish and are able to come for Darshan next August, you may do so. But for the moment for the reasons pointed out Sri Aurobindo is not able at present to give you any instruction or suggest a discipline.

17 October 1934

*

Is it not possible that you tell me about my weaknesses, defects and deficiencies so that I may try to remove them?

It is not a question of defects and weaknesses. You have to grow spiritually from within till it is certain that your call is to this Path. Till then it is not possible for me to give you any definite verbal guidance. What comes to you must come from within yourself at present.

11 April 1935

*

You had better write to her saying that Sri Aurobindo does not usually give instructions to anyone but those who follow his path of Yoga which is a difficult path and not possible for everybody. Nor is it by oral instructions that he helps his disciples as he speaks with none nowadays and lives entirely retired. There would therefore be no utility in coming here.

It would be difficult for anyone suffering from nervous debility to follow Yogic processes; the recovery of health would be a necessary preliminary. It would be especially dangerous in Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga.

1 May 1935

*

[*Letter from an outsider to one of Sri Aurobindo's disciples:*]

Can you enlighten me as to the reason for Sri Aurobindo's silence?

Just as I see no one, so I answer usually no letters except those of the disciples and many of these even are not answered by myself personally if they are outside the Asram.

Will you also advise me how I can obtain his *kṛpā*?

My spiritual work is limited to a very small field and a particular purpose. Outside that field I never intervene whether for spiritual instructions or worldly matters. This limitation is absolutely necessary otherwise I could not do the work I have to do. All depends on whether the man who comes to me is meant for the spiritual path and its work—if not, then all I can do is to give him the *kalyāṇecchā* which one can always give. The rest depends upon himself or his karma. I shall ask Nolini for X's letters and see. But at present I can say nothing.

25 January 1936

Does Not Grant Interviews or Personal Darshans

You had better write to him that an interview is impossible, that I see and speak with none, not even my disciples,—except on three days of the year when they and a few others specially

permitted come and make pranam and receive a silent blessing,
for even then I do not speak.

28 January 1930

*

Write that the paragraph in the *Jyoti* is a sheer invention. I have said nothing about the present movement to either disciple or visitor. I could not have done so, because since it began, I have seen and spoken to no one. My rule of giving no interview to anyone, of speaking with none, even on the three days when I come out, remains unchanged.

25 April 1930

*

A Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University wrote some time back asking if it was possible to meet Sri Aurobindo during a proposed visit to South India. I let him know that he may write to Sri Aurobindo and if he was lucky he may find it possible to see Sri Aurobindo. He has written again. What reply shall I give him?

In such cases you should not write anything without consulting me. What he wants is evidently to talk with me and that is impossible. You will have to write to him now regretting that it is not at all likely that I shall come out of my retirement just now.

13 January 1932

*

If the Baba Maharaj asks for an answer, you will tell him that it is impossible for me to satisfy his requests. I am in entire retirement, seeing no one, not even my disciples, so I cannot see him. As for the Asram, it is a strict rule that none but disciples can reside in it; the whole life of the Asram is besides governed by a system elaborated in all details and it is only the disciples trained to this life who can conform to it.

16 September 1932

*

I am afraid I don't see how I can see William Arthur Moore—how can I extend to him so extraordinary a privilege (since I see nobody) which I would not have conceded to Sarat Chatterji?

You say Barin certifies him as a bhakta — but Barin's language is apt to be vivid and exaggerated; he probably means only an admirer. I think he must be answered that certainly he would have been allowed a meeting with me if I had been coming out but the entire seclusion has been taken as a rule for Sri Aurobindo's sadhana and it may not be subjected to exception so long as the rule is in force. If he is really a bhakta, that will give him a ray of distant hope and if he isn't, the impression made does not very much matter. Barin surely exaggerates the power of the publicist — after all he is only the editor of the *Statesman* — but even otherwise that is not the main consideration. By the way why have you transmogrified Moore into Jones? — there was a Jones there but he has departed and yielded the place to Moore.

17 August 1933

*

I pray for Sri Aurobindo's Darshan once more before I leave.
I know that it is against the rule but I hope you won't mind
relaxing it for the sake of a bhakta.

I am afraid it is impossible. No separate personal Darshan can be given at this stage — it is not a rule, it is a necessity for the work that Sri Aurobindo is doing.

17 August 1934

*

The Maharani's request was placed by the Mother before Sri Aurobindo. But it has been his strict rule for many years past to see no one except on the three darshan days in the year and no exception has been made up till now. If an exception were made now, it would be difficult for him to maintain the rule in future. There is no possibility of keeping the matter secret and publicity would be undesirable for the Maharani and also Sri Aurobindo, as it would give rise to many requests for a special darshan or interview from others. It is therefore better that the Maharani should not maintain her request. But if on her way back she wishes to visit the Mother, the Mother will be glad to see her.

31 January 1938

*

There seems to be some misunderstanding about Mr. C. R. Reddy's visit to the Ashram. He was sent to Pondicherry by the Chancellor of the Andhra University to present the medal of the humanities prize given by the University and accepted by Sri Aurobindo. The Chancellor was to have come himself, but as it turned out that he was unable to do so the Vice-Chancellor came as his representative. Sri Aurobindo when he accepted had expressed his inability to leave Pondicherry in order to receive the medal but had consented to this official visit for the purpose. There was therefore no question of Mr. Reddy coming for a personal visit. The last visit of that kind Sri Aurobindo received was from Tagore very long ago. The only exception made to his rule of seclusion has been for the giving of instructions and receiving the report of a disciple entrusted with some work or some mission. It is difficult or even impossible for Sri Aurobindo to relax his rule any farther, still less to make any departure that would have the result of opening the doors widely or altogether. He might make some relaxation if a compelling occasion arose or if he felt it necessary because of some public emergency or some need of his work or the necessity of an exceptional case. But at the moment he still feels it essential to maintain his rule for some time at least and not less strictly than before.

10 January 1949

Part Four

The Practice of Yoga in the Ashram and Outside

Section One

The Practice of Yoga in the Ashram

1926–1950

Entering Sri Aurobindo's Path

Acceptance as a Disciple, 1926–1949

His aspiration may be satisfied if he makes himself fit. Let him continue to read the *Arya* and practise daily meditation. In the meditation he should concentrate first in an aspiration that the central truths of which he reads should be made real to him in conscious experience and his mind opened to the calm, wideness, strength, peace, light and Ananda of the spiritual consciousness. Let him write to you from time to time what experiences he gets or what are the difficulties that rise and prevent the experience.¹

30 November 1926

*

Sri Aurobindo is retired and sees no one.

If you have not had even a glimpse of the Truth from any spiritual man, the fault is likely to be yours. Either you have not made it your chief concern to know and realise, putting all things else in the background or holding them to be of no account, or else you have been seeking with your mind, through the thought, and not with your inner being, your soul and spirit.

No suggestions of any practice can be given you unless you write more fully and state how you have tried hitherto, by what kind of practice etc.

19 July 1927

*

All is possible if there is a true faith, a complete consecration, a sincere and pure aspiration and a persistent endeavour.

¹ This letter and many other letters in this section were written by Sri Aurobindo to one of his secretaries. The secretary would reply to the correspondent over his own signature, quoting Sri Aurobindo's exact words or else paraphrasing or translating them. — Ed.

There is no one path for all. The nature of the aspiration expressed seems to indicate Bhakti as the proper path. That also is the quickest way, though none is easy.

Sri A. cannot undertake to point the way to any except those who follow his own path and are capable of it. The right thing for a seeker is to find the Guru destined for him. Usually one who has been in search for twelve years finds the way and the leader of the way long before the end of that period. Probably a more whole-hearted and concentrated seeking is needed.

4 August 1927

*

Answer that I am ready to help him in his aspiration. But first he should give some fuller information about himself. He will also have to take some time to see whether he is really called to this way or to another. And before he is finally accepted, it will have to be tested whether he is really capable and ready to give himself entirely to this aspiration. This Yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work. This means an inner discipline far more exacting and difficult than the ethical and physical austerities which are the rule at the Satyagraha Asrama. He must not therefore enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of Yoga, unless he is sure of the psychic call and of his readiness to go through to the end.

6 April 1928

*

Some time back, I had written to you to request whether you could take me for training in the yogic lines. I have not yet the favour of your reply. As already said in my last letter I need not write anything concerning me to the people of your type, as you can know all you want through your own powers. I should be much grateful for your early favourable reply.

I do not use powers of this kind or in this way. If he wants a Yoga of miraculous siddhis he must go elsewhere.

The object of Yoga is a change of consciousness, and opening into spiritual knowledge and experience and union with the Divine. If any powers come along with this change, they are not to be used in a trivial manner.

9 June 1928

*

Write to your friend that we do not ask for any financial help from your father and therefore you are not called upon to answer the questions in his letter. It is not everyone who has the *adhikāra* to help in the work of the Asrama. Those only can do so who have faith in it or sympathy or at least confidence in Sri Aurobindo.

As for the house, it was simply said that your wife would be allowed to come, if she wished to enter this path or prepare herself for it; but only when a house could be bought which could be set apart for women disciples. Sri Aurobindo is not anxious to increase the number of his disciples and only those are accepted usually who have the call and capacity for Yoga and are ready to satisfy the conditions. The permission was given for your wife at your request as a special favour and stands only if she wants to come and is prepared to live here under the conditions of life in the Asrama.

14 October 1928

*

Your letter this time is sufficiently explicit regarding your state of mind and your object in practising Yoga. You have apparently a call and may be fit for Yoga; but there are different paths and each has a different aim and end before it. It is common to all the paths to conquer the desires, to put aside the ordinary relations of life, and to try to pass from uncertainty to everlasting certitude. One may also try to conquer dream and sleep, thirst and hunger etc. But it is no part of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga to have nothing to do with the world or with life or to kill the senses or entirely inhibit their action. It is the object of his Yoga to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power and Bliss of the divine Truth and its dynamic certitudes. This Yoga is not a Yoga of world-shunning asceticism, but of divine Life.

Your object on the other hand can only be gained by entering into Samadhi and ceasing in it from all connection with world-existence. You cannot get help in this path from Sri Aurobindo; you must go to someone else in order to find a Guru.

1 January 1929

*

He can have darshan (only) if he comes for one of the three days. His request for advice etc. is too vague. I do not give advice or instructions in this general way. The whole question is whether he has the call or the capacity for the Yoga. That can only be seen when he comes here. He has to see first if the wish to offer himself is real, deep and persistent,—if the message has captured his heart or only touched his mind. All else afterwards.

8 September 1929

*

No one is initiated in this Yoga in any formal way. Those are accepted by the Mother who are found to be called or chosen from within for this path or for Sri Aurobindo's work. That acceptance is sufficient. Those are considered as called or chosen who can open and be receptive to the Power that goes from her here and can feel its working. If by doing what he is doing now, he can in time thus open and receive and feel the Power that will be a sign that he is meant for this way of Yoga. Nothing else is needed; prayer and aspiration are sufficient, if there is sincerity and a true call within.

23 February 1930

*

Answer to X that at present his mind seems to be under too many conflicting influences for him to take up Yoga with a single mind, much more for him to give up everything and come here, even if he were accepted. If he came, he would be pulled backwards by these influences. A divided nature is the worst possible condition for this path. Moreover he has a wife and a very young child, and he would have to give them up and practically renounce all connection with family life. As for politics, if he still feels

the political call, he certainly cannot come here. It is better if he exhausts these desires of the ordinary nature, before he takes up the spiritual life. If at any time he feels them fallen away from him and only the spiritual attraction left, he can then take up the spiritual life, though it would still remain to be decided which path was the right one for him. Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga is a very difficult one and there are others that are much easier to follow and might suit his nature better. But whichever path it is, Yoga asks for a one-centred endeavour, and until that can be given, a preparation like that which he is spontaneously undergoing is all that is possible.

20 May 1930

*

You had better send a copy of this letter to X and ask him to be careful in future with those whom he takes for the sadhana. Everybody must be made to understand clearly that this is not a sadhana of emotional and egoistic *bhakti*, but of surrender. One who makes demands and threatens to commit suicide if his demands are not complied with, is not meant for this Yoga. Also they must understand that they must not consider that they have a right to be called here at their own demand either for darshan or for permanent residence. Farther, it is not the habit of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother to answer every letter written to them; they do not answer unless there is a special reason for reply. Sadhaks who write about their sadhana will get the help they need if they take the right attitude and can receive it. But no written answer can be demanded for any letter.

You may write also to the boy himself to the following effect.

(1) If he cannot take the right attitude, he had better leave this Yoga and take to the ordinary life or follow some other path like Gandhi's.

(2) *Satyāgraha* and *prāyopavesāna* are no parts of this Yoga — they are parts of Gandhi's teaching and practice, but anyone who tries to bring them in here will be considered unfit to be Sri Aurobindo's disciple. If he writes again in this strain, no farther notice will be taken of him and he will be left to his own ways.

(3) It is not the habit of the Mother to answer letters written

to her; all letters are written by you under my instructions or at the Mother's order. But no disciple has the right to demand an answer to his letter. If he writes about his sadhana, he will receive *silent* help, provided he has the capacity to receive it and the right attitude. In future he must expect no direct answer to his letters; if anything has to be said, you will write through X.

(4) He must not expect to be called to Pondicherry. Only those are allowed who are ready for sadhana in the Asram or who are called for work for which they have a special capacity or training. For darshan, permission is given only when the Mother chooses; demands made in the spirit of his letter are always refused.

(5) This Yoga is not a Yoga of emotional egoistic vital bhakti full of demands and desires. There is no room in it for *ābdār* of any kind. It is only for those who surrender to the Divine and obey implicitly the directions given to them by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

2 August 1930

*

You may get his photograph—it may help to see what kind of nature he has. But there is no need to go out of the way to *persuade* him; from his letter he does not seem altogether ready for the spiritual life. His idea of life seems to be rather moral and philanthropic than spiritual at present; and behind it is the attachment to the family life. If the impulse to seek the Divine of which he speaks is more than a mental turn suggested by a vague emotion, if it has really anything psychic in it, it will come out at its own time; there is no need to stimulate, and a premature stimulation may push him towards something for which he is not yet fit.

12 January 1931

*

Am I fit for Sri Aurobindo's Yoga? Will he take me up?

If by my Yoga you mean the integral Yoga leading towards the supramental realisation, you have not at present the capacity for it. All you can do at present is some preparation for it by Bhakti and self-dedication through Karma; if into this preparation you

put a strong sincerity and a settled psychic aspiration, then one day you will be ready for more.

23 February 1931

*

The letter is an extremely intelligent one and shows considerable justness of mind and discriminating observation both as to the nature of the sadhana and its obstacles and the movements in him. You had better correspond with him and encourage him.

Tell him that his observations are all very correct and there is little to add to them. If he perseveres with sincerity and the same discriminating correctness of vision he is sure to progress. The sadhana is a difficult one and time should not be grudged; it is only in the last stages that a very great and constant rapidity of progress can be confidently expected. As for Shakti, the descent of Shakti before the vital is pure and surrendered, has its dangers. It is better for him to pray for purification, knowledge, intensity of the heart's aspiration and as much working of the Power as he can bear and assimilate.

18 May 1931

*

As to the girl, X, it hardly seems possible to say anything definite from her experiences — they are in the vital plane; it is only if the experience is in the psychic that it has a decisive value as indicating the call to Yoga.

The vision of the boy purports to be a call from Srikrishna, but these vital visions are not always what they seem to be. The vision about Kali and the dark forces and the fainting indicates on the contrary very serious difficulties, danger from the Asuric forces and an insufficient strength in the Adhar. On the other hand the vision of Kali with the dagger followed by that of the boy *might* mean that the Divine Shakti will destroy the difficulties and make the way clear for the service of Krishna.

Nothing however can be definitely said from this kind of experience. If her call to Yoga is real, it will declare itself irresistibly hereafter; it will then be seen to what path she is called, for as yet there is no clear and indubitable indication of a call to *this* Yoga.

7 November 1931

*

You ask about your friend, X. It is very evident from his own letter that he is not ready for the spiritual life or fit for Yoga. If he were to attempt it in his present condition, he would only be wasting time and energy (which could be turned to other purposes) in a futile endeavour. The spiritual life is only for those who have a single-minded or else a dominant turn towards it sufficient to carry them through all its struggles and difficulties. An awakening of the soul (not a turn of the mind only) is the one sure sign of a call to the Yoga.

26 December 1931

*

At times I feel a kind of peculiar fear as if I am going to lose my brain (especially at night when I go to bed).

You can reply to him that if he has fears of this kind, it would be better not to try the sadhana. It is a difficult Yoga and faith, a steady and quiet will, courage and strength are necessary if one is to follow it.

21 March 1932

*

Tell him he can meditate and put himself into spiritual relation with us and if anything opens in him he can write.

25 March 1932

*

X is certainly capable of doing Yoga, he has a good adhar,— but whether he will be able to do this Yoga, is not quite certain as it is a very difficult path and would need more vital energy and single-minded concentration than he might be prepared at present to give for the purpose.

16 August 1932

*

The experiences you have had are very clear evidence that you have the capacity for Yoga. The first decisive experiences in this Yoga are a calm and peace that is felt, first somewhere in the being and in the end in all the being, and the descent of Power and Force into the body which will take up the whole adhar

and work in it to transform mind, life and body into the instrumentation of the Divine Consciousness. The two experiences of which you wrote in your letter are the beginning of this calm and the descent of this Force. Much has to be done before they can be established or persistently effective, but that they should come at this stage is a clear proof of capacity to receive. It must be remembered however that this Yoga is not easy and cannot be done without the rising of many obstacles and much lapse of time—so if you take it up it must be with a firm resolve to carry it through to the end with a whole-hearted sincerity, faith, patience and courage.

The vision of flowers is a symbol usually of psychic qualities or movements whether in potentiality or promise or in actual state of development. The swaying is due probably to the body not being habituated to receive the Force—it should cease as soon as the body is accustomed.

2 May 1933

*

I am interested in spirituality. My desire is to live in direct touch with the Asram.

You can give him some kind of answer—for his stamp. Spirituality is a vague term,—there are many ways of approaching the spiritual consciousness and the Guru's choice of a disciple depends on whether his mind or his nature and inner capacity call him to the particular path or not etc.

7 January 1935

*

We have read your letter and the Mother is willing to accept X as she has already accepted you. It is understood that he will do all he can to merit the acceptance.

You can tell him that reading and study, though they can be useful for preparing the mind, are not in themselves the best means of entering the Yoga. It is self-dedication from within oneself that is the means. Nor is it entrance into the atmosphere of the Asram that is needed, for there are many things in the atmosphere of the Asram, not all of them desirable. It is with

the consciousness of the Mother that he must unite and there too a sincere self-consecration in mind and heart and will is the means for it. The work given by the Mother is always meant as a field for that self-consecration; it has to be done as an offering to her so that through the self-offering one may come to feel her Force acting and her presence.

P.S. The Mother will give the interview asked for, but it will not be possible immediately as just now her days are too crowded — you will have to wait some days for it. 27 February 1935

*

What you say about those whom we receive — that if one part in them sincerely desires the Divine, we give them their chance — is quite true. If we demanded more at the beginning, exceedingly few would be able even to commence their journey towards the Divine.

24 April 1935

*

You can tell him that no one is accepted as a disciple unless the Mother has seen him and it appears that there is some possibility in him of an opening not merely for Yoga but for the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. At present however Sri Aurobindo does not wish to accept more disciples unless the circumstances are exceptional. He can however, if he likes, come for darshan in August.

(I suppose he knows of my retirement and not speaking with people.) 9 May 1935

*

All Yoga is difficult, because the aim in every Yoga is to reach the Divine, to turn entirely towards the Divine and that means to turn away from the ordinary movements of the nature to something beyond it. But when one aspires with sincerity the strength is given that ends by surmounting the difficulties and reaching the goal.

The Mother was speaking of sadhaks who had entered into the life and atmosphere of the Asram and felt the touch on the

psychic of what is here. It does not apply to those who have come here from the outside world but still belong to the outside. All the ties of X's nature were still with the outside life; her vital was quite unadapted to the Asram life and recoiled from the idea of living it always. She gave her psychic no time to make that connection and absorb that influence which would have fixed in it the feeling of this as its true home. People can come here like that and stay for a time and go without any difficulty as many have done. The feeling of difficulty or uneasiness in going is on the other hand a sign that the soul has taken root here and finds it painful to uproot itself. There are some who are like that and have had to go but do not feel at ease and are always thinking of how to come back as soon as possible.

To help others without egoism or attachment or leaving the spiritual surroundings and spiritual life is one thing, to be pulled away by personal attachment or the need of helping others to the outside life is different.

18 May 1935

*

X, who was a residential disciple of yours at Pondicherry but came here some months back, is a neighbour and a friend of mine. Under his instruction, I have been practising sadhana for a few months. I concentrate in the heart. Concentrating at this place for some time, I feel a descent first and then an ascent of a force within me. At first this was very irregular. Now I am having this descent and ascent regularly. I feel a power descending within me, then after one or two or sometimes three minutes, I feel it ascending and going above the head and the same upward and downward movements go on in cyclic order. I do not practise more than one hour daily. When the descent and ascent go on, the concentration at a certain place does not become necessary or rather my personal attempt of concentration stops or hampers the movements. In such a state, I keep myself vacant and watch the movements listlessly and keep off the passing thoughts that sometimes come. I feel calmness, quietude and vastness within me.

Accepted as disciple. As long as the calmness, quietude and vastness lasts, a special concentration need not be continued.

The special concentration is intended to bring the experience — during the experience the attitude of witness should be kept with rejection of anything that might disturb the experience. Listlessness however is not the proper poise of the witness but rather a still quietude.

1 November 1935

*

Wire me if I am accepted or not.

What the deuce does he mean by asking a wire? One does not take disciples by a wire. And how that face [*in the man's photograph*] is going to do Yoga, I don't know. I suppose it is through X that he comes. Has the latter written anything about him?

circa 1935

*

I am sending the photograph of X. Please see him, for he has come with much faith and *bhakti* for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Mother does not want to see him; he has come without permission and, if we start seeing all the people who come like that, there will be no value in the rule. If he had a true Yogic capacity, it would be different, but we see no trace of it. Tell him he needs another kind of guidance — he would not be able to stand this Yoga.

3 July 1936

*

X is planning to go back to his home. But he would like your instructions and guidance from here.

It is not possible for me to give him help and guidance — for that would mean an Influence put on him and in his present stage of development he has not the necessary strength and balance to receive it and bear it. I have said he cannot do this Yoga. He needs something else that he can assimilate.

4 July 1936

*

You can write to him in Bengali and tell him that Sri Aurobindo has seen the letters and says that the vision is interesting as showing that his inner being which came up in the dream is capable of receiving the Light which descends from above through the head into the other centres of the being. It is too early to say more. But he can continue with his aspiration and endeavour and report what experiences he has.

You can also tell him that there are two stages in the Yoga, one of preparation and one of the actual intensive sadhana. It is the first that he can undertake. In this stage aspiration in the heart with prayer, bhakti, meditation, a will to offer the life to the Divine are the important things. Purification of the nature is the first aim to be achieved. There should be no over-eagerness for experiences but such as come should be observed and, if helpful to the right attitude and true development, accepted. All that flatters the ego or feeds it should be rejected. There should be no impatience if the progress is slow or difficulties many—all should be done in a calm patience—and full reliance on the Divine Mother. This period tests the capacity of the sadhak and the sincerity of his aspiration towards the Divine.

12 November 1936

*

A correspondent has asked whether it is possible to receive spiritual initiation from you. He has heard from somebody that if one has earnestness to be your disciple, you appear in your mental body and give the initiation.

There is no formal initiation; acceptance is sufficient, but I do not usually accept unless I have seen or the Mother has seen the person or unless there is a clear sign that he is meant for this Yoga. Sometimes those who desire to be disciples have seen me in dream or vision before acceptance.

20 May 1937

*

You can write to him that when someone has a sincere and strong call for the sadhana Sri Aurobindo does not refuse to accept him. But it may be that he has first to prepare himself before he can

face the full difficulties of the Path. As for leaving all it would be premature to do so before one is sufficiently advanced on the way to make such a step spiritually profitable; too early done, it often creates more difficulties than it removes.

31 May 1937

*

Sometimes people whose aspiration is doubtful or whose acceptance is not known to me, come and claim to join my meditations here as a matter of right.

The word "accepted" in these conditions has no great importance. If people want to join the Asram, then acceptance or non-acceptance has a meaning. But outside there are any number of sadhaks practising Yoga who have started without asking even for acceptance on their own motion. I do not interfere unless it is a question of something quite opposed to the Yoga in them, something neurasthenic, ill-balanced or hostile. It is quite impossible to stop the flood in most cases — even if refused, people say, "You alone are my guru" and go on doing sadhana.

18 July 1937

*

I don't very much care to accept unknown people unless they turn out to be of the right stuff. His visions were interesting² but what I wanted was for him to prepare himself and see whether anything developed in him. If there is nothing in his letters about experiences or spiritual developments, he has not satisfied the test. You will in that case write to him that his acceptance depends upon his development and showing that he is really called to this sadhana.

8 March 1938

*

I have received the photo and his letter and I should not advise him to undertake the Yoga — at least not now. In spite of his mental capacity which is considerable there is a weakness of the vital force in him which would stand very much in his way.

² See the letter of 12 November 1936 on page 551. — Ed.

Moreover to overcome the difficulties of Yoga, there must be a definite call and he himself says that he has not got that. It is better for him to increase his vital force and will by some life-action steadily undertaken and followed out—that is the one thing he needs before he can go farther.

6 June 1938

*

Two days ago my friend X wrote to the Mother imploring her to take him in hand. Can I answer him in the affirmative?

Well, at present it is better not to write anything too positive. Nowadays especially, the Mother takes people in such circumstances on probation, she does not give them large immediate assurances, but waits to see how they open. If he justifies his aspiration, all will be well.

26 February 1943

*

As for the Zamindar he seems to expect some *dīksā* of the traditional kind from me, but this I do not give. He will have to be told that I do not and that my method is different. It may be a little difficult to explain to him or for him to understand what it is. Perhaps he may be told that those who come to have the Yoga are not accepted at once and there is sometimes a long period of trial before they are. We can see how he takes it and decide afterwards if he persists in his desire to come here.

11 July 1949

A Special Path

This Yoga is a special way to a high and difficult spiritual achievement. It is given only when there is sufficient evidence of capacity or an irresistible call. Inner peace is not its object; that is only one of the elementary conditions for it.

29 July 1927

*

Ask him to let me know more about himself.

What is the nature or object of Yoga which he says is the aim of his life? Has he practised at all before?

What makes him turn to me? Does he know anything about my way of Yoga and its aims?

I accept only those who are found capable of the Yoga practised here and who are either naturally drawn to this way or who are prepared to put themselves with entire confidence and without any reserves under the guidance they will get here.

I shall reply more definitely to his request after I have received his answer.

12 July 1928

*

Answer to him that my way of Yoga is a special path and extremely difficult and I do not readily accept disciples — unless there is something to indicate that they have a special call.

16 December 1928

*

Write to him that compliance with his request to see me is impossible. I do not *see* anyone — I do not speak with anybody or give oral instructions in Yoga. As for the rest, this is a special path of Yoga and only those are accepted who have a special call to it, not merely a general desire for the spiritual life. It is not a life of Sannyasa or a Yoga that can be done by Japa etc. but something much more difficult, so difficult that even those who have a call do not find it easy to go through to the end, and for those who have not the call, it would be impossible. If he likes, however, he can go on practising his Japa with an aspiration towards this path and if he gets any experiences by which a call to it becomes evident, then I can reconsider his case.

13 February 1930

*

May I ask if you have published anything (in English) on the Tantra?

For at least ten years I have been getting symbols and instructions in the sleep-state, but only within about one year have I been able to see at all (with the Inner Eye) while awake. . . . But I long to develop a little faster in the waking state. Can you suggest any way?

If you can put any literature in my way along these lines

or give me any hints as to higher development than that which I have, I will be greatly under obligation to you.

1. Sri Aurobindo has written no book in English upon the Tantra.
2. Mention *The Mother* and give her the address of the publishers.
3. For the rest, say that Sri Aurobindo does not usually care to intervene in the sadhana of others even by such hints and suggestions as she asks for, because such intervention might unprofitably disturb their own line of development or basis of experience. His own way is of a special kind with a well-defined purpose and he has made it a rule—for very strong reasons—not to touch spiritually anyone who has not entered this particular way.

February 1931

*

He has himself said that he could not follow any path consistently owing to doubts and difficulties. Sri Aurobindo's path is long and difficult and it is not possible to follow it unless there is a strong call and a power to go through to the end. He cannot be admitted until it is clear that he has both.

3 May 1932

*

Sri Aurobindo's way of Yoga is of a special character—it is neither sannyasa nor does it accept the ordinary way of human life. Its first stages can be practised anywhere. But unless there is a personal call to this particular way, there is no use in anybody taking to it. For it is a difficult path and there is little chance of success unless the aspiration is clear and fixed and the demand of the soul sincere and unbreakable. Sri Aurobindo does not admit anyone to this Yoga unless he has some ground to decide that there is in him this special call and that he has an evident capacity for this way—usually it is only after seeing personally at the time of one of the three darshans he gives to disciples and others that he decides whether or not to admit. On the strength of correspondence only he very seldom makes any decision of this kind.

1 May 1933

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You have written [*in the preceding letter*] that Sri Aurobindo's way of yoga is of a special character and unless there is a personal call to that special yoga, there is no use taking to it. First of all my idea of yoga is very hazy and confused and I do not know anything about Sri Aurobindo's system of yoga. Does it put too much stress on pranayama? . . . Does it follow Anahata Nad and Jyoti?

You can tell him that it has nothing to do with the things he speaks of. It is a Yoga whose aim is to bring down a supramental consciousness and its Light, Power, Peace, Knowledge and Ananda for the transformation of the mind, life and body consciousness into an instrument of the Divine Consciousness. It does not follow any of the old ways though it takes something from all of them — but it is in essence the finding of a new way and is therefore extremely difficult and under certain conditions may be dangerous, — so it is not likely to be what he wants. You can give him the dates and explain that there is only darshan and Sri Aurobindo does not converse with those he sees.

17 May 1933

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The difficulty is that she seems to have only vairagya for worldly life without any knowledge or special call for this Yoga and this Yoga and the life here are quite different things from ordinary Yoga and ordinary Asrams. It is not a life of meditative retirement as elsewhere. Moreover it would be impossible for us to decide anything without seeing her and knowing at close hand what she is like. We are not just now for taking more inmates into the Asram except in a very few cases.

May 1936

*

I have been doing asanas for the last year and a half, but do not seem to have derived any benefit from this, nor do I see light while doing pranayama. I have been a devotee of Sri Dattatreya and have been given a mantra by a sannyasi whom I regard as my guru. Recently I have read your book *The Mother* and feel that the Mother and Dattatreya are not

different but one. Still, I do not see the light that, it is said, comes to those who practise asanas and pranayama.

Please give me some instruction in asanas and pranayama.

Tell him that this is a different way of Yoga and it does not include Asanas and Pranayam. The seeing of light depends on a certain opening of the inner consciousness — it can come by pranayam or without pranayam. If he does not see, there must be some obstacle not yet removed in himself. But whatever difficulties he has, he should seek their solution from his guru.

25 June 1936

*

Reply that the Mother is not able to write letters herself, and you are writing on her behalf. What is given by the Mother is not a development of supernatural force, but if someone is accepted to take up this path of Yoga he is led towards a deeper and higher consciousness in which he can attain union with the Divine Mother. This however is a path long and full of difficulties — Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not admit anyone to it unless they are sure of his call and his capacity to follow it and the person himself is sure of his will to follow it until the goal is reached. You can also inform him that Sri Aurobindo is retired and sees no one, he only comes out to give a silent blessing to his disciples and some others specially admitted for Darshan three times a year. If he comes in December, it will not be possible to see Sri Aurobindo, but he can see the Mother. 6 March 1937

*

The writer of this letter wants to know if he is fit to be a disciple or if he has yet to prepare himself.

This is a difficult yoga and very few are “fit” — one has to prepare oneself for a long time in order to become fit.

11 May 1938

*

Inform him that

- (1) No one is admitted into the Asram, unless and until he is accepted as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo.
- (2) Sri Aurobindo sees no one, not even his own disciples, except on three days of the year and he speaks with none.
- (3) Sri Aurobindo's path is a special one to which few are admitted. He seems to want Rajayoga (*cittavrttinirodha*) or something similar, but that is not the way followed here. He should seek a guru who can give him what he wants.

*

I had the good fortune of securing a real guide in the spiritual path, who initiated me into Rajayoga. But I have lost the chance of further guidance. I would now like to be guided by you.

Reply that Sri Aurobindo gives help or guidance only to those who follow his own special path of Yoga, but this is a path which would not be suited to his case.

Will you kindly lead me and help me in my attainment of what I desire? I take refuge in you as your own disciple.

Reply to him that this Yoga is a long and difficult one and needs a perseverance and a steadiness which according to his own letter he does not seem to possess. If he found the path being shown to him by his "guidance" too hard for his zeal, this will be still more difficult for him either to understand or to follow to the end. This is not a Yoga one can start today and leave tomorrow. It is only if there is a sign of a real call to it that Sri Aurobindo would be willing to take anyone into this path.

Admission, Staying, Departure

“Acceptance” and “Admission”

Reply that residence in the Asrama is only allowed to sadhakas who have been accepted into Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga, and not to all of them. This path is a special way of Yoga, difficult and different from others; only those are accepted who have a special call to it.

8 February 1930

*

Many thanks for [*a transcript of the preceding letter*]. Permit me to ask as to the qualifications of persons who can be accepted and admitted into the holy ashram as sadhaks.

There are no specific qualifications except the call to lead a divine life embodying a higher spiritual and supramental Truth (not Sannyasa), the spirit which is prepared to sacrifice all for that one end accepting even the hardest conditions, ordeals and tests, and the recognition of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is the Mother herself who decides after seeing the aspirant and the nature of the call within him. You may point out to him that the seeking in him seems from his letter to be of a vague kind; he seems to seek any path and any Guru he can find. There is nothing definite that would indicate a call to this way of Yoga.

22 February 1930

*

X may write explaining that the Asram is not a public institution with rules etc. which anyone satisfying the rules can enter. Only those are admitted who are already Sri Aurobindo's disciples and who are considered ready for the Asram life.

1 April 1930

*

Answer that admission to the Asram is very strictly limited and only those who have already been accepted as Sri Aurobindo's disciples are admitted there. This acceptance is not easy, as Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga is different from others and only those who are specially called to it in preference to other paths and who show some sign of the call or are believed to be initially capable can become disciples.

The answer must be in Hindi.

30 April 1930

*

No one can be received into the life of the Asram unless he has first been accepted as a disciple—there are no “students” of Yoga—and no one is accepted as a disciple until he has been first seen and it is known whether he has the call to this Yoga and the capacity for it. If he likes to come to Pondicherry, he may; the Mother will see whether he is fit. But permission to stay in the Asram cannot be given now. All the rest can be seen afterwards.

22 August 1930

*

I am quite tired of this selfish and frail world and therefore I wish to stay in your Ashram for the good of my soul. I have heard much about you and I fully trust you will very kindly help me as your younger brother to be free from such a selfish and frail world.

Give him the usual answer that stay in the Asram is allowed to some only of those who are already accepted as Sri Aurobindo's disciples and that owing to the difficulty of the path, only some who have a call or a capacity are accepted as disciples.

It is not possible for him to join the Asram; Sri Aurobindo does not admit anyone who is not personally known and already his disciple; even among his disciples he admits only those whom he considers to be ready or called to the life of the Asram. Moreover the Asram is now full and there is hardly any room for new members.

All are not equally capable of practising Yoga and in Yoga itself some paths are more difficult than others. There are some

who have a special call to a path; others have no call; though they may feel drawn to Yoga, it is to other disciplines that they must go. This path is especially difficult and even some of those admitted to it find great difficulty in following it. Therefore Sri Aurobindo is not willing to admit any new disciples unless he has reason to think that they have a special call for it or a special capacity.

11 June 1932

*

Those who follow the Yoga here are accepted by the Mother — for “accepted” means “admitted into the Yoga, accepted as disciples”. But the progress in the Yoga and the *siddhi* in the Yoga depend on the degree to which there is the opening.

24 June 1933

*

One cannot enter the Asram like that. One must first be admitted to the Yoga and show that there are the experiences which indicate that one is really called to this path. Even afterwards it rests on the decision of Sri Aurobindo whether the sadhak is to be admitted to the Asram or practise his sadhana outside.

8 January 1934

*

You will tell him that admission to the Asram is only allowed to those who are already accepted as Sri Aurobindo’s disciples. There are no arrangements for visitors residing in the Asram; those who come for darshan make their own arrangements outside. Sri Aurobindo does not readily accept disciples as his is a special path of Yoga and very difficult for most. For what he wants, another Guru with an easier way of Yoga would probably be more helpful.

31 December 1935

*

You can tell them that it is not possible. Admissions to the Asram have been stopped owing to want of accommodation. Moreover, it is only those who are already Sri Aurobindo’s disciples and

practising his special way of Yoga who are admitted as members of the Asram.

19 April 1935

*

Write to him that only those who are already Sri Aurobindo's disciples and have practised his Yoga can be admitted. Moreover at present admissions are rarely made as there is no longer any sufficient accommodation in the Asram.

(This should now be the answer to all these candidates from nowhere and everywhere—i.e. if they persist, otherwise they can be left without answer.)

15 May 1935

Admission to the Ashram, 1927–1943

It is best for him to put away all family and worldly cares if he wishes to succeed in the sadhana.

As for staying here, things have changed since he was here. I no longer take direct charge of people's sadhana; all is in the hands of Sri Mira Devi and the force acting here is much more direct, powerful and insistent than it was then. It needs a certain strength and a strong receptivity to bear and answer to it, especially a great sincerity in all the being and a preparation is sometimes necessary before it can do its work.

The best would be perhaps for him to have an experimental stay for some time.

23 March 1927

*

People are not accepted in the Asram or in the Yoga unless it is seen that they have the call and the capacity. A mere formal request is not sufficient for the purpose.

Sri Aurobindo is not at present seeing anyone, not even his own disciples.

If he likes, he can enter into a preliminary correspondence and explain his case, what he is seeking and why and the nature of his past efforts.

3 June 1927

*

Everybody is not admitted here, only those who are fit and who have a true call to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The desire for a "calm and peaceful" or Asramic life is not a sufficient passport for this admission.

22 July 1927

*

There is no question about grihastha and Sannyasin here, because the distinction does not exist for us. There is no place for the Sannyasin of the ordinary type at least, because we do not turn our backs on life; neither are we grihasthas, because we do leave behind us the ordinary human life and its institutions and motives.

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The difficulty in X's case is of two kinds. First, his mind seems to cling to traditional ideas and ways of action, while here they are thrown aside altogether. It is impossible without an entirely free intelligence (or, in its place, a strong psychic faith and ardour) to follow the movement here. I doubt whether X would be able to appreciate, much less to assent to it and follow it.

(2) X seems to lay entire stress on the reasoning intellect and to have fixed himself in that movement. Here the endeavour is of a supramental and therefore suprarational character. It has to be carried out through a silent mind, an active psychic being, a descent of the supramental Light and Power and Vastness and Ananda transforming all the instruments. An attachment to the way of the intellect, a bondage to the rational mind would be an insuperable obstacle. The supramental can be reached through the active mind only if the latter is large, free, subtle, plastic, ready at every moment to renounce its own way and to admit enlightenment and contradiction of all its cherished conclusions and habitual movements by a higher Light. Not one intellect in a thousand is of that kind. And even then it would not be enough without the heart's opening and the support of the psychic brought to the surface.

It would be useless for X to come here and find himself at a loss in an atmosphere foreign to his temperament. There is no sign that he is *psychically* ready for such a transplantation. A

certain agreement of the philosophic idea is quite insufficient.

Only two kinds of people can stay here with any true profit;

(1) Those who are ready to absorb the spiritual atmosphere and change.

(2) Those who, if not yet ready, can still surrender to the influence and prepare slowly till they are ready.

=

It may be that X cannot advance precisely because of this interference of the intellect in the ways of the Spirit. The reasoning mind can never give itself confidently to the greater Influence, not even to God or Guru; it is capable of turning unprofitably around itself for ever.

July 1927

*

He cannot come here to join the Asram. If he finds that he is under a pressure too much for his body, it is better to relax and take to healthy physical habits which will restore strength. Yoga is only for those who have brains and bodies strong enough to bear the pressure.

6 August 1927

*

Is it possible under your guardianship (or elsewhere and in that case where?) to live a longer life than usual in India, and similarly to transplant self with body to other planets or other distant parts on the earth? I believe you have achieved all these powers. I do not mean transplanting the soul alone which could naturally be achieved after death.

Will you very kindly admit one who has some practice in yoga and is prepared to abide strictly by the injunctions to a student in yoga?

Only those who take up this way of Yoga are admitted, if otherwise fit or ready, to this Asrama. The miraculous powers he mentions are not among the objects of this Yoga.

19 August 1927

*

He will have to wait. Admission here does not go by each one's own desire or idea of his readiness; there is an inner source of

decision which has nothing to do with any of the reasons given by the mind. But also from a more external point of view we have neither means nor accommodation to entertain all who would otherwise come and there are some who are not called and are yet more ready than X.

He must make his sadhana deeper, less mental, more psychic, by a stronger aspiration and more devout surrender, before he can hope to come. Let him learn too to face the difficulties of life and keep his inner consciousness amongst them. It is not always the best thing for everybody to have the external circumstances made easy and favourable for the sadhana.

6 September 1927

*

The best thing will be for him to come here for a few days; the Mother will see him and decide what is best to be done after seeing his capacity etc., whether he is to remain here for a time or practise there.

Inform him that there is no fixed rule for everybody here. Fruits except bananas are not easily available in Pondicherry. For expenses (ordinary diet etc.) Rs. 20 a month can be reckoned as a fair amount; but he can meet his own expenses if he likes, taking his own diet etc.

Also inform him that I do not see anybody now or personally give initiation, but that will make no difference. He must have understood from Jotin's article¹ that all the work is in the hands of the Mother.

He should not come till a little time after February 21st.

circa February 1928

*

X of Burdwan writes that he intends to come here and I will have to support him, because he has nowhere else to go and because

¹ "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram: Daily Life of Disciples", by Jatindranath Sen Gupta, published in the Hindu (Madras) on 6 May 1927. See the Note on the Texts to Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 608.

he has the need of an intensive sadhana. Write to him not to come. Only those are allowed to live here who are accepted by myself and the Mother. People cannot merely come because they want or need or think that I ought to receive and maintain them or on the mere ground that they are sadhaks. As for himself, he has not as yet even the first conditions, a psychic opening or an attitude of self-surrender. He is only in the first mental stage of initial realisations. In any case no claim is allowed in these matters.

13 April 1928

*

This path of Yoga is very special and a very difficult one. *Yogic Sadhan* does not give a sufficient idea of it. It requires not only capacity for sadhana, but a psychic call of a very definite kind — a mental adhesion is not sufficient. Before I can assent to his coming here, I must be sure of his having this call. Why should he not continue his practice at Rishikesh and see what develops in him and what is his real way?

8 September 1928

*

It will be better for him to write again stating

- (1) What Yoga he has practised during these 15 years, or, especially, during the last two years.
- (2) With what results.
- (3) His age, circumstances etc.

There are no external rules for admission to the Asrama. The conditions are internal, the call to the way and spiritual purpose of this Yoga, an entire and one-minded readiness for surrender and the giving up of all else for the one Truth, acceptance by myself and the Mother. Those who practise, are not always admitted at once to the Asrama.

11 September 1928

*

The obstacles to his coming here are of two kinds.

- (1) There is nothing as yet in his experiences, at least as he has recorded them, which would indicate a real call, necessity or readiness for his stay here.

(2) If he comes here, unready, the pressure of the forces at the centre is likely to be injurious rather than beneficial to his sadhana. The illness from which he has suffered, may return or regain force; the peace he is gaining may be disturbed etc. He is mistaken in thinking that to stay here will necessarily make his sadhana easier; it may make it more difficult, especially if, as is likely, the demand and pressure of the Force that is acting here is too great for him and he is unable to receive it or to answer.

I do not wish to increase the number of people in the Asrama excessively under the present conditions and I allow only those to remain with regard to whom the indication from above is perfectly clear and unmistakable.

11 September 1928

*

Write to X that I am not pleased with the tone of his letter. Demands of this kind, talk of suicide etc., claim to come here on the ground of poverty are all entirely out of place in one who aspires to practise this sadhana. Those who cannot face the difficulties of life in the right spirit, will not be able either to face in the right way the difficulties of sadhana. To stay here is a privilege accorded by the Mother to some who are fit or are called to do some work for her here. It is not conceded to anybody because he is poor and has no other resource or for any other irrelevant reason. And no one has a right to demand or clamour for it. If he wants to practise this Yoga, he must do it with a quiet spirit, demanding nothing but the calm, peace and light and strength of the divine consciousness and the presence of the Divine. And he must face all that comes to him in life, in a spirit of quiet faith and equality and endurance.

circa 1928

*

It is very evident from his letter that in his mind he is not at all ready. If he has this wandering and experimental spirit, let him satisfy it first in the other places he thinks of visiting or the other experiments he wants to make. Here only those should come who feel a definite call and are sure that here lies their spiritual destiny and nowhere else.

16 January 1929

*

He says he wants to come here for his sadhana, but for what sadhana? The Yoga here is of a special kind and everybody is not called to it or fit for it. He himself seems to have been living very much in the mind and in external things. He is leaving the Asram there because he has fundamental differences (it is to be presumed, differences of idea and mental outlook) with the workers. How is it sure that there will be agreement here? In any case, it is the capacity for a special kind of inner life or the inner call to it that can alone be a reason for admittance to the Asram here. This is what you must explain to him. I do not know what sadhana he has been doing or what experiences he may have, if any. But when he came here, he did not seem to be at all ready. A mental decision to give up one kind of life or activity and take up another, is not sufficient for the purpose.

7 June 1929

*

What you should write to him is that it is not so easy to get permission to come here. Many desire it, but only a few are admitted. The desire is not enough, it has to be seen whether the applicant is fit.

As for the letter itself, he only says that he wants to serve a "good man" and that he is ready to do any work you (X) tell him to do. I do not see in that any sufficient call or reason for his coming here.

21 June 1929

*

I do not consider it advisable that he should abruptly give up his service and come here for good. When he came, he had a difficulty in bearing the pressure of the atmosphere up to the end. It will be better if for the present he comes at intervals,— we can see how he progresses and, if after a time, the difficulty is finally and definitely eliminated, then a decision can be taken.

1 August 1929

*

Write that permission is given for his coming but there are at present nearly 90 people here and, even when the temporary

ones have gone, something like 80 are likely to be here, for already the permanent number is over 75. In these circumstances it is extremely difficult to find room for new people, even for one. But still this may be arranged; in a few days we shall be able to see what is possible.

But if he wants to bring the child, it is another matter. Our experience is that most children cannot bear the pressure of the atmosphere, and after two or three experiences of this kind it has been made a rule not to admit young children to reside in the Asram. If he comes with the child, he must make his own arrangements for a separate lodging.

After receiving this letter he should let us know what are his definite plans and when he proposes to come.

circa August 1929

*

Answer that there are many paths of Yoga,—Sri Aurobindo's is one which is very difficult and exacting and he does not care to accept anyone into it unless he is satisfied that he has a special call and is capable of following the path. No one is admitted to the Asram as a member in the indefinite and conditional way he suggests. It is no use taking up Yoga without knowing what it is. If he wants to read books on the subject, he can read the *Essays on the Gita* and *The Mother*. They will not give him a complete idea of this path and its conditions and objects, but they should at least give him some notion of what Yoga is and of the spirit of this Yoga.

11 December 1929

*

It is not advisable for her to come now; she is not yet spiritually strong enough or sufficiently undivided to be able to support the pressure of the Yoga here. Nor is there at present room in the Asram. Also, she is mistaken in thinking that she has something to get directly from me other than what she has got or can get from the Mother. The only thing she can do now is to prepare herself, going on with what she has received and trying to assimilate it and bring it to her surface consciousness;

especially, she has to cultivate calm, balance, simple sincerity and a *quiet* and firm aspiration.

25 December 1929

*

You can write to X answering his questions.

There are three kinds of arrangements

(1) Those who live outside, rent their own house and see to their own arrangements.

(2) A room is sometimes given in the Asram to those who come for sadhana, as well as food etc.; but they pay a monthly sum so long as they stay.

(3) Those who are accepted as permanent resident members of the Asram and give all they have as property or income; these have nothing to pay.

If he comes, it is probably the first that would suit him best, at least at the beginning.

You can write this on your account and need not give it as coming from me. I have not yet decided anything about him.

circa 1929

*

I request, if you feel that I may be permitted to do so, to be kindly allowed to pay my pranams to both of you on the November festival of Sri Aravinda's darshan.

Write to him that he has permission for November 24th; but there is no room in the Asram; he must make his own arrangements.

Enter in the applicant's book.²

9 October 1929

*

I had the fortune of having Sri Aurobindo's Darshan and staying in the Asram for twelve days. I feel that I am greatly benefited. Yet I feel unless I can stay there for a long enough period I cannot know if I can aspire to get fixed in the path of

² This letter and the next three letters were written to a single sadhak in 1929 and 1930. The sadhak was admitted to the Ashram in September 1930.—Ed.

Yoga. I request therefore that you will be so kind as to let me remain in the Asram for at least six months commencing from 1st January 1930 or thereabouts. If I can be found by the end of that time to be a fit one I hope to stay in the Asram for ever if you would kindly take me in.

An "experiment" of this kind is not made in the Asram. Those who are as yet uncertain about their capacity or their call, are sometimes allowed to live here outside the Asram (at their own expense), but in connection with it for a time. It is only when they have accepted the spiritual life and are accepted that they can be admitted in the Asram as its members and workers or allowed to stay there for a long time on the same footing as the members.

10 December 1929

*

I want to dedicate myself and my life to yoga under the guidance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I request you to kindly accept me as one of your disciples and members of the Asram.

He is not ready for life in the Asram. He must be able first, staying where he is, to open himself to the divine Power and make sufficient inner progress. It is not enough to want to dedicate himself; there must be some clear indication that he is capable of entering into the path and following it.

17 December 1929

*

I entirely surrender myself and depend upon your divine Grace. If in your pleasure you direct that I should remain in the Asram, I feel the spiritual path will lose many of its difficulties for me. If on the other hand you should direct that I should go back to Nellore may I request at least that you will graciously accord me darshan tomorrow.

If he likes to spend some days more here, he can do so; but the time has not come for him to remain here permanently. He must wait for that for some time longer.

22 February 1930

*

As for coming here he will have to wait. Has he any clear idea of what this Yoga and sadhana mean? It is a one-pointed direction and concentration of all the being on an aim which most people would regard as remote from all current human aims and impossible. He would have to turn his back on all the old interests and pursuits and the sympathy and support of those now around him and undertake a most difficult effort and discipline which his vital being might find painful and distasteful to it. It is better if he considers long before asking for this Yoga and make sure that he has really an irresistible call.

1 January 1930

*

He can come in June. But I think, if I remember right, I had written that he should first come for some time and we would see from the results whether he should stay here permanently or not. To do the sadhana permanently in the Asram is not always the best thing for everybody; it depends on the capacity and also on the stage which has been reached in the sadhana. For some the Force here would be too strong for a permanent stay; they get more advantage by staying for some time, receiving what they can and then going elsewhere to assimilate it; they are not ready for a continuous pressure.

I presume he will live separately, making his own arrangements? To live in the Asram and take the food etc. would, I imagine, be a rather abrupt and trying change at his age.

10 May 1930

*

In each case there is a difference, for some are called upon to enter the Asram life at once, others have to practise the Yoga while they are still in the world. No general rule can be made covering all cases. Each should do what he is called upon to do without troubling himself with suggestions of this kind. If any one has to enter the Asram life either early or at a later stage, the call will come to him at the proper time. Meanwhile he should pursue the sadhana quietly keeping himself in close inner contact with the Force that comes from here.

3 July 1930

*

Write to him that it will be better for him to wait until he has from within himself the true and complete turn to a spiritual life. It is not in his mind only but in his vital nature that there are obstacles to a complete consecration. To come here might give him a stimulus, but it is not sure that it will be anything more than a partial stimulus which he could easily mistake for a total call. Often people receive such a stimulus, the psychic being opens, but the rest of the nature is only silenced for a time and does not sincerely concur, so that afterwards resistances arise and the sadhak falls away from the path,—which it is very injurious spiritually and otherwise to abandon once it has been begun.

5 July 1930

*

Reply that it will be better for his Yoga if he goes on for some time as he is—to practise it at the Asram might easily interrupt the present movement which is the right one for him and precipitate another for which he is not ready.

At present his experience is that of the mental being and mental nature opening to the Light and to some touch of a higher Ananda, with a basis of calm—the indispensable basis. This movement should continue till the heart and the vital being and vital nature also open. It is not necessary for him to make a special effort for these things. If he keeps concentrated and open and maintains his faith and the remembrance of the Mother, they will come of themselves in the proper time.

Meanwhile, he can keep himself in some kind of physical touch by writing from time to time giving succinctly his experiences and the progress of his Yoga. When a sufficient basis has been acquired, the question of his coming to the Asram can be reconsidered.

6 July 1930

*

What comes to my mind is to live in the Ashram where only it is possible for me to give myself up for the service of the Divine. May I have your permission for this?

No. It is elsewhere that you must prepare yourself, not here. You have not been asked to give yourself up to the service of the Divine in any outward or physical sense, but to prepare yourself inwardly by taking all life and all work wherever you are as a sacrifice, an offering to the Divine. That, if you are sincere in your seeking, you can do anywhere.

27 February 1931

*

It is possible to give X a room, the Mother says, in one of the houses. But he speaks of residing here permanently—in Pondicherry. To that there can be no objection; but as far as the life in the Asram is concerned, I think it should be regarded as a trial at first—to be rendered permanent if all is found right afterwards. He should be informed that there are two kinds of residents in the Asram, permanent members who give all they have or can dispose of and the Asram undertakes in return all their expenses etc. and those who come for a time to practise Yoga. The latter pay their expenses of boarding and lodging and certain contingents, but, as the Asram is in a town mostly in rented houses, these by themselves are sufficiently heavy.

17 May 1931

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It is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place, but is everywhere. It is not necessary *for everybody* to be at Pondicherry or physically near the Mother in order to lead the spiritual life or to practise this Yoga, especially in its earlier stages. But that is only one side of the truth; there is another. Otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all or for the existence of the Asram or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few is it well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life. It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn

towards this Truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the wakening of the psychic being — that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact. It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many — if they are ready — in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have this development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able to keep the contact and go on with his spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and, if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished by adverse influences or movements. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of a return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or give a fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent or mixed with a vital motive, — but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This is for those who are not called upon or are not yet called upon to live in the Asram under the direct pressure of the central Force and Presence. Those who must so live are those called from the beginning or who have become ready or who are for some reason or another given a chance to form part of the work or creation which is being prepared by the Yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness are indispensable; to depart would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are often in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and the pressure are greater; but so also is their opportunity

greater and the power and influence for development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call.

7 October 1931

*

Reply that it is impossible to have X or anybody else here now (for staying) even if they were ready—for owing to damage to rented houses we are compelled to vacate them and have no longer sufficient room even for the sadhaks who are here, much less for new members. Moreover there are already a hundred here and we cannot take more (except for exceptional cases) till the funds of the Asram increase.

Moreover, it is not good for anybody to come here prematurely—even for Darshan. If they are not ready, the pressure of the Power here may disturb them, a resistance or obstacles in the nature may rise as in the case of Y.

As for the February darshan we do not yet know how we are going to accommodate even those who have already permission to come. It is probable that X will have to wait for the Darshan for some time longer.

1 January 1932

*

There is no possibility of admitting in such cases now. There are already nearly 100 people and it is impossible freely to increase the Asram by renting new houses or undergoing farther expenses at present. Therefore only in exceptional cases can new people, not already known as disciples, be accepted. If she wants to prepare herself for Yoga, she can try to practise where she is for the present.

11 February 1932

*

In the Asram there is very little room nowadays and what is there must be kept for disciples—for those who have been accepted and come for the practice of the Yoga and to profit by quiet meditation in the Asram atmosphere.

All that we can offer him is, if he comes to Pondicherry, that

he can see the Asram and meet people who will speak to him of the “philosophy” and the Yoga. At first more cannot be done.

This is not an Asram like others. It has a special life of its own and only those can live it who have entered into the spirit of the Yoga and are ready to assimilate its atmosphere.

As to your question about his sincerity, it is quite evident that his interest is mental only — it may be mentally sincere, but that does not carry one very far. If we were to admit everyone who is like that, we should soon have a thousand people here and there would be no Yoga and no spiritual life left. This, however, is for your information only; you need not hint anything of the kind to him in your letter!

24 February 1932

*

Oh Father! *I want a heart that can respond to all my moods, that can understand me, that can do me justice, that can love me intensely and exclusively.* Love, and love alone, is the chief note of my heart. But the inner voice says it is not love I crave for. It is Maya. . . . If you think it is time for me, will you allow me to come there for sadhana?

Reply to him that what he describes (in the sentence on the first page of this letter [*in italics above*], which you can quote) is a vital demand of the ego for emotional self-satisfaction; it *is* Maya. It is not true love, for true love seeks for union and self-giving and that is the love one must bring to the Divine. This vital (so-called) love brings only suffering and disappointment; it does not bring happiness; it never gets satisfied and, even if it is granted something that it asks for, it is never satisfied with it.

It is perfectly possible to get rid of this Maya of the vital demand, if one wishes to do it,— but the will to do it must be sincere. If he is sincere in his will, he will certainly get help and protection.

It is no use his coming to the Asram for sadhana; for so long as he has this vital demand, it will *not* be easier but rather more difficult to go on with his sadhana here. Here this vital basis for the Yoga is discouraged, there is a pressure against it and he would probably find the struggle in him made still more acute.

He must first get his basis changed from the vital to the psychic centre.

20 March 1932

*

Sri Aurobindo does not think that your coming here is advisable at the present stage of your sadhana. If you have this feeling that a Divine Guidance is there behind the circumstances of your life and especially if you feel this calmness, strength and light of which you speak, it means a great progress — for this is the real beginning of the spiritual and yogic consciousness and it shows that the foundation of the true being and the true consciousness is being laid in you. The psychic centre is that turned in all things towards the Divine, while the vital is that preoccupied with the desires and sufferings and enjoyments of the ego. If you continue with all sincerity under this sense of guidance and with this foundation growing in you, the psychic centre is likely to open of itself. It is when it opens and the present vital turmoil has sunk that it will be useful for you to come to Pondicherry for darshan.

29 July 1932

*

You can write to him (whoever he may be) that Sri Aurobindo is living absolutely retired, seeing no one and not corresponding with anyone outside. It is not possible therefore to get from him an opinion about the books.

In the Asram there is no accommodation for guests — it is only the disciples who live there under the rules of the Asram.

circa 1932

*

You can write to him that it is not possible to admit him into the Asram at once nor perhaps at any early date. He is too young and has not developed the necessary experience either of himself or of life or of Yoga. He should try to develop himself outside — develop in his inner spiritual urge and in spiritual experience and in strength and capacity. If he comes here in an unripe state, he is likely to meet not less but more serious difficulties than he has there. He must develop in himself the strength that can meet

them and a will strong enough to go through all possible opposition and ordeals without wavering or weakness. If these two conditions are satisfied, he may then be fit for a more intensive sadhana and for the Asram life. All depends on himself and his sincerity of aspiration and endeavour.

4 May 1933

*

Yes, you can leave everything and come to the Asram; but we suggest that, if it is at all possible for you to take a prolonged leave, say for six months, you should do that first. The reason is that there is sure to be a strong pressure on you (spoken or unspoken), especially from your father's side to return, so it is surest to test yourself first and see that there is no response in yourself, otherwise you might be subjected to a severer internal struggle if you come permanently at once. If all is well then the six months can become a permanent stay. But if leave is not possible, then you can give up all and come.

20 October 1933

*

If what she wants is to come here permanently, it is quite out of the question at this time. In future it is only those who make progress in sadhana and show that they have the necessary fitness to come here, who will be allowed.

18 November 1933

*

The question about the failures does not arise. I am not aware that anybody has come here who was a failure in life. Many have been very active and successful, each in his own line. What brings men to the Yoga has nothing to do with success or failure, it is the impulse of the psychic being to rise to something truer and higher than the ordinary life.

6 February 1934

*

This is not the time when we can go on increasing the number of members of the Asram—as you can well understand. We have no accommodation, the numbers are already unwieldy—

and there is the other reason.³ He must either wait perhaps for a very long time — he is exceedingly young — or find a place elsewhere.

17 February 1934

*

It is not possible to receive X here. In the first place we are obliged to stop or very strictly limit new admissions for some time to come. In the second place, X's struggle would be no less severe but more so here than over there, as the pressure is greater and the inner demand also. His difficulty is the usual difficulty in the vital and it can always arise at his age when the vital has to choose between the satisfaction of its normal movement and the single-minded pursuit of sadhana not for its own sake but for the sake of the Divine alone.

19 February 1934

*

Permanent admission is no longer given except in exceptional cases as the number is already large and accommodation is likely to be more and more difficult to provide.

All that can be permitted is to come for darshan in August — the rest is premature.

28 February 1934

*

In some minds there is, I think, the idea that the Divine is "in need" of instruments for the work of manifestation. With this idea are associated some very curious ideas. I suppose the Divine may be in need of us in his own supramental way, but that cannot mean that we have not to make any effort.

What you say is right. This attitude that the Divine has need of the sadhak and not the sadhak of the Divine, is utterly wrong and absurd. When people are accepted here, they are given a chance of a great Divine Grace, of being instruments in a great work. To suppose that the Divine *cannot* do his work without the help of this or that person is surely most arrogant and illogical. They

³ In February 1934, the Government of French India initiated an inquiry into the organisation and finances of the Ashram, as a result of which it requested Sri Aurobindo and the Mother not to buy or rent more houses. See pages 30–32. — Ed.

ought to remember the Gita's ऋतेऽपि त्वां, "even without thee" the work can be done, and its निमित्तमात्रं भव. 11 April 1934

*

I have recently gone through a volume called *Practice of Yoga* by Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh and learnt therefrom that about sixty students are practising yoga in the Ashram of your holiness. While writing a few words on the Ashram, the Swamiji says that "Those who really want to join the Ashram may communicate to Shree Arabindoo directly."⁴ It is really a very great fortune for a man who practises yoga under the guidance of such a great realised soul as your holiness.

The number of sadhaks is over 150 and it is impossible to make farther admissions except in the most sparing way, as the means of the Asram are not unlimited. Moreover Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is of a special and difficult kind and he admits only those who seem to him to have a special call to the life here. 9 May 1934

*

I send you back your friend's letters. As regards the question about his *śisya*, I do not usually give directions in such matters — one has to follow the course that seems best relying on the Divine Will both for the choice and the consequence. It seems fairly clear that the course already suggested is the wiser one.

As for his coming here, he must first prepare himself. For the time being we are not making new admissions to the Asram except in certain cases, mostly where a promise had been previously given. He could come for darshan if he wishes in August and return back, — but the more important thing is that he should establish a conscious inner connection and attain to the calm and peace of mind which is always the best preparation and foundation of this Yoga. 24 June 1934

*

There is no possibility of that just now. The Asram is crowded

⁴ *Swami Sivananda, Practice of Yoga (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1929), p. 211.*

and we cannot admit new resident members for some time to come — except those who have already a claim or right to come.

10 July 1934

*

Impossible. We do not accept people for a long fixed period like that. Either they come as permanent sadhaks or, if they are disciples, on a short visit as at the darshan times. But at present we have suspended permanent admissions.

7 August 1934

*

He wants to stay — but for how long and where? The conditions are such now that we have been obliged to refuse all requests for permanent admission and even those for residence in the Asram. Otherwise we shall have no accommodation at all for those who are to come or for the habitual visitors at the darshan times.

28 August 1934

*

The Mother accepts in principle your coming here as a permanent member of the Asram. She would like you indeed to consider yourself, from now on as a member, — as X is though living for most of the year in Madras, — not an outside disciple.

The question remains about the time of your coming here not to return. Here the Mother is inclined to think that it would be more satisfactory to settle the affairs of the estate definitely, and then permanently come. There would in that case be some delay, but it would have this advantage of leaving little chance of a call or pull from over there to create any vibrations in the sadhana. The second date proposed by you would then have to be adopted.

Next, the children. Most of them are too young to have an intelligent will of their own in such matters as yet and in a matter like sadhana there should be no pressure or influencing of any kind. The delay will give some of them time to grow into a possibility of a clear and willed choice. Under this arrangement the matter of their coming over here can be decided then, when

things are ready. Meanwhile their photographs can be sent and perhaps the older of them can come at some darshan time so that the Mother can see them.

I think these are the main points in your letter. As for other details it is for you to arrange. You have given us a clear idea of the situation and the possibilities and we will help you with the Force we can give you to support your measures.

29 September 1934

*

You must reply to him that at present the situation is such that we have not sufficient accommodation and no likelihood of extension in the near future—so we are unable to make new admissions. There is room only for some who have already received a promise of admission when they are free to come.

17 October 1934

*

I have made no final decision about your request. But it does not seem to me advisable, as yet at least, for you to remain here longer than the two months you had settled on when you came. This Yoga is a long and difficult one and one has to travel far before there can be any question of a supramental illumination or transformation. It means besides a constant breaking up of past formations and realisations which would not be easy for you, as you have advanced fairly far on another line of sadhana with its own lights and inspiring sources. My advice to you would be to go on in the direction you had already been following and see where it leads you. If any light from my writings is of use to you, you can take it or if any help from me is necessary you will get it from within. But if in the end it is destined that you should enter this path of Yoga, you will get the necessary realisations which will make that possible. At present it seems to me premature for you to enter this way or to stay here for any great length of time.

10 March 1935

*

I am afraid it is not possible for him to join the Asram. It is open only for those who have practised or wish to practise a particular path of Yoga of a very difficult type. As a rule only those who are Sri Aurobindo's disciples are accepted and new admissions are almost stopped because there is no longer sufficient accommodation. Moreover he could not get here what he asks — it is a Yoga full of difficulties and even dangers and joining the Asram does not ensure a smooth path — that only happens to one or two who have a spiritual strength and mental and vital temperament that is very rare.

26 May 1935

*

There is no chance of her living in the Asram. She is too young and has seen nothing of life.

9 July 1935

*

There should be no desire or anxiety in your mind to get these people or others to come here. These things ought to be decided on one side by their call and fitness and on the other by the will of the Mother.

28 June 1936

*

“Dedication of life” is quite possible for some without their staying here. It is a question of inward attitude and of the total consecration of the being to the Divine.

28 June 1936

*

Here is a man of fifty intending *vānaprastha*, who thinks our Asram will just be the place for him. He says he has prepared himself for Asram life; his only fault being taking a little opium for the sake of health. He can bring with him Rs. 150 in cash.

Declined with thanks. Opium not allowed here. Also this is not a Vanaprastha Asram.

17 July 1936

*

What he asks for (to stay here immediately as a resident sadhak) is not possible. There are only two conditions under which such

a permission can be given — 1st if after seeing personally the Mother was satisfied that the applicant would be able to do the sadhana here or could be given a chance to prepare himself here by work or otherwise — or, if after practising Yoga outside it was seen that he had come to a point at which he could be admitted to the Asram.

1 August 1936

*

Inform him that Sri Aurobindo is not at present admitting any more resident sadhaks in his Asram, as the number is already too large.

4 December 1936

*

I have read and considered your letter and have decided to give you the opportunity you ask for — you can reside in the Asram for two or three months to begin with and find out whether this is really the place and the path you were seeking and we also can by a closer observation of your spiritual possibilities discern how best we can help you and whether this Yoga is the best for you.

This trial is necessary for many reasons, but especially because it is a difficult Yoga to follow and not many can really meet the demands it makes on the nature. You have written that you saw in me one who achieved through the perfection of the intellect, its spiritualisation and divinisation; but in fact I arrived through the complete silence of the mind and whatever spiritualisation and divinisation it attained was through the descent of a higher supra-intellectual knowledge into that silence. The book, *Essays on the Gita*, itself was written in that silence of the mind, without intellectual effort and by a free activity of this knowledge from above. This is important because the principle of this Yoga is not perfection of the human nature as it is but a psychic and spiritual transformation of all the parts of the being through the action of an inner consciousness and then of a higher consciousness which works on them, throws out the old movements or changes them into the image of its own and so transmutes lower into higher nature. It is

not so much the perfection of the intellect as a transcendence of it, a transformation of the mind, the substitution of a larger greater principle of knowledge — and so with all the rest of the being.

This is a slow and difficult process; the road is long and it is hard to establish even the necessary basis. The old existing nature resists and obstructs and difficulties rise one after another and repeatedly till they are overcome. It is therefore necessary to be sure that this is the path to which one is called before one finally decides to tread it.

If you wish, we are ready to give you the trial you ask for. On receiving your answer the Mother will make the necessary arrangements for your residence in the Asram. 26 March 1937

*

Usually we do not give consent to anybody staying in the Asram until we have seen him at one of the Darshans. If he wishes to come for the August darshan he may do so. 12 May 1937

*

X has requested me to bring to your notice his sincere prayer for permission to come here before August and stay as a resident sadhak.

We do not think it would be advisable at this stage. By coming to the Asram difficulties do not cease — they have to be faced and overcome wherever you are. For certain natures residence in the Asram from the beginning is helpful — others have to prepare themselves outside. 8 June 1937

*

As for X he can remain in Calcutta. I do not consider it likely that we shall permit him to be a permanent resident of the Asram unless he is or becomes very different from what his letter indicates. At some future date it may be possible for him to have darshan. Why should everybody want to be in the Asram? There are many practising sadhana outside. The number in the Asram must necessarily be limited. I have no objection to his preparing

himself for this Yoga, if he feels the call to do so, there are many who are doing that.

2 August 1937

*

Sri Aurobindo says you are mistaken in thinking that by merely being at Pondicherry one can keep the psychic being in front. Difficulties arise here as outside. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would not advise you to throw up your practice and come here now, especially as this is a very difficult time for everybody even in the Asram itself.

26 April 1938

*

I want to live in the Ashram and be a regular inmate of it; so you will kindly advise me in this matter. Eagerly awaiting your reply.

What the deuce! Is the Asram a caravanserai that everybody who "wants" to live in it can come there? Who is this Ahmedabad monsieur? As these people are sending stamps and envelopes, I suppose they have to be answered.

9 October 1938

*

Here is a village girl, a young widow, who has heard your call in a dream and is eager to come here.

Too young — such dreams are not conclusive and there is too much of the vital tone in her remark; you need say nothing about that however.

14 October 1938

*

X has come here. If I happen to see him, what should be my attitude? If I speak to him should I advise him to stay here or go away?

X has come here not only without permission but in spite of repeated prohibitions. He cannot be received in the Asram or encouraged to stay at Pondi. It is not good for him; his mental illness would increase and it would be the cause of endless trouble for himself and others. To live a normal life with work

and study and without intensive sadhana or seclusion is his only chance of keeping normal.

You must tell him, if you see him, to go away and if he can be persuaded to return to the Gurukul and live a normal life, that would be the best for him.

23 October 1938

*

X is there [*outside Pondicherry*] because he has not yet made up his mind about his future and Mother wants him to see fully both possibilities before him—the ordinary life and the Asram life—and choose his way. He cannot go on always oscillating between the one and the other. If he comes back to the Asram, it should be with the firm determination to stick to the Asram life. If he cannot be steady to that then he must choose the outer life and face its problems and find his way there. In that case he cannot be always dependent on you [*his father*], but must train himself to live his own life on his own basis. He has parts, special gifts, a fine intelligence, but no full training and no steadiness in one line. He must acquire that or he will not be able to stand in the outer life. It is during this time that he must make up his mind one way or the other.

8 November 1938

*

I have already told you that X⁵ has not the capacity for disciplined study sustained for a long time. What is the use of forcing him any farther and trying to make him do what he will not because he cannot do? It will be a sheer waste of time and energy.

I cannot sanction his coming here to stay, for under present conditions his vital being will not remain steady here and it will take him away again. The one thing to do is what he himself wants to do, to take a job requiring intelligence and energy rather than book-learning and maintain himself; there must be plenty of jobs of that kind and it ought not to be difficult for him to get one when men are so much needed. Once he has shown to himself and others that he is not helpless in the world, then the

⁵ *The same person as in the preceding letter.—Ed.*

vital conditions will be much better for his taking up the Asram life if he wants to do it. This is the one thing to be done and at present there is no other way that is worth taking.

*

Why does he want to come to Pondicherry for solitude and peace? The Asram itself is not a place of solitude and peace, much less the town. In any case, one has to get peace *in oneself* much more than from one's surroundings. 21 June 1943

The Purpose of the Ashram

The liberated person finds everything going on according to the will of the Supreme. What then is the purpose of the Ashram and the necessity of our individual sadhana for a divine creation on earth? Is it only an experiment for the individual's own development?

I don't catch the point. The Divine does not act in the void, but through instruments, embodiments or channels. If a creation is intended, those will have to be prepared who can be part of the creation and at the same time the means of developing it, I suppose. 25 July 1932

*

I don't know where to draw the line between the egoistic will and the divine Will. Can there really be anything like the will of the instrument in the practical field? As the physical mind would put it: Since only the Divine's Will is done, what is the need of your creating instruments for the divine creation?

As long as there is egoism, the egoistic will is there. And so long as there is Ignorance, there will be a will of the instrument in the practical field. If the ignorant egoistic will is to be considered as a manifestation of the Divine Will, then there is no utility in Yoga — in that case the Yogi and the ordinary man stand on the same footing, they are both the Divine and their will is the Divine Will.

The Divine can create his own instruments in an institution

as well as outside it. Whether He does it in an institution or not, depends on what He intends to do. If His purpose is to manifest something through a collectivity and not only through scattered and separate individuals, there is nothing to prevent Him from creating an institution for the purpose.

26 July 1932

*

This is not an Asram like others — the members are not Sannyasis; it is not *mokṣa* that is the sole aim of the Yoga here. What is being done here is a preparation for a work — a work which will be founded on Yogic consciousness and Yoga-Shakti, and can have no other foundation. Meanwhile every member here is expected to do some work in the Asram as part of his spiritual preparation.

16 August 1932

*

Your effort of so many years does not seem to have produced any effect on people in the world outside. They have not changed in the least in their aims. On the contrary they seem to be becoming more and more critical instead of appreciative of your aim and purpose.

We cannot make that a test at present. The Force is not working directly on the outside world at present — first something has to be prepared here — when the Asram is really a manifestation of the “aim and purpose”, then there will be less difficulty with the outer world.

Even in the Ashram there are extremely few who have reached or tried to reach even up to the Nirvana level.⁶ Even to reach Nirvana one has to give up desire, duality and ego and establish a certain amount of equanimity and peace. Could it be said that a sufficient number of Sadhaks in the Ashram have succeeded in doing so? At least everybody must be making some effort to do this. Why then are they not successful? Is it that after some time they forget the aim and live here as in ordinary life?

⁶ The correspondent alludes here to an exchange of 29 April 1934 that is published on pages 309–10.—Ed.

I suppose if the Nirvana aim had been put before them, more would have been fit for it, for the Nirvana aim is easier than the one we have put before us — and they would not have found it so difficult to reach the standard. The sadhaks here are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer follows still its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Asram itself, and not before.

30 April 1934

*

It will not be possible for me to return to Gujarat. I was ill-treated in my father-in-law's house. I stayed with my parents for a few months but I can't go back there permanently. I had permission for Darshan so I came here. Now let the Mother do what she thinks is right for me.

The Asram is not a place where people can come merely because they are unhappy in their homes. At that rate we should have to keep thousands of people. The Asram is for those who want to practise Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

13 July 1934

*

You can answer to your brother that Yoga life and the ordinary life cannot be the same thing — otherwise there would be no use in doing Yoga, if one lives just as others in the same way and with the same motives. The object of the Asram life is to prepare

a new way of living based on a spiritual consciousness—it is the preparation of a new foundation of life in which all works have to be done not for the self but for the Divine.

31 December 1934

*

Humanitarian work of this kind is outside the scope of the Asram; it is not as in Ramakrishna mission. We avoid public work and activities and confine ourselves to the sole spiritual work of the Asram itself. To do otherwise would be to disperse energy on the ordinary levels instead of concentrating it on the building up of a personal and collective spiritual consciousness and life.

27 October 1938

*

It is not absolutely necessary to abandon the ordinary life in order to seek after the Light or to practise Yoga. This is usually done by those who want to make a clean cut, to live a purely religious or exclusively inner and spiritual life, to renounce the world entirely and to depart from the cosmic existence by cessation of the human birth and a passing away into some higher state or into the transcendental Reality. Otherwise it is only necessary when the pressure of the inner urge becomes so great that the pursuit of the ordinary life is no longer compatible with the pursuit of the dominant spiritual objective. Till then what is necessary is a power to practise an inner isolation, to be able to retire within oneself and concentrate at any time on the necessary spiritual purpose. There must also be a power to deal with the ordinary outer life from a new inner attitude and one can then make the happenings of that life itself a means for the inner change of nature and the growth in spiritual experience. This was what was recommended to X when she first wanted to join the Ashram; she had already acquired the habit of inward concentration and it was suggested to her to proceed farther in this way, opening herself towards the spiritual and psychic aid she could get from here, until she had made farther progress; later on we acceded to her request to join the Ashram. The Ashram

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

24 April 1947

Not a School or Teaching Institution

This is not an "institution" for practical teaching of Yoga. Only those who follow Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga and have been recognised as fit to bear the direct influence are allowed to come and stay here.

30 May 1927

*

I am an irregular student of your *Arya* philosophy. Nowadays I keenly feel the necessity of meditation and concentration; for, I fear, without it the ego sense is likely to haunt me still, however much I may talk of self-surrender and spirituality.

I hope you will be kind enough to send me a copy of the instructions you might have given to the yogic pupils staying with you, to enable them to learn and practise meditation.

If copying the notes would be a tedious task, I pray someone should be asked to send me his notebook, which I would copy out and return safely without any unnecessary delay.

Yoga is not taught as in a school. There are no set formal instructions or notebooks; therefore his request cannot be complied with.

Suggest to him the separation of Purusha and Prakriti, introspection, rejection of ego and desire wherever he sees it. Also to open to the Divine Shakti.

22 June 1927

*

I was discouraged to learn that you have not yet come out. I would like to come to Pondicherry on the 15th August and remain for about three months. I try to follow the instructions given me, and have been able to calm my mind and improve my nature to some extent.

I am still not coming out; no “instructions” are given for the Sadhana. All depends now on the sadhaka being able to open silently to the influence and allowing that to work while rejecting all lower influences and lower movements. I do not know if he is quite ready for that as yet. If he can once open himself to the Divine Shakti and feel the Power and get accustomed to its working, it would then be different and he would profit by his stay. Otherwise he may find the conditions too difficult for him here.

20 July 1928

*

Answer that the Asram is not meant for “study” of Yoga but for spiritual life. It has no teaching and no courses. Only those come who are accepted for this particular path of Yoga, which is more difficult than any other. The Asram has nothing to do with politics; but it is watched on account of Sri Aurobindo’s past political activities of 20 years ago.

1 December 1929

*

The Asram here is not precisely a place for “spiritual training” but for growing into a divine consciousness and divine life. Those who come here must have grown already so far that they are ready to give up all past mental ideas, fixed life-habits or life-tendencies and even the very mould of their physical consciousness and open only to the light of a greater Truth which, by their complete surrender to it, will transform the whole nature. This is very difficult, and it has been found by experience that those who come here unprepared break down after a time and can go no farther, because they cannot consent to get free from their past selves. They find the atmosphere too hard for them to breathe and the pressure of the Truth too exacting. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are therefore unwilling to call anyone

here, especially from so great a distance, transplanted from such different surroundings unless they have first assured themselves that the one concerned is ready for the change and truly called to this way of Sadhana.

26 February 1930

*

There is no study of philosophy here; there is only a silent practice of Yoga. But this Yoga is too difficult for everyone to be admitted to it; one must have a special call or a certain capacity (not intellectual, but psychic or spiritual) before he is accepted. And even then all who are accepted as disciples are not allowed to stay in the Asram. The life of the Asram is of a special kind and it is only rarely that those are admitted who have not become permanent members; a few come and stay for short periods, but these are already accepted disciples of Sri Aurobindo.

11 April 1930

*

I wish to get all the information about the sadhak-Asrama in regard to the following matters:

1. The method of instruction.

No "instruction" given. It is an Asram for spiritual life and the only method is to open to the divine influence and live and work for the Divine.

2. The students living there.

There are no students, only disciples who give their lives and all they have to the Asram and its spiritual aim and in return are maintained by the Asram.

3. The terms of joining the Asrama.

Only those who are already disciples can join and among them only those who are chosen by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

4. Is the person free to communicate with friends and relatives?

If he wants, but the less he does so, the better for his Yoga.

5. Is the Asrama free from politics?

Entirely.

6. What language is spoken prominently in the Asrama?

English, French, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi — the sadhaks being of these nationalities.

7. Is the whole teaching based perfectly upon Hinduism?

No sectarian religion is the basis; orthodox Hinduism and its caste rules are not followed; but the spiritual Truth recognised here is in consonance with the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita while not limited by any Scripture.

5 September 1930

*

Your Ashram purposes to be as I believe a training school for the synthetic process of realisation. Knowing it to be a place of peace and prayer I have come as a pilgrim seeking entrance into your Ashram.

Reply to him that he has been misinformed about the Asram; it is not a training school for the synthetic process of realisation. It is simply that a number of disciples of Sri Aurobindo are living here in order to practise Yoga — only those are allowed who have accepted this path which is not identical with any other discipline but a thing apart and are permitted by Sri Aurobindo to stay here. Sri Aurobindo himself does not see or speak with anyone.

22 December 1932

*

You can write to him that the Asram is not an institution and no pupils are taken and no teaching given. Some of those who are already following Sri Aurobindo's Yoga are admitted to live here and practise the Yoga under the influence of the immediate presence of Sri Aurobindo. No others are admitted.

Sri Aurobindo does not usually accept new disciples unless they have been seen and he is sure that they are called to this particular way of Yoga and have some capacity for it.

21 July 1933

*

If he cannot receive help from a distance how does he expect to carry on the Yoga here? This is a Yoga which does not depend upon verbal instructions or anything outward but on the power to open themselves and receive the force and influence even in a complete silence. Those who do not receive it at a distance cannot receive it here also. Also without establishing in oneself calm, sincerity, peace, patience and perseverance this Yoga cannot be done, for many difficulties have to be faced and it takes years and years to overcome them definitely and altogether.

25 June 1934

*

Barin-da has just written me a letter. He has started a Yoga school. Fancy that!!

But what an idea, good heavens! A Yoga school—a class, a blackboard (with the gods on it?); interesting cases! a spiritual clinic, what? What has happened to Barin's wits and especially to his sense of humour? Too much *Statesman*? marriage? writing for a living? age?

5 December 1934

*

You can write and tell her this is not a school and there are no students or correspondence system. It is an Asram or residence for those of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo whom he selects and the Yoga done here is conducted not by verbal instruction but by special methods mostly of a silent influence, concentration and self-discipline. It is only for those who accept the aims and demands of this special path of Yoga.

29 April 1937

*

You can answer that the Asram is only a residence for a number of Sri Aurobindo's disciples to stay and practise Yoga. As the number has become very large, it was necessary to organise it as an Asram, but it still retains its original character. Outsiders are not usually allowed to reside, for there is no provision for that. There are no religious discourses nor any set course of instruction. All is done by meditation, work for the Divine and self-opening to receive knowledge and experience from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

27 May 1937

*

Write to him that pupils are not taken into the Asram, for there is no teaching or instruction. The Asram is a place where some of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo are allowed to live and practise Yoga or prepare themselves for it by work and service if they are not yet ready for the deeper inner practice. As a rule disciples are not allowed to live in the Asram unless they have been specially chosen and usually after some practice of the Yoga outside.

Sri Aurobindo does not receive anyone in a private interview or speak to anyone. The work of the Asram is carried on by the Mother, Sri Mira Devi. Only 3 times in a year Sri Aurobindo gives a silent blessing to his disciples in the Asram and those from outside and a restricted number of visitors from outside. The disciples admitted into the Asram are expected to know enough of the Yoga (through Sri Aurobindo's writings or otherwise) to practise it or prepare themselves for the practice—the principal requirement for progress in the Yoga is that they should be able to open their consciousness mentally, psychically and spiritually to the silent help and force which is given them from within; they must also follow implicitly the directions for work, action, life or their sadhana given them by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In these conditions it may not be worth while for him to come here unless he has acquainted himself more intimately with the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and found that it is the path his nature accepts and can follow. The *Yogic Sadhan* does not give any real idea of the nature of this Yoga; he would have to read other works of a completer and deeper character. Most even

after accepting follow out the practice of the Yoga to a certain extent and communicate their experiences before thinking of coming here for a closer contact.

If however he is in any case coming to India to find his path and a Guru, he could pass through Pondicherry and see the Asram and establish a contact after which it can be known whether he can take up the Yoga.

7 July 1938

*

Write that this Asram is not intended for religious teaching, but for the practice of Yoga; its object, like that of all Yoga, is the attainment of a higher consciousness and the spiritual life. But Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a special path with its own special objects in addition to this common aim of all Yoga. Only those are admitted who have a call to this special path which is a very difficult one, are recognised as having some capacity for it and are willing to give up everything else and follow without reservations the guidance of Sri Aurobindo. There is no separate asram for ladies; the Asram is composed of several houses and accommodation is given according to convenience.

Representation of People in the Ashram

My mind is so full of thoughts about the possibilities of new creation that whenever I see a sadhak I think of him as an aspect of the beauty of the new creation.

That is what he should be.

21 April 1934

*

What disciples we are of what a Master!

As to the disciples, I agree!

I wish you had chosen or called some better stuff — perhaps somebody like Krishnaprem.

Yes, but would the better stuff, supposing it to exist, be typical of humanity? To deal with a few exceptional types would hardly

solve the problem. And would they consent to follow my path — that is another question. And if they were put to the test, would not the common humanity suddenly reveal itself — that is still another question.

3 August 1935

*

In the Ashram one finds that people with forceful personalities and great capacities like X or Y are not able to put their energies to good use. Others, like Z and A, who have no great capacities, are able to apply their energies better. No doubt the Divine could give great capacities to Z and A, but could they ever become great writers or artists like X, Y or B?

There is no necessity for everybody to become artists or writers or do work of a public character. Z and A have their own capacities and it is sufficient for the present if they train themselves to make them fit for the Mother's work. Others have great capacities which they are content to use in the small and obscure work of the Asram without figuring before the public in something big. What is important now is to get the true consciousness from above, get rid of the ego (which nobody has yet done) and learn to be an instrument of the Divine Force. After that the manifestation can take place, not before.

24 October 1935

*

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Asram which is a "laboratory", as Adhar Das puts it,⁷ for a spiritual and supramental Yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic and cultured men came for the Yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably

⁷ A. C. Das, *review of Lights on Yoga*. The Calcutta Review 47 (October 1935), pp. 101–2.

be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of the human being. Those in the Asram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.

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

Also much stress has not been laid on human fellowship of the ordinary kind between the inmates, (though good feeling, consideration and courtesy should always be there), because that is not the aim; it is a unity in a new consciousness that is the aim and the first thing is for each to do his sadhana, to arrive at that new consciousness and realise oneness there.

Whatever faults are there in the sadhaks must be removed by the Light from above — a sattwic rule can only change natures predisposed to a sattwic rule.

31 October 1935

*

Your description of the psychological state of the Asramites is vivid and convincing and very true. It is that which we are up against. It is the average physical consciousness of humanity concentrated in the Asram and the one consolation is that if the Force can transform *that*, then it can transform anything. If everybody were as accurately conscious of the nature of the thing as you show yourself in this letter, the transformation would be perhaps more quickly possible.

11 February 1936

Profiting from One's Stay in the Ashram

He can come, if he understands the conditions under which alone he can profit by staying here. Henceforth a stay here can only be profitable (1) for those who are ready for an intensive sadhana turning their back on all attachments belonging to the ordinary human life, (2) for those who, though not ready, yet

recognise fully the aim and open themselves so as to prepare for it, (3) those who, even if not capable as yet of an inner intensive sadhana, can yet dedicate themselves entirely in the way of service.

4 August 1927

*

You can write to him that at present his coming here is hardly possible or advisable. There are now nearly 80 members in the Asram and all the accommodation available is taken up or else marked out already for others who are coming. Moreover if he has not been able to make the vital surrender, he would not be able to profit by coming here; for the conditions of the sadhana here are no longer what they were before and this vital surrender is precisely the first condition of any benefit from our help or any true farther progress.

As for his sadhana, if he can persist in the attitude he has taken and be entirely sincere in it, then the difficulty he is experiencing is bound to disappear. Necessarily, the resistance in the vital being and the body, based on all their past habits, cannot be overcome in a day. In his case, it is probable that the mental has reached the point where the surrender can be made, but the vital *puruṣa* still refuses. If he can become conscious in his sadhana not only of the resistance on the surface but of the vital being behind in its entirety, separately from the mind, and see all its deeper movements and offer them in the whole and detail to the Mother for transformation, then the work of transformation can be done. It is for more and more consciousness and more and more strength for consecration that he must ask.

1 December 1929

*

You can write to him that, if he is in the grip of adverse forces, it is not a condition in which to come to the Asram. Only those are called here and allowed to stay who are ready to profit by the Asram atmosphere. What he can do, if he likes, is to come for the 15th August for darshan — after seeing him, then we can

say something more definite.

8 April 1932

*

It is no use people staying here unless they have, first, the capacity and, secondly, the pull and the will for Yoga. 16 August 1933

*

No, it is not enough to be in the Asram—one has to open to the Mother and put away the mud which one was playing with in the world. 25 September 1934

*

But what is the meaning of the dull life we lead here? No scope for any skills, no use for knowledge. My five years of medical study all lost. Some at least have the satisfaction of using their capacities—X his training as an engineer, Y his medical knowledge. But for most of us, it seems like you have put square pegs in round holes.

Obviously the life here is not that of a place where the mind and vital can hope to be satisfied and fulfilled or lead a lively life. It is only if one can live within that it becomes satisfactory. Y himself if he were outside, would be dealing not with two or three selected patients but with many—he speaks of hundreds in the past—and would be living a much fuller vital life. But for one who has the assured inner life, there is no dullness. Realisation within must be the first object; work for the Divine on the basis of the true inner self and a new consciousness, not on the basis of the old, is the result that can follow. Till then work and life can be only a means of sadhana, not a “self-fulfilment” or a brilliant and interesting vital life on the old basis. 15 April 1936

*

Everybody has to deal with the lower nature. No Yoga can be done without overcoming it, neither this Yoga nor any other. A Yogic life means a life in which one tries to follow the law of Yoga, the aim of Yoga in all details of life. Here people do not do that, they live like ordinary people, quarrelling, gossiping,

indulging their desires, thinking of Yoga only in their spare moments.

13 February 1936

Departure from the Ashram

X is quite happy here and she is progressing very well in her sadhana. If she goes away from here, the progress will be stopped and much of what she has gained may be lost. An intensive and concentrated sadhana once begun has to be persistently continued in the right atmosphere. If it is kept up only for a short time and then dropped for another kind of life in which the concentration is diffused and weakened, there is no likelihood of fruition. For this reason we would disapprove of her departure.

9 January 1928

*

I have had no time to answer X's letter tonight. I will write in the course of tomorrow, afternoon or evening. He may at least ask the gentleman inside who is so furiously hurrying him away, to wait for one day.

It looks as if the hopes I had for him were either unjustified or premature — he is either too young or too raw and unfit. In that case there will be nothing to do but to let him return to the ordinary life and ordinary atmosphere. But he must understand, if he goes, that it is his own choice and must not blame either myself or the Mother.

c. August 1929

*

I certainly cannot sanction your departure on so wrong and trivial a ground. You must be aware, as you admitted at first, that you are yourself to blame. When the Mother after a long and exhausting morning's work still gave you time, it was very wrong of you to reward her by speech of an insulting character. And it was wrong of you to resent her kind letter and her reference to the adverse force which you yourself have called the "devil" and from which you have prayed insistently to be delivered. I shall add that if you allow yourself to be ruled in this way by

self-will and an abnormal sensitiveness, you will always create trouble for yourself, no matter where you go.

I could only sanction your departure if I came to the conclusion that you are still too young and raw and ill-balanced to bear the pressure for change which is inevitable in the atmosphere of the Asram. But before this attack, you were progressing very well with a rapid growth in consciousness and character. It ought not to be difficult for you to get over this attack and settle down to a self-development of your undoubted possibilities on the right line. It would be a pity if you threw away the chance by obstinate persistence in the result of a moment's pique.

I prefer not to give any decision till after the 15th. You will do well to wait till then and see if your present feelings do not change.

4 August 1929

*

When these moods come upon you, why do you run away from the Mother and avoid her? Why do you not come to her, tell her frankly what you feel and what is in your mind and let her take the trouble from you?

The reasons you give for wishing to leave us are no good reasons at all. If you want to see the richness and greatness of God, you will, if you wait, see more of it with us than you ever can outside. And if you want to see the Himalayas, it will be much better for you to see them hereafter with your Mother beside you.

You are quite mistaken when you say that if you will go, there will be no Devil left in the Asram. The Devil is not here because of you; he is here because he wants to give trouble to the Mother and spoil her work. And what he chiefly wants is to drive her children away from her, and especially those who like you are nearest to her. If you go, he will remain; and not only he will remain, but he will feel that he has won a great victory and will set himself with a double vigour to attack her through others.

You talk of not giving trouble to the Mother and to me; but do you not realise that nothing can be worse trouble to us than your going away? The moods of revolt that come upon

you are clouds that pass; but to see you leave us in this way and feel our love rejected and your place near us empty would be indeed a real trouble to us and we would feel it more deeply than anything else you could do.

You know that it is not true that your sole desire is to go away. It is only so when you are in these moods. And you know that these are moods that pass, and if you allow the Mother to take them away, they go at once. The trouble is that when they come, you take them too much to heart and you begin to think that there is nothing else to do but go away. I assure you that that is no solution and that we would much rather have you with us even with these moods than be separated from you; compared with our love for you, the trouble they give us is mere dust in the balance.

Read this letter, talk with the Mother and act according to your true self; never mind the rest.

7 March 1930

*

It is certainly the force hostile to the Yoga and the divine realisation upon earth that is acting upon you at the present moment. It is the force (one force and not many) which is here in the Asram and has been going about from one to another. With some as with X, Y and Z it has succeeded; others have cast it from them and have been able to liberate the light of their soul, open in that light to the nearness and constant presence of the Mother, feel her working in them and move forward in a constant spiritual progress. Some are still struggling, but in spite of the bitterness of the struggle have been able to keep faithfully to the divine call that brought them here.

That it is the same hostile force would be shown, even if its presence were not for us visible and palpable, by the fact that the suggestions it makes to the minds of its victims are always the same. Its one master sign is always this impulse to get away from the Asram, away from myself and the Mother, out of this atmosphere, and *at once*. For the force does not want to give time for reflection, for resistance, for the saving Power to be felt and act. Its other signs are doubt, tamasic depression, an

exaggerated sense of impurity and unfitness, the idea that the Mother is remote, does not care for one, is not giving what she ought to give, is not divine, with other similar suggestions accompanied by an inability to feel her presence or her help, a feeling that the Yoga is not possible or is not going to be done in this life, the desire to go away and do something in the ordinary world—the thing itself suggested varying according to the personal mind. If it were not this one invariable hostile force acting, there would not be this exact similarity in all the cases. In each case it is the same obscurities thrown on the intelligence, the same subconscious movements of the vital brought to the surface, the same irrational impulses pushing to the same action,—departure, renunciation of the soul's truth, refusal of the Divine Love and the Divine Call.

It is the vital crisis, the test, the ordeal for you as for others—a test and ordeal which we would willingly spare to those who are with us but which they call on themselves by persistence in some wrong line of movement or some falsification of the inner attitude. If you reject entirely the falsehood that this force casts upon the sadhak, if you remain faithful to the Light that called you here, you conquer and, even if serious difficulties still remain, the final victory is sure and the divine triumph of the soul over the Ignorance and the darkness.

30 March 1930

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The Mother has told me what you said to her. In other circumstances I would have asked you to stay on in the confidence that, however sharp the struggle might be, the inner being in you aided by the Divine Force would prevail over the other and foreign influence. But in the condition of mind described by you some relief and rest from the inner struggle seems to be necessary for you. An absence from Pondicherry and change of atmosphere may be the best way to give it.

I do not, however, care to take the responsibility of sending you to Hyderabad, as that might turn out not at all the best, but the worst thing for you. Even if there were nothing else to do, it would not be possible to send you all that way

alone; arrangements would have to be made. We would prefer instead to see whether another means cannot be arranged, such as staying in a quiet place in the hills where you could have a healthy change of air for a time and other surroundings and recover your vital strength and nervous balance. We are making enquiries and in a few days hope to be able to let you know what can be done.

I write this much today in answer to your request for an immediate decision; but I have something to say with regard to your spiritual life and its difficulties which I have not had time to finish. I will finish it tomorrow and send it to you. 3 June 1930

*

You ought to be able to see, after receiving today's telegram, that the cause of the unrest is in yourself and not in the outward circumstances. It is your vital attachment to family ties and the ordinary social ideas and feelings that has risen in you and creates the difficulty. If you want to practise Yoga, you must be able to live in the world, so long as you are there, with a mind set upon the Divine and not bound by the environment. One who does this, can help those around him a hundred times more than one who is bound and attached to the world.

It is not possible for the Mother to tell you to remain, if you are yourself in your mind and vital eager to go. It is from within yourself that there must come the clear will on one side or the other. 24 February 1932

*

The crisis you are passing through might be due to your not being ready for an intensive practice of Yoga. On the other hand, a crisis of this kind often happens in the ordinary course of the sadhana. As long as the sadhana is only in the mind, things go on well enough, but as soon as the vital or the physical begin to be worked upon directly, all the resistance, inability, obscurity in the adhar rises up and there may be a prolonged period or recurrent periods of darkness.

I would suggest to wait a little longer — say, till the 24th

November. If by that time there is no return of the favourable course of the sadhana or if meanwhile you find the resistance too great, you may for a time discontinue.

In any case, the habit you speak of ought to be given up at once and altogether. You must be aware how injurious it is to the mind, the nervous system and the body, and it can of itself create the most serious obstacles in the way of any sadhana.

5 October 1932

*

In the outside world people live in quite a different consciousness and the sadhak if he goes there in the middle of his sadhana is bound either to fall back into it or to get so much mixed with it that he either falls out of his path or struggles through great difficulties. Either the work within is, outside, not done at all or what would here take 2 or 3 years would there be not done in thirty.

11 November 1932

*

How can the people in this Asram judge whether a man has progressed in Yoga or not? They judge from outward appearances — if a sadhak secludes himself, sits much in meditation, gets voices and experiences, etc. etc. they think he is a great sadhak! X was always a very poor Adhar. He had a few experiences of an elementary kind — confused and uncertain, but at every step he was getting into trouble and going off on a side path and we had to pull him up. At last he began to get voices and inspirations which he declared to be ours — I wrote to him many letters of serious warning and explanation but he refused to listen, was too much attached to his false voices and inspirations and, to avoid rebuke and correction, ceased to write or inform us. So he went wholly wrong and finally became hostile. You can tell this by my authority to anybody who is puzzled like yourself about this matter.

11 March 1933

*

If your staying here is to end in "death and scandal", obviously I cannot tell you not to go. But I have not forsaken you; it is you who prefer to turn away from the Yoga. I will not "send" you away. If you go, it will be because you do not want to stay here or feel that you cannot and that you will be at peace elsewhere. You can take my blessings with you if or when you go — but I do not know why they should be of more use to you than my help and guidance in the Yoga.

11 March 1933

*

I know well that the ordinary life is not for me. Why then do I get thoughts of going? What part of me wishes it?

Is it a part of yourself at all that has the idea? It may be that it is only because others are thinking it or wanting you to come and some portion of you still in contact with them gets the impression. Such touches can easily be felt as if they were your own ideas, emotions or desires, but they may not be so.

7 April 1933

*

I hear that many people, at one time or another, have been on the point of going away from here due to pressure of Yoga.

It is not due to the pressure of Yoga, but to the pressure of something in them that negates the Yoga. If one follows one's psychic being and higher mental call, no amount of pressure of Yoga can produce such results. People talk as if the Yoga had some maleficent force in it which produces these results. It is on the contrary the resistance to Yoga that does it.

11 May 1933

*

It feels as though some hostile force is trying to pull me back.
But I have no desire to return to my old family life.

It usually happens like that — when one comes out of the world, the forces that govern the world do all they can to pull you back into their own unquiet movement.

4 October 1933

*

I don't know why. It is perfectly irrational. People have been going as well as coming since the Asram began. Perhaps it arises from the ignorant idea that the people who go like X and Y are true bhaktas and sadhaks — while the fact is that X never made much progress even elementary and Y has been in a state of vital revolt sometimes against the Mother, sometimes against myself, battling against both, for the last six or seven years. People go away because they are too proud and arrogant to accept the control of the Guru or of the Truth or of the Divine. Y had decided that the Truth was in him alone and there was no Truth in myself or in the Mother.

10 October 1933

*

What would be the best way of rejecting the thought of going away? Every few days or so I have to deal with this "challenge".

The reason why it recurs so much is that it is not so much a personal reaction as a force that whenever it gets the door of the consciousness open, is consciously pressing the idea of departure with all sorts of reasons to support it. There are a certain number in the Asram who have it with the same recurrence — while there are others who used to have it but from whose consciousness it is now after a long series of attacks excluded or fading out. Obviously to give the movement any kind of scope would be no conquest. One day it will give up coming of itself, as it has done with others, when the external vital nature has got as convinced as the inner being of the imperativeness of its spiritual destiny.

23 October 1933

*

I do not understand the meaning of the complaint in your letter. I am not aware that there was any maltreatment of you by us or any lack of true love and care. In your spiritual life I have striven to give you all the possible help and support and guidance, more so than to most others because I felt that you had much need of it. I do not see any reason why you should go on the goad of a difficulty which always occurs in sadhana or under the driving

of a suggestion or impulse; if it were a mature and deliberate decision taken after full reflection, one could understand it. In any case, this Asram is here as your spiritual home so long as you choose to avail yourself of it and our help and consistent support in your difficulties are at your disposal so long as you need and desire them for the attainment of the goal of your spiritual endeavour.

5 November 1933

*

For the last few days, I have felt quite foreign here. I do not like going to work or doing anything else. If there is any reason for my being here, I don't know what it is.

Why do you allow these suggestions to get hold of your mind? You have made great progress here which you could not have made over there—and as for usefulness, there are few whose work can be relied on as yours can. Dry moments come to all—that is not a reason for doubting one's call to the Yoga. Shake off these false suggestions—they must surely be the result of the old atmosphere coming in in such a mass—and regain the peace and stillness that you were having before.

18 August 1934

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I have given you the permission to go only on your insistence that the pull from there is too strong for you to resist. It is not because we think that it is the right or the best thing for you—on the contrary we do not like the idea of your going at all. I have told you that to stay and fight out any inner difficulty here is always the true course. If there is any misconception about that, you should reconsider your decision.

27 August 1934

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I have written to X⁸ to set right any misunderstanding—if there is really a misunderstanding—about our consent to her going. That consent I consider as forced from me by her own insistence that she could not stay—the pull was too great—she must go.

⁸ The recipient of the preceding letter.—Ed.

I reminded her of what I told her before that the only true way was to stay and fight out the difficulty — the only justification for going would be if her call was more to the family life than to the spiritual life. I have told her that we keep to that and the Mother and I do not like her going — and asked her to reconsider her decision. For it is hers not mine. You know that I dislike any one who has a psychic call going away from here, because it is throwing away their spiritual destiny or at least postponing it. For I don't suppose X, if she persists in going, will remain always under the illusion of the family bonds — but the risk is there and the postponement is there. Mother has called her tomorrow morning and we will see what she decides. 28 August 1934

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The Mother was not distant and had no reason for being so — that cannot be put forward as a reason for going away. It is the feeling of the vital-physical that has been stopped in its activities and is not yet able to receive the touch of the higher consciousness or keep it that makes you feel like that. I don't know that you would get so much interest or satisfaction from the life outside that it would be worth while to give up and go. To persist is better.

10 January 1935

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The inability to go can come from the psychic which refuses, when it comes to the point, to allow the other parts to budge, or it can come from the vital which has no longer any pull towards the ordinary life and knows that it will never be satisfied there. It is usually the higher parts of the vital that act like that. What still is capable of turning outwards is probably the physical vital in which the old tendencies have not been extinguished.

19 May 1935

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I certainly do not wish to "put you in the wrong box", nor have I an idea or any desire to keep you here against your own inclination or choice. Going or staying is a matter entirely for

your own decision. If you can stay here with spiritual profit to yourself, we shall be very glad; but if you find that there is nothing to be gained by staying or that you cannot receive anything or that your will is decidedly for the ordinary life, I certainly would not like to put any undue pressure on you to stay against your own real interest or will. You must consider yourself entirely free to shape your own course in life by your own independent choice.

24 May 1935

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Where will I begin again? There certainly is something fundamentally wrong — otherwise why these impulses to depart? Everything is confused. I can't see my way, and have lost all capacity to analyse or synthesise. In addition [*in the preceding letter*] you are practically giving me a *carte blanche* to depart!

I am not telling you to go, but if I tell you the opposite it will only strengthen the suggestion that is being put on you — viz. that you are being kept here contrary to your own nature's choice and your mind's judgment for something that you cannot do and no longer want to do, a spiritual life that you cannot live and don't want to live. You think it is something in yourself that says that, but in reality it is not so. Only as you cannot see that at present, I have no choice but to leave everything to your own decision so that the sense of being outrageously compelled to stay may have no ground for growing in you.

You have mentioned X's case more than once as analogous, but his was quite opposite. He considered himself as the holder of the supramental Truth whom all ought to approach for the Truth, but that this was an Asram peopled by Asuras who refused to recognise him and all these Asuras were supported against him at every step by the Mother and me. He gave me the ultimatum that in this we must support him against the others and give him his proper position or else give him freedom to leave the Asram with which he had no longer any affinity, an impossible place for such a one as he, so that he might give the Truth to others elsewhere. No point of contact at all there with you except the Force driving him away.

What is happening just now is that there is a great uprush of the subconscious in which are the seeds or the strong remnants of the habitual difficulties of the nature. But its character is a confusion and obscurity without order or clear mental or other arrangement — it is a confused depression, discouragement, inability to progress — a feeling of what are we doing? why are we here? how can we go on? will anything ever be attained? and along with it old difficulties recurring in a confused and random but often violent and distressing fashion.

You cannot “begin” again; it would be too difficult a thing in this confusion. You have to get back to the point at which you deviated. If you can get back to the Peace that was coming and with it aspire to the freedom and wideness of the Purusha consciousness forming a *point d'appui* of detachment and separation from all this confusion of the subconscious Prakriti, then you will have a firm ground to stand upon and proceed. But for that you must make your choice firmly and refuse to be upset at every moment and diverted from it.

25 May 1935

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Sometimes people who are in difficulty ask your permission to leave the Ashram, and you and the Mother grant it. But if things turn out badly they say, “Why did I fall even after taking their permission to go?” I think that too much should not be made of such “permissions”, which are often just concessions to their weaknesses.

It is well understood that the permission given does not exclude the possibility of the experiment ending badly. But the experiment becomes necessary if the pull of the ego or outer being and that of the soul have become too acute for solution otherwise or if the outer being insists on having its experience.

20 June 1935

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Do you mean [*in the preceding letter*] that when we feel a strong push to leave, it would be best to make the experiment?

It is especially when the outer being rejects the Truth and insists on living its own life and refuses the rule of the spiritual life that the experiment becomes inevitable. I have never said that it is recommendable.

Sometimes that part is so violent that we feel we can't deal with it.

In some it is too strong; they have to go and see for themselves. That does not mean that everyone has to go whenever he feels a difficulty. These are exceptional cases.

24 June 1935

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Last evening I saw X off at the station. He looked very black in the face and gloomy too. I felt for the poor fellow who has lost his all through his own waywardness. I felt a little sad as I came back. The question recurred to me again and again: did Sri Krishna truly mean it concretely or did he merely poeticise when he said *na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati?*

You have forgotten the context. Arjuna asks what of a Yogi who fails in this life because of his errors — does he fall from both the ordinary life and the spiritual and perish like a broken cloud? Krishna says no. All who follow the Good get the reward of their effort and do not perish — they get it first in the life beyond and afterwards in the next birth in which the Yogi who fails now may even resume his effort under the best conditions and arrive at Siddhi. Krishna never said that nobody ever in this life fails who attempts the Yoga.

20 September 1935

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I feel a push to leave the Ashram often just before other people actually do leave. A day or two before X's departure on the 19th, I felt the same way. Do all people get such feelings?

There is a Force that is always seeking to push people away; formerly more than half the sadhaks were getting from time to time the suggestion to go. This has diminished now in its general power, but the Force is still there and presses very heavily on

some. When it gets anyone to go, then the power of the suggestion revives through that person and spreads to others. Those who are specially sensitive receive it most. 22 September 1935

*

If I am not doing anything useful here, why should I not try the world where also there is so much love and joy and the Divine?

Do you think so? Those who have gone do not find the world like that — they feel miserable and harassed on every side. So it has been with all who left here. 28 September 1935

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It is difficult for the Mother to decide for you. If you had been settled in Yoga as a resident sadhak of the Asram recognised as such by your family and everybody, then the rule of not allowing any tie of the world to draw you away would have stood with force against all such calls. But now it is different and you have to see for yourself what you feel called upon to do. For the Mother to decide would not be a solution from the spiritual point of view and it is better if the decision rises out of yourself — then only is it likely to be *for you* the true one. 21 November 1935

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What takes people away mostly is not the smaller failings like family attachment etc., but either ambition and great vanity or sexual desire or else some extreme form of vital ego which wants its own way and not the Divine's. It is from the first two causes that the departures from the Asram have mostly taken place and X and Y's case is no exception to the rule. 1935

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You can have permission to go. But one knows when one goes, one does not know whether or when one will come back. But if you really want to go, we cannot refuse permission.

26 March 1936

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If you wish to go, Mother gives the permission. But we cannot assure you that you will be able to come back or that it will not injure your sadhana. These things depend on yourself and on circumstances.

26 March 1936

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X has been here on probation for three years now. If we are sending her home, it is not as a punishment for any offence or out of anger or any similar reason, but it is because that is the best thing for her also. It is after long observation of her that this step has been taken and it is not a sudden decision on our part but has been maturing for some time. We have not rejected her,—it is with our blessings that she will go and if she keeps the right attitude our protection will be with her there. This has all been now explained to her and I believe she is not *affolée* any longer.

3 May 1936

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It is a little difficult for me to answer your letter in view of what you have written there. I have certainly persuaded you to remain here because I did not think that going away was the right solution, nor do I think so now. But from what you wrote last time after this came on you, I understood that you did not really want to go and were glad that I had persuaded you, that in fact you would have suffered greatly if I had given my consent. Here you write very differently and in such a way that if I am to take what you say in its full sense I would have to reply at once "Yes, go, since there is no other alternative." Let me say that persuasion is not force. Last time I don't think I even used persuasion; I simply gave my opinion against your proposal. My opinion remains the same, but that is not binding on you. I have also never thought of cutting you off if you go to Cape Comorin for a time or to Calcutta. Everyone here is free to follow his own decision in these matters. But when I am asked for a full consent, I take it as an invitation to give my own view on what is proposed and I give it. There is no question there of detaining or refusing a bitter need and therefore there can be no reason for your being

driven to the extremes of which you speak in your letter.

As for the way out of the impasse, I know only of the quieting of the mind which makes meditation effective, purification of the heart which brings the divine touch and in time the divine presence, humility before the Divine which liberates from egoism and the pride of the mind and of the vital, the pride that imposes its own reasonings on the ways of the spirit and the pride that refuses or is unable to surrender, sustained persistence in the call within and reliance on the Grace above. These things come by the inner discipline which you had begun to practise some time ago, but did not continue. Meditation, japa, prayer or aspiration from the heart can all succeed, if they are attended by these or even some of these things. But I do not know that you can be promised what you always make the condition of any inner endeavour, an immediate or almost immediate realisation or beginning of concrete realisation. I fully believe on the other hand that one who has the call in him cannot fail to arrive, if he follows patiently the way towards the Divine.

Frankly this is my view of the matter. I have never seen that anyone by changing place arrived at spiritual realisation—it always comes by a change of mind and heart. I put before you what I can see. The rest is for you to consider.

29 May 1936

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I have surely never said that you should not want the Divine Response. One does Yoga for that. What I have said is that you should not expect or insist on it at once or within an early time. It can come early or it can come late, but come it will if one is faithful in one's call—for one has not only to be sincere but to be faithful through all. If I deprecate insistence, it is because I have always found it creates difficulties and delays—owing to a strain and restlessness which is created—in the nature and despondencies and revolts of the vital when the insistence is not satisfied. The Divine knows best and one has to have trust in His wisdom and attune oneself with His will. Length of time is no proof of an ultimate incapacity to arrive—it is only a sign that there is something in oneself which has to be overcome and, if

there is the will to reach the Divine, it can be overcome.

Suicide solves nothing — it only brings one back to life with the same difficulties to be faced in worse conditions. If one wishes to escape from life altogether, it can only be by the way of complete inner renunciation and merging oneself in the Silence of the Absolute or by a bhakti that becomes absolute or by a karmayoga that gives up one's own will and desires to the will of the Divine.

I have said also that the Grace *can* at any moment act suddenly, but over that one has no control, because it comes by an incalculable Will which sees things that the mind cannot see. It is precisely the reason why one should never despair,—that and also because no sincere aspiration to the Divine can fail in the end.

Mother does not remember having said to X what you report — it may have been something in another sense which X understood in that way. For it cannot be said that you have never received Force from us, you have received it to any extent; it can only be said that you were not conscious of it, but that happens with many. Certainly none of the sadhaks receives and uses all the Force the Mother sends, but that is a general fact and not peculiar to you.

I hope you will not carry out your idea of going suddenly away — if you have to go for a time, it should be with our knowledge and our protection around you. I hope it will not be necessary at all, but certainly it should not be in that way. Whatever else you doubt, you should not doubt that our love and affection will be always with you. But I still hope that you will be able to overcome this despair and this impulse of flight and develop the quiet force of intense will which brings the Light that is sure to come.

May 1936

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I have analysed and analysed myself, and have found that I have no real urge for the Divine. It seems more the unfavourable external circumstances that have brought me here. Had I been happy and in plenty there, would I have chosen

the path? . . . Where is the sincerity in me? . . . So wouldn't it be better for you to let me go instead of wasting so much of your time and labour on me?

Your analysis and reasonings are those of Grand-mère Depression which sees only what she allows to come to the surface for her purposes. There are other things that Madame suppresses because they don't suit her. It does not greatly matter what brought you here — the important thing is to go on till the psychic truth behind all that becomes manifest. The inertia of your physical nature is only a thick crust on the surface which gives way slowly, but under the pressure it will give way. If you had some big object in the ordinary life and nothing to hope for here it might be different, but as things are it would be foolish to walk off under the instigation of this old Mother Gloom-Gloom. Stick on and you will get the soul's reward hereafter.

14 June 1936

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There is no reason to be so much cut down or despair of your progress. Evidently you have had a surging up of the old movements, but that can always happen so long as there is not an entire change of the old nature both in the conscious and subconscious parts. Something came up that made you get out of poise and stray into a past round of feelings. The one thing to do is to quiet yourself and get back into the true consciousness and poise. . . . Always keep within and do things without involving yourself in them, then nothing will happen or, if it does, no serious reaction will come.

The idea of leaving for any reason is of course absurd and out of the question. Eight years is a very short time for transformation. Most people spend as much as that or more to get conscious of their defects and acquire the serious will to change — and after that it takes a long time to get the will turned into full and final accomplishment. Each time one stumbles, one has to get back onto the right footing and go on with fresh resolution; by doing that the full change comes.

17 August 1936

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You must not deceive yourself into thinking that the ordinary life will prepare you for the Asram life. So we cannot tell you how to prepare yourself. It is better to choose frankly between the two. If you go away, you would find the same difficulties if you came back. It is knowing that that you must decide.

21 August 1936

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Since the attacks of fear do not cease, it is best that you should go and rest for the time being from the sadhana—for these two cannot go together. In order to be quite sure, it would be advisable to see in Calcutta whether there is not some physical cause also such as blood pressure. It is not possible for the Mother to see you before you go as you have to go tonight. For the rest, we can decide only after seeing how you go on over there. If you keep your trust in the Divine and clear yourself of all that conflicts with it, there is no reason to fear that the Divine will abandon you. For the present what is necessary is to shake off this disturbance and get out of the condition of fear and nervous disturbance altogether.

21 October 1936

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As you say that you are determined to go, I can only answer by reaffirming our disapproval of the step you propose to take and the rejection—from a blind vital feeling—of the true path and the spiritual life. It is not true that you could not appreciate our help and solicitude or that you were unable to follow the sadhana, you are only shutting the doors of your mind and vital to the help and laying stress on a temporary block which would have disappeared if you had dissociated yourself from it. I can only express the hope that the true being in you will awake in time and draw you back from this course, restoring the inner contact with us and the unity with the higher Self, a glimpse of which had come to you for a moment.

31 January 1937

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Neither the Mother nor I have asked you to go nor approved

of your going. As I could not give any assent to it and the reasons put forward by you precluded my asking you to stay, I had to be silent. Mother could not withhold from you the money you asked for because you claimed it as your own and her withholding it would have looked like an undue interference with your personal liberty and your formed decision. I must now say however that if you go, it will be your own decision and not in any way ours. If you change your decision and resolve to face out your difficulty here until it is solved, we shall be very glad of it.

There is no such impossibility of your victory over the harder parts of your nature as you imagine. There is only needed the perseverance to go on till this resistance breaks down and the psychic which is not absent nor unmanifest is able to dominate the others. That has to be done whether you stay here or not and to go is likely only to increase the difficulty and imperil the final result — it cannot help you. It is here that the struggle however acute has, because of the immediate presence of the Mother, the best chance and certitude of a solution and successful ending.

5 March 1937

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No one in fact is kept here when his will or decision is to go — although the principle of the spiritual life is against any return to the old one even for a time especially if the deeper urge is there and striving towards a firm foundation of the new consciousness — for the return to the ordinary atmosphere and surroundings and motives disturbs the work and throws back the progress.

10 March 1937

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Does your allowing people to go out from here mean that now there is no harm in their doing so?

No, it does not; it simply means that we can't always be holding back people whose vital says "I want to go, I want to go" and they side with the vital. They are allowed to go and take their risk.

18 March 1937

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Each time somebody leaves the Asram, I feel a kick, a shock, a heartquake.

May I ask why? People have been leaving the Asram since it began, not only now. Say 30 or 40 people have gone, 130 or 140 others have come. The big Maharathas, X, Y, Z departed from this too damnable Asram where great men are not allowed to do as they like. The damnable Asram survives and grows. A and B and C fail in their Yoga — but the Yoga proceeds on its way, advances, develops. Why then kick, shock and heartquake?

You said long ago that the Suprmental won't tolerate any nonsense of freedom of movement or wrong movement. Is this the kick he is imparting from high up? . . . In these two months he has struck a tall tower like A and a fat buoy like B; how many of these!

And what then?

I hold the view that the Suprmental is descending concentratedly, though I don't feel it,

Not so strongly or concentratedly as it ought, but better than before.

. . . and that those who resist, who are between two fires, have either to quit or to submit.

Even if it were so, that is their own business. The Divine is driving nobody out except in rare cases where their staying would be a calamity to the Asram (for instance it could decide one day to drive C out); if they cannot bear the pressure and rush away, listening to the "Go away, go away" push and suggestion of the Hostiles can it be said then that it was the Divine who drove them away and the push and suggestion of the Hostile is that of the Divine? A singular logic! The "Go, go" push and suggestion have been successfully there ever since the Asram started and even before when there was no Asram. How does that square with your theory that it is due to the concentrated

descent of the Force?

21 April 1937

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What you say about yourself — the jealousy etc. — is already known; you have yourself written it all before to the Mother. In spite of that we did not consider you unfit for the Yoga. Every sadhak has by nature certain characteristics which are a great obstacle in the way of the sadhana; these remain with obstinacy and can only be overcome after a very long time by an action of the Divine from within. Your mistake is — not to have these defects, others have defects of anger, jealousy, envy etc. very strongly and not only have them within but show them very openly, — but to accept it as a reason for despair and the wish to go away from here. There is absolutely no meaning in going away, for nothing would be gained by it. One does not escape from what is within oneself by changing place; it follows and reproduces itself under other circumstances and among other surroundings. To go away and die does not solve anything either; for one's being and nature do not end with death, they continue. The only way to get rid of them is to throw them out and the only place where you can get rid of them is here. Here, if you remain, a time is sure to come when these things will go out of you. The suffering it causes cannot cease by going out — it can only cease by the *inner* cause being removed or else by your drawing back from them and realising your true self which even if they rose would not be troubled by them and could refuse to regard them as part of itself — this liberation too can only come here by sadhana.

24 May 1937

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What you have written is quite correct. To say that the Divine is defeated when a sadhak goes away is an absurdity. If the sadhak allows his lower nature to get the better of him, it is his defeat, not the Divine's. The sadhak comes here not because the Divine has need of him, but because he has need of the Divine. If he carries out the conditions of the spiritual life and gives himself to the Mother's leading, he will attain his goal but if he wants

to lay down his own conditions and impose his own ideas and his own desires on the Divine, then all the difficulty comes. This is what happened to X and Y and several others. Because the Divine does not yield to them they go away; but how is that a defeat for the Divine?

27 May 1937

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You speak as if the majority of the sadhaks who came here had gone! As a matter of fact it is only a small minority. Some went owing to a revolt of pride and ambition thinking that they had a great work to do or that they were already the equals or superiors of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo — some because they were unable to resist their sexual desires, others because they preferred to take their own way instead of following the directions of the Guru and went off the track. These things always happen to a number of those who start on the way, whatever the path they follow. It is no proof of the special difficulty of this Yoga. If one yields to ambition, sexual passion or self-sufficiency, a fall is always possible. There is also the possibility of being driven off the track by doubt or attraction to the old life — family, friends etc. The only one of these things that can act in your case is this doubt of your own capacity.

As I have told you, the capacity for having inner experience — and that is the one thing all sadhaks must have or develop — this you have, for it showed itself clearly. The rest does not depend on personal capacity, but on reliance and opening to the Mother's force. It was because you had that that you were progressing for some time very well. It got covered over by the physical consciousness which understands only external things and understands even those wrongly and obscurely. If that consciousness opens, there is no reason to suppose that you will not be able to go through.

12 July 1937

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By no means at my command can I make my mind even reasonably silent. It has again started bringing in doubts and misgivings and disquiet. One of them is that perhaps I am

on the wrong path; this is not the goal that my nature wants. Perhaps it is some ambition that has attracted me to this path. I write this to you because I cannot deal with it effectively. Temperamentally the rest of my instruments seem more amenable to influences representing other paths and other goals. Am I really on the right path, have I really the call to it?

It is the right path for your inner nature and there there is the call. The resistance is from the outer, especially the mind, but that is due to a dissatisfied restlessness which is part of the outer mental nature (the reasons given are only supports which it builds for its restlessness) and that would have interfered wherever you might have been and on whatever path. To conquer this outer nature is the only way and that can be best done here, since the change of the outer being is here a part of the sadhana and you will receive the necessary help.

17 July 1937

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Don't be with me as with X. You couldn't keep him here; forces took him away. Doubts!

I repeat that he took himself away. No Force can take a man away, who really wants not to go and really wants the spiritual life. X wanted the "Divine Response" only, not spiritual life — his doubts all rose from that.

2 August 1937

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Yes, you can do as you propose. So long as you have the attachment to the family, it is not possible to do any good sadhana here. Yoga and attachment do not go together. As long as you have it, the best you can do is to go on with the ordinary life, develop Bhakti and try to prepare yourself for a true and complete sadhana hereafter.

circa 1937

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It doesn't seem to me that it will be impossible for me to return after I have exhausted my vital attachments. I feel I am destined for the spiritual life and will take the final plunge very soon.

When there is so sharp a difference between the inner and the outer being, it is always the sadhak who has to make his choice. As for coming back, many who have gone out have come back, others have not—for in going out there is always the danger of entering into a current of forces that make return impossible. Whatever decision you make should be clear and deliberate—otherwise, you may go out and as soon as you are there want to come back and after coming here again want to go; that would be inadmissible.

16 May 1938

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I have already answered more than once to what you have written in your last two letters and I can only give the same answer as before.

You write as if our only reason for not consenting to your going away or for not sending you away was that you had nowhere to go. But that is not so. It is because we do not approve of the idea of your going; it is a wrong step altogether without any sense or reason in it.

The difficulties in your nature are not peculiar to you alone among the sadhaks here and their persistence is no sign that you cannot do Yoga. The few years you have been here is too short a time to expect a transformation of the character. Nobody can expect a transformation in so short a time.

It is not a fact that you are incapable of doing Yoga. Anyone who can open his consciousness and have inner experiences is capable of Yoga and that did happen in you. The closing of this openness by a descent into the physical consciousness is something that has happened to most in this Asram and it usually takes a long time to come out of the closing. There is therefore no reason for concluding that this shows incapacity for Yoga and therefore there is no use in staying here.

The only reasonable thing for you to do is to get rid of this wrong idea and remain quietly here where alone the true consciousness and the true life can come to you. 7 July 1938

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These ideas are only suggestions that always come up when you allow this sadness to grow in you; instead of indulging them, they should be immediately thrown from you. There is no "why" to your feeling of our far-away-ness and indifference, for these do not exist, and the feeling comes up automatically without any true reason along with this wave of the wrong kind of consciousness. Whenever this comes up, you should be at once sure that it is a wrong turn and stop it and reject all its characteristic suggestions. It is when you have been able to do so for a long time that you have made great progress and developed a right consciousness and right ideas and the true psychic attitude. You are not hampering our work nor standing in the way of others coming here; in cleaving to the sadhana in spite of all difficulties you are not deceiving yourself but, on the contrary, doing the right thing and you are certainly not deceiving the Divine, who knows very well both your aspiration and your difficulties. So there is not a shred of a reason for your going away. If you "sincerely want to do Yoga", and there can be no doubt about that, that is quite a sufficient reason for your being here. It does not matter about not having as yet any occult experiences, like the rising of the Kundalini etc.; these come to some early, to some late; and there are besides different lines of such experiences for different natures. You should not hanker after these or get disappointed and despondent because they do not yet come. These things can be left to come of themselves when the consciousness is ready. What you have to aspire to is bhakti, purification of the nature, right psychic consciousness and surrender. Aspire for bhakti and it will grow in you. It is already there within and it is that which expresses itself in your poetry and music and the feelings that rise up as in the temple of the Mother at the Cape. As the bhakti and aspiration in the nature grow, the right psychic consciousness will also increase and lead to the full surrender. But keep steady and don't indulge these ideas of incapacity and frustration and going away; they are stuff of tamas and good only to be flung aside.

19 October 1942

The Ashram and Its Atmosphere

The Ashram Precincts

X told me that Y has said that there is a very strong circle of Mother's protection around the main Ashram house, and a less strong one in the other houses.

It is not the house, it is the inner nearness that matters.

What is true is that there is a strong force going out from here and it is naturally strongest at the centre. But how it affects there, depends on how one receives it. If it is received with simple trust, faith, openness, confidence, then it works as a complete protection. But it can so work too at a distance.

16 January 1933

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Mother said once that all the houses were sanctified by her presence and there were no houses more favoured than others. This appeals to me. For if it was otherwise I would of course try to get into a room within the Asram precincts, as people often say that there the atmosphere is ever so much better.

The atmosphere of the houses as houses is pretty much the same in all the Asram. But people make their own atmosphere as well; a number of people living together may create one that is agreeable to this person and disagreeable to another. A single man also may leave a vital atmosphere in a house which is felt by others who follow him or, even if they do not feel it, they may be influenced by it for a time — that I have observed often enough. The surroundings also have sometimes an effect. But all that is very secondary — one ought to create one's own atmosphere (of course of the right kind) and keep it, then other vibrations will fall away from it.

What are the Asram precincts? Every house in which the

sadhaks of the Asram live is in the Asram precincts. People have a queer way of talking of the houses in this compound as the Asram — it has no meaning. Or do they think the Mother's influence or mine is shut up in a compound? 12 January 1935

The Atmosphere of the Ashram

When I sit on the staircase to your room, I feel something very special there. But now I find that wrong things are coming in when I sit there. I hope I am not disturbing the atmosphere.

The force is there in the atmosphere, but you must receive it in the right way — in the spirit of self-giving, openness, confidence. All the rest depends on that. 16 January 1933

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I was surprised to learn that X and Y are staying in the town. How, after being in the Ashram for two years, can they bear the outside atmosphere? Z, who just returned from a visit home, tells me he could not endure the atmosphere over there.

It is certainly strange. Most people after the atmosphere here cannot tolerate the ordinary atmosphere. If they go outside, they are restless until they return. Even A's aunt who was here only for a few months writes in the same way. But probably when people get into the control of a falsehood as X and Y did, they are projected into the unregenerated vital nature and no longer feel the difference of the atmosphere. 30 May 1933

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It is easier to feel the presence in the atmosphere of the Asram than outside it. But that is only an initial difficulty which one can overcome by a steadiness in the call and a constant opening of oneself to the influence. 16 August 1934

*

I have translated the first four pieces of Maurice Magre's "L'Asram de Pondichéry"¹ into Gujarati. There are some exaggerations in his perceptions: "*les hommes les plus sages de la terre*" and "*Ce sont des Parfaits entre les hommes*". This is too much to say about us sadhaks. I find it almost impossible to put such sentiments in Gujarati, as people there would find them overblown.

Magre like many others got an immediate strong impression of the atmosphere of the Asram — most feel it as an atmosphere of calm and peace, something quite apart from that of the ordinary world. He thought it was the atmosphere of the people. Besides, of the few who saw him, he saw only the best. Also many here if not most have something in their appearance different from people outside, something a little luminous, which a man of sensitive perceptions like Magre could feel. The other side becomes apparent only if one stays long and mixes in the ordinary life of the Asram or hears the gossip of the Sadhaks. People from this country, Gujaratis or others, more easily see or feel this side and do not feel the rest because they enter at once into relation with the exterior life of the Asram.

4 February 1937

*

There are two atmospheres in the Asram, ours and that of the sadhaks. When people with a little perceptiveness come from outside, they are struck by the deep calm and peace in the atmosphere and it is only when they mix much with the sadhaks that this perception and influence fade away. The other atmosphere of dullness or unrest is created by the sadhaks themselves — if they were opened to the Mother as they should be, they would live in the calm and peace and not in unrest or dullness.

15 March 1937

¹ Maurice Magre, *À la poursuite de la sagesse* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1936), pp. 99–104.

The Ashram's Physical Expansion

Is having more houses a sign of progress?

It is a sign of physical expansion. The progress depends upon what is behind; if the inner progress is not there, the physical expansion is of no great use.

7 July 1933

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If the Asram expands very much and there are no houses available in Pondicherry, naturally the extension will be somewhere in the villages nearby?

There was some idea of that years ago, but circumstances took another turn and it did not materialise.

14 April 1935

Sadhana in the Ashram

Communal Sadhana

In respect to Yoga, what is the meaning of communal sadhana?

There is no communal sadhana. It is the individuals who do the sadhana and that creates a collective atmosphere with a character and movements of its own.

In the commune can sadhaks help each other in their sadhana?

What commune? There is no commune here, there is only a group of people who are supposed to follow the same sadhana.

In what way?

Anyone can help another if he has the capacity. It has nothing to do with a “commune”.

Not living in a commune, is it possible to reach the highest Truth?

The highest Truth is there for anyone who can reach it.

16 May 1933

Personal Difficulties and Progress in Yoga

You have now taken the right attitude, and if you keep it all will go better. It is to the divine Mother that you have come for Yoga, not for the old kind of life. You should also regard this as an Asram, not an ordinary Sansar, and in your dealings with others here strive to conquer anger, self-assertion and pride, whatever may be their attitude or behaviour towards you; for so long as you keep these moods, you will find it difficult to

make progress in the Yoga.

8 July 1932

*

If the difficulties in my nature still persist after so many years of sadhana, how can I be certain of success? How can I think that I am fit for the Yoga?

The vital difficulties persist so long as one indulges in any way the lower nature — even after one has ceased indulging, they persist so long as there is anything in the lower consciousness which desires or regrets them or is still responsive to their touch when they return either as waves from the universal Prakriti or an attack by the hostile forces. If length of time in mastering the vital or transforming it were a proof of unfitness, then nobody in this Asram — or outside it — would be fit for the Yoga.

Until success actually comes, there is always the chance that it will *not* come at all.

The mind can argue like that about anything not yet actually realised and established beyond dispute and without flaw. But what one has to lean on in Yoga is not the reasonings of the physical mind, but faith in the soul and the secret certitude of the Spirit.

I want to have the Yogic consciousness at all times and never lose it. This constant moving between light and darkness, peace and struggle cannot be a proof of progress. In what way am I incorrect?

Absolutely incorrect. The progress of the sadhana is for most even such an alternation because it is precisely a struggle between the powers of Light and Darkness, those who want the divine transformation and those who want the continuance of the old ignorant Nature. At each step something has to be conquered from the hold of the Ignorance, something brought down from the Light above. When the whole nature is opened and the peace and equality are brought down into the vital and physical and settled there, then there is no inner disturbance, but the struggle

continues until there is the beginning of the supramental transformation.

20 July 1933

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How is it that many sadhaks who had a strong spiritual tendency before coming to the Asram have got stuck in vital difficulties after many years of sadhana?

It is because outside before people come here, they are quite satisfied with their inner spiritual experiences and there is no idea of changing or attempt to change the vital. The moment this idea is imposed on the vital or the attempt begins all the vital difficulties begin. That is one reason, but by itself it would not have mattered so much, the difficulties would have appeared but they could have been conquered without so much trouble. But here owing to the wrong attitude of many sadhaks, their indulgence of the vital opposition and revolt, an atmosphere of extreme vital difficulty has been created and when one comes to stay here all that atmosphere throws itself upon him and it is only by a great and prolonged struggle that he can get back to the spiritual simplicity and straightforward aspiration or the psychic poise.

18 July 1934

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I do not see why your having difficulties or the external consciousness denying the inner truth should prevent you from calling our help. At that rate hardly anybody could call for help. Almost everybody in the Asram except a few have this difficulty of the external consciousness denying or standing in the way of the inner experience and trying to cling to its old ways, ideas, habits and desires. This division in human nature is a universal fact and one should not make too much of it. Once the Peace and Power are there, it is best to trust to that to remove in time the opposition and enlighten and occupy the external nature.

19 July 1934

*

You have often spoken of the Man of Sorrows in connection

with me. But I was a cheerful fellow at school and college. So I am afraid he is a contribution, partly at least, of your Yoga.

Not of my Yoga, but of the blasted atmosphere that has been created here by the theory that revolt, doubt and resultant sorrow and struggle and all that rot are the best way to progress. The Asram has never been able to get out of it, but only some people have escaped. The others have opened themselves to the confounded Man of Sorrows and got the natural consequence. But why the devil did you do it? The Man of Sorrows is a fellow who is always making a row in himself and covering himself with sevenfold overcoats of tragedy and gloom and he would not feel his existence justified if he couldn't be colossally miserable — when he gets on people's backs he puts the same thing on them. Yoga on the other hand tells you even if you have all sorts of unpleasantnesses to live in the inner sunlight, your own or God's. At least most Yogas do except the Vaishnava — but the Yoga here is not a Vaishnava Yoga. 19 June 1935

*

All I want to know is whether the whole of my being wants God or not. I am always saying, "I have come here to attain God." But perhaps this is just self-deception.

I have already answered your question. You came because your soul was moved to seek the Divine. That some part of your vital has strong attachments to the people you left behind, is a fact, but it does not make your soul's seeking unreal. If the presence and persistence of vital difficulties were to prove that a sadhak is "unfit" and has no chance, then only one or two in the Asram — and perhaps not even they — would survive the test. The feeling of dryness and not being "able to aspire" is also no proof. Every sadhak gets periods and even long periods of such emptiness. I could point to some who are considered among the most "advanced" sadhaks and yet are not free yet altogether from the family instinct. It is therefore quite unreasonable to be upset because these reactions still linger in you. These reactions come and go, but the need of the soul is permanent, even when covered

up and silent, and will always stay and reemerge. 24 June 1935

*

A vast abyss has opened its jaws to swallow X for ever. I tell you, Sir, it will be a pathetic failure on the part of the Divine.

Rubbish! It will be a failure on the part of X. I don't profess to transform men against their will. 1 September 1935

*

If I want to hang myself, would you say, "I can't help him against his will"?

If that were your will and not merely an impulse of the vital being, nobody could stop you. 2 September 1935

*

All who come here did not come with a conscious seeking for the Divine. It is without the mind knowing it the soul within that brought them here. In your case it was that and the relation your soul had with the Mother. Once here the force of the Divine works upon the human nature till a way is opened for the soul within to come out from the veil. The conscious seeking for the Divine does not by itself prevent the struggle with the ignorance of the nature; it is only self-giving to the Mother that can do that.

7 November 1935

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Why is the sex-force working so vehemently now? Does it mean that the supramental also is vehemently descending? Or at least some Divine Force, giving a last kick at the sex-force?

The Divine Force has nothing to do with it. It is the sex and other lower forces that are attacking in order to make it impossible for the Divine Force to do its work or the Supramental to descend. They hope to prevent it altogether or, if by some miracle it still descends, to limit its extension and prevent anything more than an individual achievement. 6 August 1937

The Supramental Evolution, the Ashram and the Hostile Forces

With Sri Aurobindo and the Mother so close to us here, how is it that we continue to fall into darkness and sorrow—even into struggles with the hostile forces?

You are right. The hostile forces, their attacks, their suggestions ought now to be superannuated, out of date, out of place here in this sadhana. If somebody would realise that and fulfil it in his sadhana, the others might perhaps get strength to follow. At present these things are still here because the sadhaks open themselves to them, out of habit, out of desire, out of attraction for the drama of the vital, out of fear, out of passive response and unresisting inertia. But there is no real necessity for them any longer or true justification for their presence here,—the outer world is a different matter. The sadhana could very well go on and should go on as an unfolding, a natural falling away of defects and difficulties, a coming of greater and greater light and power and peace and transformation. 8 November 1933

*

Many people are experiencing acute difficulties. Is this the result of an inrush of forces or a pressure in the atmosphere?

It is not the pressure from above that creates difficulties. There is a strong resistance to change in the lower planes and certain Forces take advantage of it to throw in vortices of disturbance and try to upset as many people as possible. The only action of the Pressure from above on these is to push them out from the atmosphere of the person touched or from the atmosphere generally. After a time they are pushed out of the atmosphere of the person and can no longer work on him except from a distance with very slight effect. When that can be done generally—so as to push them to a distance from the atmosphere of the Asram, then all this trouble will cease. 9 November 1933

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You wrote, in the letter that was placed on the notice board,¹ that there is not “any longer” a justification for the hostile forces here. That suggests that there has been some change in the atmosphere, which makes possible their elimination. But can they really be eliminated?

I wrote because now there is a sufficient descent of Light and Power, for one not to be subject to the ordeals and tests which the Hostile Powers are permitted to put when one has only the mental, or ordinary spiritual forces on the plane of mind, to support one’s progress. If you look closely, you will see that when these Forces work now it is in a perfectly irrational, instinctive way, repeating always the same movements without any intellectual or higher vital power behind them. Theirs is now an irrational mechanical method which obscures more in the lowest physical and subconscious than anything else. That means that their true justification for being there is gone.

9 November 1933

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I have something to ask about your letter [of 8 November 1933] about the hostile forces. You write that they are “out of place here in this sadhana”. But you go on to say that attacks continue because “the sadhaks open themselves to them, out of habit, . . . out of passive response and unresisting inertia”. Please explain all this more clearly. Do you mean that the forces that were obstructing the sadhaks have been destroyed?

There is no question of destruction. There is only the question of their exclusion from the Asram. The things enumerated are not causes of the attacks, but they are the occasion, the weakness in the sadhaks that allows them when they could very well be dismissed. The hostile forces are there in the world to maintain the Ignorance—they were there in the sadhana because they had the right to test the sincerity of the sadhaks and their power and will to cleave to the Divine and overcome all difficulties. But this is only so long as the higher Light has not descended into the physical—now it is descending, it is sufficiently there

¹ *The letter of 8 November 1933 on page 639.—Ed.*

for anyone to receive it more and more fully, so that the way becomes smooth and open, a progressive development and not a struggle.

10 November 1933

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Since I wrote to you last, the hostile force has been trying to prove that it still has a place in this world.

Even if it had a place in the world where men do not seek the Divine, it has no right of place in the Asram.

14 November 1933

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It seems to me that the evolution out of matter could have taken place without the hostile forces. It could have happened quickly, by the descent of the Supramental and other lights, powers and joy of the Transcendent.

Anything could have happened — but if the Supramental was to descend immediately, there was no need of matter or evolution — the only reasonable thing would have been to create a supramental world at once without any slow evolution of matter, of life in matter, of mind in living matter or of the spiritual or supramental in spiritualised life in the material body.

Without the hostile forces and the self-contradictory consciousness of an exclusive division, *avidyā*, the manifestation would have been self-luminous and perfect and there would have been no need of an evolution from imperfection to perfection.

Obviously — but this world was created for evolution and not for an immediately luminous manifestation such as already exists on some other planes.

Whoever gave the hostile forces the power of *avidyā* to enter into and interfere with the earth-evolution has allowed tremendous pain and suffering to grow in the earth-consciousness.

Avidya did not interfere with the earth evolution, it existed before the earth life was evolved in the form of Inconscience. The meaning of evolution is the evolving or slow manifestation of life, mind and conscious supermind out of matter with its original Inconscience. Avidya is one thing and the intervention of the hostile forces is another.

Even if the hostile forces go back to their own region, they will certainly wage war against the transformed divine world. The only way for God to save us from this would be for him to put some pressure on them for self-transformation.

It is supposed that the supramental Light and Force is to descend — if the descent is so complete that these forces are driven back to their own world, it is not likely that any efforts on their part would have any success. It is the darkness or the insufficient Light that gave them their chance to intervene. If there is the victory of the true light, they cannot any longer.

The Mother has said that the hostile forces are necessary in the life of the Asrama for testing the sincerity of the sadhakas.

The work of this Yoga and therefore the principle of the Asram life is to take the world as it is and deal with it by a transformation of which the supramental descent is not the first but the final process. The presence of the hostile forces is a part of the world as it is and not to deal with them at all or to act as if they were not there would have been to leave the problem unsolved and the work undone. The sadhaks of the Asram are not spotless Saints or perfect born Yogis but men who carry in them their human nature and typify each in his own way what is in the world and what has to be changed. The influence of the hostile Forces was on them as on all human beings in a less or greater degree, and so long as they open themselves to that influence, it works on them as on the world,—it is only by a perfect sincerity and by a perfect opening to the Light that it can disappear. In that sense the presence of these forces is a test and the world that has to be changed being what it is and their

nature being what it is, it could not be otherwise.

I believe that each divine being has a hostile being associated with it for some unknown purpose in the Asrama.

It is not only in the Asram but everywhere that it is like that. It is a well-known principle of all occult knowledge that there are these two elements overstanding each seeker of the Truth.

The Mother once said that she never upheld the hostile forces, nor was she their Mother.

The hostile forces are upheld not by the Mother but by something in the sadhaks themselves which opens the doors to them by concentrated egoism, mental arrogance, vital revolt and many other things, e.g. lying, sex etc.

I remember how I was suddenly betrayed into the hands of the hostile forces when I came to the Budhi house. When I asked to be moved to a house near the Asrama, you ordered me to remain here.

The hostile forces were not in the Budhi house any more than in any other and being in a house near the Asram does not save anybody from their attacks—as is shown by the case of several who lived in houses near the Asram. Even to be in the central building does not necessarily save anybody from attacks. It depends on oneself, not on purely external things.

You have said that the hostile forces are no more necessary here in the Asrama. Will you let me know when they are going to be put out of the Asrama life altogether?

They are no more necessary if the sadhaks open to the Light that is descending—that was what I said—but if they do not open and go on exposing themselves, there will still be a possibility of their presence for some time to come.

Please give me the highest solutions and not temporary truths of a passing evolution.

The highest solutions cannot be brought in like that, as if one were acting in a clear field. If the “temporary” truths of the evolution could be got rid of so easily, there would have been no need of preparation or of a trying and difficult sadhana. It was necessary to deal with what had come into existence in the evolution so that the supralental descent might become possible.

9 December 1933

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What I meant in my first question [p. 641] was that, as far as I can see, evolution is not necessary for the divine manifestation.

There is no question about the possibility of a non-evolutionary manifestation — but that is quite irrelevant, for this *is* an evolutionary manifestation and it was evidently intended to be so from the beginning.

But on account of the interference of an exclusive *avidyā*, the manifestation has been perverted into what it now is.

What do you mean by an interference? The exclusive Avidya, that is the Inconscience of Matter, was the starting point, not something that came in after life had begun.

If there had been a gradual descent of the supralental light in the beginning, the true life, mind and higher planes might have been released and organised.

A gradual descent of the Supralental Light into what? Matter being the starting point, life and mind had to evolve first — to begin with a supralental descent would have reversed the order of the creation.

Thus the hostile forces and the perversion that they bring might have been dispensed with.

All that depends on the original statement that it might have been otherwise—if a rapid supralental creation had been intended and not an evolution. As this is in its nature an evolutionary world, there is no practical use in pressing that possibility.

My point is that the hostile forces could have been dispensed with, and that they still can be dispensed with, at present.

As for what can be done at the present time, that is just what is being fought out. But there are two parties to the issue, the higher consciousness and the earth consciousness, the latter largely represented by the sadhaks here. If the earth consciousness is ready an easy descent is quite possible, but if it resists, then there is in the nature of things difficulty and struggle and the Asuric forces have their chance.

25 December 1933

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It may be that a God-man was created first. But by “interference” he degenerated into the present man in his surface mental and vital consciousness. And this same spirit of a self-contradictory hostile nature created in his surface consciousness the *exclusive Avidya* (*vide Bible, Book of Genesis*).

I am not aware of it—not on this earth at any rate. If he was a God-man, why did he allow the interference and degeneration in himself? The Bible to which you refer supposes Adam to have been innocent but ignorant in the beginning.

In 1926 you said that this creation was not intended to be as it is, but that a self-contradictory spirit interfered at a certain stage and perverted it.

My statement does not bear the meaning you give it.

Supposing that this physical body has evolved on this planet in the way understood by Darwin . . .

It has nothing to do with Darwin.

yet it seems from inner knowledge that it was essentially an action of the Supermind below, the Supermind above and the psychic being, and all the struggle and difficulty and delay that we see was caused by adverse forces of a consciousness of a self-contradictory nature.

I have no inner knowledge to that effect—that it was intended to be worked out by these three forces alone.

The whole thing looks like an intended perfect manifestation perverted in its surface mental and vital consciousness by the power of a self-contradictory hostile nature that was a possibility of God's being.

If it started from the Inconscience, it could not be a perfect manifestation from the beginning.

You say [*p. 641*] that in a supramental manifestation matter would not have been necessary. I suppose you meant that the darkness of matter was not necessary.

It would have been not matter but supramental substance.

You say that permission was given to the hostile forces to pervert the creation by a sort of beautiful Asuric stress.

What is this word beautiful? I never used it and it is an absurd epithet.

Also it seems that in this Asrama the hostile forces were allowed to move and play with the idea of testing the sadhaks.

Not at all—it is a law that grew up in the world, as I have said clearly, it seems to me, and as this Asram is part of the world, it worked here also.

At least the dangers of the hostile forces were not pointed out as clearly as they should have been.

That is false.

I for my part am not prepared to bear any part of the burden of transformation of the hostile forces.

So much the better. I am not asking anybody to transform the Asuras—I am only asking them to reject them.

I spoke of having seen and heard someone who showed me how he had organised, in the being of every sadhak here, a “dark being” veiling his “divine being”.

I do not know what you mean by this someone. The existence of a double being is a preexistent fact, it has not been organised by anyone here.

I am not aware that the condition of anyone in the Asrama was or is as difficult as mine since I have come to this house.

That is your ignorance. There were many others.

By my observation I have found it was not so.

Your observation is incorrect.

And it is my conviction that the sort of attack I have undergone cannot last when a man is with others and is busy with collective work.

I do not accept your idea of the origin of the attacks on you as correct.

I am neither for delay nor for incurring more danger for the sake of the dogma that we have to accept everything that is in the creation . . .

It is a practical fact, not a dogma—we have to proceed from what it is, not from what we would like it to have been.

and in the way chalked out by another.

Who is this other?

My greatest urge is to go up and see the truth in its own home.

There is no objection to that, but it is not so easily done—at least to my experience. Those who have tried it in a rush have not had very good results.

This I can best do by your grace, and by your answering my questions.

I don't see how my answers can do that—since you stick to your own view of the matter.

You once said that the ascension to the supermind and individual transformation must precede the manifestation of the Sangha. But why did you allow the Sangha to manifest before this condition was fulfilled?

Which Sangha? I have never called this Asram the Sangha. The Asram is a field of growth, not a manifestation of perfection.

Is there no possibility of an individual rising up to the Supramental separately, and then turning down towards manifestation with a fuller light, knowledge, power and joy, individually?

There is no possibility of shooting up suddenly to the Supermind—one has to go step by step—though it may be done more or less quickly—but not with any railway-train speed. Nor is it possible for the supramental to descend without a preparation of the lower parts.

Have you still the idea of transforming the hostile forces? If so, how?

I do not know what you mean by the transformation of the hostile forces. It is the lower nature that has to be transformed into the higher nature. The object of the Yoga is the transformation of terrestrial beings, not of the Asuras.

Is it not possible again to begin the sadhana of ascension to the higher mind and supermind and work out the transformation below *just as you did for yourself*, keeping this outward and inward Sangha formation, if possible, though curtailing the outward work to a minimum or for the greater need and purpose of the Truth giving it up temporarily?

That is an ignorant and incorrect statement of our sadhana.

Since the Chandernagore [*i.e. the Prabartak Sangha*] experience, it has always seemed to me that the best way of sadhana would be to rise to the *vijnāna* individually, to transform oneself personally, and then, when all was perfect to create or allow the Sangha to descend.

I do not know what you mean by a Sangha descending—it is the Supermind that has to descend.

This transformation cannot be done individually in a solitary way only—if it were possible we would not have undertaken the burden of maintaining this Asram.

It appears from all you have written that you do not accept my knowledge but have ideas and principles of sadhana of your own. My knowledge and action are based on the actual facts of the universe and the relation of the higher Truth with these as I have found them. If you have a knowledge superior to mine and a greater way of action, there is no necessity for these questions.

4 January 1934

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The forces compelled Adam—who does not seem to have possessed a great knowledge about the wiles of the hostile forces—to fall.

It means that he was ignorant and not merely innocent.

From your statement it is obvious that at a certain stage of the manifestation the hostile forces interfered but that up to that stage the manifestation was perfect.

Not at all. If it had been perfect, there would have been no need of evolution.

This supports the idea that a perfect manifestation was intended from the very beginning.

An unperverted manifestation is not necessarily a perfect manifestation — it may be unperverted but still imperfect.

You have not taken exception to my statement that the *exclusive* Avidya is not present in the inner vital and mental.

It depends on what you mean by Avidya. They are not inconscient like Matter, but until the higher knowledge comes, they are in the Ignorance.

I do not understand what you mean by "It has nothing to do with Darwin."

The evolution I speak of is not the evolution of the Darwinian theory.

I understand that the interference of the Avidya or the hostile forces were the causes of man's degeneration and delay in his evolution and that they were not helping forces as such, even indirectly.

They did not intend to be helping forces, but they have been obliged to help in certain ways.

Psychic innocence is a great perfection by itself.

What is psychic innocence after all?

You have not taken exception to my statement about Vidya and Avidya.

These are terms which one can use in different senses. There is no Avidya in the highest planes, if by Avidya you mean Ignorance.

You have not taken exception to my statement about the great pain created in the universe by the interference of the hostile forces in the life of man.

I have not accepted it.

Once pain is in the world and a main part of its working it cannot be got rid of arbitrarily by ignoring it or by a simple surgical operation of cutting out its source. It is the mind with its summary conclusions that thinks the complex knot of things can be dealt with by a simple cut—in fact it is not so.

The Mother has spoken many times of hostile forces that came here after the descent for transformation. In fact, she had transformed one hostile being who was present in the Asrama.

A transformed hostile being or one who wants to be transformed is no longer hostile. It is simply a power of the vital world which places itself at the service of the Divine. Hostility consists in opposing the Divine Light and fighting against the transformation of the earth consciousness.

But in any case the Mother never spoke of such transformation as the object of the sadhana or the Asrama.

You have not said anything about several of my questions and statements.

There are many things you have written about which I have not said anything but which I do not endorse. It is impossible for me with my limited time to answer such a long series of questions in detail.

After the descent, the Mother spoke of the Asrama as the spiritual cell (the word is mine) and Sangha.

The Mother was not in the habit of using the word sangha, I think.

9 January 1934

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A natural unfolding of the consciousness in manifestation from an involved state is quite a beautiful phenomenon.

No doubt—but when the evolution had to express the possibilities of an emergence from the Inconscience, it was not easy to materialise a flawless unfolding—since out of Inconscience came Ignorance and Ignorance is easily a field of deviation and error.

Probably you spoke of a psychological evolution whereas Darwin spoke of the evolution of the physical species.

Quite so. Many centuries before Darwin Puranic and Tantric writers spoke very explicitly of an evolution of the soul's birth through the vegetable and animal to man.

Psychic innocence is psychic existence in the eight planes of consciousness, manifestly.

Innocence has two meanings—sinlessness and ignorance. The psychic innocence is not an ignorant condition.

An ordinary vital being or a hostile vital being driven into the Asrama atmosphere by some presence from above or otherwise may at any time open to its own world and source in its darker aspects and then become the cause of much disturbance in the sadhana.

That does not apply to a converted Asura. The others are not driven—wherever sadhana is going on, they come to disturb it—a fact known to the Yogis and Rishis from early times.

Forced opening by a vital or a hostile force means a forced opening and entering of the same force in our mental, vital, physical body.

If you mean an invasion of the consciousness by a hostile force, that happens—but it cannot succeed unless something in the sadhaka either welcomes the invasion or is somehow attracted or won over or somehow responds. As for the ordinary attack not amounting to an opening, that nobody escapes.

In your reply of 4 January, you wrote: "That is an ignorant and incorrect statement of our sadhana" [p. 649]. Could you please clarify this?

I said that was an incorrect statement of my sadhana. I did not start by ascension to the supermind—I fought out the difficulties of the mind and vital first in such a way as to make it possible for not only the higher mind but the intuition and overmind to descend. The supermind comes last of all. 16 January 1934

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Inconscience is the involved state of the Sachchidananda. It is all-knowing, only the knowledge is involved. In Inconscience there need not be an exclusive *avidyā*, neither is it necessary for involving the Supraconsciousness.

In that case there is no exclusive Avidya anywhere—for wherever there is Ignorance, there is also the all-knowledge involved in it.

The condition of innocence realised by Christian saints and mystics was a psychic state of perfect self-surrender to and oneness with God on every plane of consciousness. But that perfection is not a state of Ignorance. Achieved in its fullness, it is *as good as* a state of supramental perfection—the difference being only in the basis, movement and *aiśvarya*.

Not at all. If it were then there would be no use of seeking for the descent of the supermind. A condition which one cannot retain by the inherent light and power of the Knowledge Will in it is not the supermind as I know it.

Sri Krishna when asked by Arjuna after the destruction of the Yadavas to repeat the sacred lore of the Gita, replied that the teaching of the Gita came into him once but that it was no more and he could not repeat it. Can one who has attained to the supermind fall?

Srikrishna did not say that he was in the supermind when he spoke the Gita to Arjuna—he was in Yoga, but one can be in

Yoga without being in the Supermind. So this is not a point in instance.

The only way to avoid the “fall” is to preserve oneself by a supreme knowledge and strength that refuses submission even to God if some part of His being should draw one down the path of darkness; and to correct this world-movement at its very source.

I am not aware of any state of supreme knowledge in which the separative ego or the individual becomes greater in knowledge and will than the Divine or can by his own separate power overcome the Divine Will and correct the world movement.

In the supermind there is not this division of one part of the being of God willing something and some other part fighting against it. There all is viewed from an integral vision and founded on a harmony in the being — how this works out cannot be fixed by the mind, which lives and acts in division. If there is no such integral supermind, then I have nothing to do here and will leave it to greater Minds to solve the problem in their own way.

When did the hostile forces begin their work of perversion — at the time of mental, vital or physical manifestation?

As soon as Life was to appear, they intervened in it.

A converted Asura, i.e. one who has consented to be God’s ally and undergo transformation, may easily change colour and become hostile. In fact, the Mother writes in her *Prayers* of some Asuras who promised to be God’s servants, but did not keep their promise as they wanted to lord it over others.²

The Mother was not speaking of any Asuras called into the Ashram and imposed on some human being there who was to bear the burden of his transformation. She was speaking of certain

² *The Mother, Prayers and Meditations (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003)*, p. 223.

Lords of the Vital who had taken birth in earthly bodies and tried to prepare the Divine Descent, but each imagining that he alone was the chosen instrument of the Force, spoiled the work they could have done. It was outside the Asram that this originally happened—only the Mother found the same mentality still persisting and interfering with the manifestation of the Force. But it had no reference to the converted Asura who tried to come here in his subtle Form of whom I spoke—that was many years afterwards—and he did not change colour or become hostile. Any other case of Asuric intervention was due to an affinity in the sadhak himself or a call from him—as in the case of X who was always calling Asuras into himself to convert them and although discouraged by us persisted thinking that he had himself a truer knowledge than we of what was wanted for the work. But again I have not known of any Asura who had accepted submission to the Divine becoming hostile. It is men who are under the influence of truly hostile beings who become like that.

The hostile beings generally attack, then make some way in, lay siege and create conditions for invasion and ultimately lead or compel the human being to fall.

I am quite aware of the way in which the unconverted hostile beings, who have a hostile intention, get inside—there have been plenty of cases like that, and their method besides has been known by occultists and Yogins all through the ages. As for attacks, they can attack anybody. Christ and Buddha too had to bear the assaults of the Asura. But invasion in a man is only possible if there is something in him that gives a response and opens the gate.

What I would like to know is whether all this can be done individually.

I do not seize the significance of the question. It has to be done in each individual—otherwise it cannot be done in the collective at all. But there can be a general descent of the Force by which

each can profit to have it done in him if he is ready or when he is ready.

25 January 1934

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Summing up, I understand you to say:

- (1) That the hostile forces were permitted by God to pervert this creation at the time of the evolution of the human type.

No, I said "when life began to appear", that is before the human evolution.

- (2) That when the supermind comes down and manifests itself in the transformed earth consciousness they will go away or be driven out as there would be no need of their presence in this creation or Asrama,

No possibility either, if the supermind is once dominant.

- (3) for here they serve some purpose (which I have not quite understood).

The purpose they serve *in the world* is to give a full chance to the possibilities of the Inconscience and Ignorance — for this world was meant to be a working out of these possibilities with the supramental harmonisation as its eventual outcome. The life, the work developing here in the Asram has to deal with the world problem and had therefore to meet, it could not avoid, the conflict with the working of the hostile Powers in the human being.

- (4) That you did not allow any hostile being in the Asrama, except one converted Asura, and that no Asura owing allegiance to you had turned hostile.

We did not call any. The converted one too came but did not remain, so he too does not count.

- (5) Outside the Asrama some Lords of the vital world took birth on this earth, saying that they would serve God, but in

fact lorded it over others. But these were not Asuric forces though they were so called in the book.³

I said nothing about their not being Asuras. I said those to whom the Mother referred were not Asuras who had manifested in the Asram, but outside the Asram and before it was formed—as human beings who wanted to help and prepare the Divine Advent but spoiled their work, not by hostility, but by egoism—just as human beings with an Asuric temperament often do.

(6) The transformation of hostile beings is no part of the Yogi's work—though Mother transformed one. No such thing had been done in the Asrama or will be done.

The Mother's transforming one Asura was an incident, not an object of the Yoga.

I have not said either that it will not be done. If the Divine demands it, it will be done; if not, it won't be; but in any case it is not an object of the Yoga.

(7) That the Supermind can be attained individually though a force may descend by which men can profit according to the self-preparation—though you once said that it could not be done individually.

You have missed altogether the qualifying words which I put with great care and prominent emphasis—if you don't read carefully, you will necessarily misunderstand what I write. I said "*This transformation cannot be done individually in a solitary way only*" [p. 649]. No individual solitary transformation apart from the work for the earth (which means more than any individual transformation) would be either possible or useful. (Also no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the Yoga to create an individual superman here and there.) The object of the Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness

³ The "book" referred to here is apparently the Mother's Prayers and Meditations. See footnote 2 on page 654.—Ed.

on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life. Therefore the existence of the Asram, whatever difficulties it created for ourselves or for the individual, was inevitable. The method was the preparation of the earth consciousness in the human being as represented by the members of the Asram and others (with also a certain working in the general earth consciousness) so as to make the descent of the supramental Force possible. That Force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion.

(8) This world was originally intended to be an evolution out of ignorance in matter to knowledge through struggle and duality. Thus there was no original divine creation in the image of Heaven, or an original Satya Yuga.

It is quite possible that there have been periods of harmony on different levels, not supramental, which were afterwards disturbed — but those could only be a stage or resting place in a world of spiritual evolution out of the Ignorance.

(9) That a perfect manifestation is quite possible without need of evolution. But you have not said anything about whether an unfolding of the Inconscience (involved Sat-Chit-Ananda) without ignorance is possible.

I don't see how there can be, given the starting point of the Inconscience. An unfolding of anything involved must necessarily be an evolution.

(10) As for Krishna, he was God, who is everything consciously not excluding the Vijnana (the Supermind).

I have said nothing about that.

31 January 1934

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In a letter of November 1933 [p. 639], you wrote that the intervention of the hostile forces was no longer necessary. But it seems that they have come full force this year and driven several people away. That suggests that the hostile forces will remain for ever—or at least until the final transformation.

When I said “no more necessary”, I did not mean that their action could not go on—I think I expressly said that if the sadhaks persisted in opening themselves to it, it would continue. There is a difference between the action of the hostile powers and the ordinary action of the lower nature. The latter of course goes on until it is changed but there is no necessity for it to take the form of hostile attacks and upsettings; it can be treated as a machinery that has to be set right and with the aid of the higher Light and Power can be set right. There are several who were once taken by hostile attacks who have now reached the point where they can follow this method, others are approaching it—some of course have always followed and never were attacked, at least in their mind and vital. But there are still many who are very far from it and so the action of the Hostiles continues. 14 October 1935

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There can be no question that it is a most desirable thing that the hostile forces should be destroyed or ejected from the Asram atmosphere and from all hold on the lower vital and physical of the sadhaks—the sooner the better. For the moment they are still able to resist and to keep up the disharmony in this part of Nature. It is only when they do so no more that the capital difficulty in the general sadhana will be over. 9 May 1936

Retirement and Progress in Yoga

Would not rejection of the problems of the lower vital be better done in retirement?

It is very doubtful. Our experience is that, generally, it does not succeed very well. Sometimes there is a great improvement so long as the person remains sequestered but it does not stand the test of again coming out into contact with others. Sometimes it

has led to an exalted inner activity, occasionally sound but often too unsound, the sadhak in retirement losing in the latter case the power of discrimination between subjective formations and valid truths of fact (X and others). In other cases the result has been a complete failure (Y, Z). As a general rule we consider it safer at the very least to combine some activity of outer life with retirement if any is made.

2 December 1933

*

Mother does not at all approve of the idea of complete retirement. It does not bring the control, only an illusion of a control because the untoward causes are removed for a time. It is a control established while in contact with the outward things that is alone genuine. You must establish that from within by a fixed resolution and practice. Too much mixing and too much talk should be avoided, but a complete retirement is not the thing. It has not had the required result with anyone so far.

27 November 1936

Lack of Intensity in Sadhana

I have been thinking again about the general sadhana in the Ashram, how the intenser attitude of sincerity in all would bring an earlier victory. Does such thinking about others bring any difficulty in one's sadhana? Is it better to stick to one's own sadhana?

No — it is very good — there are few who have that in any intensity — if there were more, it might hasten things. 27 June 1933

*

How is it that there is so little intensity of devotion here? Is it because there is more insistence on controlling emotions or because of constant Sadhana and the integral movement?

It is true that devotion here is very insufficient — but these cannot be the reasons, for psychic emotion is not discouraged by us and the integral Sadhana is not integral without bhakti. And yet it is a fact that those who come here full of bhakti lose much of

it after a time — with a few exceptions. I think it is because of the prevalence of a too positive mind and the habit of criticising everything from a quite external point of view which is rife in the atmosphere.

5 August 1933

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We have very little devotion and obedience compared to the disciples of Shankara and Buddha or the followers of old yogic disciplines, even though a greater discipline is needed because our aim is higher. This is perhaps due to the fact that you do not impose any discipline. Or perhaps there is a fundamental defect in our aspiration because of the western education many have had. I wonder if Shankara or Buddha or Mahavir would have allowed many of the things we do here.

They would not. All the causes you mention operate — perhaps the westernised atmosphere (even more than the education) of the present times is the strongest, but also the nature of the work to be done.

3 April 1934

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I feel that many have become "soft" after they come here. Is there something in the Yoga itself that makes them soft?

Nothing in the sadhana. It is because their desires had only been limited by poverty and, as soon as the poverty is removed, the desires come surging up. As for the self-imposed renunciation of desire which is of primary importance in this Yoga, only a few ever think of it.

13 June 1934

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If the Force cannot bring definite and lasting fruit without our individual endeavour, don't you think at least half the sadhaks here will remain in the mud for long if not for ever? Half of them don't seem to want to make any steady personal effort. They depend on the action of your Force alone.

That is why the Asram is what it is. Only those who are taking the Yoga seriously are making any progress. 17 November 1936

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How is it that people here become more soft than in ordinary life and a little hardship or discomfort becomes unbearable? Is it because they live a life of ease here doing no physical work?

What you have noticed is quite correct. It comes from a wrong movement which takes the rejection of asceticism as if it were a sanction for the indulgence of the body in whatever comfort it can get. The right principle is that one should be free from attachment and be able to do without things but also able to have them and use them without being bound or affected. Very few have taken it in that way — the vital has chosen to turn a deaf ear to anything said in that direction and to take as a right the comforts and conveniences given. What you have noted is one of the consequences.

December 1936

Egoism among Sadhaks

I have heard that some people here have gigantic egos, like X and Y, while some have fat egos, like Z. What sort of ego do I have?

Your ego is small and not gigantic — not tall and vehement and aggressive like Y's, but squat and inertly obstinate — not fat, completely, nor thin, but short and roundish and grey in colour.

3 November 1935

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I looked up "squat" in the dictionary but could not guess which definition applied to my ego.

Squat = short in stature but broad and substantial, so difficult to get rid of.

You write: "not fat, completely, nor thin, but short and roundish and grey in colour." What do all these symbols stand for?

Not tall and preeminent or flourishly settled in self-fullness — roundish = plenty of it all the same

Grey = tamasic in tendency, therefore not aggressive, but

obstinate in persistence. But these are not symbols, they are the temperamental figure of the ego.

5 November 1935

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Nowadays I find ego in every little act or feeling. Formerly I saw it only when I acted with desire or pride.

Perhaps because then you were looking for ego only in the form which people specially call egoism, i.e. pride, vanity, selfishness, insistence on vital satisfactions. But ego is of all kinds—and you are only just now finding it out.

Half my being is trying hard to reject the sense of ego, while the ego itself colours all my actions. This contradiction creates an inner pain. Will the ego never be dissolved completely?

There is nothing to be troubled about. You ought rather to congratulate yourself that you have become conscious. Very few people in this Asram are. They are all ego-centric and they do not realise their ego-centricity. Even in their sadhana the I is always there,—*my* sadhana, *my* progress, *my* everything. The remedy is to think constantly of the Divine, not of oneself, to work, act, do sadhana for the Divine,—not to consider how this or that affects *me* personally, not claim anything, but to refer all to the Divine. It will take time to do that sincerely and thoroughly, but it is the proper way.

31 March 1936

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Many here seem to be proud of their surrender— even though they know that surrender and ego do not go together.

But who has got rid of ego in this Asram? To get rid of ego is as difficult as to make a complete surrender.

10 August 1936

Conversion, Realisation and Transformation

Today the Mother spoke to me of “conversion of consciousness” as distinct from “transformation of physical nature”.

Pointing to me she said, as for “the conversion of consciousness, it is there”. Did she mean, by implication, that all those who have gathered round Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have this “conversion of consciousness” — perhaps in varying degrees?

No. Those who come here have an aspiration and a possibility; something in their psychic being pushes and if they follow it, they will arrive; but that is not conversion. Conversion is a definite turning of the being away from lower things towards the Divine.

Can it be further explained in terms of the psychic being and its relation to the instrumental (nature) being?

It is certainly the psychic being turning the nature definitively Godwards, but the transformation has still to be worked out in the nature.

Or can it be said that whoever has some aspiration for the Light or Truth or God vaguely, has some sort of conversion of consciousness, for the reason that he has come to the Ashram and lives here?

No. Aspiration can lead hereafter to conversion; but aspiration is not conversion.

Mother spoke of three different things: conversion, the turning of the soul decisively towards the Divine, — inner realisation of the Divine, — transformation of the nature. The first two can happen swiftly and suddenly and once for all, the third always takes time and cannot be done at one stroke, in a moment. One may become aware of a rapid change in this or that detail of the transformation, but even this is a rapid result of a long working.

3 September 1937

Ashram Sadhaks and the Supramental Realisation

One day, while I was thinking that I would have to fulfil certain conditions before I could be saved from Ignorance, a strong feeling came to me from you that I need not fulfil any

condition, but that you would save me by a special Grace.
Was there any truth to what I felt?

I certainly gave you no such message or promise as you describe. You may have picked up something that was in my atmosphere, but, once again, your mental transcription of it was wrong—and turned it into something quite different from the truth. It may or may not be, although no promise of the kind can be made at the present moment, that you or other sadhakas here or all will be brought through in the end by the divine grace in spite of the very serious difficulties created by your and their external being and the obstinate obscurities and resistance in its crooked human nature. But in any case, to say that “you need not fulfil any condition” is a flagrant error. It is the old mischievous suggestion of an inert passivity to all influences as the true surrender and, if accepted, would legitimate every wrong movement of the nature. First, certain conditions have to be fulfilled; afterwards, there will be room for the divine grace to act.

18 October 1928

*

I have heard that sadhaks here will have perfect control over decay and death. I have some doubts about this. Could you say something about it?

It depends on the Supramental and on the Divine's will in the sadhak. All that can be said is that to conquer disease and death is part of the total physical perfection. But as to other matters nothing can be said as yet.

13 September 1933

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You wrote to X, “It is the first step and perhaps for some it may be sufficient, for we are not asking everybody to become supramental.” Do you mean everybody in this Asram?

Yes. Only it does not mean that anybody here is debarred from the supramental consciousness or the physical transformation—if he wants it. It is not a question of possibility, but of the need and aspiration in the nature.

21 September 1934

Realisations by Sadhaks

I have all but made up my mind to give up the sadhana. I find it very humiliating to be reminded every month that I am far from the cosmic consciousness. In the midst of all my troubles, I have lost faith. Do you think it is of any use to keep me here?

When you have got out of this attack, you will yourself recognise the emptiness of such a question. You have the Yogic capacity in you as your experiences show and it is not by going away from here that you will develop it.

I do not understand why it should be insulting to speak always of the cosmic consciousness and the necessity of its settling down. I mean by it the living in the sense of the cosmic Self and the experience of the cosmic forces. A certain number here have contact with that, very few have it as a constant realisation, none have it perfected and fixed in all their being. As for going above it there are grades in the cosmic consciousness and one can go above the cosmic mental and rise as far as the overmind. But that also is still the cosmic consciousness. 15 September 1934

*

I sometimes wonder whether anyone here is attaining anything at all? Has anyone realised the Divine? Please don't ask me what I mean by the Divine.

Why shouldn't I ask? If you mean the Vedantic realisation, several have had it. Bhakti realisation also. If I were to publish the letters on sadhana experiences that have come to me, people would marvel and think that the Ashram was packed full of great Yogis! Those who know something about Yoga would not mind about the dark periods, eclipses, hostile attacks, despairings, falls, for they know that these things happen to Yogis. Even the failures would have become Gurus, if I had allowed it, with circles of Shishyas! X did become one. Y of course. But all that does not count here, because what is a full realisation outside, is here only a faint beginning of siddhi. Here the test is transformation of the nature, psychic, spiritual, finally supramental. That and

nothing else is what makes it so difficult.

20 May 1936

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Is it only for physical transformation that staying here is necessary? Otherwise sincere sadhana can be done elsewhere as well as here.

I don't suppose the later stages of the transformation including the physical would be possible elsewhere. In fact in those outside none of the three transformations seems to have begun. They are all preparing. Here there are at least a few who have started one or two of them. Only that does not show outside. The physical or external alone shows outside.

11 April 1937

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People here—the Toms, Dicks and Harrys, who would be nowhere beside X in the outside world and who would simply have rotted in the gutter if they hadn't found shelter here—even such people criticise him.

The quality of the sadhaks is so low? I should say there is a considerable amount of ability and capacity in the Asram. Only the standard demanded is higher than outside even in spiritual matters. There are half a dozen people here perhaps who live in the Brahman consciousness—outside they would make a big noise and be considered as great Yogis—here their condition is not known and in the Yoga it is regarded not as siddhi but only as a beginning.

12 July 1937

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What the deuce is "Brahman consciousness"? The same as cosmic consciousness? Does one come to that after your psychic and spiritual transformation?

Is it something like seeing Brahman in everybody and everywhere or what? It is not spiritual realisation, I suppose, I mean realisation of Self? You see I am a nincompoop in this business. Please perorate a little.

Eternal Jehovah! you don't even know what Brahman is! You

will next be asking me what Yoga is or what life is or what body is or what mind is or what sadhana is! No, sir, I am not proposing to teach an infant class the A-B-C of the elementary conceptions which are the basis of Yoga. There is X too who doesn't know what consciousness is, even!

Brahman, sir, is the name given by Indian philosophy since the beginning of time to the one Reality eternal and infinite which is the Self, the Divine, the All, the more than All, which would remain even if you and everybody and everything else in existence or imagining itself to be in existence vanished into blazes—even if this whole universe disappeared, Brahman would be safely there and nothing whatever lost. In fact, sir, you are Brahman and you are only pretending to be Y; when Z is translating X's poetry into Bengali, it is really Brahman translating Brahman's Brahman into Brahman. When X asks me what consciousness is, it is really Brahman asking Brahman what Brahman is! There, sir, I hope you are satisfied now.

To be less drastic and refrain from making your head reel till it goes off your shoulders, I may say that a realisation of the Self is the beginning of Brahman realisation;—the Brahman consciousness—the Self in all and all in the Self etc. It is the basis of the spiritual realisation and therefore of the spiritual transformation; but one has to see it in all sorts of aspects and applications first and that I refuse to go into. If you want to know you have to read the *Arya*.

Is living in that consciousness an ideal condition for receiving the supramental descent?

It is a necessary condition.

I ask because I heard that no one here was prepared for this supramental descent.

Of course not, this realisation of the Self as all and the Divine as all is only the first step.

Is that the height of realisation achieved here so far among sadhaks? What is the next step?

The next step is to get into contact with the higher planes above spiritual mind — for as soon as one gets into the spiritual Mind or Higher Mind, this realisation is possible.

Now the big question is: Is the realisation of the Self a state of perpetual peace, joy and bliss?

If it is thoroughly established, it is one of *internal* peace, freedom, wideness, in the inner being.

Is it a state surpassing all struggles, dualities and depressions?

All these things you mention become incidents in the external being, on the surface — but the inner being remains untouched by them.

Are all troubles of the lower nature conquered finally — especially sex?

No, sir. But the inner being is not touched.

Or is it that sex-desire rises up in the Yogis, but leaves them untouched, unscathed? No attraction for them? It must be so, otherwise how can they be called *siddhas*? No danger of a fall from the spiritual state?

It may be covered up in a way — so long as it is not established in all parts of the being. The old Yogis did not consider that necessary, because they wanted to walk off, not to change the being.

Why do you call it a beginning only? What more do you want to do except perhaps physical transformation?

I want to effect the transformation of the whole nature (not only of the physical) — that's why.

And lastly can you whisper to me the names of those lucky fellows, those "half a dozen people" [p. 667], so that I can have a practical knowledge of what that blessed thing — "the Brahman consciousness" — is like?

NO, SIR.

How can you have a practical knowledge of it by knowing who has it? You might just as well expect to have a practical knowledge of high mathematics by knowing that Einstein is a great mathematician. Queer ideas you have!

Are they *A?* *B?* *C?* *D?* *E?* *F?* — but he can't be for he is a Brahma himself, so keeps himself secluded like Him, no?

???????

18 July 1937

"Advanced Sadhaks"

X is an advanced sadhak? This word "advanced" has no sense, it merely feeds the egoism of those who apply it to themselves.

*

The Mother never speaks of advanced sadhaks — it is the sadhaks themselves who have invented the phrase. Whenever they used it in their letters to me, I have thrown ridicule on the phrase and said I have no knowledge of there being two classes in the Asram, one of advanced sadhaks and the other of non-advanced sadhaks. So the question about X does not arise. If a sadhak, whoever he may be, speaks or acts out of anger, rajasic violence or any other unYogic impulse, his speech or action is contrary to the spirit of the sadhana.

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Yes, you should learn not to be perturbed by talk of this kind from whomsoever it proceeds; I think I have already tried to put you on your guard against listening to "advanced sadhaks" or taking these pronouncements of theirs as authoritative statements of the aims and conditions of the Yoga. Why this claim

to be an advanced sadhak and what is the sense of it? it resolves itself into an egoistic assertion of superiority over others which is not justified so long as there is the egoism and the need of assertion — accompanied, as it always is, by a weakness and turbid imperfection which belie the claim of living in a superior consciousness to the “unadvanced” sadhaks. It is time these crudities disappeared from the Asram atmosphere. 3 February 1932

*

Wouldn’t it be best if people did not think of themselves as being more advanced than others? It is enough to know that we are on the right path.

Yes, the talk about advanced sadhaks is a thing I have always discouraged — but people go on because that appeals to the vital ego. 13 May 1935

*

I understand your protesting against “great” or “big” sadhaks, but why against “advanced” sadhaks? Is it not a fact that some are more advanced than others? If we speak of X as an advanced sadhak, we don’t mean anything else.

Advanced indeed! Pshaw! Because one is 3 inches ahead of another, you must make classes of advanced and non-advanced? Advanced has the same puffing egoistic resonance as “great” or “big”. It leads to all sorts of stupidities — rajasic self-appreciating egoism in some, tamasic self-deprecating egoism in others, round-eyed wonderings why X, an advanced sadhak, one 3 inches ahead of Y, should stumble, tumble or fumble while Y, 3 inches behind X, still plods heavily and steadily on, etc. etc. Why, sir, the very idea in X that he is an advanced sadhak (like the Pharisee, “I thank thee, O Lord, that I am not as other unadvanced disciples”,) would be enough to make him fumble, stumble and tumble. So no more of that, sir, no more of that. 25 September 1935

Discipline in the Ashram

Discipline Defined

What is discipline?

To act according to a standard of Truth or a rule or law of action (dharma) or in obedience to a superior authority or to the highest principles discovered by the reason and intelligent will and not according to one's own fancy, vital impulses and desires. In Yoga obedience to the Guru or to the Divine and the law of the Truth as declared by the Guru is the foundation of discipline.

12 June 1933

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What is discipline and how does it apply here, in our Yoga?

It is not the discipline of Yoga, but the discipline of an organisation, the exterior material discipline one has to accept if one is to be part of an organisation.

9 July 1933

*

What is discipline?

To live and act under control or according to a standard of what is right—not to allow the vital or the physical to do whatever they like and not to let the mind run about according to its fancy without truth or order. Also to obey those who ought to be obeyed.

July 1933

Need of Self-Discipline

In the outside world there is a mental and social control and also the absorption in other things. Here you are left alone with your own consciousness and have to replace the mental and outward

control by an inner self-control of the spirit. 1 December 1933

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If there was a perception of the difficulties in the adhar, it ought to have moved you to a more strenuous effort, a deeper call on the help and Grace. To indulge in a bout of gross material self-indulgence was a quite imbecile solution. It is true that the Grace is there for all who aspire and, however one may stumble, if there is a sincere repentance and a will to atone, there need be no cause for despair.

But I must remind you that that is only the individual aspect. There is here an Asram, a group of seekers of the Divine Truth with a collective existence and aim; a work is being done for the Divine against great difficulties and in the midst of a hostile and censorious world which is only too glad of any pretext for assailing it and, if possible, injuring its fair fame and success. A conduct like this deals a wound to the work and the collective effort towards a higher life. Your proposed escape from your own fall by suicide would not have been a solution and would only do a still greater injury to the divine Work which is, as much as individual realisation, our spiritual endeavour.

I trust that you are sincere in saying that these things are finished for ever. If you had not confessed, the Mother would have been obliged to deal severely with you; but as you have confessed, this lapse may be considered as annulled, provided it is never repeated. A greater frankness and sincerity in laying yourself open to the Mother will help you avoid such aberrations in future.

There is no reason why you should not succeed in your sadhana if, having seen the defects of your lower nature, you take a firm resolve in future and keep it to be more strict with yourself, more trustful in the Divine Grace, more sincerely open to the Mother.

10 September 1933

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Some [personal] rules I have been following — not reading newspapers, not eating outside, and so forth — now seem like mental dogmas.

Rules like these are intended to help the vital and physical to come under the discipline of sadhana and not get dispersed in fancies, impulses, self-indulgences; but they must be done simply, not with any sense of superiority or ascetic pride, but as a mere matter of course. It is true also that they can be made the occasion of a too great mental rigidity — as if they were things of supreme importance *in themselves* and not only a means. Put in their right place and done in the right spirit, they can be very helpful for their purpose.

8 May 1934

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I have read your letter. What you write is true; X has said these things in order to help you and put you in the right way. A certain inner and outer discipline is necessary in order that one may grow into the spirit of the Yoga and the natural impulses of the vital cannot be a guide to action there. One has to perceive what one should or should not do and impose this discipline on oneself; for that X's advice and guidance can be of great help to you.

20 October 1936

Importance of Obedience

In regard to obedience, X told Y, in a depreciatory way, that it was not that important, that asking for permission to do things was not necessarily surrender, but often was hypocritical.

It seems to me that one obeys rules because if one was to do the opposite, one would go out of your protection.

It is precisely that — one immediately goes out of the protection.

As far as I can see, right action and right movement (after asking you what is right) are rather the first bases of sadhana.

Yes, quite right.

Please cast some light on this, so that I can explain it to Y.

It is a deficiency of psychic perception and spiritual discrimination that makes people speak like that and ignore the importance of obedience. It is the mind wanting to follow its own way of thinking and the vital seeking freedom for its desires which argue in this manner. If you do not follow the rules laid down by the spiritual guide or obey one who is leading you to the Divine, then what or whom are you to follow? Only the ideas of the individual mind and the desires of the vital: but these things never lead to siddhi in Yoga. The rules are laid down in order to guard against certain influences and their dangers and to keep a right atmosphere in the Asram favourable to spiritual development; the obedience is necessary so as to get away from one's own mind and vital and learn to follow the Truth.

8 June 1933

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All your comments seem to rise from the fact that you object to discipline, rule and order. That seems to be the general mind of the Asram. Each must be allowed to follow his own inclination, convenience or "common sense". Those who insist on stemming the chaos of vital indiscipline and disorder are martinets like X or capricious and tyrannical like the Mother. October 1933

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What most want is that things should be done according to their desire without check or reference. The talk of perfection is humbug. Perfection does not consist in everybody being a law to himself. Perfection comes by renunciation of desires and surrender to a higher Will. 5 August 1934

Rules in the Life of the Ashram

No Fixed Rules

The Asram, not being a public institution, has no prospectus or fixed set of rules. It is directed by the Mother according to what she sees to be necessary for each individual and for the work as a whole.

19 March 1930

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I request you to furnish me with the rules and regulations necessary for becoming a member of the Ashram.

Tell him that there are no public rules and regulations for the Asram, as it is not a public institution.¹ Only some of Sri Aurobindo's disciples who are considered ready or called to the Asram life are admitted. At present however no admissions are being made, as the accommodation capacity of the Asram is exhausted and there is no possibility just now of expanding it.

25 December 1934

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What seems to me of more importance is to try to explain how things are worked out here. Indeed very few are the people who understand it and still fewer those who realise it.

There has never been, at any time, a mental plan, a fixed programme or an organisation decided beforehand. The whole thing has taken birth, grown and developed as a living being by a movement of consciousness (Chit-tapas) constantly maintained, increased and fortified. As the Conscious Force descends in matter and radiates, it seeks for fit instruments to express and manifest it. It goes without saying that the more the instrument

¹ Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.—Ed.

is open, receptive and plastic, the better are the results. The two obstacles that stand in the way of a smooth and harmonious working in and through the sadhaks are:

(1) the preconceived ideas and mental constructions which block the way to the influence and the working of the conscious force;

(2) the preferences and impulses of the vital which distort and falsify the expression.

Both these things are the natural output of the ego. Without the interference of these two elements my physical intervention would not be necessary.

You are quite right when you do not believe in "Mother likes", "Mother dislikes": it is quite a childish interpretation.

There is a clear precise perception of the Force and the Consciousness at work, and whenever this Force gets distorted or the Consciousness is obscured in its action, I have to interfere and rectify the movement. In most cases things are mixed up and there again I have to intervene to separate the distorted transcription from the pure one.

Otherwise a great freedom of action is left to all, because the Conscious Force can express itself in innumerable ways and for the perfection and integrality of the manifestation no ways are to be *a priori* excluded; a trial is very often given before the selection is made.

22 August 1939

The Ashram's Rules and Regulations

I would like to know precisely which people I should ask to read the Rules and Regulations of the Asram² and sign for them?

The members of the Asram. For the others you can submit the names — long resident visitors in the Asram itself would usually have to see the rules e.g. X.

12 April 1933

² The reference is to a typed set of "Rules and Regulations of the Asram", issued in 1933 but incorporating several rules written earlier.—Ed.

General Rules and Individual Natures

It is a little difficult from the wider spiritual outlook to answer your question in the way you want and every mental being wants, with a trenchant "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not", especially when the "thou" is meant to cover "all". For while there is an identity of essential aim, while there are general broad lines of endeavour, yet there is not in detail one common set of rules in inner things that can apply to all seekers. You ask "Is such and such a thing harmful?" But what is harmful to one may be helpful to another,—what is helpful at a certain stage may cease to be helpful at another,—what is harmful under certain conditions is helpful under other conditions,—what is done in a certain spirit may be disastrous, the same thing done in a quite different spirit would be innocuous or even beneficial. I asked the Mother indeed what she would say to your question about pleasures and social expansiveness (put as a general question) and she answered, "Impossible to say like that; it depends on the spirit in which it is done." So there are so many things: the spirit, the circumstances, the person, the need and cast of the nature, the stage. That is why it is said so often that the Guru must deal with each disciple according to his separate nature and accordingly guide his sadhana; even if it is the same line of sadhana for all, yet at every point for each it differs. That also is the reason why we say the Divine's way cannot be understood by the mind,—because the mind acts according to hard and fast rules and standards, while the spirit sees the truth of all and the truth of each and acts variously according to its own comprehensive and complex vision. That also is why we say that no one can understand by his personal mental judgment the Mother's actions and reasons for action; it can only be understood by entering into the larger consciousness from which she sees things and acts upon them. That is baffling to the mind because it loses its small measures, but it is the truth of the matter.

To come down to hard facts and it may make the dictum a little more comprehensible. You speak of retirement and you say that if it is good why not impose it — you couple together X, Y,

Z, A, B, C! Well, take that last name, C, and add to it D for he also “retired” and went headlong for an intense and solitary sadhana. X and Y profited by their seclusion, what happened to C and D? We forbade D to retire,— he was always wanting to give up work, withdraw from all intercourse and spend all his time in meditation; but he did it as much as he could — result, collapse. C never asked permission and I cannot say what his retirement was like, but I hear he boasted that by his intense sadhana he had conquered sex not only for himself but all the sadhaks! He had to leave the Asram owing to his unconquerable attachment to his wife and child and he is there living the family life and has produced another child — what a success for retirement. Where the retirement is helpful and fits the mind or the nature, we approve it, but in the face of these results how can you expect us to follow what the mind calls a consistent course and impose it as the right thing on everybody? You have spoken of your singing. You know well that we approve of it and I have constantly stressed its necessity for you as well as that of your poetry. But the Mother absolutely forbade E’s singing? To music for some again she is indifferent or discourages it, for others she approves as for F, G and others. For some time she encouraged the concerts, afterwards she stopped them. You drew from the prohibition to E and the stopping of the concerts that Mother did not like music or did not like Indian music or considered music bad for sadhana and all sorts of strange mental reasons like that. Mother prohibited E because while music was good for you, it was spiritually poison to E — the moment he began to think of it and of audiences, all the vulgarity and unspirituality in his nature rose to the surface. You can see what he is doing with it now! So again with the concerts — though in a different way — she stopped them because she had seen that wrong forces were coming into their atmosphere which had nothing to do with the music in itself; her motives were not mental. It was for similar reasons that she drew back from big public displays like Udayshankar’s. On the other hand she favoured and herself planned the exhibition of paintings at the Town Hall. She was not eager for you to have your big audiences for your singing because she found

the atmosphere full of mixed forces and found too you had afterwards usually a depression; but she has always approved of your music in itself done privately or before a small audience. If you consider then, you will see that here there is no mental rule, but in each case the guidance is determined by spiritual reasons which are of a flexible character and look only at what in each case are the spiritual conditions, results, possibilities. There is no other consideration, no rule. Music, painting, poetry and many other activities which are of the mind and vital can be used as part of spiritual development or of the work and for a spiritual purpose — “it depends on the spirit in which they are done.”

That being established, that these things depend on the spirit, the nature of the person, its needs, the conditions and circumstances, I will come to your special question about pleasure and especially the pleasure in society of an expansive vital nature.

P.S. Of course there is a category of things that have to be eschewed altogether and of things that have to be followed by all, but I am speaking of the large number that do not fall into the two categories.

24 October 1936

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No, there is no obligation of gloom, harshness, austerity or lonely grandeur in this Yoga. If I am living in my room, it is not out of a passion for solitude, and it would be ridiculous to put forward this purely external circumstance — or X's withdrawnness which is a personal necessity of his sadhana — as if it were the obligatory sign of a high advance in the Yoga or solitude the aim; these are simply incidents which none is called on to imitate. So you need not be anxious; solitude is not demanded of you, for an ascetic dryness of isolated loneliness cannot be your spiritual destiny since it is not consonant with your swabhava which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a comprehensive movement of the life-force. And, as for stern gravity and the majesty of a speechless and smileless face, your transformation into that would be terrifying to think of! I may remind you that the Mother and myself always recommended to you a sunlit and

cheerful progress as the best; if we were inclined to complain of anything in you — which we are not, knowing that one does not choose one's difficulties, — it would not be that you have too much gaiety but that you are not always as gay and cheerful as we would like you to be! The storm, cloud, difficulty, suffering come, but they are no part of the Yogic idea; they belong to the Nature that is now, not to the divine Nature that is to be.

Disregarding the Rules of the Ashram

Is it a fact that some sadhaks enjoy the special privilege of having obtained either your or the Mother's sanction for eating meat or fish whenever they like?

No such sanction or privilege has been obtained by anybody from the Mother.

If so, can they cook these things in their residential quarters?

Certainly not, that is strictly forbidden.

Or does the permission apply only to their going out in town to eat these things?

When they do it outside in the town, they are taking a liberty — no liberty has been granted to them.

If no such sanction has ever been given, then how far are the principles of the Asram violated if a local well-wisher or a visitor to the Asram invites us to such feasts? Do they do the right thing by inviting us?

No, they don't do the right thing — if they know of the rule of the Asram.

Those sadhaks who wilfully indulge this vital desire, how do they stand in your estimation? Are they to be classed as especially progressed souls for whom no such bondage to rules and regulations apply?

Not in the least — any such claim is obvious bunkum.

When such sadhaks lead others to believe that they are above the Asram rules, does it not do harm to their own Buddhahood? Then what is the right attitude to take up?

That raises the general question of disregard of the rules of the Asram or of the standards of action in Yoga. As such disregard is widespread and common among the sadhaks, if dealt with radically, it could entail a Pride's purge or Communist purification which would leave in the Asram only a greatly reduced number of inmates. Certain things cannot be tolerated especially if done in the Asram. Apart from that we have been waiting for something to develop inwardly in individual sadhaks which will bring about a change. If it doesn't — well, I suppose a time will come or is coming *when everybody will have to choose*.

I am not aware that there are any Buddhas in the Asram.

The right attitude is to keep strictly oneself to the truth and to affirm it quietly whenever it is necessary to do so.

Would turning down such invitations amount to a breach of etiquette or hurting the feelings of the person inviting?

That too is rubbish. Etiquette cannot take precedence over a rule of life proper to the Asram or the Yoga. 10 November 1938

No Politics in the Ashram

It is supposed that all who come here come for the spiritual life and aspire to realise the Divine Truth, leaving all else behind them. If you have come here for the spiritual life, you have nothing to do with what others may be doing in the political field which you have left behind you. It is no part of your dharma.

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The rule for permanent residents of the Asram is that they must abstain from political activities altogether. Although this rule is not rigidly imposed on disciples at a distance, yet it is expected

that they should not do anything which would compromise the Asram, and, as a matter of fact, no disciple of Sri Aurobindo is at present participating in political agitation.

It is also the rule for permanent members of the Asram that they should put their property at the disposal of the Mother, and they do not spend anything of it for other purposes except with the sanction previously given by her. But as you are not a permanent member, this rule does not apply to you, and the Mother cannot undertake to direct you as to the persons and the purposes to which you should give or refuse financial assistance. As a rule we never interfere in the personal lives or affairs of others than whole-time sadhaks who have given up everything else for the spiritual life.

I would suggest that the difficulty about giving shelter to Congressmen arises only when there is an arrival of a batch of Salt Law Satyagrahis sent to break the Law. If such a batch arrives at your place and you give them shelter, then, as the law is now being administered, you run the risk of going to jail. It seems to me that, not being yourself a Satyagrahi, you are not bound to give this help or run this risk. Nothing prevents you from receiving a friend who is a Congressman under other circumstances.

The questions you put about financial help to Khaddar and Prohibition and to the National school, must be decided by yourself, I think. I will only ask you to note what I have written in the first paragraph of the letter.

24 May 1930

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Is there no likelihood of any political work being done by us?

Not any! What is called politics is too rajasic, mixed and muddied with all sorts of egoistic motives. Our way is the pressure of the spirit upon the earth consciousness to change.

25 July 1933

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What will be the use of a transformed vital in a new manifestation if there is nothing active like politics?

But surely politics is not the only activity possible for the vital — there are hundreds of others. Whenever there is something to be produced, created, organised, achieved, conquered, it is the vital that is indispensable.

26 July 1933

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Is politics necessary for some people here? We would seem to have sufficient difficulties in sadhana without adding that. Why do people take mental interest in something not likely to help the divine manifestation unless it is given as a work to some?

No, it is not given as a work to anybody. People go on with that because it is a mental interest or habit they do not like giving up, it is like the vital habit of tea-drinking or anything else of the kind. Politics is not only not given as a work but the discussion of politics is discouraged as much as possible.

30 November 1933

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A member of the Ashram cannot belong to a political body or do political work. He is also not supposed to do any social propaganda. Educational work like the Gurukula is different; it can be done with the Mother's permission.

circa September 1938

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I don't understand how X and others who are there are continuing to make proposals like these when I have clearly forbidden any publicity of the kind. You must make it perfectly and finally clear to them that the Ashram is a non-political institution as well as non-sectarian and that therefore there can be no public commitment by its members and they cannot take any official position in institutions like this nor can their names be signed to any document involving a breach of this principle. Their proposals therefore cannot be accepted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Whatever sympathy, support and guidance they receive from you or from anybody here must be personal and given

behind the scenes. Sri Aurobindo has sometimes made public utterances or taken publicly a political position, but that was on his own personal account and his action did not involve the Asram. His name also must not be published in this connection. They must be satisfied with the knowledge that his sympathy is entirely with your objects and that his spiritual force will be behind your work, but this must not be made public.

14 April 1947

Avoidance of Speech and Writing about Ashram Life

I do not know why you said all you did to Miss Maitland about the British police. We do not care in the least about the matter, and we have no intention of making any move to get rid of them.

Farther, you must try to remember that this Asram is not concerned with politics and the members are expected not to talk politics with people from outside like Miss Maitland. She came here from an interest in Yoga and is not in the least interested in politics. If you begin to talk to her about the freedom of India and the misdeeds of the British Government, she will inevitably think in the end that the Consul was right and the Asram is full of revolutionaries under the garb of Yoga. It is surprising that the members of this Asram seem always unable to use discretion in their speech or measure its consequences or understand how easily false impressions are created.

Finally, those who see Miss Maitland are expected not to quarrel or dispute with her about her views or mental impressions about India. She is returning soon to England and they can surely have patience for this short time and maintain harmony and good feeling in their relations with her.

1929

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I am sending herewith a letter from a friend. Can I let him know some details about the Ashram?

It is an express rule of the Asram not to give inner information of the Asram life to people outside. If the correspondent is a seeker after Yoga (which does not seem to be the case here) he can be

told general things about the Yoga (not anything personal to the sadhaks or to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother).

19 November 1931

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It is not very advisable to discuss either myself or the Asram or spiritual things with hostile minds or unbelievers. These discussions usually bring on the sadhak a stress of the opposing atmosphere and cannot be helpful to his progress. Reserve is the best attitude; one need not be concerned to dispel their bad will or their ignorance.

13 September 1932

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Your mistake was to say something which implied a reflection on a fellow-sadhak to a visitor. That should not be done when it is unnecessary, especially if the Mother's name is brought in. If some sadhak of the Asram says things to a visitor against us or the Asram or the Yoga, for instance, and the visitor comes to you with a report of it, it is necessary to set right the wrong impression made or any perplexity he may feel, or other reasons may arise. But here there was no necessity. Your explanation of X's goings out from the Asram was in fact not correct, for he had wired refusal to go and had no wish to go and it was not out of a desire to attend a relative's marriage that he went; but even if it had been correct, the statement should not have been made. The internal affairs of the Asram and the sadhaks should not be spoken of — unless it cannot be avoided — to visitors or persons from outside.

There is no reason why you should stop receiving visits; you have the Mother's approval and it is helpful. But we would wish you to avoid anything which might be interpreted as reflections or personal judgments on other sadhaks or anything which can be interpreted as that; you see for yourself what reactions and bad currents any indiscretion of that kind can create.

Guidelines for Writing about the Ashram

It is not necessary to answer everything that appears in the newspapers. Nor is it advisable to take the outside public into confidence as to what is or is not going on in the Asram. It is only in exceptional cases that an answer is called for.

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Here is an article by X (with some necessary corrections).

I have glanced over your monster. He will have to be beheaded and his tail cut off. Beheaded because Mother has put a prohibition on publication of her name and what she has written. The *Conversations* are for private circulation, the *Prayers* only for disciples and those who are actively interested in spiritual experience. This rule has been hammered into Y and others; you also must fix it in your cerebellum for the future. The tail will have to be docked for a reason regarding myself. Your reason for including it shows a harrowing incomprehension of the purpose of these things. The object of such special issues³ is not to exhibit me to the public and show them all sides of me, i.e. to make me go through all my possible performances on a public stage. The object is to make the reading public better acquainted with the nature of this Yoga and the principle of what is being done in the Asram. The private matters of the Asram itself are *not* for the public—at most only so much as the public can see. *A fortiori* anything personal and private about me is also taboo. I come in only so far as it is necessary for the public to know my thought and what I stand for. You will notice that my life itself is so written as to give only the grey precise surface facts, nothing more. All propensity to make me figure in the big Barnum circus of journalistic “features” along with or in competition with Joe Louis the prize-fighter, Douglas Fairbanks, H. G. Wells, King George and Queen Mary, Haile Selassie, Hobbs, Hitler, Jack the Ripper (or any modern substitute of his) and Mussolini should

³ Special issues of daily or weekly periodicals dealing with Sri Aurobindo and his work.
—Ed.

be strictly banished from the mentality for evermore and the day after.

24 September 1935

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I cannot understand how some people here think that a few articles in magazines help the Mother's work. Do such articles help to remove the hostile impressions in people's minds which hamper the work or do they create interest among rich people and induce them to offer some money to help?

Up to now it has not. It has only brought useless letters and people wanting to "join" the Asram to "study" here. There is no specific utility in the publications, but only a sort of counteraction to false ideas and rumours about the Asram and a vague general effect on the public mind. I allow it not because it has any central value for the work, but there is in the play of forces a tendency towards pressure for a more favourable attitude towards the Asram in Pondicherry and elsewhere and some measure of respect in Europe also and this is helpful to a certain extent. Especially it relieves me from the necessity of putting out forces constantly to combat the possibility of hostile attacks from outside threatening the security of the work. The result is therefore rather defensive up till now than something positive — but I cannot say it is of no use at all.

8 October 1935

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I shall see your article and decide. I fear the first part of it is not admissible. The Mother always insists on great reserve in writing publicly about the Asram, especially if it is done by inmates or sadhaks.

25 November 1935

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Asked by the *Indian Review*, I sent them an article entitled "Socialism and the Indian Ideal". They are asking for permission to print it in their review as well as in booklet form. Can the permission be given?

I think I had better make it clear once for all that I do not

approve of the publication of articles on controversial political subjects by members of the Asram. It involves the Asram and can prejudice the work of the Mother by raising quite uselessly unnecessary opposition and prejudice of which there is already more than enough. From a deeper point of view it pulls down the work to a lower region of mental and vital forces and the methods current on that lower plane. The work we have to do does *not* belong to that plane and cannot be done by current methods. It can only be done by rising to a higher spiritual plane and working silently from there on the forces in action so as to prepare a favourable field for the growth of the true consciousness and the true life-action. So long as that is not done, to engage in any activity which means opposition and struggle on the lower plane or to resort to its methods can only put it at a disadvantage and imperil its future. It is from the higher levels that things have to be worked out before the lower can be ready.

Your article is not at all conclusive except to people who are already disposed to be of the same way of thinking. It has besides the appearance of preaching a sort of spiritualised individualism and capitalism, but that is no more the object of our work than the "spiritual communism" which Motilal put into it. To allow that to pass as the economic gospel of this Yoga would not do at all. In the Gita I only explain the spiritual sense of the *caturvarnya*; I do not put that forward as my own economic or social teaching. Our aim is to rise to a higher spiritual consciousness and to create from there—to drag in mental forms from the present or past society could only spoil or hamper the purity and freedom of the future spiritual working.

29 September 1938

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It is because I thought I might serve you through such an article — a personal article I mean, the only type I feel free in — that I accepted the invitation to contribute something to *Asia*.

Well, what I am considering is just this, whether it would

not be wiser, as far as concerns England or America, to start impersonally with the philosophical side and the side of the Yoga, and leave the person a little behind the scene for the present, until people there are ready as individuals for the personal touch; that is the course we have been following up to now. In India it is different, for here there is another kind of general mentality and there is the tradition of the Guru and the Shishya. May 1943

No Propaganda or Proselytism

It is a rule of the Asram that resident sadhaks shall not engage in any kind of public or propagandist activity political, social or religious; it is only our special permission which could dispense any member of the Asram from conformity to this rule. The Asram exists solely for Yoga and for a purely spiritual purpose; it is not a political or social or religious institution and it abstains from all these activities, this abstention is necessary for its existence. If any member engages in them, it involves the Asram itself and gives it the appearance of entering into activities which are not proper to it, and if any such impression of that kind is created, it may have serious consequences.

It appears that you have been engaging without our permission or authorisation in public activities of various kinds for some time past. This must cease. If you intend to carry them on any farther, you must leave the Asram and go outside; you cannot be allowed to continue them from the Asram and as a member.

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You must not write to all these people encouraging them in the idea of coming here. It is only selected people who can come here. If anybody is encouraged, there would before long be 10,000 instead of 120 — and it would no longer be an Asram.

14 April 1933

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There is no necessity for a society for the translation of the

books. I have given my books outside always so that the Asram should not be entangled in these things and there should be no appearance of a propaganda inspired by me. 14 May 1933

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How far does the arrival of well-known people justify the flutter it causes? Is it a sign that the Truth is spreading?

No, not at all. Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit; they think and say "O if Kalelkar comes, the whole of Gujarat will be ours" — as if we were a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.

16 January 1934

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I think there is nothing solid about all these magazine articles — a temporary value.

There is no value at all in these things — people read and forget. As for propaganda I have seen that it is perfectly useless for us — if there is any effect, it is a very trifling and paltry effect not worth the trouble. If the Truth has to spread itself, it will do it of its own motion; these things are unnecessary.

5 September 1934

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It may be said generally that to be overanxious to pull people, especially very young people, into the sadhana is not wise. The sadhak who comes to this Yoga must have a real call, and even with the real call the way is often difficult enough. But when one pulls people in in a spirit of enthusiastic propagandism, the danger is of lighting an imitative and unreal fire, not the true Agni, or else a short-lived fire which cannot last and is submerged by the uprush of the vital waves. This is especially so with young people who are plastic and easily caught hold of by ideas and communicated feelings not their own — afterwards

the vital rises with its unsatisfied demands and they are swung between two contrary forces or rapidly yield to the strong pull of the ordinary life and action and satisfaction of desire which is the natural bent of adolescence. Or else the unfit *ādhāra* tends to suffer under the stress of a call for which it was not ready, or at least not yet ready. When one has the real thing in oneself, one goes through and finally takes the full way of sadhana, but it is only a minority that does so. It is better to receive only people who come of themselves and of these only those in whom the call is genuinely their own and persistent.

6 May 1935

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It is true that there is in most people here this running after those who come from outside especially if they are well-known or distinguished. It is a common weakness of human nature and, like other weaknesses of human nature, the sadhaks seem not inclined to get rid of it. It is because they do not live sufficiently within, so the vital gets excited or attracted when something important or somebody important (or considered so) comes in from outside.

29 November 1935

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No, X should not write to his friends to come here. That would not only be propaganda which we must avoid but done like that it would create a conflict and turmoil—and conflict and turmoil are the wrong atmosphere for the Truth to grow in. It has been the great mistake of schools and religions to fight for the possession of men's minds—that we must not do. We can protect ourselves by spiritual means from attacks from outside, but not enter into mental or outward conflict with others. If his friends are meant to come here, it must happen otherwise.

30 March 1936

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What Tagore or others think or say does not matter very much after all as we do not depend on them for our work but on the Divine Will only. So many have said and thought all sorts

of things (people outside) about and against us, that has never affected either us or our work in the least; it is of a very minor importance.

7 March 1937

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I am sure you have read the eulogies showered upon Durai-swami on his retirement and enjoyed them immensely, at the same time feeling proud of him and saying, "Ha, ha, here is the fruit of my Force!" It is indeed a great pleasure to see the prestige of the Asram elevated by at least one man, though I suppose you don't give a damn about prestige.

Queer idea all you fellows seem to have of the "prestige" of the Asram. The prestige of an institution claiming to be a centre of spirituality lies in its spirituality, not in newspaper columns or famous people. Is it because of this mundane view of life and of the Asram held by the sadhaks that this Asram is not yet the centre of spirituality it set out to be?

I want to see how far Duraiswami's character has been changed and moulded by the Force.

Lord, man, it's not for changing or moulding character that this Asram exists. It is for moulding spirituality and transforming the *consciousness*. You may say it doesn't seem to be successful enough on that line, but that is its object.

I suspect, however, that you are closing in your Supramental net and bringing in all the outside fish!

Good Lord, no! I should be very much embarrassed if all the outside fish insisted on coming inside.

What about X? When do you propose to catch him? . . . It would be a great enrichment of your Fishery. We are all watching with interest and eagerness that big operation of yours. But I don't think you will succeed till your Supramental comes to the field in full-fledged colours, what?

What big operation? There is no operation; I am not trying to

hale in X as a big fish. I am not trying to catch him or bring him in. If he comes into the true spiritual life it will be a big thing for him, no doubt, but to the work it means only a ripple more or less in the atmosphere. Kindly consider how many people big in their own eyes have come and gone (Y, Z, A to speak of no others) and has the work stopped by their departure or the Asram ceased to grow? Do you really think that the success or failure of the work we have undertaken depends on the presence or absence of X? or on my hauling him in or letting him go? It is of importance only for the soul of X — nothing else.

Your image of the Fishery is quite out of place; I fish for no one; people are not hauled or called here, they come of themselves by the psychic instinct. Especially, I don't fish for big and famous and successful men. Such fellows may be mentally or vitally big, but they are usually quite contented with that kind of bigness and do not want spiritual things, or, if they do, their bigness stands in their way rather than helps them. The fishing for them is X's idea — he wanted to catch hold of Subhas Bose, Sarat Chatterji, now Lila Desai etc. etc., but they would have been exceedingly troublesome sadhaks, if they ever really dreamed of anything of the kind. All these are ordinary ignorant ideas; the Spirit cares not a damn for fame, success or bigness in those who come to it. People have a strange idea that Mother and myself are eager to get people as disciples and if anyone goes away, especially a "big" balloon with all its gas in it, it is a great blow, — a terrible defeat, — a dreadful catastrophe and cataclysm for us. Many even think that their being here is a great favour done to us for which we are not sufficiently grateful. All that is rubbish.

30 June 1938

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Is it not natural for us to feel proud of the praises bestowed on Duraiswami or feel a little "embarrassed" when things are said against X?

If the praise and blame of ignorant people is to be our standard, then we may say good-bye to the spiritual consciousness. If the

Mother and I had cared for praise or blame, we would have been crushed long ago. It is only recently that the Asram has got “prestige” — before it was the target for an almost universal criticism, not to speak of the filthiest attacks.

2 July 1938

The Ashram and Religion

A Way, Not a Religion

I have no time to read books usually. I seldom had and none at all now. I have had no inspirations from the sadhana of Bejoy Goswami, though a good deal at one time from Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. My remarks simply meant that I regard the spiritual history of mankind and especially of India as a constant development of a divine purpose, not a book that is closed, the lines of which have to be constantly repeated. Even the Upanishads and the Gita were not final though everything may be there in seed. In this development the recent spiritual history of India is a very important stage and the names I mentioned had a special prominence in my thought at the time — they seemed to me to indicate the lines from which the future spiritual development had most directly to proceed, not staying but passing on. I do not know that I would put my meaning exactly in the language you suggest. I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion new or old for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.

18 August 1935

Islam, Hinduism, and the Integral Yoga

I want to do something to work for Islamic ideals here. I have a strong desire to do this, but somehow it cuts me off very much from the Ashram atmosphere and sadhana.

As to what you say about Islamic ideals, you should remember that whatever is necessary to keep from the past as materials for the future, will *of itself* and *automatically* be taken into the new creation when things are ready and the full Light and Power at work. It is not necessary for anybody to represent or stand for Islamic ideals or for Hindu or Christian ideals; if anybody

here thinks he must stand for one or other of these things, he is making a mistake and is likely to create unnecessary narrowness, clash and opposition. There is no opposition or clash between them in spiritual experience; it is only the external human mind that mistakenly puts them against each other. What we are here to make is a new creation in which there is a larger reconciling Truth than anything that went before in the past; but what will reconcile and create anew is the Power, the Light, the Knowledge that comes from above. The important thing therefore is to prepare yourself for that Power, Light and Knowledge; it is only when that descends that all will be done rightly. Nothing can be done rightly by the individual working without the Light and the Knowledge.

14 January 1932

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I want to ask if there is any likelihood of a fight between the Hindus and Mahomedans in India, and if the forces are nearly equal on both sides or one side is superior to the other.

It is to be hoped that in time the present mentality will pass away and both communities learn to live as children of the same Mother. If they fight, neither are likely to gain but both to lose, even perhaps giving an opening to a third party as has happened before in their history.

I also want to ask if Mahomedanism will retain its present form and terms in the future. At present its only strength and faith is in the most orthodox section, which does not and cannot change even a bit; for the least change would mean the end of its formation, and in that it has sufficient force and faith. What happens under such circumstances? Can it have a place in the supramental creation?

There is no place for rigid orthodoxy, whether Hindu, Mahomedan or Christian in the future. Those who cling to it, lose hold on life and go under — as has been shown by the fate of the Hindus in India and of the orthodox Mahomedan countries all over the world. It is only where there has been an opening to new light and inevitable change that strength is returning as

in Turkey and Persia. In the supramental creation fundamental truth will always find a place; but orthodoxy means a clinging to narrow limitations, and limitations of that kind cannot exist in the supramental creation. All that is permanently true will be taken up into the creation of the future.

23 February 1932

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I wish that Muslims might come here from outside and keep a more constant contact. It would create a nice atmosphere here. After all, it seems improbable that all the twelve crores of Mahomedans should be left quite out of contact with the Yoga.

These things that rise in you are certainly desires of the physical vital or else ideas of the physical mind giving a mental shape to desires. The sadhak has to see them when they rise and note them for what they are, but not allow them to move him to action.

If one is meant to be an intermediary between the Yogic Truth that is descending here and some part of the outside world, e.g. the Mahomedan world, it is necessary first that he should get a calm and complete balance, a full foundation in the higher consciousness and the permanent Light in his being,—otherwise he will not be able to do his work. If he tries before he is ready, he will fail—therefore let there be nothing done that is premature.

16 November 1932

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You write: "If one is meant to be an intermediary between the Yogic Truth and . . . the Mahomedan world". I wish to ask if the Mahomedan world is such a separate thing here. For this phrase cannot be put thus: "between the Yogic Truth and the Hindu world".

Of course it can—the orthodox Hindu world is quite separate, all the outside world is separate, until the Light that is growing here makes the connection.

I thought the attitude towards Mahomedans lay in the minds of the people here because of a subconscious influence and I took this to be an ignorance that can be overlooked for the time being. But if Sri Aurobindo also writes like this, I wish to know if the Mahomedan world is a separate block to be dealt with as one deals with strangers, foreigners, almost enemies.

I wish also to ask this: The Mother has often issued notices saying, "When a man comes here, he ceases to be a Hindu or a Mahomedan etc." Though there is sufficient pressure on the Mahomedans to cease to be Mahomedan, does anybody cease to be a Hindu? Is the idea even believed by any Hindu sadhak? So certain is everybody of its not being true that there is hardly any hope of such a thought ever entering the mind. Under these circumstances, God alone knows if it is right or sensible for me to live on and see the ruin without doing anything to bring in the Mahomedan influence here. When I surrendered, I had not ceased to be a Mahomedan as happened afterwards.

If there is anybody in this Asram who is a Hindu sectarian hating Mahomedans and not opening to the Light in which all can overcome their limitations and in which all can be fulfilled (each religion or way of approaching the Divine contributing its own element of the truth, but all fused together and surpassed), then that Hindu sectarian is not a completely surrendered disciple of Sri Aurobindo. By his narrowness and hatred of others he is bringing an element of falsehood into the work that is being done here.

When I spoke of the outside world, I meant all outside, including the Hindus and Christians and everyone else, all who have not yet accepted the greater Light that is coming. If this Asram were here only to serve Hinduism I would not be in it and the Mother who was never a Hindu would not be in it.

What is being done here is the preparation of a Truth which includes all other Truth but is limited to no single religion or creed, and this preparation has to be done apart and in silence until things are ready. It is in that sense that I speak of the rest of the world and all its component parts as being the outside world — not that there was nothing to be done or no connection to be

made; but these things are to be done in their own proper time.

Do you tell me that all the people here show the spirit you speak of against the Mahomedans or are you generalising from particular cases? If it is as you say, I am quite ready to intervene to put a stop to it. For such a spirit would be entirely opposed to the Truth I am here to manifest.

When I came here in the beginning, X told me that Sri Aurobindo said: "Mahomedanism was all right for the people of Arabia and those countries. I don't see why it should have come to India." Had Mahomedanism no message for India? Is this a teaching of the Ashram?

No, certainly not; it is a sheer misinterpretation of my views. I have written clearly that the coming of so many religions to India was part of her spiritual destiny and a great advantage for the work to be done.

17 November 1932

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If the sadhaks here remain Hindus, which in the end turns out to be their very aim and zest, what an utter fool I would be to allow myself to be changed and trust myself to be worked upon thus.

Again, when Sri Aurobindo writes about what he is going to manifest here, I wonder why such a great thing is partial. Why should that creation be formed in such a way as to exclude Mahomedans from it and put on them an all-round pressure which is experienced by nobody else. To give up one's past and forget it or to try not to think about it is one thing; to go through the humiliation of taking up the way of others is most difficult, almost shameful, and I have lost faith in it.

It is news to me that I have excluded Mahomedans from the Yoga. I have not done it any more than I have excluded Europeans or Christians. As for giving up one's past, if that means giving up the outer forms of the old religions, it is done as much by the Hindus here as by the Mahomedans. Every Hindu here — even those who were once orthodox Brahmins and have grown old in it, — give up all observance of caste, take food from Pariahs and are served by them, associate and eat with

Mahomedans, Christians, Europeans, cease to practise temple worship or Sandhya (daily prayer and mantras), accept a non-Hindu from Europe as their spiritual director. These are things people who have Hinduism as their aim and object would not do — they do it because they are obliged here to look to a higher ideal in which these things have no value. What is kept of Hinduism is Vedanta and Yoga, in which Hinduism is one with Sufism of Islam and with the Christian mystics. But even here it is not Vedanta and Yoga in their traditional limits (their past), but widened and rid of many ideas that are peculiar to the Hindus. If I have used Sanskrit terms and figures, it is because I know them and do not know Persian and Arabic. I have not the slightest objection to anyone here drawing inspiration from Islamic sources if they agree with the Truth as Sufism agrees with it. On the other hand I have not the slightest objection to Hinduism being broken to pieces and disappearing from the face of the earth, if that is the Divine Will. I have no attachment to past forms; what is Truth will always remain; the Truth alone matters.

17 November 1932

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Does the supramental victory mean the victory of the Hindu religion and culture over others? Will the supramental consciousness come into the body of a man whether or not he subordinates himself to Hinduism?

The Asram has nothing to do with Hindu religion or culture or any religion or nationality. The Truth of the Divine which is the spiritual reality behind all religions and the descent of the supramental which is not known to any religion are the sole things which will be the foundation of the work of the future.

The Hindu Religion and Its Social Structure

My friend Dhurjati writes: "I want to know the essential feature of Hinduism. Hinduism is inside me, but please bring it up on my conscious plane. The first step of my realisation must always be conceptual and propositional."

I am rather at a loss from which side to tackle the affair. Conceptually and propositionally is it possible to give Dhurjati something about the essential feature of Hinduism which he does not know already? I can say what to my view is the truth behind Hinduism, a truth contained in the very nature (not superficially seen of course) of human existence, something which is not the monopoly of Hinduism but of which Hindu spirituality was the richest expression. Perhaps I can try to bring out something on that line. I will see.

19 May 1936

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I send you Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*. I want to have your opinion on his reading of the Hindu religion. I agree with the bulk of his condemnation of religion. But it seems to me he is a little hazy in his ideas, expecting from it just what is beyond its *portée*. But of course I don't wonder, for religion is a most mysterious term, like our famous *kalpataru* of Indra's garden which promises to its worshippers any fruit they covet.

I fear that to accede to your request for a page and a half on the mystic soul of India is physically impossible now and psychologically a little difficult. I have once more the full flood of correspondence, in spite of the rules of time which have proved an insufficient dam. Each night is a race to get things done in time which I generally lose and that means an increasing mass of arrears which have to be dealt with whenever I get some exceptional leisure. On Sunday a mass of outside letters waiting for disposal because I have no time on other days and not enough on Sunday either. In these circumstances to produce a page on such a subject would be a feat of acrobacy not easily performable.

As for the subject, well in the days of the *Karmayogin* or of the *Defence of Indian Culture* I could have served you freely. Now I feel as if I have said all I could say on these things — they have gone back into the far recess of my mind and to pull them out for expression is not easy. That is a second obstacle.

I do not take the same view of the Hindu religion as Jawaharlal. Religion is always imperfect because it is a mixture of

man's spirituality with the errors that come in trying to sublimate ignorantly his lower nature. Hindu religion appears to me as a cathedral temple half in ruins, noble in the mass, often fantastic in detail, but always fantastic with a significance—crumbled and overgrown in many places, but a cathedral temple in which service is still done to the Unseen and its real presence can be felt by those who enter with the right spirit. The outer social structure which it built for its approach is another matter.

19 September 1936

Social Rules, Caste and the Ashram

You must not get upset like this over these things. After all when one comes to an Asram to do Yoga, one leaves social rules, caste, ceremonial purity etc. behind one. Also one tries to practise *সমতা* [*samatā*] to all people and all things, because the Divine is everywhere. Why not take that attitude instead of the old one?

No Public Worship

It seems that even when visitors are there, people come into the Reception Room and prostrate before the photograph. I thought the rule had been made that when visitors were there, no one was to go? This rule must be strictly enforced — inform the gate-keepers and let everybody know that if these things continue, the Reception Room will have to be closed and opened only when visitors come.

23 December 1933

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The reception hall is for visitors. It is only when there are no visitors that Sadhaks can go there — for a short meditation if they want. It should not be made a place of public worship.

27 December 1933

Inward Worship and Outer Forms

The Mother's prohibition is only against sadhaks being there and prostrating when visitors are in the Reception Room. This

room was originally meant for the reception of people from outside and the photo was put there to be shown to visitors who could not see me. The permission was at first given to one sadhak or another to sit and meditate there and afterwards it has become a common practice to go and make pranam, but it was understood that the sadhaks should not be there when there were visits. This rule has not been observed and people have used it as a place of public worship. It was this that was disapproved of by the Mother.

There is no restriction in this Yoga to inward worship and meditation only. As it is a Yoga for the whole being, not for the inner being only, no such restriction could be intended. Old forms of the different religions may fall away, but absence of all forms is not a rule of the sadhana.

c. January 1934

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You have written [*in the preceding letter*] that the “old forms . . . may fall away”; but I think it would be proper if they fell away only after a true consciousness was established.

That is what I meant.

It would seem to me that there would be no impropriety if forms like Pranam, Dhup, Dip or Naivedya are continued even after a true inner consciousness is established.

I was thinking not of Pranam etc. which have a living value, but of old forms which persist although they have no longer any value — e.g. Sraddha for the dead. Also here forms which have no relation to this Yoga — for instance Christians who cling to the Christian forms or Mahomedans to the Namaz or Hindus to the Sandhyavandana in the old way might soon find them either falling off or else an obstacle to the free development of their sadhana.

3 January 1934

Human Relations and the Ashram

Right Relations between Sadhaks

The sadhaks of this Asram are not perfect — they have plenty of weaknesses and wrong movements. It is blindness not to be able to see that; only it should not lead to a criticising or condemnatory attitude on persons — it should be regarded as the play of forces which have to be overcome. 1933

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To be turned wholly to the Mother and have nothing but friendly relations with the sadhaks, the same for all, is a counsel of perfection; but not many can carry it out, hardly one here and there. Yet to have that tendency is to have the real turn towards the one-pointedness of sadhana; but people take time to arrive at it. 12 July 1935

*

The Mother has not laid stress on human fellowship of the ordinary kind between the inmates (though good feeling, consideration and courtesy should always be there), because that is not the aim; it is a unity in a new consciousness that is the aim, and the first thing is for each to do his sadhana to arrive at that new consciousness and realise oneness there. 31 October 1935

*

I don't think it is much use writing about personal relations in the true spiritual life (which does not yet exist here). None would understand it except as a form of words. Only three points —

- (1) Its very base would have to be spiritual and psychic and *not* vital. The vital would be there but as an instrument only.
- (2) It would be a relation flowing from the higher Truth, not continued from the lower Ignorance.

(3) It would not be impersonal in the sense of being colourless, but whatever colours were there would not be the egoistic and muddy colours of the present relations. 24 June 1936

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What you say is right. Those one lives with have always some ways and manners that do not agree with one's own and may grate on the mind. To observe quietly and not resent is part of the discipline of life,—not to be moved or affected at all but to see with equanimity the play of one Nature in all is the discipline of sadhana.

Helping Other Sadhaks

The best way to help X is to assist her by your own example and atmosphere to get the right attitude. Instead of the sense that she is very ill, she should be encouraged to have a bright and confident feeling, open to receive strength and health from us, contributing by her own faith to a speedy recovery. These ideas that they do not see the Mother, are outside the atmosphere, at a distance, are just the wrong notions and most likely to come in the way and block your sisters' receptivity; it is surprising that you should accept or echo them and not react against them at once. They are here in the Asram (a little nearer or farther makes no difference), in the Mother's presence and atmosphere, meeting her every day at the Pranam where everyone who is open can receive as much of her touch and her help as they can hold,—that is what they should feel and make the most of their opportunity and not waste it by a negative attitude.

For yourself, what you must have with other sadhaks (including your sisters) is a harmonious relation free from any mere vital attachment (indifference is not asked from you) and free from any indulgence in wrong vital movements of the opposite kind (such as dislike, jealousy or ill-will). It is through the psychic consciousness that you have found it possible to be in a true constant relation with the Mother and your aim is to make that the basis of all your life, action and feelings; all in you, all

you feel, say and do should be consistent with that basis. If all proceeds from that psychic union of your consciousness with the Mother's, dedicating everything to her, then you will develop the right relations with others.

10 February 1932

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Can one person really help another? Sometimes it seems as if help is given, but in the end it looks to be rather vague.

It is a relative and partial help, of course, but it is sometimes useful. A radical help can only come from within through the action of the Divine Force and the assent of the being. It must be said of course that it is not everyone that thinks he is helping who is really doing it; also if the help is accompanied with the exercising of an "influence", that influence may be of a mixed character and harm as well as help if the instrument is not pure.

2 November 1935

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A fully developed sadhak can be an instrument of the Mother for helping others, but a fully developed sadhak means one who is free from ego and he would never claim the work as his own. In this Asram all helping has recoiled on the helper by either making him egoistic or by his getting affected with the very things one is helping the other to get rid of.

9 June 1936

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It is indeed not possible for one human being to do another's sadhana for him, that each must do himself. The help that can be given is to lead or impel him by influence, example, speech, encouragement towards the point where he can directly open to the Divine, also to impart to him strength, comfort, right suggestion in his moments of difficulty and weakness. You had very serious difficulties at the time and therefore we entrusted X with this work and he did all he could to carry it out and in fact his help was effective. For he stood successfully against the forces that tried to carry you away from here and brought you through to the point at which you could feel the direct inner

contact. This was what we meant by bringing you to the Mother. If in doing it human weakness brought in a personal attachment between you which had its vital element, it was without his or your intending it. Now you are free from this element and wish to be entirely turned within to the Mother alone, and that is quite right. For X who behind an exterior of curt speech and strong dominating will has a heart of strong feelings and warm emotions, it may take a little more time to be entirely free of this element. We shall try to liberate him from what is left of it as soon as possible. Meanwhile what you have to do is to be his comrade in work, but reserve yourself within entirely for the Mother. If you keep to this attitude, as you have resolved, then it is bound to have its effect and he must before long come himself entirely to the same attitude.

What you say of sadhana is true. Sadhana is necessary and the Divine Force cannot do things in the void but must lead each one according to his nature to the point at which he can feel the Mother working within and doing all for him. Till then the sadhak's aspiration, self-consecration, assent and support to the Mother's workings, his rejection of all that comes in the way is very necessary — indispensable.

25 September 1936

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It is not really surprising that people should be able to draw help from you and feel themselves helped and this can happen even though you yourself may not consciously have the idea or the feeling of extending any help to them. You have a very strong vital with a great communicative and creative power which is not shut up in itself but expansive and naturally flows out on those around it. Even ordinarily in the world people easily turn to such a strong and expansive vital and draw upon it for strength and assistance. In your case this is enhanced by your psychic being having the habit of using your vital force for communication to the outside world as it has been habitually doing in your creative activities, poetry and other forms of writing or speech, song and music: apart from artistic qualities and appeal these have an appeal and influence which comes from that inner power

which has breathed itself into them and formed their substance. It has again been greatly increased by the practice of Yoga and the feeling of bhakti which comes out of you when you write your songs and sing them. In your work for us you have the knowledge that our force stands behind you; it is always there and can increase your power to help others, not only when you are doing the work but at other times or whenever they turn towards you with the idea or faith that the help they need can come from you.

11 July 1949

Inadvisability of Forming Special Relations

Write to him that these things are the creations of the mind and have no value. If the girl has a true call to Yoga, she can herself follow it; but it creates no special connection between her and him any more than with any sadhaka. To indulge imaginations of this kind will be dangerous for his sadhana. 7 January 1929

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All that you have written in this letter is quite correct. It is useless to go through the old kind of reconciliation with X — it will only bring back the same futile circle — for he will act in the same way always (until he changes spiritually in the vital and that means a turning away from all vital relations) and you would be flung back into the same reactions. To cut away is the only thing — the best for him, the best for you. As for the feelings excited in him — more hurt self-esteem than anything else — they will fade out of themselves. The first necessity of both is to free yourselves from the old relations and that cannot, it is very clear, be done by going back to any remnant of the old interchange.

For the rest keep to your resolution. Do not discuss him with anybody, do not interest yourself in what he does or does not do; let it be his own concern and the Divine's, not yours. Expect nothing personally from him — you may be sure that your expectations will only be disappointed. His nature is not yours and his mental view of what should or should not be done is quite different — incompatible with yours. By retaining

anything of the old feeling you will only invite pain and farther disillusionment—you gain nothing and pay a heavy price for that nothing. It is only by becoming one-minded in the sadhana that you can escape from this painful circle.

I hope that you will recover tomorrow the capacity for food and shake off the remnants of the physical depression which have been left behind by the attack. Let the physical consciousness as well as the rest of the nature turn wholly to the Light and the Divine and seek only the one true source of happiness and Ananda.

31 March 1933

*

There is no sin in attachment. All human beings are full of attachments. But if one wants to do Yoga and reach the Divine, one must give up all earthly attachments. It is not easy to do so, even for a sadhak, but it must be attempted sincerely and, if it is sincerely attempted, then it can be done.

Attachment means that you desire or need or depend on a thing or a person so much that you cannot do without it or him, and are always trying to keep the thing or be with the person or somehow in touch with him. X says you are attached to him and that it is proved by your always seeking to find an excuse for your being with him; you want to learn from him and not from another, to read our answers with him and not with any other, to do the dispensary work and so be near him every day. He says also you told him if he did not satisfy you in these matters, you would go away to Gujarat or do worse, because you could not bear his disappointing you always. He thinks this proves that you came here for him and not for Yoga. If you want to show him that it is not so, the only way is not to insist on these things that bring you near to him and not say anything that he can understand in this sense.

You have come here for Yoga and not for X—you depend on the Mother and myself alone and not on X. We are quite ready to accept that, for that is what should be. But then you have no need to be upset by what X may say to you or how he may act with you or by his refusal to accede to your requests.

You can freely and calmly stand away from him and turn to the Divine alone.

17 July 1933

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The whole difficulty comes from the fact that you and X had a special relation to each other which was of the character of a mutual vital demand and dependence on each other and what is called in Yoga an attachment. (There is no question here of a sexual physical relation but of a vital attachment.) This was coming in the way of your making any progress in Yoga and it was coming in the way of X also. When X realised this and wanted to reduce the connection between you to a minimum, you were unwilling, you wanted to do all sorts of things that would keep you near him and keep him busy with you. X himself was not free from attachment and therefore in reacting against your pressure and his own remains of weakness, he became rude and violent — that was what he meant by cutting the connection altogether. But he is not yet free and that is why he still reacts violently whenever there is any talk of your going to him as he has done in his last letter. On your side you also are not free — if you were, it would not happen that every time there is any question of X you immediately lose the good condition you were getting and all the old thoughts occupy your mind and you fall back into the weeping and not eating etc. etc. It is the reason why the Mother does not care for you and X to meet so long as these old reactions are there either in him or in you. That is the plain fact of the matter. What other people think or say about it, is of no importance. What matters is the sadhana and besides it nothing else matters. Show that you are free, that what X does or does not do does not disturb or occupy your mind in the least and get into the true way of the sadhana as you were preparing to do — then it will be easier for us to deal with X and his defects and difficulties. This Asram is not intended to be a society like that of the outside world, and when Y or Z or anyone else talk and advise you from that standpoint, they are speaking things which have nothing to do with the work we are trying to do here — and if you listen to such advice, you

will only get out of the right way of looking at it. You will get into the right way only when you cease to think of these things and look at things from the point of view of sadhana only.

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Every sadhika has one or another special sadhika-friend but I find none like-minded enough. Why am I such an independent-minded loner?

It is not necessary to have special friendships,—to be in good relations is enough. For the rest, to be turned entirely to us is the best condition for spiritual progress.

Relations between Men and Women in the Ashram

How is it that when I am talking to a sadhika I don't feel anything but afterwards the memory or image brings the sex-sense? Why should a sadhak not be able to speak to a sadhika as he would to anybody else?

In an Asram or other religious institution men and women are not usually allowed to live together. Where they do, as among the Vaishnavas, these difficulties invariably arise. The difficulty lies in the enormous place given to sex in the lower Nature. But there is no reason if one fixes oneself firmly in the spiritual consciousness why one should not speak and act between men and women without the least reference to sex. 2 December 1933

*

Can we not justify Buddha, Ramakrishna and others who advocated isolation from women? After all, is it not essentially the same principle here, because if vital relations are debarred, nothing remains except a simple exchange of words?

What about the true (not the pretended) psychic and spiritual — forgetting sex? The relation has to be limited as it is because sex immediately trots into the front. You are invited to live above the vital and deeper than the vital — then only you can use the

vital aright. Buddha was for Nirvana and what is the use of having relations with anybody if you are bound for Nirvana? Ramakrishna insisted on isolation during the period when a man is spiritually raw—he did not object to it when he became ripe and no longer a slave of sex.

26 January 1935

*

Do not receive *X in your own room*. That may disturb the atmosphere of the Asram. What was meant when we said you need not avoid her or cut all relations was that if you meet in the ordinary way in the Asram, you need not avoid speaking to her if occasion demands it or if she speaks to you avoid replying etc. Any relations kept should be natural, but not *intimate*.

17 April 1943

Sexual Relations and the Ashram

In view of your last letter and of the disturbances in you which you hint there, we consider and you must yourself realise that it is better for you to return to your family life and not to stay here too long. The conquest of sexual desire can only be done if one is truly ready and has the spiritual call and is prepared, however difficult it may be, to give up for it everything else. There is no place for the sexual impulse and its desires in spiritual life and any sadhaka indulging it, either physically or vitally, is going against the law of the Asram life and injuring gravely his or her sadhana. The sexual desire must be either satisfied in the ordinary family life or it must be thrown aside. But you are not now able to conquer it. To remain here with the unsatisfied desire will only confuse your mind, bring wrong ideas, create a struggle in you and injure the basis of such sadhana as you can do. Make up your mind therefore to return to your family and do what you can there. It is always better to do what you can than to attempt prematurely something for which you are not ready.

16 April 1932

*

Your daughter X¹ has now been here for a fairly long time and we think it due to you to let you know what we consider best for her. It appears from our observation of her that she is not at all ready for Asram life or for intensive sadhana; she has too much of the ordinary movements and the instinct of sexual desire is too strong in her and unsatisfied and this indicates the need of the social and family life, not a life of Yoga. The family life accompanied with whatever religious worship or practice of bhakti she can manage is her proper field at present. For one with these unsatisfied instincts to live in the Asram would on one side be bad for her,—it would raise up a vital struggle and a confusion of ideas adverse to spiritual progress—for she has not yet the necessary inner force or intensity of the spiritual call that would help her to overcome. On the other side it would be likely to create movements that would be disturbing to the Asram atmosphere. It is better for her therefore to return home and do what she can there. I trust our decision will not in any way disturb or disappoint you; for it was not, I think, your intention in bringing her here that she should remain for a long time. It is in her own interest that she should not be pushed towards an effort that is premature.

16 April 1932

*

The whole of yesterday I felt a dark power hanging over me. When I asked the Mother if it was the same universal dark power that, through woman, binds the soul to the earth, she replied, "Why woman? Through *man* as well!" Yes, man as well—but is there not something which makes woman a more convenient, capacious and dangerous tool in its hand?

That is what man thinks; it is his experience. Woman's experience is that man is the dangerous animal and instrument of all her sufferings and downfalls.

It is not man or woman; it is the Sex-Force which is the dangerous tool in the hands of the Ignorance. 17 September 1932

*

¹ *The recipient of the preceding letter.—Ed.*

Why do you believe everything that people tell you? What I told X was that he had *once* progressed greatly, he had afterwards allowed himself to yield to the bad habits that rose from his lower nature and fallen from the psychic contact and that until he got rid of these things which were the cause of all his sufferings he would not progress or recover his contact with the Mother. We never told him that he was making progress now or that his coarse indulgence was a sign of (no doubt, miraculous, godlike and amazing) progress. God in Heaven, what things people put in my mouth and the Mother's!

25 November 1933

*

While looking at pictures of women in magazines, I sometimes feel sexual sensations. Do you want me to avoid looking or to overcome this influence?

You had better get rid of the influence. It won't do not to be able to look at a woman or a picture of a woman without getting sexual sensations — you must get rid of that.

4 December 1933

*

I am afraid X is not so forward in sadhana as you think. I suppose I had better tell you plainly that she is full of the sex difficulty — it is *her special difficulty* and it is so much in her nature that with all her struggles she is unable to escape from it. I am afraid she is throwing it upon you. Of course it is her imagination that yields to it; she would never consent to the act.

As for Y it is different. She has no sex desires, but before she opened to the Yoga, there was a certain kind of vital passivity in her to men and this kind of passivity is very attractive to the masculine sex instinct. As the movements in you are not mental but in sensation, it is possible that your subconscious vital has somehow felt this in her subconscious temperament and got the attraction. These movements are not vitally willed or mental — they belong to that shadowy region of submerged vital physical instinct which the psychoanalysts try to deal with in their jargon of complexes etc.

30 September 1934

*

I consider the sex-movement to be something outside me, and leave it to the Mother for transformation.

Yes — so long as it does not come inside, that can be done.

26 October 1934

*

Yesterday you wrote about the sex-movement, “so long as it does not come inside, that can be done.” I don’t know what you mean by “come inside”.

Coming inside means taking hold of you so that there is a push for satisfaction. Pressure from outside however strongly felt is not coming inside.

27 October 1934

*

Why is it that in the past so much stress was laid on food, external cleanliness, asceticism, etc. and so little on brahmacharya or conservation of energies or inner development? And why all the prejudice of caste in the matter of food? Is there any truth in the popular belief that a man is not considered spiritual unless he is a vegetarian, cooks his own food, etc.?

The value of brahmacharya was fully understood in past times for Yogis; carefulness about food and cleanliness is also necessary as a minor matter for the body. The rest appertains to the social system (e.g. caste etc.) and does not concern spiritual living. The Sannyasi is not supposed to be bound by caste. Some may be unable to shake off these things — the grihastha Yogi may continue them because they are part of the social life in which he is.

I suppose the idea of inner detachment with regard to food and other vital enjoyments is not much understood in other beliefs.

The idea of inner detachment is perfectly well known to the Yogis as the Janaka ideal — but it is considered too difficult to practise for most men and therefore likely to be practised only in profession, not in fact.

And what is the reason for the popular opposition to materialism?

Materialism is of course incompatible with the spiritual aim. The spiritual control of matter is a different thing, it has nothing to do with materialism.

I would like to know if in the higher spiritual or Divine Life the sexual or vital play is to be altogether banned.

If you expect to indulge it in the Divine Life, you will never get rid of it — it will remain clinging under that excuse.

If there is to be no sex in the Divine Life, how is the human race to continue?

Why concern yourself with the continuity of the race? There will be plenty of people to continue it. If the supermind has to intervene in the continuity, it will surely do it in its own way, but what that way will be will be found out if and when there is a necessity.

What did Sri Ramakrishna mean by banning *kāminī* and *kāñcan* for a spiritual man?

He stressed the danger of sex and greed of money for the spiritual life and insisted on a total abstinence, at any rate in the whole period of sadhana and I suppose he considered that impossible without keeping aloof from the things that most aroused these passions. Some of his disciples say however that he said काम काञ्चन [*kām kāñcan*], not कामिनी काञ्चन [*kāminī kāñcan*]. Anyhow he probably imposed it for the raw period of the sadhana — once siddha, when the contact with women could no longer rouse the sex-impulse, he would not have considered it so imperative for all. But he himself could not touch money.

What are the correct ideas with regard to *gārhasthya* life?

Gārhasthya life, meaning marriage and rearing of a family, is

a social institution based on ego. It can only be a stage in the evolution of a spiritual man.

13 November 1934

*

Is there a region of Apsaras in the intermediate zone? Perhaps you discourage me from retiring because you feel I might go there and try to get in touch with them. But probably such a contact is not as dangerous as ambition, pride, egoism etc.

There may very well be,—though I don't know that anyone here came into contact with Apsaras; it is generally less attractive females from the vital world who are after them, usually in the shape of sadhikas, relatives etc. The sadhaks here don't seem to be so aesthetic as the ancient Rishis. It would be pretty dangerous, however, if they did contact it. Sex (occult) stands on a fair level of equality with ambition etc. from the point of view of danger, only its action is usually less ostensible i.e. the Hostiles don't put it forward so openly as a thing to be followed after in the spiritual life. They did that more in the beginning, e.g. X and others.

28 February 1935

*

Touching is quite common in ordinary civilised society. It may not be pure, but it is so common that there is little reaction. Perhaps there are some who do not feel the sex sensation at all when they touch in public. But when it is done in secret, I suppose the reaction is almost always there. As for myself, I'm sure I would feel the effect later, even if the touching was done in public.

In ordinary society people touch each other more or less freely according to the manners of the society. That is quite a different matter because there the sex impulse is allowed within certain more or less wide or narrow limits and even the secret indulgence is common, although people try to avoid discovery. In Bengal when there is purdah, touching between men and women is confined to the family, in Europe there is not much restriction so long as there is no excessive familiarity or indecency; but in Europe sex is now practically free. Here all sex indulgence inner

or outer is considered undesirable as an obstacle to the sadhana — as it very evidently is. For that reason any excessive familiarity of touch between men and women has to be avoided, anything also in the nature of caressing, as it creates or tends to create sex tendency or even the strong sex impulse. Casual touching has to be avoided also if it actually creates the sex impulse. These are commonsense rules if the premiss is granted that sex has not to have any indulgence.

1 July 1935

*

Before, when I had ordinary contact with women, I did not feel the sex-pull so much, nor did I have the sense that it was always behind. Now it shows itself so vividly: contact, imagination, sensation. I am in despair, and feel I should give up my efforts and go away.

Sex is your main difficulty — it is in fact the only very serious one and it is so because it is always behind and you have sometimes pushed it back, but never cut with it entirely. It is the physical vital that is weak and when the thing comes, becomes pliant to it in spite of the mental will's resistance. But even so; if the mental will made itself real and strong, these crises would be met and overcome, or at least pass without leading to indulgence in one form or another. The other possibility is the settled descent of the higher consciousness into the physical being. It is in these two ways that liberation from sex is possible.

5 April 1936

*

You write [*in the preceding letter*], "you have . . . never cut with it entirely." In what sense? Every time I have tried to cut off all contact with people, I have been overcome with imaginations. How does one cut off imaginations? Perhaps you will say that other people have conquered sex without seclusion or higher experience or much work. If so, I would like to know about them. Probably they were naturally sattvic.

There are people outside the Asram even who have got free from the sex without seclusion — even sleeping in the same bed with the wife. I know one at least who did it without any higher

experience. The work of these people is ordinary service or professional work, but that did not prevent their having the sex struggle nor did it help them to get rid of it. The thing came after a prolonged struggle because they were determined to be rid of it and at a certain stage they got a touch which made the determination absolutely effective. Possibly they were sattvic, but that did not prevent their having strong sex impulses and a hard and prolonged struggle.

I meant by cutting off a determined rejection of the inward as well as the outward movement whenever it comes. Something in the nature accepts and lets itself go helplessly and something in the mind allows it to do so. The mind does not seem to believe in its power to say No definitely to inward movements as it would to an outer contact—and yet the Purusha is there and can put its definite No, maintaining it till the Prakriti has to submit—or else till the confirming touch from above makes its determination perfectly effective.

5 April 1936

*

Your diagnosis of the origin of the trouble in X agrees with what we have seen of it. But here a question arises. You say that one thing that has contributed is a suppressed sexuality which could not find satisfaction. Now it is obviously impossible for him to have that in the Asram—for the rule of life is against it and it is impossible to give any even limited expression to it without at once hurting the sadhana while at the same time it does not satisfy because of the restriction and wrong conditions of mind which attend it. It is only by going outside that it can be done. In X there is the constant push to go away and this along with a vital restlessness is likely to be the cause. The question then is whether it is necessary for the cure of his neurasthenia that he should satisfy it and therefore leave the Asram so that he may be free to follow his vital impulse?

18 April 1936

*

Europe and America are full of free sex indulgence—they do not nowadays consider it a thing to be avoided but rather welcomed.

But this is an Asram and people are supposed to be doing a sadhana in which sex has to be surmounted. In the Asram there are many who mix freely with all the sadhikas — they are certainly not free from sex. Avoiding also is not a panacea; one can avoid and have sex imaginations and desires. But it is absurd to say that avoiding is the cause of sex imaginations and impulses or that mixing is a panacea for it.

13 April 1937

*

To get rid of the vital difficulties one very necessary thing is to keep yourself fully open to us. It was because you did that, that it was possible to throw out the sex obsession. If anything rises from the vital, keep yourself detached and observe it and reject; on no account allow yourself to be caught and swept away by it.

21 June 1938

*

About sex and Yoga — my teaching has been clearly written in the *Bases of Yoga* and everyone knows how strongly the Mother has discountenanced these things and considers purity from them a first requisite for success in the path of sadhana. But there are very queer things that have for long been inculcated in the Asram to newcomers and to visitors — e.g. that truthfulness is a superstition and the more you lie the better sadhak you are. That was the first thing taught to a sadhak who first came here many years ago and it is only recently that he has discovered it was not my view or the Mother's. It is not surprising that our work and the Yoga should make such slow progress when such perversities fill the atmosphere. Whatever can be done to clear them out will be so much help to the work of the Mother.

13 November 1938

*

Is it true that there is the spiritual relation of husband and wife between sadhaka and sadhika?

Are you all becoming cracked in the head? How is it that after all this time such a question can be put? Have you not read my

letters and messages on the subject of sex? You have not gone through the *Bases of Yoga* where the subject of sex is treated through many pages and it is clearly insisted on that all sex impulse and sex relation must go. If any sadhak and sadhika want to establish this relation, they should immediately pack up their things and go—for it is forbidden here.

If there exists between a man and a woman the high spiritual relation of husband and wife, purusha and shakti, and the woman demands consummation, is the man bound to satisfy her?

You have not read the rule that conjugal relations are forbidden here? You do not know that X and Y and Z and A had to leave because they followed this way? Under no pretence or cloak whatever is sex to be indulged by anyone practising this sadhana.

circa 1936–1938

*

There is with regard to sex no change whatever. Babies may be allowed in the Ashram but the manufacture of babies there is an industry which has no sanction. Married people (that is not new) or families may be living here, but on the old condition of the complete cessation of marital activities. The ban on sex here stands, unchanged by an iota.

2 January 1945

Tantric Theories and the Ashram

Something in me has been persistently giving the suggestion that sex is not to be given up altogether and that some refined movement of sex may be an aid to the sadhana. This suggestion was supported by some vague ideas I have about Tantric methods.

Any suggestion about Tantric practices must certainly be a trick of the vital. The sex impulsions can be got rid of without them. They persist only because something still wants to reserve a place for them. So the best answer to the question about the sadhana

(What is the place of sex in our sadhana?) is “No place”. One must give up the sex-satisfaction and be satisfied with the Divine Love and Ananda.

*

Sometimes I get the idea that I should talk and laugh and mix with women and touch them and yet remain free. This alone could be called true conquest.

The idea you speak of is the Tantric idea and very dangerous. It must be so in the end, but it is difficult to do that until one is strong enough in the settled spiritual consciousness. The avoidance is sometimes the only way until the higher consciousness is settled in the vital and vital-physical.

22 October 1934

*

Someone said that if a yogi has his Shakti and if the Shakti demands physical contact the yogi has to fulfil it. Is that correct?

If the sadhak is a left-hand Tantrik or a Vaishnava of the Bengal school, then his theories may have some validity but they have none in this Asram.

Someone else also said that a special, though not sexual, relation can exist between sadhaka and sadhika.

The only relation permissible here is the same as between a sadhak and sadhak or between a sadhika and sadhika—a friendly relation as between followers of the same path of Yoga and children of the Mother.

5 September 1936

*

The subtle sex centre awoke after some years of Pranava sadhana. Afterwards I understood what the Tantras meant by the relation between sadhaka and sadhika. The reality behind it is the duality of united Shiva-Shakti. Man's ordinary life is the wrong way of giving it expression. I am now able to transform this perception into Delight. Is this experience true?

This is not accepted in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.² Any such "sublimated" sex relation becomes a subtle but powerful bar to the full realisation and transformation and can derail the sadhana. There is an Ananda behind all things, otherwise they would not exist; but it does not follow that all things must be accepted in their delight-form as a part of the higher life.

The Question of Marriage

I have not your letter with me as I write but there were two questions which you put to us, as far as I can remember.

The first was about a complementary soul and marriage. The answer is easy to give; the way of the spiritual life lies for you in one direction and marriage lies in quite another and opposite. All talk about a complementary soul is a camouflage with which the mind tries to cover the sentimental, sensational and physical wants of the lower vital nature. It is that vital nature in you which puts the question and would like an answer reconciling its desires and demands with the call of the true soul in you. But it must not expect a sanction for any such incongruous reconciliation from here. The way of the supramental Yoga is clear; it lies not through any concession to these things,—not, in your case, through the satisfaction, under a spiritual cover if possible, of its craving for the comforts and gratifications of a domestic and conjugal life and the enjoyment of the ordinary emotional desires and physical passions, but through the purification and transformation of the forces which these movements pervert and misuse. Not these human and animal demands, but the divine Ananda which is above and beyond them and which the indulgence of these degraded forms would prevent from descending, is the great thing that the aspiration of the vital being must demand in the sadhaka.

The other question was about your difficulty in getting rid of the aboriginal in your nature. That difficulty will remain so long as you try to change your vital nature by the sole power of

² Written by Sri Aurobindo to one of his secretaries, who replied to the correspondent.
—Ed.

your mind and mental will, calling in at most an indefinite and impersonal divine Power to aid you. It is an old difficulty which has never been truly solved because it has never been met in the true way. In the former ways of Yoga it did not supremely matter because the aim was withdrawal from life. Either the vital was kept down by a mental and moral compulsion, or it was stilled and kept lying in a kind of sleep and quiescence, or it was allowed to run and exhaust itself if it could while its possessor professed to be untouched and unconcerned by it. When none of these solutions could be attained, the sadhaka simply led a double inner life, divided between his spiritual experiences and his vital weaknesses to the end. If you want a true mastery and transformation of the vital movements, it can be done only on condition you allow your psychic being, the soul in you, to awake fully, to establish its rule and open to the permanent touch of the divine Shakti and impose its way of devout aspiration and complete surrender on the mind and heart and vital nature. There is no other way and it is no use hankering after a more comfortable path. *Nānyah panthā vidyate ayanāya.*

4 October 1927

*

I could not quite follow what the Mother said the other day about keeping a mate. What is the difference between keeping a mate and marrying?

The Mother said "maid", not "mate". You spoke of having wished to marry again because you needed someone to nurse you when ill, etc. etc. These are good reasons for keeping a servant, not for marrying.

30 September 1929

*

If she has the true call to the Yoga and not only an impulse due to the influence of others, the necessary conditions will be created. Even if the circumstances seem adverse, it will be only a test or ordeal and she will come through in the end. On the other hand, if she is not yet truly called or if her nature is not yet ripe, the marriage may take place and she may have to go

through the ordinary life before she can return to the spiritual. There was never any suggestion from here that the girl should come to Pondicherry; how is it that it has been raised over there?

25 April 1930

*

No member of the Asram can while he is a member contract a marriage whether it is spiritual or sexual or bring in a woman to be his life-companion or establish such a relation with anyone outside. This is no part of the Asram life. He can do it outside by leaving the Asram, for then he is no longer a member and can order his life as he pleases; he is then responsible to himself alone for his action and its spiritual or other consequences concern only himself and that other person.

In the cases you cite there is no tie of spiritual marriage between the persons concerned: the sexual connection has been renounced, but no new inner tie has been formed — there is therefore no similarity with the action you propose. As special cases they are allowed to live in the same house for certain outward conveniences, but it is clearly understood that the old dependence of husband and wife on each other has to cease; they have to accustom themselves to be only sadhaks having no inner dependence on each other, but separately depending on the Mother alone, receiving spiritual help from her alone, offering to her alone the obedience of the disciple to the Master.

For your case to assimilate to theirs you would have to marry legally and socially with the consent of the father, live for twenty years or more together outside and then come for admission to the Asram with the resolution to develop an inner life independent from each other and turned to the Divine alone. What you propose as described in your letter is something quite different — it might stand in a Vaishnava sadhana or in some form of Karma Yoga, but it has no place here. An old relation is one thing, — its root being cut, time may be given in special cases at the Mother's discretion to get free from some of its outer results and habits which are not of the first importance; to bring in a new marriage relation with the full intention of giving it free

play and making it a part of the sadhana is a very different thing.

I do not know what you mean by "true sadhana". Each path of sadhana has its own way and procedure which may be quite different from that of other paths. For this path the Mother and I can alone determine what is necessary or not necessary, what is admissible or not admissible. If one has some other way of life which he finds necessary and considers part of the true sadhana, he is free to practise it elsewhere, but he has no claim to do it here and make it a part of this sadhana or of the life of the Asram if it is not sanctioned and approved by the Mother and myself.

13 May 1937

*

There is only one answer to X's question — marriage and Yoga are two different movements going opposite ways; if he follows one, he will be moving away from the other. So if he marries, either of two things will happen — he will sink into the ordinary life and go far away from us in spirit or he will find married life unsatisfactory, renounce his wife and return to the path that leads towards the Divine. Marriage with the first result would be only a stupidity; marriage for the second result would be an irrational inconsequence. So in either way —

Marriage, Service and Yoga

A letter from you dated July 25th of this year duly reached Sri Aurobindo, but at the time he was not in a position to give any definite answer. Latterly, he has read your letter again and instructs me to write the following reply.³

First, as regards your question about your married life. The sound principle in these matters is that so long as you feel the sense of duty, it is better to follow it out until you are liberated; you must not carry a scruple or a remorse or any kind of backward pull or attraction into the spiritual life. Equally,

³ *Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter by hand and gave it to his secretary to be copied and sent to the correspondent. —Ed.*

if you have any strong attraction towards the usual human active life, towards earning, bright prospects, the use of your capacities for the ordinary motives or on the ordinary plane of human consciousness, you ought not to leave everything behind you for what may after all be only a mental attraction towards spiritual ideals and Yoga. The spiritual consciousness and spiritual life are exceedingly difficult to attain; it needs a deep and strong call and the turning of all the energies towards the one object to arrive at any kind of full success (siddhi). Even those who have cut off all other ties, find it difficult not to live in a double consciousness, one inward and turned towards the spiritual change and the other which is still chained to the ordinary movements and pulls them down from their spiritual experience into the persistent and unchanged course of the lower nature. If you have not the entire and undivided call, it is better not to take the plunge, unless you are prepared for very bitter inner struggles, great difficulties and relapses and a hampered and doubtful progress. It is better in that case to prepare yourself by meditation and concentration while still living in the family and the usual human life, until the spiritual attraction is strong enough to overshadow and destroy all others.

Next, you speak of leading a higher life in order to fit yourself for service to others. But leading a higher life is a vague mental phrase and the object of Yoga is not service to others. The object of Yoga is to enter into an entirely new consciousness in which you live no longer in the mind and the ego but in the divine consciousness and grow into the true inmost truth of your being above mind and life and body. The aim in most ways of Yoga is to draw back altogether from life into this greater existence. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the aim is to transform mind, life and body into an expression of this divine Truth and to make the outward as well as the inward life embody it—a much more difficult endeavour. To act out of this greater consciousness becomes the only rule of life, abandoning all other dharmas. Not to serve either one's own ego or others, but to serve the Divine Shakti and be the instrument of her works is the law of this life.

Your other question,—about the Asrama, arises only when

you have found your call and your true way,— if that leads you here. In all cases Sri Aurobindo prefers to be assured of the call and the capacity before he admits anyone to his Asrama. The first of these two questions however, you have to decide mostly for yourself; the second can be settled only if, supposing you decide in this sense, you are called here and personally tested with a view for the Yoga.

circa 1927

Family Life and the Ashram

I hope you have not given any reason to your relatives to understand that it is by my *orders* that you do not correspond with them or return to family life! You have remained here and taken to the spiritual life by your own choice and it was at your prayer that your temporary stay was changed into a permanent one. When you make a choice, you must have the courage to take your stand upon it on your own responsibility before your family and the world. Otherwise each one here is at liberty to remain on the path or leave it as he chooses. I think you had better make that clearly understood by your people.

14 February 1930

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The accompanying letter is from my wife. Till now I have been guilty of writing to her without trying to know your opinion. I was keeping up the communication partly in order not to shock or pain her too much and partly with a desire to see that she might also take up the spiritual path some day. What attitude should I keep with respect to her?

I return the letter, but I leave the necessity of reply or otherwise to your own discretion. To keep any attachment is obviously inconsistent with the Yogic attitude, as also any *desire* of the kind you express; if she is to enter the spiritual life some day it should be as her own independent destiny and her being your wife is not relevant to it. Detachment is the main thing; if you have that, to write or not to write is a secondary matter.

12 June 1932

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Write to her that permission cannot be given this time. You will also explain to her that she cannot come here (permanently) merely because she is the wife of a sadhak staying here. All relations of that kind are to cease when one becomes a member of the Asram. It is only if one makes progress in the sadhana and is considered fit for stay in the Asram that permission can be given.

18 January 1933

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Neither the Mother nor Sri Aurobindo are in the habit of holding any correspondence except with the sadhaks and on matters proper to the sadhana. Sri Aurobindo sees no one except at the three Darshans and speaks with no one. The Mother except at the Darshan times sees only the sadhaks and receives them only or else, but rarely, people who come with a desire for sadhana.

As regards X

X chose the Asram life because after several attempts he found that trying to do the sadhana at home was a failure and he only multiplied ties and obstacles while here he progressed swiftly and was able to live the spiritual life. It is impossible for us to order him to go back permanently or temporarily or to live here in circumstances and conditions which he feels disturbing to his sadhana so long as he himself does not wish it or decide from his own inner determination to go. The sadhana here is not a mere matter of pranam or darshan; it is a life that has to be lived so that one may always be conscious in the Divine.

As regards X's family

As for his wife and children they could only have lived here in a separate house and had the expenses met by the family, but this is no longer possible. The difficulty of doing anything more arises from the rules and the nature of the Asram life.

(1) It is a strict rule that husband and wife living in the Asram cannot keep up the old conjugal relations and conjugal life. They either live separately or, if together, which is sometimes but not often allowed, as sadhak and sadhika only, each turned wholly to the Divine.

(2) Children of a tender age, under 10, are not allowed to live in the Asram, they are even not allowed as a rule to enter the Asram precincts. Even in houses not belonging to the Asram but still in some way connected with it (like the private house of Y where Z is temporarily staying) they are allowed only in very exceptional cases when we are sure that they can accommodate themselves to the Asram life and atmosphere.

(3) Children of low age are not admitted first because there is no proper arrangement for them—either for their food or their upbringing or their education or medical treatment. All is arranged with an eye to the life of grown-up sadhaks with limited requirements and no special provision can be made for anyone. The Asram is not in a position to undertake the responsibility for the maintenance or upbringing of children.

(4) Children are not admitted for another reason, because it was found when exceptions were made that they could not keep their health here and, after one death occurred, the prohibition was made absolute. They are too young and delicate to bear the atmosphere which is full of a tension of strong forces and, in most cases, their consciousness is too undeveloped for them to receive and profit easily by the supporting and protecting force received here from the Mother by the sadhaks. Faith and responsiveness are needed and such things cannot be expected from little children unless they have a very exceptional mind and character.

The ill-health of the children and the dangerous illness of the second among them seem to be a clear warning that these children cannot prosper here.

The Mother consented with much reluctance to Z and her children remaining in a separate house but it was under conditions that have not been fulfilled. It was never contemplated that X would live with them or earn his living. That is impossible unless he ceased to be a member of the Asram and this he does not wish to do. The family were very kindly allowed by Mr. Y to put up in his house, but this was supposed to be only for a short time. If they were to stay here, the Mother does not know where to put them or how to keep them. Even if this difficulty

were solved in some way, they would be living in conditions quite unsuitable which they would probably not be able to bear.

If Z were alone, it would be possible to put her up, but with the children we do not see any way. If she will be persuaded to return until at least they have the proper age, that would be the most advisable course. To separate from them and live here as the other sadhakas of the Asram would be the other alternative, but that, we understand, she is quite unwilling to do.

It is not possible for the Asram to modify its rules and character and way of life so as to suit the ideas and ways of living and demands and needs of the ordinary life. The Asram has its own reason of existence which is the spiritual life alone and it could not do that without losing its object and true character.

These considerations are placed before you so that you may know the position and keep them in view in advising Z. For she does not seem to understand them and it is this that has created difficulties with X; he feels that he is being pressed to abandon the spiritual life and that is why he is not at ease in going there.

21 December 1934

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As for your friend, it is not possible to say that she can come here; for that depends on many things which are not clearly present here. First, one must enter this Path or it must be seen that one is called to it; afterwards there is the question whether one is meant for the Asram life here. The question about the family duties can be answered in this way — the family duties exist so long as one is in the ordinary consciousness of the grihastha; if the call to a spiritual life comes, whether one keeps to them or not depends partly upon the way of Yoga one follows, partly on one's own spiritual necessity. There are many who pursue inwardly the spiritual life and keep the family duties, not as social duties but as a field for the practice of karmayoga, others abandon everything to follow the spiritual call alone and they are justified if that is necessary for the Yoga they practise or if that is the imperative demand of the soul within them.

Correspondence with Relatives

I feel that some idea-vibrations of that letter from home are active still in my memory.

That is the reason why it is better to drop these things. People who go on corresponding with their people do not feel it as you do, but nevertheless it is a fact that they maintain and enforce vibrations which keep the old forces active in the vital and maintain their impressions in the subconscious.

22 September 1934

*

Getting letters from relatives often opens the door to problems. Even if the people remain neutral and don't actually create difficulties, where is the common point of interest? We write to them about yoga and so forth, but I wonder whether any of that makes any difference to them.

That is why we are not in favour of correspondence with relatives etc. outside. There is no point of contact unless one comes out or down to their own level which is obviously undesirable from the point of view of Yoga. I don't think much inspiration can go through letters because their consciousness is not at all prepared. Words can at most touch only the surface of their minds; what is important is something behind the words, but to that they are not open. If there is already an interest in spiritual things, that is different. Even then it is often better to let people follow their own groove than pull them into this path.

17 April 1935

Women in the Ashram

I have heard from my mother that she is determined to go to you very soon without seeing to our many grievances. Now we are encumbered with many difficulties which we are unable to deal with without our mother. Please ask the Mother to tell her to return to us. We will let her go back to the Ashram within a year.

The Mother cannot give the advice you call on her to give to X. It is your mother's free choice alone and sense of inner need that should guide her. No one has a right to interfere with her spiritual progress or pull her back in order to satisfy their own selfish demands. Her children are not infants needing the care of a mother and ought to be able to face by themselves the difficulties of life—it is rather now their duty to put her need first and not theirs; for at her age, it is she and not themselves who should be their first consideration in their dealings with her. She has need of rest to restore her broken health and an atmosphere of peace for her soul's progress.

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I do not think it at all necessary for you to stay any longer with your son. He is now becoming old enough to trace his own path in life—the more he is independent, the better. You certainly did no wrong in coming here at this time; the opinion of society about it has no true basis whatever.

As for the attitude taken by your husband, it should rather be a help to you to make your choice decisively and once for all. You can write to him that since he presses, you will not delay long to make your decision and you will speak to him about it when you return—unless you feel it will put you more at ease to write now a definite answer.

14 March 1933

*

The need of solitude, of going inward, of getting out of the ordinary atmosphere of human life is one of the most natural movements of spiritual life. One who cannot appreciate that movement, knows nothing about spirituality or Yoga. Your husband's letters are like the reasonings of the scientists and men of the world who know nothing about Yoga or spiritual experience; they only pass mental opinions and judgments on it from outside. It is not even worth while replying to such things—they are so far from the realities of the spirit.

Keep over there your separateness and for all that surrounds you there remain inwardly aloof and untouched—dealing with

it as something external to you which you will soon leave.

31 March 1933

*

I return your husband's letters. I do not think we can build much on his desire to know about Yoga. He wishes for reasons of a mixed nature to dissuade you from leaving the domestic life and that is the main thing behind both the criticising and the conciliatory elements in his letters. Your own position is clear and it is what I suppose you have expressed already—you are sure of your own feeling and purpose and confidence in my leading, but you see no good in subjecting it to intellectual discussion. Yoga and spirituality rest on the soul's intuition and the need of the inner nature, not on the reasoning of the surface intelligence.

circa 1933

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Women are not naturally weaker than men, but in society they have not been trained and educated like men to have a strong will and control over themselves, so when these things [*vital problems*] come on them, they do not understand or react so easily against them. But there are men as helpless in these struggles who are subject to the same reactions. Once one is open to the Divine, women are no less able than men to become strong with the Divine Force and luminous and wise with the Divine Light and Knowledge.

27 October 1935

*

The tendency you speak of, to leave the family and social life for the spiritual life, has been traditional in India for the last 2000 years and more—chiefly among men, it touches only a very small number of women. It must be remembered that Indian social life has subordinated almost entirely the individual to the family. Men and women do not marry according to their free will; their marriages are mostly arranged for them while they are still children. Not only so, but the mould of society has been long of an almost iron fixity putting each individual in his place

and expecting him to conform to it. You speak of issues and a courageous solution, but in this life there are no problems and issues and no call for a solution — a courageous solution is only possible where there is freedom of the personal will; but where the only solution (if one remains in this life) is submission to the family will, there can be nothing of that kind. It is a secure life and can be happy if one accommodates oneself to it and has no unusual aspirations beyond it or is fortunate in one's environment; but it has no remedy for or escape from incompatibilities or any kind of individual frustration; it leaves little room for initiative or free movement or any individualism. The only outlet for the individual is his inner spiritual or religious life and the recognised escape is the abandonment of the *samsāra*, the family life, by some kind of Sannyasa. The Sannyasi, the Vaishnava Vairagi or the Brahmachari are free; they are dead to the family and can live according to the dictates of the inner spirit. Only if they enter into an order or asram, they have to abide by the rules of the order, but that is their own choice, not a responsibility which has been laid on them without their choice. Society recognised this door of escape from itself; religion sanctioned the idea that distaste for the social or worldly life was a legitimate ground for taking up that of the recluse or religious wanderer. But this was mainly for men; women, except in old times among the Buddhists who had their convents and in later times among the Vaishnavas, had little chance of such an escape unless a very strong spiritual impulse drove them which would take no denial. As for the wife and children left behind by the Sannyasi, there was little difficulty, for the joint family was there to take up or rather to continue their maintenance.

At present what has happened is that the old framework remains, but modern ideas have brought a condition of inadaptation, of unrest, the old family system is breaking up and women are seeking in more numbers the same freedom of escape as men have always had in the past. That would account for the cases you have come across — but I don't think the number of such cases can be as yet at all considerable, it is quite a new phenomenon; the admission of women to Asrams is itself a novelty.

The extreme unhappiness of a mental and vital growth which does not fit in with the surroundings, of marriages imposed that are unsuitable and where there is no meeting-point between husband and wife, of an environment hostile and intolerant of one's inner life and on the other hand the innate tendency of the Indian mind to seek a refuge in the spiritual or religious escape will sufficiently account for the new development. If society wants to prevent it, it must itself change. As to individuals, each case must be judged on its own merits; there is too much complexity in the problem and too much variation of nature, position, motives for a general rule.

I have spoken of the social problem in general terms only. In the conduct of the Ashram, we have had many applications obviously dictated by an unwillingness to face the difficulties and responsibilities of life—naturally ignored or refused by us, but these have been mostly from men; there have been recently only one or two cases of women. Otherwise women have not applied usually on the ground of an unhappy marriage or difficult environment. Most often married sadhikas have followed or accompanied their husbands on the ground of having already begun to practise Yoga; others have come after fulfilling sufficiently the responsibilities of married life; in two or three cases there has been a separation from the husband but that was long before their coming here. In some cases there have been no children, in others the children have been left with the family. These cases do not really fall in the category of those you mention. Some of the sadhaks have left wife and family behind, but I do not think in any case the difficulties of life were the motive of their departure. It was rather the idea that they had felt the call and must leave all to follow it.

27 June 1937

Children in the Ashram

In answer to your question about X and her children, I may say that it is best for the children to return, as they are too young and undeveloped to remain here for a very long time. For X herself, what she needs for the sadhana is to learn to live more inwardly,

and we think it is better for her to return home with her children at present. If over there she goes inward, feels her relation with us and the need of the inner life becomes imperative, then no obstacles will be able to prevent her coming here again. The difficulty you have spoken of in the way of her returning is precisely one of those outer considerations which are not of the first importance. When the thing has to be done, there will always be a way to do it. In so deciding, we are looking entirely at what we consider best for her spiritual future. 16 August 1932

*

As to the children you must remember what the Mother told you that they are yet too young for the Power to act directly upon them, it must be through you. That is the reason why you must always remain quiet and open so that the Mother may work through you, not for you only, but for them also.

22 August 1932

*

You will reply to him that for himself and X and Y permission can always be given whenever they want to come—but the children are too young. It is a rule of the Asram departed from only in rare cases, where there is something exceptional, that they cannot be admitted inside the Asram before they are 10 years old—for before that they are too young to bear or assimilate the forces of the atmosphere—at least under present conditions. When people on *their own responsibility* bring children and stay in a house outside the Asram then the Mother allows it, but she takes no responsibility for them and they are not allowed to come for Darshan or Pranam or even inside the Asram.

25 January 1934

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If he comes alone we can accommodate him in the Asram but with his wife and children it will not be possible. The Mother also does not think it advisable to bring very young children here—usually the pressure of the forces in the Asram is too strong for them and there is a danger of their being ill. It is only after

the age of 10 that they are allowed (except in very exceptional cases) to enter the Asram at all.

24 March 1934

*

The child cannot be brought to the Darshan. Children below 10 years of age are not allowed at the Darshan or in the Asram—very rare exceptions are made but not for anyone below 5. So permission can only be given for the adult members. You might write explaining this to your nephew.

2 August 1934

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It is usually unsafe for children to undergo spiritual pressure when their minds are not yet ripe—it often overstimulates certain centres before the Adhar is ripe and there is often a disturbance or lesion somewhere as the result.

26 December 1934

*

X, who is sixteen or seventeen, can explain the Mother's *Conversations* and *Prayers* but is ignorant of even elementary mathematics and other subjects which every normal person ought to know. Perhaps Ramakrishna would not consider it to be ignorance so long as the person is turned towards the Divine?

But it is an unnecessary ignorance not to know elementary mathematics. To be able to explain *Conversations* and *Prayers* is very good, but I don't see why it should exclude the other. If one has a realisation like Ramakrishna, that is another matter altogether. These people who came too young to the Asram like X and Y refused because they are not forced as children are at home and in school to learn anything at all except what it pleases them to learn. I consider the result deplorable, the more so because they have a more than ordinary personality and intelligence and ought to learn more, not less than other children.

5 June 1935

*

I do not think we can accept your friend's proposal; the conditions would have to be very different before his object could be fulfilled by sending his son here. We are not satisfied with the effect of the Asram life on children. They do not get the society of other children which they need, they associate with their elders and contract the habits of older people which is not to their benefit. Also they are exposed to ideas and influences which are beyond their age and grow old in mind too quickly, while at the same time they do not get the discipline, education, preliminary formation of the lower nature which is necessary in the early period of life. The life of the Asram has not been formed with a view to these things. If there had been a number of children with regular arrangements for their education it might have been different, but, as it is, we do not wish to admit children except in some exceptional case.

4 March 1936

Relations with People outside the Ashram

To give oneself to an outsider is to go out from the atmosphere of sadhana and give oneself to the outer world forces.

One can have a psychic feeling of love for someone, a universal love for all creatures, but one has to give oneself only to the Divine.

24 May 1934

*

Do you believe that people here are more sensitive than people outside? Some people think that the Asram is a "rotten" place with jealousy and hatred rampant among the sadhaks.

Outside there are just the same things. The Asram is an epitome of the human nature that has to be changed — but outside people put as much as possible a mask of social manners and other pretences over the rottenness — what Christ called in the case of the Pharisees the "whited sepulchre". Moreover there one can pick and choose the people one will associate with while in the narrow limits of the Asram it is not so possible — contacts are inevitable. Wherever humans are obliged to associate closely, what I saw described the other day as "the astonishing

meanesses and caddishnesses inherent in human nature" come quickly out. I have seen that in Asrams, in political work, in social attempts at united living, everywhere in fact where it gets a chance. But when one tries to do Yoga, one cannot fail to see that in oneself and not only, as most people do, see it in others, and once seen, then? Is it to be got rid of or to be kept? Most people here seem to want to keep it. Or they say it is too strong for them, they can't help it!

3 April 1938

Work in the Ashram

Work and Sadhana

I have read in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the Mother's *Conversations* that every act and movement, thought and word should be an offering. Even if this is a strictly mental effort without the heart's devotion, as it may be at first, it is sure to lead to devotion, provided the effort is sincere. This discipline is quite possible in acts of a more or less mechanical nature like walking or eating, but where the work involves mental concentration, as in reading or writing, it seems well-nigh impossible. If the consciousness has to be busy with the remembrance, the attention will get divided and the work will not be properly done.

It is because people live in the surface mind and are identified with it. When one lives more inwardly, it is only the surface consciousness that is occupied and one stands behind it in another which is silent and self-offered.

4 May 1933

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Does this consciousness [*mentioned in the preceding letter*] come only by aspiration or can one have it by following a mental discipline?

One starts by a mental effort — afterwards it is an inner consciousness that is formed which need not be always *thinking* of the Mother because it is always conscious of her. 31 May 1933

*

We cannot approve of your idea — there are already enough intellectuals in the Asram and the room-keeping intellectual is not a type whose undue propagation we are disposed to encourage. Outside work is just what is necessary to keep the equilibrium of the nature and you certainly need it for that purpose. Also

your presence in the D.R. [Dining Room] is indispensable. For the rest instead of getting vexed with X or Y you should seek the cause of these things in yourself — that is always the true rule for a sadhak. You are sometimes at your best and then things go on very well; but sometimes you are not at all at your best and then these misunderstandings arise. The remedy therefore is to be at your best always — not to be in your room always, but to be in your best and therefore your true self always. 15 May 1934

*

I have often felt that *dhyāna* was a better way than *karma*, poetry etc. to reach the Divine — a shorter cut I mean. Am I right?

Meditation is one means of the approach to the Divine and a great way, but it cannot be called a short cut — for most it is a long and difficult though very high ascent. It can by no means be short unless it brings a descent and even then it is only a foundation that is quickly laid — afterwards meditation has to build laboriously a big superstructure on that foundation. It is very indispensable, but there is nothing of the short cut about it.

Karma is a much simpler road — provided one's mind is not fixed on the karma to the exclusion of the Divine. The aim must be the Divine and the work can only be a means. The use of poetry etc. is to keep one in contact with one's inner being and that helps to prepare for the direct contact with the inmost, but one must not stop with that, one must go on to the real thing. If one thinks of being a "literary man", a poet, a painter as things worth while for their own sake, then it is no longer the Yogic spirit. That is why I have sometimes to say that our business is to be Yogis, not merely poets, painters etc.

Love, bhakti, surrender, the psychic opening are the only short cut to the Divine — or can be; for if the love and bhakti are too vital, then there is likely to be a seesaw between ecstatic expectation and *viraha*, *abhimāna*, despair, which will make it not a short cut but a long one, a zigzag, not a straight flight, a whirling round one's own ego instead of a running towards the Divine. 10 December 1934

*

If I remember right, you wrote to me that work is only a means for the preparation of the spiritual life; otherwise it has no spiritual value.

[*Sri Aurobindo underlined “only”, put a question mark above it, and wrote:*] Lord God! when did I make this stupendous statement which destroys at one fell swoop the two volumes of the *Essays on the Gita* and all the seven volumes of the *Arya*? Work by itself is only a preparation, so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing Yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as meditation is.

In your letter to X¹ you say that work helps to prepare for the direct contact with the inmost. In another letter you say that work prepares for the right consciousness to develop — which means the same thing.

I have not said, I hope, that work *only* prepares. Meditation also prepares for the direct contact. If we are to do work only as a preparation and then become motionless meditative ascetics, then all my spiritual teaching is false and there is no use for supramental realisation or anything else that has not been done in the past.

My own impression is that work is an excellent means as a preparation, but the major experiences and realisations are not likely to come in during work. My little experience corroborates me, because whatever drops of Ananda descended on me, were mostly during meditation. Only once did I have two minutes of Ananda during work.

I see. When the time for preparation is over, one will sit immobile for ever after and never do any work — for, as you say, work and realisation cannot go together. Hurrah for the Himalayas!

Well, but why not then the old Yoga? If work is so contrary to realisation! That is Shankara's teaching.

¹ *The letter of 10 December 1934 on page 743. — Ed.*

The main difference between the two is that in work the attention is bound to be diverted. While working with the hand, utter the name of Hari with the mouth — this attitude is quite possible, but only as a preparation. It is not enough to take us to the goal, which meditation alone can do; because there the whole being is absorbed in engrossing meditation on the Beloved.

In that case I am entirely wrong in preaching a dynamic Yoga — Let us go back to the cave and the forest.

You have said that 9/10 of your time is spent in doing correspondence, works etc., whereas only 1/10 is devoted to concentration.² One naturally asks, why should it not be possible for you to do concentration and work at the same time?

For me, correspondence alone. I have no time left for other "works etc".

Concentration and meditation are not the same thing. One can be concentrated in work or bhakti as well as in meditation. For God's sake be careful about your vocabulary, or else you will tumble into many errors and loosenesses of thinking.

If I devoted 9/10 of my time to concentration and none to work — the result would be equally unsatisfactory. My concentration is for a particular work — it is not for meditation divorced from life. When I concentrate I work upon others, upon the world, upon the play of forces. What I say is that to spend all the time reading and writing letters is not sufficient for the purpose. I am not asking to become a meditative Sannyasi.

Did you not retire for five or six years for an exclusive and intensive meditation?

I am not aware that I did so. But my biographers probably know more about it than I do.

² See the letter of 26 October 1934 on page 333. — Ed.

If the Supramental Divine himself differentiates between work and concentration . . .

Between concentration on correspondence alone and the full many-sided work — *not* between work and concentration.

and finds it difficult to radiate his Force among the few sa-dhaks contemporaneously with his work of correspondence etc., what about undivines and inframentals like us?

[Underlining “contemporaneously with his work of correspondence”:] It does not mean that I lose the higher consciousness while doing the work of correspondence. If I did that, I would not only not be supramental, but would be very far even from the full Yogic consciousness.

Say “by correspondence alone”. If I have to help somebody to repel an attack, I can’t do it by only writing a note, I have to send him some Force or else concentrate and do the work for him. Also I can’t bring down the Supramental by merely writing neatly to people about it. I am not asking for leisure to meditate at ease in a blissful indolence. I said distinctly I wanted it for concentration on other more important work than correspondence.

These are some of the doubts some of us are afflicted with.

The ignorance underlying this attitude is in the assumption that one must necessarily do only work or only meditation. Either work is the means or meditation is the means, but both cannot be! I have never said, so far as I know, that meditation should not be done. To set up an open competition or a closed one between works and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have been declaring all along an integral Yoga in which knowledge, Bhakti, works — light of consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works — meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the *Arya* all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge — both are equal.

Another thing—it is a mistake to argue from one's own very limited experience, ignoring that of others, and build on it large generalisations about Yoga. This is what many do, but the method has obvious demerits. You have no experience of major realisations through work, and you conclude that such realisations are impossible. But what of the many who have had them—elsewhere and here too in the Asram? That has no value? You kindly hint to me that I have failed to get anything by works? How do you know? I have not written the history of my sadhana—if I had, you would have seen that if I had not made action and work one of my chief means of realisation—well, there would have been no sadhana and no realisation except that, perhaps, of Nirvana.

I shall perhaps add something hereafter as to what works can do, but no time tonight.

Do not conclude however that I am exalting works as the sole means of realisation. I am only giving it its due place.

You will excuse the vein of irony or satire in all this—but really when I am told that my own case disproves my whole spiritual philosophy and accumulated knowledge and experience, a little liveliness in answer is permissible. 16 December 1934

*

A sense was coming down from above that I belong to the Above, but have come down upon earth for a mission to work out—deputed here as an instrument of the Above for the works of the Above.

The work is the work of the Divine and it is best to regard oneself as an instrument. The word mission is apt to accentuate the sense of ego and should be avoided. 5 January 1935

*

The higher consciousness keeps contact with me only through my passive self. If I do more work, it disturbs the higher working. I don't know what the cause of this is.

There is no special cause for it. It is always so with everybody

unless one feels the Mother's Force working through one in the action.

I find it hard to work while remaining in the Yogic consciousness. My inner state is too passive.

It is possible to work through the passive state even, provided one feels that one is not doing the work but it is being done through one.

You suggested another way — to keep the psychic in front. But I don't know how to bring the psychic forward.

It comes forward of itself either through constant love and aspiration or when the mind and vital have been made ready by the descent from above and the working of the Force.

13 March 1935

*

There are some sadhaks here who think that everyone should do Karmayoga only, without doing any meditation at all.

There are some who cannot meditate and progress through work only. Each has his own nature. But to extend one method to all is always an error.

16 May 1935

*

Why do people complain that they are not able to keep up the sadhana during work?

It is a question of doing work in the right attitude — as a means of sadhana. Most take the work as work only. 3 July 1936

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Is it not a fact that most of the true Yogas demand passivity of the mind as the first important basis? Does your Yoga differ from them in this at least? If not, what is the purpose of allowing the sadhaks to keep their minds constantly active in learning languages? Or has it created for them such a climate

that they can keep their minds calm and quiet somehow behind and in spite of this mental activity?

One can go on without anything except a little rice daily and some water — without clothes even or a house to shelter. Is that what you call true Yoga and that should be followed in the Asram? But then there is no need of an Asram. A cave somewhere for each will do.

Why do you use a fountain pen? You can very well go on with an ordinary one. Why do you take these *cahiers* from the stores? Cheap paper would do. Why do you write? The mind should be passive.

If by passivity of the mind you mean laziness and inability to use it, then what Yoga makes that its basis? The mind has to be quieted and transformed, not made indolent and useless. Is there any old Yoga that makes it a rule not to allow those who practise it to study Sanskrit or philosophy? Does that prevent the Yogis from attaining mental quietude? Do you think that the Mother and myself never read anything and have to sit all day inactive in order to make our minds quiet? Are you not aware that the principle of this Yoga is to arrive at an inner silence in which all activities can take place without disturbing the inner silence?

24 March 1937

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For the sadhana, it is not true that some are here only because they give money and others because they are workers only. What is true is that there are many who can prepare themselves only by work, their consciousness not being yet ready for meditation of the more intense kind. But even for those who can do intense meditation from the beginning, sadhana by work is also necessary in this Yoga. One cannot arrive at its goal by meditation alone. As for your own capacity, it was evident when for a fairly long period an active sadhana was proceeding within you. Everybody's capacity however is limited — little can be done by one's own strength alone. It is reliance on the Divine Force, the Mother's Force and Light and openness to it that is the real capacity. This you had for a time, but as with many others it got

clouded over by the coming up of the physical nature in its full force. This clouding happens to almost everybody at that stage, but it need not be lasting. If the physical consciousness resolves to open itself, then nothing more is needed for progress in the sadhana.

10 July 1937

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There is one thing everybody should remember that everything should be done from the point of view of Yoga, of sadhana, of growing into a divine life in the Mother's consciousness. To insist upon one's own mind and its ideas, to allow oneself to be governed by one's own vital feelings and reactions should not be the rule of life here. One has to stand back from these, to be detached, to get in their place the true knowledge from above, the true feelings from the psychic within. This cannot be done if the mind and vital do not surrender, if they do not renounce their attachment to their own ignorance which they call truth, right, justice. All the trouble rises from that; if that were overcome, the true basis of life, of work, of harmony of all in the union with the Divine would more and more replace the trouble and difficulty of the present.

Some Aspects of Work in the Ashram

The work here is not intended for showing one's capacity or having a position or as a means of physical nearness to the Mother, but as a field and an opportunity for the Karmayoga part of the integral Yoga—for learning to work in the true Yogic way—dedication through service, practical selflessness, obedience, scrupulousness, discipline, setting the Divine and the Divine's work first and oneself last, harmony, patience, forbearance etc. When the workers learn these things and cease to be egocentric, as most of you now are, then will come the time for work in which capacity can really be shown—although even then the showing of capacity will be an incident and can never be the main consideration or the object of divine work.

28 August 1931

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When I was working in the Satyagraha movement, I worked with a zeal and energy I don't seem to have here. Is it because there is no fighting programme except against one's own self? How can I recover my interest and vigour in work?

The Satyagraha was one of those movements in which the vital part of the nature gets easily enthusiastic and interested — it meant a fight on the vital level (its only difference from other revolutionary activities being its "non-violent" character), with universal support and applause and approval, a nationwide excitement behind you, the sense of heroism and possible martyrdom, a "moral" ideal giving a farther support of strong self-approbation and the sense of righteousness. Here there is nothing that ministers to the human vital nature; the work is small, silent, shut off from the outside world and its circumstances, of value only as a field for spiritual self-culture. If one is governed by the sole spiritual motive and has the spiritual consciousness, one can take joy and interest in this work. Or if, in spite of his human shortcomings, the worker is mainly bent on spiritual progress and self-perfection, then also he can take interest in the work and both feel its utility for the discovery and purification of his egoistic mental and vital and physical nature and take joy in it as a service of the Divine.

11 August 1932

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Recover yourself now and proceed on your way with a deeper and truer aim in you. Your efforts at sadhana up till now have been too exclusively on the vital plane; aspire for a full opening of the psychic, clear your movements of all ego and strive to make yourself open and aspire only to be a receptacle of the true consciousness and an instrument of the Divine.

As for outward things, what has been lacking in you has been discipline, order, self-consecration in your work. You have acted according to your impulse and fancy and been unable to do any work steadily and with devotion in the work. The Mother gave you library work to do and it has not been scrupulously done. She asks you for the sake of your own self-discipline to do that little carefully and scrupulously in the future. For the rest

you can go on with your music and your sadhana; but let all be done in a deeper spirit and as an offering to the Divine.

11 May 1933

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There is no reason why one should not offer to work if there is work to do. Often there is work to be done and no one offers, so it is not done. Most of the Asram work is done by a few people, while others do a little only or only what they please.

31 May 1933

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Each man has his defects — you and all others. So you should not allow that to destroy the harmony that should reign among workers. Remember that patience and equanimity and good feeling for all are the first needs of the sadhak. 12 November 1933

*

The Mother's withdrawal of you from the work had nothing to do with any relation between you and X or any other sadhika. What you have to do is to utilise it for becoming quiet within, silencing the vital movement and getting into the true attitude.

What you write shows that you had a wrong idea of the work. The work in the Asram was not meant as a service to humanity or to a section of it called the sadhaks of the Asram. It was not meant either as an opportunity for a joyful social life and a flow of sentiments and attachments between the sadhaks and an expression of the vital movements, a free vital interchange whether with some or with all. The work was meant as a service to the Divine and as a field for the inner opening to the Divine, surrender to the Divine alone, rejection of ego and all the ordinary vital movements and the training in a psychic elevation, selflessness, obedience, renunciation of all mental, vital or other self-assertion of the limited personality. Self-affirmation is not the aim, development of the personal self is not the aim, the formation of a collective vital ego is also not the aim. The merging of the little ego in union with the Divine, purification, surrender, the substitution of the Divine

guidance for one's own ignorant self-guidance based on one's personal ideas and personal feelings is the aim of Karma Yoga, the surrender of one's own will to the Divine Will.

If one feels human beings to be near and the Divine to be far and seeks the Divine through service of and love of human beings and not the direct service and love of the Divine, then one is following a wrong principle — for that is the principle of the mental, vital and moral, not the spiritual life. November 1933

*

All work is equal — those who write or embroider are in no way superior to those who cook or prepare the grains. To speak otherwise is ignorance.

7 December 1933

*

Active participation in an outside work is sometimes useful to a sadhak in the early stages of his sadhana so that he may learn equanimity; but the utility of it for a sadhak of the Asrama is not very clear. Personal or family work is not part of the divine Work unless as in X's case it is dedicated to the Divine — for he gives all its profits here. But in your case it is family property and that is not possible. We are therefore rather doubtful as to how this would fit in at the present stage of your sadhana.

25 April 1935

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Work here and work done in the world are of course not the same thing. The work there is not in any way a divine work in special — it is ordinary work in the world. But still one must take it as a training and do it in the spirit of karmayoga — what matters there is not the nature of the work in itself but the spirit in which it is done. It must be in the spirit of the Gita, without desire, with detachment, without repulsion, but doing it as perfectly as possible, not for the sake of the family or promotion or to please the superiors, but simply because it is the thing that has been given in the hand to do. It is a field of inner training, nothing more. One has to learn in it three things,

equality, desirelessness, dedication. It is not the work as a thing for its own sake, but one's doing of it and one's way of doing it that one has to dedicate to the Divine. Done in that spirit it does not matter what the work is. If one trains oneself spiritually like that, then one will be ready to do in the true way whatever special work directly for the Divine (such as the Asram work) one may any day be given to do.

21 September 1935

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What is necessary is not to be troubled or upset by small things, to work pleasantly and quietly with the others, then they also will do the same and there will be no friction.

The Place of Rules in Work

We are supposed to take our tooth-sticks between 6 and 7 p.m. Yesterday I forgot to go. At 7.15 I remembered, but it was too late. I mentioned this to X. He told me to go anyway, since others go after 7. I told him I would obey the rule regardless.

It is a good discipline like that. Rules are made for the proper harmony and convenience of the work. If you disregard them you promote disorder, inefficiency and looseness of work and at the same time you yourself become or remain loose, negligent, undisciplined and imperfect.

25 June 1933

*

Rules are indispensable for the orderly management of work; for without order and arrangement nothing can be properly done, all becomes clash, confusion and disorder.

It is the rule that as far as possible supervisors should foresee their needs and ask for the morning's needs the evening before and for the afternoon's needs in the morning. In special cases where the article is needed at a particular hour, that should be stated in the chit. Where such previous notice is not given, the office will send the articles asked for as soon as possible — i.e., in view of the other work to be done.

In this case the work had been fixed beforehand so it was

possible to send previous notice. Under the circumstances, although you could ask them to let you have your needs early in spite of absence of previous notice, you could not go and claim that as a right or threaten to report them for negligence to the Mother.

In all such dealings with others, you should see not only your own side of the question but the other side also. There should be no anger, vehement reproach or menace, for these things only raise anger and retort on the other side. I write this because you are trying to rise above yourself and dominate your vital and when one wants to do that, one cannot be too strict with oneself in these things. It is best even to be severe to one's own mistakes and charitable to the mistakes of others.

23 June 1935

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A rule that can be varied by everyone at his pleasure is no rule. In all countries in which organised work is successfully done, (India is not one of them), rules exist and nobody thinks of breaking them, for it is realised that work (or life either) without discipline would soon become a confusion and an anarchic failure. In the great days of India everything was put under rule, even art and poetry, even Yoga. Here in fact rules are much less rigid than in any European organisation. Personal discretion can even in a frame of rules have plenty of play—but discretion must be discreetly used, otherwise it becomes something arbitrary or chaotic.

1 October 1936

Organisation and Discipline in Work

I hear you do not like the gate-keepers to do any writing, reading etc. when on duty. Is it true? Up till now I have been writing during that time.

It was because people were neglecting their duty in the absorption of reading and writing, allowing undesirable people to enter etc. If that does not happen, one can read or write—only when one is on duty, the duty comes first.

12 May 1933

*

In regard to my work at the office, I have the feeling that my position is neither one of working under another nor of working on my own. Is this the way it should be?

It is not necessary to work under anybody—it is a work of collaboration in which each is free to organise his work as he thinks best for the work. You can see how best to organise yours.

31 May 1934

*

The Mother has her own reasons for her decisions; she has to look at the work as a whole without regard to one department or branch alone and with a view to the necessities of the work and the management. The objection to buying much of this size was hers and not X's. Whatever work is done here, one has always to learn to subordinate or put aside one's own ideas and preferences about things concerning it and do for the best under the conditions and decisions laid down by her. This is one of the main difficulties throughout the Asram, as each worker wants to do according to his own ideas, on his own lines according to what he thinks to be the right or convenient thing and expects that to be sanctioned. It is one of the principal reasons of difficulty, clash or disorder in the work, creating conflict between the workers themselves, conflict between the workers and the heads of departments, conflict between the ideas of the sadhaks and the will of the Mother. Harmony can only exist if all accept the will of the Mother without grudge or personal reaction.

Independent work does not exist in the Asram. All is organised and interrelated; neither the heads of departments nor the workers are independent. To learn subordination and cooperation is necessary for all collective work; without it there will be chaos.

As for the Yoga aspect of these personal clashes, dislikes etc. and of the work itself, I have written about that before.

10 March 1936

*

When people set a date by which a work must be completed, the usual result is that there is a huge haste, followed by a period in which people don't know what to do. Is it really necessary to fix dates? I wonder sometimes if doing so does not create a sort of occult resistance.

It is necessary to fix dates for the organisation of the work, but there must be a certain plasticity so that if necessary the time may be extended. As to particular cases it is a matter of judgment how much time is to be given. It is the system of the schedule, but whether the work can be done "according to schedule", as they say, has to be seen in practice. The occult resistance is a fact but it applies more to psychological than to physical things.

18 October 1936

Dealing with Paid Workers

In dealing with paid workmen, I sometimes behave in a very familiar way, sometimes in a neutral way and sometimes I get angry. How should I behave with them?

None of these ways is the right one; the first weakens the authority, the second is not dynamic, the last is obviously not helpful. In all work the nearer one gets to an entire equanimity (which does not mean indifference) in the mind and the vital feeling, the better. A calm detached attitude, with a fundamental sympathy in it but not of the sentimental kind, a clear unbiased eye observing their character and reactions, and a quiet and firm authority without harshness, capable both of kindness and of quiet severity, where severity is needed, would be the best attitude.

22 August 1932

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To be angry and speak harshly to the workmen injures both the work and the sadhana.

10 February 1933

*

It seems to me that sadhaks could take up some of the work now being given to paid workers, electrical work for instance. I am ready to do this kind of work.

I suppose it will have to come to that in the end — for the conditions and cost of having workmen and even servants is likely to become prohibitive if the new laws are made operative in the [French] colonies. But for the moment it is not practicable. The majority of the sadhaks have not the mentality that would be needed for this kind of work — workman's work — nor the necessary capacity of working together. A few zealous and enthusiastic sadhaks would not be able to meet the necessity.

30 June 1936

Life and Death in the Ashram

Self-Control, Not Asceticism

What should be the true necessities of a sadhak? Should he buy things from outside? With what idea is pocket money given to us?

The idea, when the arrangement was made, was simply to see how and in what spirit the sadhaks dealt with money when they had any at their disposal.

The *necessities* of a sadhak should be as few as possible; for there are only a very few things that are real necessities in life. The rest are either utilities or things decorative to life or luxuries. These a Yogi has a right to possess or enjoy only on one of two conditions —

(1) if he uses them during his sadhana solely to train himself in possessing things without attachment or desire and learn to use them rightly, in harmony with the Divine Will, with a proper handling, a just organisation, arrangement and measure — or,

(2) if he has already attained a true freedom from desire and attachment and is not in the least moved or affected in any way by loss or withholding or deprival. If he has any greed, desire, demand, claim for possession or enjoyment, any anxiety, grief, anger or vexation when denied or deprived, he is not free in spirit and his use of the things he possesses is contrary to the spirit of sadhana. Even if he is free in spirit, he will not be fit for possession if he has not learned to use things not for himself, but for the Divine Will, as an instrument, with the right knowledge and action in the use for the proper equipment of a life lived not for oneself but for and in the Divine.

7 March 1932

*

I find it difficult to distinguish between true need and what might be called luxury. A part of me wants to have nice and

decent things and to take pleasure in them. Another side tells me so many things are not needed. I would like to return to the ascetic life I followed before coming here.

You must be prepared to live in either condition, attached neither to luxury nor to asceticism. It is good to be able to live with very few things, but you must also be able to live with nice and decent things and make right use of them. Never mind your true need, live with whatever the Mother has given you. 6 April 1932

*

An aspiration towards detachment has come upon me and the will to avoid luxury or desire or habit of any kind.

If that can be done (in a positive, not merely a negative way), then it would be an immense step forward. 18 November 1933

*

You have written [*in the preceding letter*] of detachment “in a positive, not merely a negative way”. Please explain this.

By negative I mean merely repressing the desires and wrong movements and egoism, by positive I mean the bringing down of light and peace and purity in those parts from above. I do not mean that these movements are not to be rejected — but all the energy should not be directed solely to rejection. It must also be directed to the positive replacement of them by the higher consciousness. The more this consciousness comes, the easier also will the rejection be. 19 November 1933

*

Your condemnation of asceticism is often taken by the vital as giving sanction to the continuation of desire and its fulfilment — so at least I have noticed in some here.

That is a mistake many have made because the vital wanted to make it. Whether ascetic or non-ascetic, the Yogi, the sadhak must become free from vital desire and spiritually master of the movements of his nature — and for that he must be free from

ego and desire and duality. I have always made that quite clear — that indulgence of desire is no more part of this Yoga than it is of Sannyasa. One must be able to use and handle physical things and physical life, but from the spiritual consciousness, not from the level of the vital ego.

27 November 1935

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It is surprising that you should miss, that so many here should miss the point that to be so much troubled about a trifling want or inconvenience is quite contrary to the spirit of Yoga. To be untroubled and unmoved by such things is an elementary step in Yogic self-discipline. Transcendence is a far bigger matter; but this should be possible by self-control, for that there is no need of transcendence. In the life here extreme asceticism in the sense of doing without everything but the barest needs is not enforced; but it is all the more necessary to be free within, to surmount desire and attachment, to be able to do without things in the sense of not hankering after things when they are not there, not being attached to them when they are there, not insisting on one's own demands, desires, wants, comforts, conveniences, being satisfied with what one is given. Sannyasa is not enforced, but the inner *tyāga* of non-desire, non-demand, non-attachment is indispensable. A thing like this, an inconvenience that is not remedied when one asks, should be welcomed as a test for this inner *tyāga*; all things of the kind should be welcome as such opportunities to the seeker after the inner perfection.

I don't know that wearing the Sannyasi dress would help for one can wear the dress and yet be full of desires. But I have no objection if it helps you as a symbol or a reminder.

7 March 1937

No Demands

A sadhak should not have demands and ask for things for his personal use from people outside, but if they of their own accord and without any request or suggestion send them to him, he can receive them. The most important point is that he shall not indulge any spirit of greed or desire under any excuse or colour

and should be unaffected in his vital being by the presence or absence of these things that satisfy desire. 5 March 1931

*

All that is simply the unreasoning repetition of the old blindness. There can be no understanding if your mind insists on something that is radically untrue. This ignorant attitude assumes that you are here to be first, to be equal to any other in the Asram in the eyes of others, to enjoy position and privileges, to grab whatever you can for yourself, to have pleasure and enjoyment, to get everything that anybody else may have. All that is utterly false for the spiritual life. These are the aims that selfish, worldly and ambitious men seek in the ordinary life. The spiritual life has nothing to do with these things. One is here only for two things, to realise the Divine and to transform the consciousness and nature into the higher consciousness and nature. That is what the Power that works on you intends and nothing else. The influence upon you which struggles against it has to disappear and no more be a part of your nature. 8 June 1934

*

I was told that when we have surrendered completely to God,
God will take care of all our true needs.

He may give all that is truly needed — but people usually interpret this idea in the sense that He gives all that they think or feel that they need. He may do that — but also He may not.

It is said that He supplies all our psychic needs.

In the end, yes; but here too people expect Him to supply them instantly, which does not always happen. 30 January 1936

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It is true that the sadhaks have turned the idea of a divine life into an excuse for an unbridled spirit of demand and desire and this is increasing to a perilous extent. The whole world is in a financial and economic crisis; money difficult to get, prices rising

fantastically, people everywhere cutting down their standard of life and their expenses: here in the Asram the standard of life is rising and the expenditure on comforts increasing continually. At this rate it will not be long before a halt will have to come and circumstances will force a reversion to a more abstemious way of life.

But the remedy is not asceticism; it is self-control, the elimination of desire and demand, the spirit which is easily satisfied with what it gets, makes the most of it, is careful of physical things and not subject to craving. The ideal of the Yoga is not asceticism, but to do with things or without things in the same spirit of equality and non-attachment—only in that spirit can one make a true and spiritual use of physical things and material life.

5 July 1937

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You must get a change of consciousness which makes these external things of no importance to you. A change of room will not bring it, on the contrary your stay in this room is the very opportunity that is given you for the inner change.

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I have the idea of giving up the cot I was offered because I could not get a cot to my taste. Should I keep whatever comes, or should I do without?

Why keep up these vital desires, “a cot to my taste” etc.? I have always lain on any cot given to me, not asking whether it is to my “taste” or not. It seems to me the proper attitude for a sadhak.

Care of Material Things

Wanton waste, careless spoiling of physical things in an incredibly short time, loose disorder, misuse of service and materials due either to vital grasping or to tamasic inertia are baneful to prosperity and tend to drive away or discourage the Wealth-Power. These things have long been rampant in the society and, if that continues, an increase in our means might well mean

a proportionate increase in the wastage and disorder and neutralise the material advantage. This must be remedied if there is to be any sound progress.

Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of this Yoga, but self-control in the vital and right order in the material are a very important part of it — and even an ascetic discipline is better for our purpose than a loose absence of true control. Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.

5 January 1932

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I may say, generally, that in the present condition of things it is becoming increasingly necessary to do the best we can with what we have and make things last as long as possible. There are many kinds of things hitherto provided, for instance, which it will be impossible to renew once the present stock is over. The difficulty is that most people in the Asram have no training in handling physical things (except the simplest, hardest and roughest), no propensity to take care of them, to give them their full use and time of survival. This is partly due to ignorance and inexperience, but partly also to carelessness, rough, violent and unseeing handling, indifference; there is also in many a feeling that it does not matter if things are quickly spoilt, they will be replaced; one worker was even heard to say to another, "why do you care? it is not your money." To take one instance only. Taps in Europe will last for many years — here in a few months, sometimes in a few weeks they are spoilt and call for repairs or replacement. People ask for new provisions before the old are exhausted or even near exhaustion, not because they need them, but because they have a right (?) to a new supply; some have even been known to throw away what remains with them in order to have a new stock. And so on, ad infinitum. All this is tamas and the end of tamas is disintegration, dispersal of forces, failure of material. And in the end, as this is a collective affair, the consequences come upon everybody, the careful and the careless

together. Our ideal was a large, not a restricted life, but well-organised, free from waste and tamas and disorder. Now there has to be a tightness, a period of retrenchment till people learn and things get better.

17 January 1932

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If things are constantly broken, X is perfectly right in enforcing economy. Very few of the sadhaks have any sense of responsibility in this respect; most seem to think that they are entitled to waste, destroy, spoil, use freely as if the Mother's sole business was to supply their wants and the Asram had unlimited resources. But it is not possible for the Asram to develop its wealth so long as the sadhaks and workers are selfish, careless, undisciplined and irresponsible. Lakshmi does not continue to pour her gifts under such conditions.

30 January 1933

*

Each supervisor is responsible for the maintenance intact and in good condition of the machinery, tools and apparatus in his charge. No one other than those in charge or using them for the work should touch or handle.

1940s

Consciousness in the Body

Sometimes during work, while issuing materials or counting money, the required amount comes up in the hand at the first attempt. This happens more frequently when the mind is quiet and at ease. Till now I thought it may be merely an accident. Is there anything in this?

The correct counting is not an accident; there is a sort of intuitive consciousness that comes in the body and makes it know the right thing or do the right thing. This growing of consciousness in the body is one of the most important results of Yoga turned to action and is especially important in this Yoga.

8 August 1932

Fund-Raising

How can I make myself fit for the Mother's divine work? Should I actively pull her power or open myself passively and wait for it to descend and work in and through me? What are the conditions that I must fulfil to allow the materialisation of this money power? If I have the capacity, as you had told me the last time, what shall I do to fulfil the capacity?

It is something in the inner being that has the power of which the Mother spoke, not the external human part. I think you are seeking the power in the external being, but that can only raise up difficulties. Awaken the psychic in you, let the inner being come out and replace the ego, then the latent power also will become effective. You can then do the work and the service to which you aspire.

23 February 1931

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If you say "you are unfit for the [*fund-raising*] work that you propose", that will suffice to break the existing deadlock.

It is not a question of fitness or unfitness, primarily,— there are many other considerations, e.g. the practicability of any such large collection under the present not very favourable circumstances, the conditions of your proposed attempt etc.

But if you are not sure of yourself (as to the persistence of your intention in the future), how can you be sure that it is your mission or a true inspiration and not the imagination or the strong impulse of a moment? In another letter you had said you could wait for years.

Anyhow, I cannot give a decision on so important a matter unless I see the way more clear than I see it now.

26 June 1931

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I wrote to you before [*in the preceding letter*] that I did not see my way clear in this matter. My main reason, or one of my main reasons, was that the time and present conditions are adverse to success. All the information I have received since entirely

confirms it; most have suffered by the long prevailing depression and few are either in a mood or a position to give largely. In these circumstances the idea of a mission to collect lakhs of money must be abandoned or at least postponed to better times.

There were other difficulties I saw, but these need not be discussed at present, since the mission itself is barred by the lack of all reasonable chance of success.

About work here and what has been said by you on that subject, I shall write in another letter.

26 August 1931

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I should like to know (1) whether I can stay here even if no financial help comes forth.

Yes; since you are working for the Asram.

(2) whether it would be desirable to open up fresh correspondence with friends who may perhaps send something.

If you can get some help from your friends, it would be much better. You can understand that with 100 members almost, most of whom can contribute nothing to the expenses, the Asram needs all the help it can get for their and its maintenance.

14 December 1931

*

X wants to approach rich people for money, but does not know how to do it. He says that if people are approached directly, there may not be any response. His plan is to somehow make them take interest in our work so that they may themselves offer money without any asking. He asked me to take your advice in this matter.

If it is done in that way, X will have to wait for a result for years together. Even if they are interested, even if they are practising Yoga, people don't think of giving money unless they are asked, except a few who have a generous vital nature. It is all right to interest people in the work and the Yoga — but of itself that will be rarely sufficient, they must know that money is needed and

the idea of giving must be put into them.

13 March 1933

*

I have an earnest desire to be of some help to the Ashram but I don't know how. I know several rich people in Calcutta but I fail to make them respond generously to my request for donating to the Ashram. Please enable me to influence these people.

There are many men who are very pious, but they will give only to traditional institutions, temples, dharamshalas etc. Unless they are convinced, interested or somehow touched, they may not be so ready to give to the Asram. But the attempt can always be made.

13 March 1933

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The vital forces who hold the money power do not want to give or yield anything except for vital purposes, it is only under compulsion that they give for divine work.

15 May 1933

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I am rather anxious to know the average monthly expenses of the Asram.

Over Rs. 6000 a month — including the building expenses and all other current expenditure. Of course buying of houses and such other non-current expenditure is not included. Each member of the Asram costs Rs. 50 a month, visitors about Rs. 40 (rent, electricity, food, servants etc. all included).

31 July 1933

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May I possibly know more about the financial condition of the Asram?

I think there is nothing more of importance, except that we need money for expansion and do not get it.

1 August 1933

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The expenses of each sadhak are reckoned as Rs. 50 a month — but it is not much use asking for that. The real need of money

here is of a bigger kind — for development of institutions in the Asram, a place for art, for music, a school for children, a place for science etc. Even the maintenance of the Asram needs larger sums, e.g. for houses to be bought instead of renting them at a heavy recurring expense.

Business

As usual you seem to have received some very fantastic and sensational reports about what you call the mill business. There was no "mill" in question, only X's small foundry and Y's equally small oil factory. X was in difficulties about her affair and came to the Mother for advice and offered to sell; the Mother was prepared to buy on reasonable or even on generous terms on certain conditions and use it, not on capitalistic lines or for any profit, but for certain work necessary to the Ashram, just as she uses the Atelier or the Bakery or the Building Department. The Ashram badly needs a foundry and the idea was to use Y's machinery for making the soap necessary for the Ashram. The Mother told X that she was sending for Z and if he consented to run these two affairs, she might buy but not otherwise as the Mother herself had no time to look after these things. Z came but found the whole thing too small and not sufficient for the purpose or for some larger work he wanted to do; so X had to be told that nothing could be done. That is the whole affair. Where do you find anything here of capitalism and huge profits and slums and all the rest?

I may say however that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it was so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money from A or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile A's seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had

had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principle on which it is built and use to which it is turned. I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoram karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes farther and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine. He validates the function and dharma of the Vaishya as well as of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. It is in his view quite possible for a man to do business and make money and earn profits and yet be a spiritual man, practise Yoga, have an inner life. The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life.

There is of course also the ascetic ideal which is necessary for many and has its place in the spiritual order. I would myself say that no man can be spiritually complete if he cannot live ascetically or follow a life as bare as the barest anchorite's. Obviously, greed for wealth and money-making has to be absent from his nature as much as greed for food or any other greed and all attachment to these things must be renounced from his

consciousness. But I do not regard the ascetic way of living as indispensable to spiritual perfection or as identical with it. There is the way of spiritual self-mastery and the way of spiritual self-giving and surrender to the Divine, abandoning ego and desire even in the midst of action or of any kind of work or all kinds of work demanded from us by the Divine. If it were not so, there would not have been great spiritual men like Janaka or Vidura in India and even there would have been no Krishna or else Krishna would have been not the Lord of Brindavan and Mathura and Dwarka or a prince and warrior or the charioteer of Kurukshetra, but only one more great anchorite. The Indian scriptures and Indian tradition, in the Mahabharata and elsewhere, make room both for the spirituality of the renunciation of life and for the spiritual life of action. One cannot say that one only is the Indian tradition and that the acceptance of life and works of all kinds, *sarvakarmāṇi*, is un-Indian, European or Western and unspiritual.

Food

The food given from the Dining Room has the Mother's force behind it. It contains everything that is necessary to keep you in good health to do the sadhana. Keep that attitude and eat. Everything will go well.¹

circa 1927

*

It is certainly not very Yogic to be so much harassed by the importunity of the palate. I notice that these petty desires, which plenty of people who are not Yogis at all nor aspirants for Yoga know how to put in their proper place, seem to take an inordinate importance in the consciousness of the sadhaks here—not all, certainly, but many. In this as in many other matters they do not seem to realise that, if you want to do Yoga, you must take more and more in all matters, small or great, the Yogic attitude. In our path that attitude is not one of forceful

¹ This message has hung in the dining room of the Ashram for many years.—Ed.

suppression, but of detachment and equality with regard to the objects of desire. Forceful suppression² stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains; in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression. It is only when one stands back, separates oneself from the lower vital, refusing to regard its desires and clamours as one's own, and cultivates an entire equality and equanimity in the consciousness with respect to them that the lower vital itself becomes gradually purified and itself also calm and equal. Each wave of desire as it comes must be observed, as quietly and with as much unmoved detachment as you would observe something going on outside you, and must be allowed to pass, rejected from the consciousness, and the true movement, the true consciousness steadily put in its place.

But for that these things of eating and drinking must be put in their right place, which is a very small one. You say that many have left the Asram because they did not like the food. I do not know who are the many; certainly, those who came here for serious sadhana and left, went for much more grave reasons than that. But if any did go because of an offended palate, then certainly they were quite unfit for Yoga and this was not the place for them. For it means that a mutton chop or a tasty plate of fish was more important for them than the seeking of the Divine! It is not possible to do Yoga if values are so topsy-turvy in the consciousness. Apart from such extravagance, these things which ought to be only among the most minor values even in the human life, are promoted by many here to a rank they ought not to have.

At the same time it is better, if it is possible, to have well-cooked rather than badly-cooked food. The idea that the Mother wants tasteless food to be served because tasty food is bad for Yoga, is one of the many absurdities that seem so profusely current among the sadhaks in this Asram about her ways and motives. The Mother is obliged to arrange for neutral (plain and simple), not *tasteless* food, for the reason that any other course has been proved to be impracticable. There are ninety people

² Fasting comes under the head; it is of no use for this purpose. Abandon that idea altogether.

here, from different countries and provinces whose tastes are as the poles asunder. What is tasty food to the Gujarati is abomination to the Bengali and *vice versa*. The European cannot stand an avalanche of tamarind or chillies; the Andhra accustomed to a fiery diet would find French dishes tasteless. Experiments have been tried before you came, but they were disastrous in their results; a few enjoyed, the majority starved, and bad stomachs began to be the rule. On the other hand, neutral food can be eaten by all and does not injure the health,—that at least is what we have found,—even if it does not give any ecstasy to the palate.

Only, the food, if neutral, should not be tasteless. A certain amount of fluctuation is inevitable; no one can cook daily for 80 or 90 people and yet do always well. But if it is too much, a remedy is to be desired and the Mother is willing to consider any practicable and effective suggestion. If any practicable suggestion is made, it will be considered,—keeping always in view the difficulty I have pointed out of the ninety people and the three continents and half a dozen provinces that are represented here, apart from individual idiosyncracies and fancies, which, of course, it is absolutely impossible even to try to satisfy unless we want to land ourselves in chaos.

But what if people were to remember that they were here for Yoga, make that the salt and savour of their existence and acquire *samatā* of the palate! My experience is that if they did that, all the trouble would disappear and even the kitchen difficulties and the defects of the cooking would vanish. 28 August 1930

*

The Mother and I do not take meat or fish and it is not allowed to the members of the Asram. We cannot give the sanction you ask for. You should rise superior to passing ideas and desires; to allow them to take hold of the mind and push towards action is not good for your sadhana. 15 November 1932

*

I was invited by friends to go to a restaurant and accepted.
Later I learned that you were opposed to the idea. What should

we — those of us who live outside the Ashram — do?

The Mother has made an arrangement with a view to all the occult forces and the best possible conditions for the protection of the sadhaks from certain forces of death and disease etc. It cannot work perfectly because the sadhaks themselves have not the right attitude towards food and kindred vital-physical things. But still there is a protection. If however the sadhaks go outside her formation, it must be on their own responsibility — the Mother does not and cannot sanction it. But this arrangement is for the Asram and not for those who are outside. 14 July 1933

*

Vegetarian food is a rule for the Asram, it is not incumbent on anyone outside.

30 October 1933

*

I was speaking to X about the dining hall, past and present.
The rule *upabhogena na sāmyati* seems to be more solid looking at our experience here.

Much more solid. But people here do not seem to realise that desire consciousness and Yoga consciousness are two different things. They seem to want to make a happy amalgamation of the two. 1 June 1934

*

Mother meant that wrong food and the poisons created by wrong assimilation were a great obstacle to the prolongation of life.

14 January 1935

*

If animal food (e.g. eggs or soup) is absolutely for health in convalescence, it can be taken. But it is *samiskāra* to suppose that vegetarian food makes people weak — if the food is nourishing and of the right kind, one can be as strong on vegetable food as on meat.

30 January 1935

*

If my physician asks me to take a diet of rice, meat, fish, eggs etc. (as I used to eat these before) and to cut off or dress my hair etc., should I follow his instructions?

You [Sri Aurobindo's secretary] can tell him that to live on fruits and milk, not to shave, not to take rice etc. is absolutely unnecessary for the sadhana. It does not depend on these things. In the Asram we take only milk and vegetarian diet,— but that rule is not imposed on those outside, it is left to their choice. If it is thought necessary for his health to take fish, meat or eggs he can do it.

Sadhana also does not depend on the dressing of hair or non-dressing. Sadhana in this Yoga at least is a matter of the inner consciousness mainly. One has to get over greed of food but not abandon food, to get over tamas and inertia, but not abandon all rest and sleep. To injure the body by excessive physical tapasya is forbidden in this Yoga.

29 October 1935

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It is not you but I who look on the Asram as a failure [*in regard to food*]. I was speaking not of you in person, but of the general spirit of the sadhaks with regard to food which is as unYogic as possible. In regard not only to food, but to personal comforts it differs in no way from that of ordinary men; it is an attitude of demand, claim and desire and of anger, vexation, grudging, complaint if they do not get their desire. They justify their position by saying that this is not an ascetic Yoga. But neither is it a Yoga of the satisfaction of desire. In this Yoga quite as much as any other, one must be free from servitude to the mind, the vital and the body. It is to be done by the growth of an inner consciousness free from demand and desire, not by the principle of an outer suppression of the objects of desire. It is to be done by having a perfect equality with regard to food as to other things. But this very few seem to recognise.

17 March 1936

*

I am afraid you have spoiled your stomach and made it nervous by irregular eating. The food of the Asram is quite plain and

healthy and unless one eats too much it ought not to give indigestion.

Exercise and Sports

Does exercise help to overcome inertia or physical tamas?

It is quite true that physical exercise is very necessary to keep off the tamas. I am glad you have begun it and I trust you will keep it up.

What should I do when I descend into physical tamas or when there is an attack of inertia?

Physical tamas in its roots can be removed only by the descent and the transformation, but physical exercise and regular activity of the body can always prevent a tamasic condition from prevailing in the body.

28 May 1934

*

I suppose walking is one of the best forms of exercise. Can I take it up with profit? Kindly let me know how many miles a day and with what speed I should do it.

Yes, certainly, it is very good. The amount and speed depend on your capacity and time. A brisk long walk is always very healthful.

23 October 1934

*

Certainly, Mother does not want only sportsmen in the Ashram: that would make it not an Ashram but a playground. The sports and physical exercises are primarily for the children of the school and they also do not play only but have to attend to their studies: incidentally, they have improved immensely in health and in discipline and conduct as one very valuable result. Secondarily, the younger sadhaks are allowed, not enjoined or even recommended, to join in these sports, but certainly they are not supposed to be sportsmen only: they have other and more important things to do. To be a sportsman must necessarily be

a voluntary choice and depends on one having the taste and inclination. There are plenty of people around the Mother herself, X for instance, who would never dream of frequenting the playground or engaging in sports and the Mother also would never think of asking them to do it. So equally she could not think of being displeased with you for shunning these delights. Some, of course, might ask why any sports at all in an Ashram which ought to be concerned only with meditation and inner experiences and the escape from life into the Brahman; but that applies only to the ordinary kind of Ashram to which we have got accustomed and this is not that orthodox kind of Ashram. It includes life in Yoga, and once we admit life, we can include anything that we find useful for life's ultimate and immediate purpose and not inconsistent with the works of the Spirit. After all, the orthodox Ashram came into being only after Brahman began to shun all connection with the world and the shadow of Buddhism stalked over all the land and Ashrams turned into monasteries. The old Ashrams were not entirely like that; the boys and young men who were brought up in them were trained in many things belonging to life; the son of Pururavas and Urvasie practised archery in the Ashram of a Rishi and became an expert Bowman, and Karna became disciple of a great sage in order to acquire from him the use of powerful weapons. So there is no *a priori* ground why sports should be excluded from the life of an Ashram like ours where we are trying to equate life with the Spirit. Even table-tennis or football need not be rigorously excluded. But, putting all persiflage aside, my point is that to play or not to play is a matter of choice and inclination, and it would be absurd for Mother to be displeased with you any more than with X for not caring to be a sportsman. So you need not have any apprehension on this score; that the Mother should be displeased with you for that is quite impossible. So the idea that the Mother wanted to punish you for anything done or not done or that she wished to draw far away from you or to be cold and distant was a misinterpretation without any real foundation since you have given no ground for it and there was nothing farther from her mind. She has herself explained that it

was just the contrary that has been in her mind for some time past and it was an increasing kindness that was her feeling and intention. The only change she could expect from you was to grow in your psychic and spiritual endeavour and inner progress and in this you have not failed, quite the contrary. Apart from that, the notion that she could be displeased because you did not change according to this or that pattern and that we could ever dream of sending you away on any such account is a wild idea; it would be most arbitrary and unreasonable.

10 July 1948

*

As to your idea about the sports, your idea that the Mother looks on you coldly because you are not capable of taking delight in sports, that is entirely without foundation. I must have told you already more than once that the Mother does not want anybody to take up the sports if he has no inclination or natural bent for them; to join or not to join must be quite voluntary and those who do not join are not cold-shouldered or looked down upon by her for that reason. It would be absurd for her to take that attitude: there are those who do her faithful service which she deeply appreciates and whom she regards with affection and confidence but who never go to the playground either because they have no turn for it or no time,—can you imagine that for that reason she will turn away from them and regard them with coldness? The Mother could never intend that sports should be the sole or the chief preoccupation of the inmates of the Ashram; even the children of the school for whose physical development these sports and athletic exercises are important and for whom they were originally instituted, have other things to do, their work, their studies and other occupations and amusements in which they are as interested as in these athletics. The idea that you should “throw up the sponge” because you do not succeed in sports or like them, is surely an extravagant imagination: there are other things more important, there are Yoga, spiritual progress, bhakti, devotion, service. . . .

I do not understand what you mean by my giving time to sport; I am not giving any time to it except that I have written at

the Mother's request an article for the first number of the *Bulletin* and another for the forthcoming number.³ It is the Mother who is doing all the rest of the work for the organisation of the sports and the *Bulletin* and that she must do, obviously, till it is sufficiently organised to go on of itself with only a general supervision from above and her actual presence once in the day. I put out my force to support her as in all the other work of the Ashram, but otherwise I am not giving any time for the sports.

4 March 1949

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As for the rest, I think I need only repeat emphatically that there is no need for anyone to take up sports as indispensable for Yoga or for enjoying the Mother's affection and kindness. Yoga is its own object and has its own means and conditions; sport is something quite different as the Mother herself indicated to you through X when she said that the concentration practised on the playground was not meditation and was used for efficacy in the movements of the body and not for any purpose of Yoga.

14 March 1949

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Much less than half the Ashram, the majority of them boys and girls and children, have taken up sports; the rest have not been pressed to do so and there is no earthly reason why any pressure should be put upon you. The Mother has never intended to put any such pressure on you and if anybody has said that, there is no foundation whatever for what they have told you.

It is also not a fact that either the Mother or I are turning away from Yoga and intend to interest ourselves only in sport; we have no intention whatever of altering the fundamental character of the Ashram and replacing it by a sportive association. If we did that it would be a most idiotic act and if anybody should have told you anything like that, he must be off his head or in a temporary crisis of delirious enthusiasm for a very upside-down

³ See "Message" and "Perfection of the Body" in Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 517-35.—Ed.

idea. The Mother told you very clearly once through X that what was being done in the playground was not meditation or a concentration for Yoga but only an ordinary concentration for the physical exercises alone. If she is busy with the organisation of these things — and it is not true that she is busy with that alone — it is in order to get finished with that as soon as possible after which it will go on of itself without her being at all engrossed or specially occupied by it, as is the case with other works of the Ashram. As for myself, it is surely absurd to think that I am neglecting meditation and Yoga and interested only in running, jumping and marching! There seem to have been strange misunderstandings about my second message in the *Bulletin*. In the first, I wrote about sports and their utility just as I have written on politics or social development or any other matter. In the second, I took up the question incidentally because people were expressing ignorance as to why the Ashram should concern itself with sports at all. I explained why it had been done and dealt with the more general question of how this and other human activities could be part of a search for a total perfection of all parts of the being including the body and more especially what would be the nature of the perfection of the body. I indicated clearly that only by Yoga could there come a supreme and total perfection of all the instruments of the Spirit and the ascent of the whole being to the highest level and a divine life on earth and the assumption of a divine body. I made it clear that by human and physical means such as sports only a limited and precarious human perfection could come. In all this there is nothing to justify the idea that sport could be a means for jumping into the Supermind or that the Supermind was going to descend into the playground and nowhere else and only those who are there will receive it; that would be a bad look-out for me as I would have no chance!

I write all this in the hope of clearing away all the strange misconceptions with which the air seems to have become thick and by some of which you may have been affected.

27 April 1949

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I continue my letter.

I hope I have been able to persuade you that all these ideas about sport and the Yoga are misconceptions and that those who suggest them are wholly mistaken; certainly, we are not putting Yoga away or in the background and turning to sport as a substitute, such an idea is absurdly impossible. I hope also that you will accept from me and the Mother our firm asseveration that our love and affection for you are undiminished and that there has been no coldness on the Mother's part and no least diminution in my constant inner relation with you.

In view of what I have written, you ought to be able to see that your idea of our insistence on you to take up sport or to like it and accept it in any way has no foundation; you can be as averse to it as you choose, we do not mind that. I myself have never been a sportsman or, apart from a spectator's interest in cricket in England or a non-player member of the Baroda cricket club, taken up any physical games or athletics except some exercises learnt from Madrasi wrestlers in Baroda such as *dand-baithak*, and those I took up only to put some strength and vigour into a frail and weak though not unhealthy body, but I never attached any other importance or significance to these things and dropped the exercises when I thought they were no longer necessary. Certainly, neither the abstinence from athletics and physical games nor the taking up of those physical exercises have for me any relevance to Yoga. Neither your aversion to sport nor the liking of others for it makes either you or them more fit or more unfit for sadhana. So there is absolutely no reason why we should insist on your taking it up or why you should trouble your mind with the supposition that we want you to do it. You are surely quite free, as everybody is quite free, to take your own way in such matters.

28 April 1949

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I then come to the main point, namely that the intention attributed to the Mother of concentrating permanently on sports and withdrawing from other things pertinent to sadhana and our spiritual endeavour is a legend and a myth and has no truth

in it. Except for the time given to her own physical exercise and, ordinarily, two hours or sometimes three in the evening on the playground, the Mother's whole day from early morning and a large part of the night also has always been devoted to her other occupations connected with her work and with the sadhana—not her own but that of the sadhaks, pranam, blessings, meditation and receiving the sadhaks on the staircase or elsewhere, sometimes for two hours at a time, and listening to what they have to say, questions about the sadhana, reports of their work or other matters, complaints, disputes, quarrels, all kinds of conferences about this or that to be decided or done, there is no end to the list: for the rest she had to attend to their letters, to reports about the material work of the Ashram and all its many departments, decisions on a hundred matters, correspondence and all sorts of things connected with contacts with the outside world including often serious troubles and difficulties and the settlement of matters of great importance. All this has certainly nothing to do with sports and she had little occasion to think of it at all apart from the short time in the evening. There was here no ground for the idea that she was neglecting the sadhaks or the sadhana or thinking of turning her mind solely or predominantly to sport and still less for imputing the same preoccupation to me. Only during the period before the first and second December this year the Mother had to give a great deal of time and concentration to the preparation of the events of those two days because she had decided on a big cultural programme, her own play "Vers l'Avenir", dances, recitation from *Savitri* and from the *Prayers and Meditations* for the 1st December and also a big and ambitious programme for the 2nd of sportive items and events. This meant a good deal more time for these purposes but not any interruption of her other occupations except for one or two of them just at the end of this period. There was surely no sufficient ground here either for drawing the conclusion that this was to be for the future a normal feature of her action or a permanent change in it or in the life of the Ashram ending in a complete withdrawal from spiritual life and an apotheosis of the deity of Sport. Those

who voiced this idea or declared that sport would henceforth be obligatory on all were indulging in fantasies that have no claim to credibility. As a matter of fact the period of tension is over and after the second December things have returned to normal or even to subnormal in the activities of the playground and as for the future you may recall the proverb that "once is not for ever".

But there seems to be still a survival of the groundless idea that sportsmanship is obligatory henceforth on every sadhak and without it there is no chance of having the Mother's attention or favour. It is therefore necessary for me to repeat with the utmost emphasis the statement I made long ago when this fable became current for a time along, I think, with the rumour that the Supermind was to descend on the playground and the people who happen to be there at the time and nowhere else and on nobody else—which would have meant that I for one would never have it!! I must repeat what I said then, that the Mother has never imposed or has any idea of imposing any such obligation and had no reason for doing so. The Mother does not want you or anybody else to take to sports if there is no inclination or turn towards it. There are any number of people who enjoy her highest favour, among them some of her best and most valued workers, some most near to her and cherished by her who do not even set foot on the playground. Nobody then could possibly lose her favour or her affection by refusing to take up sport or by a dislike of sport or a strong disinclination towards it: these things are a matter of idiosyncrasy and nothing else. The idea, whether advanced or not by someone claiming to have authority to voice the Mother's intentions, that sport is now the most important thing with her and obligatory for sadhana is absurd in the extreme. Again, how could you ever imagine that the Mother or myself would turn you away or ask you to leave us for any reason, least of all for such a fantastic one as this? All this is indeed a maze of fantasies and you should drive them from your mind altogether. Your place in our hearts is permanent and your place near us must be that also; you should not allow anything to cloud that truth in your mind or

lend credence to anything or anyone telling you otherwise.

7 December 1949

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The realisation of the Divine is the one thing needful and the rest is desirable only in so far as it helps or leads towards that or when it is realised, extends and manifests the realisation. Manifestation and organisation of the whole life for the divine work,—first, the sadhana personal and collective necessary for the realisation and a common life of God-realised men, secondly, for help to the world to move towards that, and to live in the Light—is the whole meaning and purpose of my Yoga. But the realisation is the first need and it is that round which all the rest moves, for apart from it all the rest would have no meaning. Neither the Mother nor myself ever dreamed or could dream of putting anything else in its place or neglecting it for anything else. Most of the Mother's day is in fact given to helping the sadhaks in one way or another towards that end, most of the rest is occupied with work for the Ashram which cannot be neglected or allowed to collapse, for this too is work for the Divine. As for the gymnasium, the playground and the rest of it, the Mother has made it plain from the beginning what place she assigned to these things; she has never done anything so imbecile as to replace essential things by these accessories. 4 April 1950

Medical Treatment

The Mother's advice to X was given more for his period of stay in the Ashram than as an absolute rule for the future. If a sadhak can call down the force to cure him without need of medical treatment, that is always the best, but it is not always possible, so long as the whole consciousness mental, vital, physical down to the most subconscious is not opened and awake. There is no harm in a Doctor who is a sadhak carrying on his profession and using his medical knowledge; but he should do it in reliance on the Divine Grace and the Divine Will; if he can get true inspirations to aid his science, so much the better. No doctor

can cure all cases; he has to do his best with the best result he can.

18 October 1932

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I am afraid wherever you go there will be difficulties with your state of health—and nerves. There can be no proper provision for chronic illness in an ashram.

9 May 1933

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X had some trouble with his ear for some months; it went away only after a short “action” upon it. I do not believe in this action theory—at least here in the Ashram. I believe that if one compiled statistics of those who took an active approach and those who believed in *laissez faire*, there would be less disease and mortality in the latter group.

It depends on the person and the circumstances. “Action” of X’s kind can be taken—only it often means a struggle with the contrary forces; if the action is sufficient, it is all right, otherwise it takes time and trouble. What you say is also true. Not to be conscious about the body, not to be always thinking of it, just to say to one’s illness “Nonsense” and go about one’s business is often very effective. When we first had the Ashram there was no Doctor, no dispensary, no medicines, people hardly got ill and, if any did, he simply got well again. If at any time somebody got dysentery, he just swallowed a lot of rice and whey and got well again. If he had fever he lay in bed a day or two and got up again. There was no serious illness and no lasting illness. Now with doctors and dispensaries and cupboards full of medicines illnesses gambol about like tigers in a jungle. But in those days people had a faith in the mind and even one might say in the body, “What is illness going to do to me here” and that attitude imposed its own result. यो यच्छद्धः स एव सः 6 February 1935

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I [*a non-practising doctor*] have been going through some medical books. After all these years I find it rather interesting —at least in terms of solid intellectual jugglery.

Very interesting no doubt — and under present circumstances inevitable. The disadvantage is that it creates an illness atmosphere. When we had no dispensary and no doctors (at least no practising doctors) we had no illnesses or only slight ones which walked off at once because they were not hospitably attended to when they came!

23 March 1935

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X [*a doctor*] has as yet written nothing; he is waiting, I suppose, for the urine examination he wants to make. We can say nothing until he writes. We do not ourselves like anybody being under medical treatment except when it is necessary in moments of emergency. It seems to me if you get back your sleep and are able to get quiet in the nerves, the rest would set themselves right by the descent of peace and strength in the body.

5 April 1935

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We cannot afford to turn the Asram into an institute for the care of chronic invalids. As it is I do not think there is any Asram in India where people could get the standard of life, conveniences and comforts they get here. Elsewhere X would be expected to lead an ascetic life, whether sick or well, and medical care and nursing would be conspicuous by their absence. However we are accustomed to people abusing us for what we do for them and accusing us for what we do not and cannot do.

29 November 1935

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When illness and attacks come to the body, does that mean that the work of purification in the mind and vital is finished and that the body is being worked on?

I don't know whether it can be put like that. Illnesses and attacks on the body can come during the period of the vital purification. But it is true that when the mind and vital have progressed and the main action of the sadhana is in the physical, then attacks fall more on the body. In the early days of the Asram when the working was on the mind, nobody got ill except for

slight touches that cured without medicine; as the working came lower down, illness increased while now that the working is in the physical and subconscious, illness is almost constant in the Asram and sometimes of a serious or violent kind. 1 May 1936

*

If increase in the number of inmates stands in the way, if doctors and medicines shake the faith, well, it is very easy to solve both the problems, isn't it?

Increase of numbers brought in all sorts of influences that were not there in the smaller circle before. Doctors did not matter so long as faith was the main thing and a little treatment the help. But when faith went, illness increased and the doctor became not merely useful but indispensable. There was also the third cause, the descent into the physical consciousness with all its doubt, obscurity and resistance. To eliminate all that is no longer possible.

We have also an impression, considering the sudden wave of diseases, that it is due to some Force descending, so that wherever there is resistance there will be a rushing up.

What Force?

Since the action is to go on in the subconscious physical at present with the Supramental descending, all sorts of physical troubles will be rampant now.

Rubbish! You repeat always this imbecile absurdity that the Supramental is descending into the sadhaks—as X thought it had descended into him! The sadhaks are miles away from the Supramental. What I spoke of was not the descent of the Supramental into the sadhaks but into the earth consciousness. If the Supramental had descended into the sadhaks, there would not be all sorts of troubles, but all sorts of helps and progresses.

9 October 1936

*

I dreamt that the Mother was building a very big hospital.
Dream of a millennium in advance?

It would be more of a millennium if there were no need of a hospital at all and the doctors turned their injective prodding instruments into fountain-pens — provided of course they didn't make a misuse of the pens also.

19 July 1937

*

Why furious about injective instruments, sir? They are supposed to be very effective.

That doesn't make an increase of hospitals, illnesses and injections the ideal of a millennium.

But why the deuce are those instruments to be replaced by fountain-pens?

I was simply adapting the saying of Isaiah the prophet, "the swords will be turned into ploughshares", but the doctor's instrument is not big enough for a ploughshare, so I substituted fountain-pens.

20 July 1937

Death

I firmly believed that death was impossible here. Since the death of S⁴ shows that it is possible, it means that hostile forces have become victorious.

There have been three deaths since the Asram began — one, of a child in a house that was not then part of the Asram and the other of a visitor. This is the first death in the Asram itself.

You have said, I hear, that you have conquered Death, not only personally but for others as well.

I am unaware of having made any such statement. To whom did I make it? I have not said even that personally I have conquered

⁴ In this group of letters, "S" stands for a sadhak who died on 25 March 1935. — Ed.

it. All these are the usual Asram legends.

The conquest of Death would mean the conquest of illness and of the psychological and functional necessity of Death of the body — that is one of the ideals of the Yoga, but it can be accomplished only if and when the supramental has driven its roots into Matter. All that has been acting here up to now is an Overmind force which is getting gradually supramentalised in parts — the utmost that it can do in this respect is to keep death at a distance and that is what has been done. The absence of death in the Asram for so many years has been due to that. But it is not impossible — especially when death is accepted. In S's case there was a 5 percent chance of his survival on certain conditions, but he himself knew the difficulty in his case and had prepared himself for his departure from the body.

25 March 1935

*

Though you may say that death is possible because illness hasn't been conquered, I take it as a principle. X and myself firmly believe that those whom you have accepted are absolutely immune to death.

[Underlining “accepted”:] Too comfortable a doctrine. It brings in a very tamasic syllogism. “I am accepted by Sri Aurobindo. I am sure of supramentality and immune from death. Therefore I need not do a damned thing. Supramentality will of itself grow in me and I am already immortal, so I have all time and eternity before me for it to happen — of itself.” Like that, does it sound true?

27 March 1935

*

How is one to look at the death of D? Is it a defeat of the healing force or the absence of receptivity on her side?

It is a defeat of the healing force due to absence of receptivity in the body to the healing force.

I have heard that she had said she would not and could not give up her attachment to X. Perhaps her receptivity to Mother's

force was very little because of this attachment. But whether that should be so little as to lead to the dissolution of the physical is a question.

Perhaps the attachment to X was only one side of the same thing that stood in the way of her receiving.

Four or five days ago I felt so strongly that she was to die that I found it difficult to find arguments against it.

Yes, the chances were all along adverse and at the end it was a fight against the inevitable.

Today I had a peculiar feeling—that nothing dies and that there is nothing like death; that death is an illusion. “She is”—that’s the only fact.

Of course, that is the real fact—death is only a shedding of the body, not a cessation of the personal existence. A man is not dead because he goes into another country and changes his clothes to suit that climate.

4 October 1936

*

What you said about the immunity from death was quite correct. Immunity from death by anything but one's own will to leave the body, immunity from illness are things that can be achieved only by a complete change of consciousness which each man has to develop in himself,—there can be no automatic immunity without that achievement. What had been established was a general protection and a defence against the entry of death while the sadhana was going on—but this could not be absolute. There had been since I came here in 1910 and since people began to gather afterwards, only two deaths on the outskirts of the Asram—one in X's family (a baby) when they had not yet become resident sadhaks and one of Y's mother who had come for a visit. But this comparative immunity was broken recently by S's death and now by D's. Formerly when there were only thirty or forty sadhaks and there was a universal faith, then without medicines or doctors the Asram was free from illness except for

passing colic etc. cured in a day or merely brief fevers. If one had fever, one simply lay down for a day or two and got up well. Now, since the numbers increased and the struggle with old Nature is on the material plane, illness has increased in frequency and violence. But if there were the same solid mass of living faith, the old relative immunity might still return. But absolute immunity can be only by sadhana.

5 October 1936

*

I have seen your letters to X and Y. Comparing the latter⁵ to the one you wrote to me after the death of S,⁶ I find a lot of difference. Your views have changed immensely. In your letter to me there was a very optimistic, almost a certain tone regarding the conquest of death. Now you say that death is possible because of "a solid mass of living faith".

In what does this change of views consist? Did I say that nobody could die in the Asram? If so, I must have been intoxicated or passing through a temporary aberration.

As for the conquest of death, it is only one of the sequelae of supramentalisation—and I am not aware that I have forsworn my views about the supramental descent. But I never said or thought that the supramental descent would automatically make everybody immortal. The supramental descent can only make the best conditions for anybody who can open to it then or thereafter attaining to the supramental consciousness and its consequences. But it would not dispense with the necessity of sadhana. If it did, the logical consequence would be that the whole earth, men, dogs and worms, would suddenly wake up to find themselves supramental. There would be no need of an Asram or of Yoga.

But my letters to X and Y had nothing to do with the conquest of death—they had to do with the conditions of the sadhana in the Asram. Surely I never wrote that death and illness could not happen in the Asram which was the point Y was

⁵ The letter of 5 October 1936 on pages 790–91.—Ed.

⁶ The letter of 25 March 1935 on pages 788–89.—Ed.

refuting and on which I confirmed him.

A “solid mass of living faith” [p. 791]! Surely that is a very Himalayan condition you impose. Do you expect old tottering Z to have that solid mass in his liquid body?

Z was not old and tottering when he came and if he had kept the living faith he would not have been tottering now.

Or do you hope that by his sadhana he will have the conquest?

That depends on whether he is still alive and not quite liquefied and able to open physically when the conditions change.

Your letter to Y has struck terror into many hearts, I am afraid, and henceforth we shall look upon death as quite a possibility, though not as common as it is outside.

The terror was there before. It came with the death of D and the madness of A and not as the result of my letter. It was rushing at the Mother from most of the sadhaks at Pranam every day.

The physical condition of many sadhaks and sadhikas is not cheering in the least —

Far from it.

You know best about the condition of their sadhana.

Very shaky, many of them.

However, it is my impression that you have changed your front.

It is not mine.

Formerly I thought you said — faith or no faith, sadhana or no sadhana, you were conquering death, disease, i.e. everything depended on your success; now it seems a lot depends on us poor folks, in this vital matter.

[Underlining “*this vital matter*”:] Why vital? What is vital is the supramental change of consciousness—conquest of death is something minor and, as I have always said, the last physical result of it, not the first result of all or the most important—a thing to be added to complete the whole, not the one thing needed and essential. To put it first is to reverse all spiritual values—it would mean that the seeker was actuated not by any high spiritual aim but by a vital clinging to life or a selfish and timid seeking for the security of the body—such a spirit could not bring the supramental change.

Certainly, everything depends on my success. The only thing that could prevent it, so far as I can see, would be my own death or the Mother’s. But did you imagine that that [*my success*] would mean the cessation of death on this planet, and that sadhana would cease to be necessary for anybody?

9 October 1936

*

What is the difference between a death in the Ashram and a death outside? Does one get more benefit in the form of development of the mental, vital etc. on their own planes so that one may get a better new birth?

I am not aware of any “development” of the mental etc. in their planes; the development takes place on earth. The mental and other planes are not evolutionary.

The one who dies here is assisted in his passage to the psychic world and helped in his future evolution towards the Divine.

14 December 1936

Miscellaneous Matters

This is a small selection from the many hundreds of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to his disciples on various matters relating to their outward lives.

Household Questions

What is the “divine life” and what are “petty things”? The divine life is not something lived on romantic heights with no reference to earth and its movements. The Yogic or spiritual attitude has to be applied to the small outward details of life as well as to inner experiences or high ideals on a large scale. You ought to know by this time that the Mother attaches a great importance to the true spirit in the organisation of the material life. It is more often in relation to these petty things that the genuineness of one’s spiritual change is tested—so there is little point in talking of petty things or material or outward things as if they were not worth notice and no inner change with regard to them needed.

There is no objection to the tiffin carrier being washed by a servant. The objection was to the servants being tipped by sadhaks so that they neglect or do not wish to do things for those who do not or cannot tip them. Visitors residing at the Asram for a few days may do so without objection, for these there is extra work; but the servants must not be encouraged in the idea that they can exact tips from resident sadhaks—they have their pay and that should be sufficient.

As for tiffin baskets, if too many have to be carried, it becomes inconvenient for the Departments concerned—the Dining Room arrangements are framed to minimise the inconvenience and make service possible. A minimum number of exceptions can be made, but if everybody who asks is allowed, there will be chaos.

*

The door is coming off because the sill has been removed, for it was only the sill that upheld it. X's dealings with the door *qua* door were scientifically impeccable — the only thing he forgot was that one of the uses of a door is that people (of various sizes) should pass through it. If you regard the door from the Russellian point of view as an external thing in which you must take pleasure for its own sake, then you will see that it was quite all right; it is only when you bring in irrelevant subjective considerations like people's demands on a door and the pain of stunned heads that objections can be made. However, in spite of philosophy, the Mother will speak to X in the morning and get him to do what has (practically, not philosophically) to be done.

1932

*

You had promised that the bullocks would not be beaten, but we have been told by more than one eye-witness that they have been beaten by yourself and the servants, and badly beaten too. We strongly disapprove, we are entirely against this kind of maltreatment. It is not by beating, but by patience and a persistent will without getting into a nervous irritation that work can be taught to animals. They are far more intelligent than you believe.

25 April 1932

*

You had better put up a notice on the slate that whoever has walked off in X's wooden sandals is asked to rectify the mistake by returning them to her.

31 October 1932

*

X complains of an invasion of his solignum cot, flytoxed chair and almirah, books, chaddar etc. by bugs. He also fears that the conquering army, if not checked, will proceed to annex other rooms also. As bugs in a solignum cot are a violation of the law of Nature, Mother proposes to send a Committee of Enquiry composed of Y (who is both scientifically and officially interested in the solignum-bug problem), yourself and Z for investigations.

You have full authority to interview the bugs and demand an explanation of their conduct. Y and yourself are officially informed; you can demi-officially inform Z. 15 December 1932

*

The only thing that removes the bugs is a careful flytoxing and cleaning of the bed or furniture where they are. It is usually X who is entrusted with that work as he is practised in it and has freed many rooms. If you like, I can ask him to do it.

5 January 1933

*

According to your order, the wire for the table-lamp was to be 12 feet long. As it is too short to reach the corner where I have kept my seat for drawing, will you kindly sanction 5 feet more?

The 12 feet are the usual allowance and they were the end of a roll—if you want the 5 feet more, you will have to wait till a new stock comes.

29 January 1934

*

People are wondering why the Meditation House leaks so much. It is not like that anywhere else in Pondicherry, and I do not know if it is so elsewhere. Even X seems to be quite tired of Y's fad of using tectine, and his persistence in using it in spite of repeated failures. People even say that there is some crack in Y's brain which prevents him from dealing with the point correctly. The thing is so glaringly offensive to everyone — apart from your terrible patience.

Pondicherry houses do not leak! Well, that is news. Every house I have lived in leaked. The Govt. House leaks; the Govt. offices leak and our former Mahomedan landlord told me in the Govt. Secretariat they had to run about carrying tables and chairs to any place in the rooms which happened not to be wet. Z's roof made only a year ago leaks. Vigie House leaks and when A went to him Vigie showed him his own house leaking from many places and said "Every house here leaks! what do you expect?"

It was because of this character of Pondicherry houses that the Mother tried tectine and the first supply was very successful. The Meditation House roof made by B used to leak like a sieve till the tectine was put on, and for years we were dry. Only when new beams had to be put the tectine got displaced and there were cracks over the walls, then there was some leakage, but that was put right and the old tectine up till now has protected us. Unfortunately afterwards a bad supply of almost liquid tectine was sent which could not endure so well and it was this which was used on the NS [*New Secretariat*] which is leaking because of cracks in the cement, the usual malady of these terrace roofs. People ought to know the facts before making comments, as if it were only our tectined roofs that crack in Pondicherry — and so there must be something wrong with the Asram engineer's brain. It is rather surprising that X should speak like that, for he knows that it was Mother's personal order that the remnants of the old tectine should be used this time as there was an emergency. After all the tectine fad, if it is one, was not Y's; it was the Mother who introduced the tectine as a trial (and, as I say, it was quite successful at first) along with other new things like solignum, Silexore. Some of them succeeded, some failed because of climatic conditions and the inexperience of the masons and painters; the tectine succeeded, then failed because in answer to a complaint that too much had to be used, the firm sent us a bad supply. In all this where is the fad and where is the fault of Y and where is the "terrible patience"? 20 October 1935

*

What X wrote was correct. There is no more hair-oil and in special cases Mother gave from her own stock; but then everybody began to ask, so it had to stop. If you need, you must ask Mother direct and she will give it, because it can no longer be given from the stores — for it can be given only in special cases where there is a good reason as in yours.

As for the soap, you must not use the bath-soap for hair, for it is very bad for the hair. Mother can give you Golden Grape or more oil or hair lotion for that purpose. She is giving a chit

for the Golden Grape; you must use it only for the hair.

1 February 1936

*

An electric stove has been ordered from Madras, but the price will not be anything like 50 Rs. I don't know whether you will have with it all the seraphic peace you expect — for in all electric matters there is the Pondicherry municipality to take into account, — untimely cessations of current, insufficient current, variable current — something for all tastes but for nobody's convenience.

24 May 1936

*

The Light went out, the Light went out — and being not fortunate enough to be in line with the Government house, ours remained out. I had no time nor courage to go through a long pencilled poem with my insufficient substitute — so all had to be shoved over to tomorrow. Man proposes, but the Pondicherry Municipality disposes. But there will be Grace tomorrow — P. M. volente.

9 August 1936

*

Some people here are very glad to know that I was preparing the roof of the house by adopting the old method used by our forefathers for generations. In this case old may be good but to some people all old is gold. Perhaps they would be happy if the new European systems of medicine like homeopathy and naturopathy are rejected and the old Ayurveda only allowed. But I wonder why they cannot see how superior reinforced concrete buildings etc. are to those made by old methods — and for earthquakes, would the Ayurvedic buildings stand the shocks?

Well, if it is done really according to old methods, an Ayurvedic building can stand many earthquakes. I remember at the time of the Bengal earthquake all the new buildings in the place where the Provincial Conference was held went down but an old house of the Raja of the place was the sole thing that survived unmoved

and unshaken. Also when the Guest House roof was being repaired, (it was an old building) the mason (one of the most skilful we have met) said that this roof had been built in a way that astonished him, it was so solid and strong, no houses now were being built like that. So perhaps it is not Ayurveda, but the degenerate ways of the descendants of Charaka that is responsible for the poor and bad building we see around us. I have also seen a remark by an English architect in Madras that it was surprising to see how old ramshackle buildings survived and stood all shocks while others built in the most scientific modern way "sat down" unexpectedly. The really old things whether in India or Europe were always solid; shoddy I think began in between—before the discovery of concrete. We have to leave the old things but progress to equally or more solid new things. 29 March 1937

*

Have the stores got any insecticide? Five of the eighteen rose plants I received last week have been demolished by white ants.

You hope to destroy white ants with a harmless insecticide? Optimist! The only defences yet found against them are kerosene (temporary) and solignum (less temporary) on things they have to cross, but here it is impossible as it can't be put on plants. Tell you what to do. Dig six feet down in the right place (which may be anywhere), find the queen of the white ants and carefully strangle her; then your roses will be safe for a season.

If an insecticide is not available, would it be possible for the bakery people to save me a bucket of soot?

Soot? The white ants will be afraid of becoming black and stay away? 15 September 1938

*

X and I receive one blade between us every two months. As it does not last us for two months, would it be possible to have one blade each every month?

Do you send the blade for sharpening to the Atelier? If not, it will soon get blunt and useless. If it is sharpened, it can last for months.

26 September 1938

*

We shall get the dhotis in January, I hope.

But what is to be done in the meanwhile till January? We shall have to dress the sadhaks in saris or they will have to resort to a state of Nature and Adamic innocence!

The Behaviour of Ashramites

You can take your meal in the verandah as indicated by X. I must point out to you that X is in charge of the Cycle Office and the cycles and, if he objected — quite rightly — to your taking your meal in the room and dirtying it, you ought to have paid some attention to his objection instead of treating it with contempt and defiance. Whoever is put in charge of a Dept. is responsible to the Mother for the proper working of that Department and those who are assisting him must help him to keep everything in order and not act according to their own whims and fancies. If there is anything which seems to them not right in his arrangements, they can bring it to his notice or to the Mother's notice, but not indulge in irresponsible indiscipline. Your behaviour does not justify X's losing his temper, but neither were you justified in pushing him against the wall. This kind of scene ought not to happen in the Asram. It is besides not only with X you have clashed but with a good many others in the Asram, and it is no use telling me that it was always the other man who misbehaved and that you were an angel of calm and patience and good behaviour. Quarrelsome ness and self-assertion and indiscipline go ill with a claim of Yogic calmness.

10 August 1932

*

It appears that there are complaints against you from all sides that you are quarrelling with the servants, upsetting the work,

putting others to inconvenience in order to put your own convenience and arrange things according to your own fancy. This kind of selfishness and quarrelsomeness will not do. You have to consider the convenience of others before yours — especially as you have been given the management of the house. A manager has to consider the convenience of others first and his own last.

5 March 1933

*

I must say what I have often written to people, that it is impossible for us to take sides in a clash between sadhaks or assume the role of judge and arbiter or of defender of one party against another. Formerly the Mother used to try to intervene or to reconcile, but we found that this only kept discord alive and fed the ego of the sadhaks. In most cases we pass over all quarrels and clashes in silence and almost all sadhaks have ceased to write about their conflicts because they get no answer. I have written to X once or twice, avoiding any discussion of the merits of a dispute, only to influence him to regard things from a general and impersonal standpoint so as to prepare him to give up that of the person and ego. I passed no personal opinion or judgment for or against this or that person. You must not expect me to take any other attitude. This is a place meant for Yoga and sadhana; personal relations of the vital kind with their attractions and repulsions, quarrels and explanations and reconciliations belong to the ordinary life and nature.

All these clashes which arise whenever you mix with X come from his weakness and yours. I have not imposed on you any rule of not meeting with him; but I have advised you not to give any field for the weakness which you yourself have admitted and which is evidently there in you. Both you and X are to me disciples and I have to deal with each in the way best for him or her. I have not pressed on your weaknesses and defects, I have given you time to find them out yourself and overcome them, for that is the best way. I have pointed out his to X when he was ready to recognise them. It is a pity that you should clash whenever you meet together a little, but you know yourself why

it is so. So long as any vital weakness remains it cannot be otherwise. Certainly it cannot be remedied by "submitting to his demands and his ego".

16 November 1935

*

It is perfectly true that the egoistic sense of possession and the habit of falsehood are too common among the sadhaks. You should train yourself however to look at these things in those around you, even when they touch you close, without being disturbed or unquiet. What you must arrive at (of course it cannot be done at once but takes time) is a complete equanimity which sees things and people as they are but is not shaken, angered or grieved by them. We ourselves know what an obstacle all this egoism and falsehood are to our work, but are not impatient because we know also that they are part of human nature and have so much hold that it is difficult for the sadhak to get rid of them even when his mind really wishes to do so. They are with many sadhaks habits stronger than their will. When there is not a strong will to get rid of them or when the sadhak is not fully conscious, then it is all the more difficult. It is only a strong and always increasing awakening of the whole consciousness which can avail and it is that which we try to bring in all without yielding to impatience because of the slowness with which it comes or the imperfect effort of the sadhaks to overcome these defects of their nature.

28 November 1935

*

No harmony can be brought about merely by apologising for one's errors. Unless we change radically and meet each other in the light of the Mother, no harmony is possible.

Quite right. Aggressiveness and bristles on both sides are not likely to go without a luminous modification in the nature.

1 July 1936

*

I would like to add two questions:

1. Why do people in the Asram (budding supermen) get

furious against anything merely because it is new and unfamiliar? That is common and natural in animals; but human beings ought to have more open minds.

2. Why are they so ready to pass positive judgments on things about which they have insufficient knowledge? It would be better if they could accustom themselves to wait and learn.

Avoiding Gossip

Is it not true that to look always at others' faults and criticise them is harmful and an obstacle to one's progress?

Yes, all that is true. The lower vital takes a mean and petty pleasure in picking out the faults of others and thereby one hampers both one's own progress and that of the subject of the criticism.

6 July 1933

*

Is gossiping and making fun of others a hindrance to one's progress in sadhana?

It can be and very often is. A gossiping spirit is always an obstacle.

10 May 1933

*

Your attitude to the gossip is quite the right one. A great part of what is talked in the Asram about others is untrue, a great part is distorted or exaggerated and what remains are things that can be left to the Mother and need not be made the subject of small talk among the sadhaks.

16 September 1936

*

The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a function which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as the expression of the vital and its habits without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has been increased

by the habit of talk about others,—gossip, to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself. Not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of Yogic self-control.

It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there, it can be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind.

6 December 1936

Minor Medical Questions

If she is accustomed to enema she can have from the dispensary. But that or laxatives can relieve for the moment but not really cure. It is perhaps the best remedy to drink a big glass of cold water as soon as she wakes in the morning and to do special exercises to strengthen the muscles of the abdomen.

2 February 1933

*

One of my teeth came out. Two others are moving, and I am afraid they will share the same fate. Is it possible to do something to save them?

It depends on the cause. If it is the gums that are responsible, then by an action upon the gums, the teeth can be tightened again. You can use either a gargle of potassium chlorate and salt (2 *grains* of the former and one teaspoonful of salt in a medium-sized tumbler of water) or, still better, a gargle of hydrogen peroxide (one-fifth of a glass in a glass of water). The best and surest hydrogen peroxide is German sold in bottles marked Merckozone.

31 December 1934

*

Bug bites are not usually red — red swellings usually come from

some small flying insects which come into the rooms here and have a rather poisonous bite.

27 January 1934

*

These bites are like that. I have often had them — they last sometimes for eight days.

30 January 1934

*

If you cannot get rid of the sciatica by inner means, the medical remedy (not for curing it, but for keeping free as long as possible) is not to fatigue yourself. It comes for periods which may last 8 weeks, then suddenly goes. If you remain quiet physically and are not too active, it may not come for a long time. But that of course means an inactive life, physically incapable. It is what I meant by eternising the sciatica — and the inertia also.

26 July 1935

*

I suppose the small pimples are what is called the prickly heat; it is rather troublesome, but of no importance. I am putting force so that the pains in the head may go.

As for the biscuits, the Mother wants you to go on taking them in spite of the absence of hunger because you are eating very little — too little. Especially now you are doing more work. It is not good to let disinclination to eat grow in the body, for that weakens the nervous system and when the nervous system is weak, illnesses come in more easily into the body; if it is strong enough, it throws them off. There must be no idea that to eat little is proper for sadhana; that is a superstition. For the body is a needed base for the working of the Force and the stronger it is the better.

20 May 1936

Cooking

A half-boiled egg means simply an egg boiled in water in the shell but for only a very short time — not for a longer time like the hard boiled egg — so that the yolk may remain liquid. It

is the simplest thing in the world to do. What you speak of is something different which is much more difficult.

*

Mother, how to make vegetable with juice from cabbage, potatoes, and red *kolu*?

[Answer in Sri Aurobindo's hand:] Prepare a sauce with saffron and the little black grains (which are put in sweets) and coriander and a little (not too much) pepper. There must be a good amount of cocose, a little dal flour. Make the flour brown in the cocose, then add water slowly stirring all the time and put the spices. This should be done in a separate pan and poured on the vegetables.

1 April 1933

*

How to make potatoes and brinjals with sauce?

If you can get 2 or 3 *piments doux*, you can do as for the onion sauce,¹ then cut the *piments doux* in very small pieces and cook them inside the sauce. It will give a good taste.

Add this sauce so made to the vegetable.

Mother, how to make onion sauce?

Cut the onions very small, fry in cocogem or oil till they get brown; take the water in which the vegetables are cooked, dissolve in that water some flour and pour slowly in the fried onions, stirring all the time. Cook for about 15 minutes, then add to the vegetables. If there are tomatoes, you can add some cut in small pieces.

9 April 1933

Visiting the Ashram

I am grateful for being granted permission to attend the Darshan though my application reached you too late. I propose

¹ But here the flour must be thicker, less watery; the onions must be cut and prepared in the same way. No saffron.

to stay here, for the present, for four days. I request you to grant permission to attend Pranam and Soup. I also request you to allow food free, because as a sannyasi, I am unable to pay for it.

You should make the following points clear to the Swami.

1. His request for food free from the Asram is contrary to the rule of the Asram. Food is given free, as a rule, only to members.

2. Only those are allowed to attend Pranam and Soup (save on exceptional occasions) who have entered Sri Aurobindo's path of Yoga and are accepted as his disciples.

3. The Mother does not give interviews for giving instructions and hints regarding sadhana. Especially, sadhana is given only to those who have a special call to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga; she never interferes with others (even by way of giving help) who are following a different path.

This is what would have been explained to him already if there had been time for writing a letter before he came. As he came all that way, darshan was given to him; but this does not mean that his other requests can be granted. 21 February 1930

*

He seems to be expecting to put up at the Asram? You will have to find a room for him at a hotel.

Reply to him that he can come to Pranam daily. I suppose the meals can be arranged somehow; you will ask Dyuman. He will have to pay as. 8 [*half a rupee*] a day. 5 November 1932

*

Tomorrow Mr. X is leaving Pondicherry. Is there any objection to my bringing him to my room for a while? Even his servants have been here — only him I have kept out.

If people from outside are allowed to come in like that, very soon half Pondicherry will be invading the Asram and it will not be an Asram, but a public place — that is why the rule is there. Even for servants from outside, the rule is against their coming

inside and upstairs in the Asram houses.

1933

*

You have permission for darshan in February, but we do not think it would be advisable for you to come so early as the first week in January. You know that after some stay here you become restless and cannot remain longer. Last time it was better because you were in a good internal condition, but even so the pull came to go. Now that you have yielded again in the matter of sex and drink, the restlessness is likely to come more early this time. The best course would be to come a little before the February darshan and stay as long as you can after it.

31 December 1935

*

He can come for darshan on August 15th, but accommodation in the Asram is very doubtful as there is very little and old habitual visitors and disciples have first claim. As for staying after the darshan that we do not usually decide till we have seen the person. The charge for board and lodging is 1 Re. a day or 30 Rs. a month — 10 as. is the charge for boarding only, as many stay outside but take their food in the Asram. If he lives outside then the question of sanction does not arise (for the one month's stay); only if he wants to live in the Asram. As to personal instructions, he knows I suppose that I see nobody — Mother also is unable to see people freely — the personal element comes in not so much through verbal instruction as through a spiritual influence and reception between the Guru and disciple.

24 March 1937

Section Two

The Practice of Yoga in the Ashram and the Outside World

The Ashram and the Outside World

Pressure of the Environment

Is it possible that thoughts and suggestions come to sadhaks from people in the town who think about us in a critical or hostile way?

It is not only likely but certain that it happens. The pressure of the environment is always there and it becomes more effective for suggestion if there are any in the Asram itself who are accustomed to mix and receive freely the impacts of the people there.

20 May 1933

*

Some boys in the neighbourhood have become a systematic nuisance—jeering and throwing things—and something decisive needs to be done. I know you do not like violence, but how else can one deal with this sort of thing?

It is in the nature of things that the ignorance and smallness of these low minds should push them to these petty manifestations of malevolence and ill-will. The best thing is to remain unmoved. As for violence that is out of the question. No doubt you do not mind about yourself—but you represent the Asram and we must not give a handle to those in power—many of whom are not now favourable to us—to get a handle to do anything against the Asram. That is the primary consideration at the present moment and under the present conditions—which will not always remain as they are now.

21 December 1933

Contact with the Outer World

The protection and help will be there as they were here. You have only to keep yourself open to them and live inwardly seeking

to become more and more conscious so that you may feel the Divine Presence and Power.

As to the Bombay atmosphere, keep inwardly separate from it, even while mixing with others. See it as a thing outside and not belonging to the inner world in which you yourself live. If you can achieve this inward separateness, it will not be able to cloud you, whatever its daily pressure.

18 May 1930

*

It is not good that X [*a visitor*] should spend so much time with you. The Yogic atmosphere is not easy to keep when one is in constant contact with people who are living in another consciousness — it is only when one has got a complete foundation in the outer as well as the inner consciousness that one can do it completely in all surroundings. That is why the Mother has always insisted on keeping the Asram and the sadhaks as much as possible out of contact with the outer world.

9 August 1933

*

In *The Synthesis of Yoga* you write of the love of the Divine in all beings and the constant perception and acceptance of its workings in all things. If this is one of the ways of realising the Divine, why do we have to restrict our contact with people?

That is all right in the ordinary karmayoga which aims at union with the cosmic Spirit and stops short at the Overmind — but here a special work has to be done and a new realisation achieved for the earth and not for ourselves alone. It is necessary to stand apart from the rest of the world so as to separate ourselves from the ordinary consciousness in order to bring down a new one.

It is not that love for all is not part of the sadhana, but it has not to translate itself at once into a mixing with all — it can only express itself in a general and when need be dynamic universal goodwill, but for the rest it must find vent in this labour of bringing down the higher consciousness with all its effect for the earth. As for accepting the working of the Divine in all things that is necessary here too in the sense of seeing it even behind our struggles and difficulties, but not accepting the nature of man and the

world as it is — our aim is to move towards a more divine working which will replace what now is by a greater and happier manifestation. That too is a labour of divine Love. 22 October 1933

*

It seems as if we avoid the world much more than the Mayavadin sannyasis. Some of them start hospitals and schools and do famine relief; some even joined the Satyagraha Movement. Similarly it may be that one would find more true ahimsaks among fighters and warriors than among those who shout "non-violence".

Very probably. You are right about the Mayavadins (I mean the present-day ones) and ourselves. The former Mayavadins were often more consistent, except that they wrote books and preached and disputed and founded institutions which seems a waste of energy if all is Maya. All the energy ought to have gone to getting out of Maya. As for our own position it is that ordinary life is Maya in this sense, not that it is an illusion, for it exists and is very real, but that it is an Ignorance, a thing founded on what is from the spiritual point of view a falsehood. So it is logical to avoid it or rather we are obliged to have some touch with it but we minimise that as much as possible except in so far as it is useful for our purpose. We have to turn life from falsehood into spiritual truth, from a life of ignorance into a life of spiritual knowledge. But until we have succeeded in doing that for ourselves, it is better to keep apart from the life of Ignorance of the world — otherwise our little slowly growing light is likely to be submerged in the seas of darkness all around it. Even as it is, the endeavour is difficult enough — it would be tenfold more difficult if there were no isolation. 20 June 1935

Work Outside and as Part of Sadhana

In work done outside, the ego remains often concealed and satisfies itself without being detected — but when there is the pressure of sadhana, it is obliged to show itself: then what has to be done is to reject it and free oneself and make the object of the work the Divine alone.

Yoga Centres and Movements

Centres

We have the idea of concentrating our activities and joining ourselves more closely to the Pondicherry Ashram by starting a lodge someplace in Gujarat where we can meet at least once a month.

No "Lodge" or formal society; these methods are not suitable for this sadhana. If they like to meet or meditate together of their own accord and without starting any fixed association or propaganda, that is another matter.

*

You might write to Rangpur (to X or Y—the one who wrote about the friction with Z, I don't remember which it was) that it is not at all clear from his letter or A's why this friction should at all have taken place. Each has the right to go on his own way according to his lights and there should be no sectarian spirit. This does not mean that one should allow several different influences at the same time; for that only brings confusion. Those who take this Yoga must follow only the path which leads to the supramental realisation and accept no other influence than that of myself and the Mother, otherwise they will not go in a straight line to the goal but are likely to be confused or divided, to wander into circuits or bypaths and lose the guidance. But they need not try to oppose the convictions of others, who are not following this way but another. Religions quarrel and collide with each other, but we are not creating a religion, we are following a path of spiritual realisation, into which those only need come who are drawn to it and have the call.

4 January 1932

*

Write to X that it was his own mistake. He must not mix up the things of Yoga with activities that have nothing to do with Yoga. What have the coming in front of the psychic being and the supramental to do with the founding of a school Samiti, a magazine and the rest of it? These are ordinary outward activities. The psychic being and the supramental are matters of a profound and difficult Yoga. These terms ought not to be cheapened by being tacked on to these small superficial things.

No doubt all activities can be carried on with a spiritual consciousness, but it is the Yogi alone who can do that. To invite people who have no spirituality in them and are no Yogis to get the psychic being in front and aspire to the supramental has no meaning whatever and is merely a mental propaganda which is unrealisable and hopelessly out of place.

16 May 1933

*

Should not the Sadhanbari be regarded as the seed-type of an Asram in the making? The question arises from the fact that there is a tendency in almost all here at the Sadhanbari — and in others in Chittagong at large — to think that it (the Sadhanbari) is merely a resting-place — a temporary foothold — and that the sooner one leaves for the Yogasram at Pondicherry the better. What really is the immediate and ultimate use of mofussil centres?

It is quite a mistake to suppose that everybody has eventually to come and join the Pondicherry Asram. That is not the Mother's intention, nor is it physically possible. The work to be done is not supposed to be confined to Pondicherry.

On the other hand cannot this tangential turn of thought prove to be an index of aspiration to live physically near the Mother, which under certain conditions is productive of great results — results which cannot be achieved anywhere else?

Where that is necessary, it will be done — but it does not follow that everybody has to come and stay here permanently.

How can sadhaks profit psychically when they live spiritually in close contact with each other?

It depends on themselves. If they grow psychically and spiritually and live within and above, instead of in the mind and vital and body, then there can be a psychic and spiritual solidarity created useful for the divine work. At present that does not exist, except in future potentiality.

18 April 1935

*

For some time there have been a lot of clashes here in our centre. [Details given.] The other day X called me aside and told me that if people had no confidence in him, he would rather not associate with us, but remain alone. Most people here are against X, who is filled with self-praise, and always criticises the Sadhanbari.

There is absolutely no hope of mutual harmony and confidence in Chittagong and it is idle to talk of it when the hearts of the sadhaks are full of all kinds of egoism, mutual dislike, jealousy, rivalry, suspicion, fault-finding and all sorts of uncleanness. It is only through the psychic and in a psychic atmosphere that harmony can come; a sadhana based entirely on the vital ego cannot create it. X is right in drawing back and keeping to himself. When things have gone so far that the sadhaks of the Sadhanbari are forming visions of him as a dangerous devil, it is absurd to want to go on as if there were nothing.

Some people here feel that X has been bringing impurity of thought and action into our centre. I give you some examples. . . .

All these are simply self-created vital formations due to the atmosphere of suspicion and dislike which Y's campaign has created around X. In such an atmosphere it is not truth that manifests but the feelings of the vital that take form in shapes and images.

You may recall that you refused to let Z stay with X, as you thought it might not be good for Z's sadhana.

I can say nothing and am not willing to say anything in these matters. I discouraged X from allowing Z to stay with him because I did not think the results will be good in view of what had happened at Rangpur — that was the reason why X refused to lodge him without an express order from here. But, seeing the results of my intervention, I refuse to intervene in any other matter. The Chittagong sadhaks must themselves settle their own affairs.

30 October 1936

Association Not a Necessity

I am feeling the want of association with co-sadhaks here. I am trying to adapt myself to the new place but I do miss my friends, especially as I can't discuss spiritual matters with anyone here.

You must be able to stand alone with only the force of the Mother supporting you. The association should not be a necessity, but only instrumental for action.

8 September 1934

Group Meditations

(1) It is not advisable to sit with others; for if any force is brought down, it may very easily be a mixed force. The difficulties in his nature may be prematurely raised and he may add to them the difficulties of those with whom he sits.

(2) Indications given by letter may not be rightly grasped or rightly practised; even if mentally understood, they may not be very helpful. The important thing is to open to the Influence. That indeed was the reason why in the old systems personal initiation by the Guru was considered indispensable. The best thing will be for him to come here for a short time, say in November (the 24th) and receive the direct touch and influence.

(3) Meanwhile he can try to prepare himself by personal meditation if he likes. The method is to quiet the mind and,

in order to do so, to concentrate on an aspiration for faith in the Divine Power, peace and calm in the mind, single-minded sincerity in the heart, and a conscious opening to the Light and Truth and Power.

14 September 1928

*

An acquaintance has written a letter asking for the Mother's permission to join our group meditation here.

Is he practising Yoga — does he do meditation by himself? It would as a rule be better if people tried by themselves first and joined the collective meditation only when they had begun to have experiences or some kind of opening.

This is not an absolute rule, however. If the other sadhaks find no inconvenience, he may come as a trial and see if it helps him, and if the others find it does not disturb the harmony of the atmosphere or bring in any inertia, he can continue.

3 February 1932

*

You [Sri Aurobindo's secretary] can write conveying the permission to meditate with X and the others. You can also write briefly to her explaining the principle of this Yoga (its practice) which is to open oneself to the Divine Power which is always secretly there above, aspire and call down its peace, calm, purity, wideness into one's own consciousness and its working which will change the nature and fill it with a higher light and Ananda. One's own part is to so aspire and open oneself and to reject all that belongs to ego, desire and the lower nature.

21 December 1932

Group Movements

The Mother does not think that a group movement of that kind could be effective for the purpose or produce any serious impression on the welter of strong blind forces that are now at work in the world. It can only be a mental ripple on the surface like so many other mental idealistic efforts of the day. All these

suffer from the fundamental defect that they work within the existing plan of things with no superior force that can dominate their disharmonies or oblige them to transform themselves by any irresistible compulsion of Light from above. Even if the meditation of these groups became less mental, that defect would not disappear. Individuals among them might rise to the spiritual heights just above mind, others might be helped to rise nearer towards them; but nothing fundamental would change in the world as a whole.

The Mother does not think any intervention or farther organisation of these groups would be helpful. Publicity of the kind suggested would be disastrous,—it would be sure to lead to vulgarisation and corruption, what purity or virtue there is in the movement would disappear. It is better to let it go on in silence with the momentum you gave to it and observe where that leads it. If there are any elements of utility in it for future work, those will be taken up when the time comes; if not, it must be left to fade away of itself. But it should be in the quiet and silence you first assigned to it—not as a public movement, for then it would soon cease to be at all pure and genuine.

28 November 1936

Part Five

Mantras and Messages

Section One

Mantras

On Mantras

Mantras in the Integral Yoga

The idea of your friend that it is necessary to receive a mantra from here and for that he must come is altogether wrong. There is no mantra given in this Yoga. It is the opening of the consciousness to the Mother from within that is the true initiation and that can only come by aspiration and rejection of restlessness in the mind and vital. To come here is not the way to get it. Many come and get nothing or get their difficulties raised or even fall away from the Yoga. It is no use coming before one is ready, and he does not seem to be ready. Strong desire is not a proof of readiness. When he is inwardly ready, then there will be no difficulty about his coming.

*

As a rule the only mantra used in this sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the Mother. The concentration in the heart and the concentration in the head can both be used — each has its own result. The first opens up the psychic being and brings bhakti, love and union with the Mother, her presence within the heart and the action of her Force in the nature. The other opens the mind to self-realisation, to the consciousness of what is above mind, to the ascent of the consciousness out of the body and the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.

13 October 1934

*

OM is the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed

indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscious to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.

In this Yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful. The stress is rather on an aspiration in the consciousness and a concentration of the mind, heart, will, all the being. If a mantra is found helpful for that, one uses it. OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards and outwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.

16 October 1935

*

I humbly request Sri Aurobindo and you to send me some *mūla-mantra* which I can repeat in meditation and concentration and as *nāma-smarana*. Coming from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, it will have a potency to lead me quickly on the path.

We do not usually give any mantra. Those who repeat something in meditation call on the Mother.

27 June 1936

*

Is there any difference between the Force that helps when I call the Mother in sleep and the Force that comes when I repeat "Sri Aurobindo–Mira"?

There is not necessarily any difference of Force. Usually the Mother's name has the full power in it; but in certain states of consciousness the double Name may have a special effect.

29 August 1936

*

I find no harm if I repeat the name of Sri Krishna, whose very

being has taken the form of our Lord Sri Aurobindo and his Parashakti, the Mother.

There is no harm in that; it is not incompatible or inconsistent with this Yoga.

Traditional Mantra Japa

In the Upanishads (Mandukya chiefly) the upasana of ॐ (OM) is recommended. It is said in the Pranava Upasana that the *pranava deha* — or the *mantra deha* of *Pranava deva* — comes successively into the *sthūla*, *sūksma* and *kāraṇa deha* of the sadhaka. It projects itself into the sadhaka first, then it engulfs him. It creates a divine rhythm and harmony and at last becomes one with every particle of his triple body (*sthūla*, *sūksma*, *kāraṇa*). Does this process include the transformation of the physical consciousness which Sri Aurobindo's yoga aspires to achieve? Or if it is different, in what way does it differ?

I do not believe a mantra can change the physical consciousness. What it does, if it is effective, is to open the consciousness and to bring into it the power of that which the Mantra represents.

*

It is said that Mantra Japa leads to a certain mechanisation of the sadhana, as the sadhaka becomes dependent on Nature to the extent that he has to awaken the Mantra in order to touch and identify himself with the Divinity. Is this charge against Japa true?

It depends on the way in which the japa is done.

If rightly done, the mantra is a means of opening to the light and knowledge etc. from above and it ceases as soon as that is done.

*

It is very good news that you got rid of the attack and it was the japa that helped you to do it. This and past experience also shows that if you can overcome the old association of the japa

with sterility and sorrow, it can do its natural function of creating the right consciousness — for that is what the japa is intended to do. It first changes the vibrations of the consciousness, brings into it the right state and the right responses and then brings in the power or the presence of the Deity. Several times before you wrote to me that by doing japa you got rid of the old impulse and recovered calm and the right turn of the consciousness and now it has helped you to get rid of the invasion of sorrow and despondency. Let us hope that this last will also soon lose its strength like the impulse and calm and serenity begin to establish itself in the whole nature.

8 October 1936

Use of a Mantra in Special Circumstances

This is not a case of ordinary madness, but, as your brother himself feels, an attack of evil forces. When the light descended into him, there was something in his brain that was not prepared or able to bear the descent and this gave the opportunity for the attack and the overthrow of the equilibrium.

It may be possible to set matters right without any personal contact. He should repeat as a *mantram* the words contained in the enclosed paper (which he should not reveal to others) after concentrating on the sign above it. He should repeat three times a day (the three Sandhyas), twelve times in all, and also whenever attacked.

Information should be sent from time to time about his condition.

Mantras Written by Sri Aurobindo

Sanskrit Mantras

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे
OM anandamayi chaitanyamayi satyamayi parame

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे
OM anandamayi chaitanyamayi [satyamayi parame]¹
circa 1927

*

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote this mantra around 1927 as one of several miscellaneous notations connected with Record of Yoga. See Record of Yoga, volume 11 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, page 1352. Note that he did not complete the transliteration in Latin script. The text was first published as a message in November 1955. Still later the Mother completed the transliteration in her own hand; see the facsimile below.—Ed.

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे
OM anandamayi chaitanyamayi
satyamayi parame

OM Tat Sat jyotir Aravinda

ॐ तत् सत् ज्योतिररविन्द

OM Satyam ^{Jnânam} jyotir Aravinda

ॐ सत्यं ज्ञानं ज्योतिररविन्द

OM Tat Sat Jyotir Aravinda

ॐ तत् सत् ज्योतिररविन्द

OM Satyam Jnânam Jyotir Aravinda

ॐ सत्यं ज्ञानं ज्योतिररविन्द

circa 1927

*

तत्सवितुर्वरं रूपं ज्योतिः परस्य
 यन्न सत्येन दीपयेत् ॥

तत्सवितुर्वरं रूपं ज्योतिः परस्य धीमहि ।
 यन्न सत्येन दीपयेत् ॥

Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri,
 on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the
 Truth.

19 March 1933

*

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो
 मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मीऽमृतं
 गमय ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

तथास्तु

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय ।
 तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
 मृत्योर्मीऽमृतं गमय ॥
 ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥²

तथास्तु

21 August 1933

² One of Sri Aurobindo's disciples wrote this quotation from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (I.3.28) in his notebook. Below it Sri Aurobindo wrote तथास्तु (tathāstu): "So be it!" — Ed.

English Mantras

OM Sri Aurobindo Mira

*Open my mind, my heart, my life
to your Light, your Love, your Power.. In all
things may I see the Divine.*

In 1935 I asked for a mantra and you suggested that I could take any combination of your name with the Mother's and make of it a mantra. Accordingly I submitted the combination "OM Sri Mira Sri Arvindaya Namah" for your sanction, and you gave it. I have tried this combination for some time now, but I feel like asking for another combination of your names with some aspiration or prayer joined to them so that it might become a sort of constant aspiration or prayer in course of time, or at least so that it will demand some concentration and not become something mechanical. Besides, I feel that if you would kindly make a combination for me I shall have more faith in it.

I have written for you a brief prayer with the names in the form of a mantra. I hope it will help you to overcome your difficulty and get an inner foundation.

OM Sri Aurobindo Mira

Open my mind, my heart, my life
to your Light, your Love, your Power. In all
things may I see the Divine. 16 July 1938

*

I feel very grateful for the mantra and the prayer. Especially the last line of the prayer — "In all things may I see the Divine" — has made me very glad since it expresses my very own deepest aspiration to which I have been partial for many years. Have I to consider the names and the prayer as one mantra?

Yes.

18 July 1938

Let my Peace be always with you. Let your mind be calm and open; let your vital nature be responsive; let your physical consciousness be calm and let the physical consciousness be a quiet and exact instrument, calm in action and in silence. Let there be my Light and Power and Peace upon these you; let there be Power and ever Light and Peace.

Let my Peace be always with you. Let your mind be calm and open; let your vital nature be calm and responsive; let your physical consciousness be a quiet and exact instrument, calm in action and in silence. Let there be my Light and Power and Peace upon you; let there be ever Power and Light and Peace.

*

In the night as in the day be always with me.

In sleep as in waking let me feel in me always the reality of your presence.

Let it sustain and make to grow in me Truth, consciousness and bliss constantly and at all times.

In the night as in the day be always with me.

In sleep as in waking let me feel in me always the reality of your presence.

Let it sustain and make to grow in me Truth, consciousness and bliss constantly and at all times.

Section Two

Messages

Messages Written for Special Occasions

Darshan Messages

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. 15 August 1929

*

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of the true and divine consciousness within you. If the Divine were to unveil and reveal itself in all its glory, the mind might feel a Presence, but it would not understand its action or its nature. It is in the measure of your own realisation and by the birth and growth of that greater consciousness in yourself that you will see the Divine and understand its action even behind its terrestrial disguises.

24 November 1929

*

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our Yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth — what I call the Supramental — and its Divine Power.¹

15 August 1931

¹ These two sentences are the opening of a letter written by Sri Aurobindo on 13 August 1931. Typed copies, individually signed by Sri Aurobindo, were distributed as "darshan messages" on 15 August 1931.—Ed.

Birthday Messages for Disciples**For Duraiswami**

Let the new birth become manifest in your heart and radiate in calm and joy and take up all the parts of your being, mind and vision and will and feeling and life and body. Let each date in your life be a date of its growth and greater completeness till all in you is the child of the Mother. Let the Light and Power and Presence envelop you and protect and cherish and foster, till all in your inner and outer existence is one movement and an expression of its peace and strength and Ananda.

23 January 1929

For Kantilal

Live always as if you were under the very eye of the Supreme and of the Divine Mother. Do nothing, try to think and feel nothing that would be unworthy of the Divine Presence. 16 April 1930

For K. Krishna Rao

Go below the surface of the consciousness deep within, for there you will find the soul's profound quietude, luminous silence, freedom and spiritual wideness, there the direct touch and presence of the Divine. 13 October 1938

For Madanlal

My blessings.

Efface the stamp of ego from the heart and let the love of the Mother take its place. Cast from the mind all insistence on your personal ideas and judgments, then you will have the wisdom to understand her. Let there be no obsession of self-will, ego-drive in the act, love of personal authority, attachment to personal preference, then the Mother's force will be able to act clearly in you and you will get the inexhaustible energy for which you ask and your service will be perfect. 27 November 1940

For Satyendra

A veil behind the heart, a lid over the mind divide us from the Divine. Love and devotion rend the veil, in the quietude of the mind the lid thins and vanishes.

9 September 1936

*

May the inner Sun tranquillise and illumine the mind and awaken fully the heart and guide it.

9 September 1937

*

In a quietude of the mind open to the presence of the Divine in your heart and everywhere; in a still mind and heart the Divine is seen like the sun in still water.

9 September 1938

*

Rise into the higher consciousness, let its light control and transform the nature.

9 September 1939

*

By the heart's self-giving the Presence and the Influence will be there even in the unconsciousness and prepare the nature for the true light and consciousness through the whole range of the being.

9 September 1940

*

Put stress always on the aspiration within; let that get depth and steadiness in the heart; the outer obstacles of mind and the vital will recede of themselves with the growth of the heart's love and aspiration.

9 September 1941

*

Keep the mind and heart open and turned inward and upward so that when the touch comes from within or the flow from above, you may be ready to receive it.

9 September 1942

*

To persevere in turning towards the Light is what is most demanded. The Light is nearer to us than we think and at any time its hour may come.

9 September 1943

*

To keep the soul ready for the Divine Grace so that it may be ready to receive it when it comes.

9 September 1944

*

A persistent will for the work to be done in us and in the world is what is most needed; there is a sure spiritual result, the growth of the consciousness and the soul's readiness for the touch of the Divine Light and Power.

9 September 1945

*

When the Light enters into the Inconscience which hedges in all our being and prevents or limits the manifestation of the true consciousness in us, when it inhibits the habits and recurrences and constant repetition of the same stimuli which besiege us and rise from the subconscious, then only can the nature be wholly free and respond only to the Truth from above.

9 September 1946

*

Clarity of knowledge and inner self-vision, subjugation of the ego, love, scrupulousness in selfless and dedicated works, are the four wheels of the chariot of Yoga. One who has them will progress safely on the path.

9 September 1947

For Kamala

In faith and confidence and joy on the quiet and sunlit path towards the home of Light and Ananda.

11 February 1936

*

My blessings on Kamala for the year of her life that begins today.

11 February 1938

*

My blessings on your birthday. May you grow in spirit with this new year of life.

11 February 1941

*

My blessings for the day and the year. Grow in faith, grow in light, grow in consciousness.

11 February 1942

*

My blessings for your birthday. May this year be a step forward in consciousness and towards union with the Divine.

11 February 1943

*

My blessings for the year. May it bring to you growth in consciousness towards the Divine.

11 February 1944

*

My blessings on your birthday. May this be a year of more and more progress both in your inner and your outer being.

11 February 1945

*

Fidelity, devotion, self-giving, selfless work and service, constant aspiration are the simplest and most effective means by which the soul can be made ready and fit to be in the abiding presence of the Divine.

11 February 1946

*

To light always and keep alight the psychic fire within, the fire of aspiration, devotion and self-giving—not to stifle it with the damp smouldering logs of vital desire and egoistic reactions. If that becomes permanent and continuous, then it will be easy to bring down the spiritual transformation.

11 February 1947

*

Devotion to the Divine, fidelity to his work and obedience to his will are the first supports of the Yoga. On these pillars all the rest can be supported.

11 February 1948

For Champaklal

Tranquillise and widen your consciousness; go deeper into your soul.

2 February 1940

*

A clarified consciousness with strength to reject all in conscience and receive all that comes from the Light, this should be the aim before you.

2 February 1941

*

Aspire always to grow more and more conscious so that all the small obstacles shall disappear from the physical consciousness and the obscurer parts of the vital nature.

2 February 1942

*

Keep yourself ready by faith and self-opening to receive the Light when it comes.

2 February 1943

*

Let the mind be quiet and receive the Light; let the vital be quiet and receive the Force that delivers.

2 February 1944

*

Let the year that is beginning mark a definitive stage in the growth of your psychic being and its power over your nature and your life.

2 February 1945

*

Continue to open yourself and the psychic consciousness will grow in you and the Light refine and illumine whatever is left of the shadows in the mind and vital being.

2 February 1946

*

An increasing advance on the road to the entire psychic change is what is most important in the sadhana, for that is the straight road to the spiritual transformation. Devotion, harmony

and scrupulousness in work, a growing inner perception and consciousness, more and more fading of the more vehement movements of the vital ego are among the more prominent landmarks on the road.

2 February 1947

*

Matter, blind to the Light, deaf to the call, the material consciousness and material life are the last and most obstinate refuge of the Inconscient and its resistance. There, the nearer the light, the higher it raises its wall of resistance. When that is overcome, the decisive transformation can have an open way.

2 February 1948

Prayers for a Sadhak

Deliver me from anger, ingratitude and foolish pride. Make me calm, humble and gentle. Let me feel your divine control in my work and in all my action.

5 November 1938

*

I pray to be purified from self-will and self-assertion so that I may become docile and obedient to the Mother and a fit instrument for her work, surrendered and guided by her Grace in all I do.

5 November 1942

*

May I henceforth with a firm determination cast away from me my faults and defects and may I do it with energy and perseverance till I succeed entirely. May I get rid of all arrogance, quarrelsomeness, self-esteem and vanity, disobedience and revolt against the Mother, hatred and rancour against others, violence of speech and conduct, falsehood, self-assertion and demand, discontent and grumbling. May I be friendly to all and without malice against anyone. May I become a true child of the Mother.

5 November 1943

Miscellaneous Messages

It is the lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man — only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you — blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life.

21 April 1933

*

You must make grow in you the peace that is born of the certitude of victory.

14 June 1933

*

Keep firm faith in the victory of the Light and face with calm equanimity the resistances of Matter and human personality to their own transformation.

21 December 1933

*

Our blessings are with you always. Persevere and have full confidence.

16 October 1934

*

I am about to complete one year of my stay here. The past year has been one of hard and painful struggle for me. I have not done much during the year but hope to do better in the next. And although my heart seems to have become a stranger to all higher and finer emotions I promise you this: that I shall endeavour with all the strength I can command to obey you.

Blessings for the new year. May all struggle cease and a quiet ascent begin.

11 February 1936

*

The time for your turning to the spiritual life depends upon your own aspiration. A sincere aspiration brings always its response, and if there is continuity in the will, the result cannot fail.

*

So the Light grows always. As for the shadow it is only a shadow and will disappear in the growing Light.

*

It is not a hope but a certitude that the complete transformation of the nature will take place.

*

Keep faith quietude openness to divine power. Ashirvada.

*Keep faith quietude openness to divine power.
Ashirvada.*

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

LETTERS ON HIMSELF AND THE ASHRAM consists of letters written by Sri Aurobindo between 1926 and 1950 in which he referred to his life and works, his sadhana or practice of yoga, and the sadhana of members of his ashram. The letters have been selected and arranged by the editors in four parts dealing with four broad subject areas: (1) Sri Aurobindo's outer life, his writings, his contemporaries, and contemporary events; (2) his inner life before and after his arrival in Pondicherry; (3) his role as a spiritual leader and guide; and (4) his ashram and the sadhana practised there. A fifth part contains mantras and messages that Sri Aurobindo wrote for the benefit of his disciples.

The title chosen for this volume might seem to suggest that Sri Aurobindo deliberately set out to write a large number of letters about his life. In fact, he rarely wrote about himself on his own initiative. He wrote many of the letters in the present volume in answer to questions about himself. He also occasionally referred to himself in passing to illustrate a point under discussion. He explained such references in a letter of 30 October 1935: "I can't write such things by themselves as an autobiographical essay — it is only if they turn up in the course of something that I can do so" (page 232).

The letters included in this volume have been selected from the large body of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to his disciples and others between November 1926, when his ashram was founded, and November 1950, shortly before his passing. Letters from this corpus appear in seven volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO: *Letters on Poetry and Art* (Volume 27), *Letters on Yoga* (Volumes 28–31), *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* (Volume 32), and the present volume. The titles of these four works specify the nature of the letters included in each, but there is some overlap. For example, Part Four of the present volume contains many letters on yoga. These differ from those published in *Letters on Yoga* in that the ones published here are framed historically by events and conditions in the Sri Aurobindo

Ashram between November 1926 and November 1950. The questions provided along with some of the letters in this volume refer to some of these events and conditions.

Many of the letters in the present volume appeared earlier in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* (1972). Those books contained, along with letters from the 1926–1950 period, historical and biographical material such as Sri Aurobindo's corrections of statements made by biographers, public messages, and letters from the years before 1927 to family members, colleagues, and others. These documents and early letters are now published in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, Volume 36 of THE COMPLETE WORKS.

The Writing of the Letters

Sri Aurobindo wrote most of the letters included in this volume to members of his ashram, the rest to correspondents living outside. For the history, purpose and nature of the correspondence, see pages 450 to 478.

Ashram members wrote to Sri Aurobindo in notebooks or on loose sheets of paper that were sent to him via an internal “post” once or twice a day. Letters from outside that Sri Aurobindo's secretary thought he might like to see were sent at the same time. Correspondents wrote in English if they were able to. A good number, however, wrote in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, or French, all of which Sri Aurobindo read fluently, or in other languages that were translated into English for him. Most letters were addressed to the Mother, even though most correspondents assumed that Sri Aurobindo would reply to them.

Sri Aurobindo generally replied on the sheets of paper (bound or loose) on which the correspondents wrote their comments or questions, writing below them or in the margin or between the lines. Sometimes, however, he wrote his answer on a separate, small sheet of “bloc-note” paper. In some cases he had his secretary prepare a typed copy of his letter, which he revised before it was sent. In other cases, particularly when the correspondent was living outside the Ashram, he addressed his reply not to the correspondent but to his secretary, who quoted,

paraphrased or translated Sri Aurobindo's reply and signed the letter himself. In such indirect replies, Sri Aurobindo often referred to himself in the third person.

While going through Sri Aurobindo's replies, the reader should keep in mind that each one was written to a specific person at a specific time, in specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. Each subject taken up was one that arose in regard to a particular correspondent's inner or outer needs, or in answer to a particular correspondent's questions. Sri Aurobindo varied the style and tone of his replies in accordance with his own relationship (or, in the case of people writing from outside, lack of relationship) with each correspondent. With those he was close to, he sometimes employed humour, irony or even sarcasm.

Although the letters were written to specific recipients, they contain much of general interest. This justifies their inclusion in a volume destined for the general public. But it is important for the reader to bear in mind some remarks that Sri Aurobindo made during the 1930s about the proper use of his letters:

I should like to say, in passing, that it is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga. (Page 473)

It is not a fact that all I write is meant equally for everybody. That assumes that everybody is alike and there is no difference between sadhak and sadhak. If it were so everybody would advance alike and have the same experiences and take the same time to progress by the same steps and stages. It is not so at all. (Page 475)

Sri Aurobindo wrote all the letters included in this volume between November 1926 and November 1950, the great majority between 1931 and 1937. He sometimes dated his answers, but most of the dates given at the end of the letters in this volume are those of the letters or notebook entries to which he was replying.

The Typing and Revision of the Letters

Most of the shorter items in this volume, and many of the longer ones, were not typed or revised during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, and are reproduced here directly from his handwritten manuscripts. But a good number of the letters were, as mentioned above, typed for Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before sending. Other letters were typed by the recipients for their own personal use or for circulation within the Ashram. Circulation was at first restricted to members of the Ashram and others whom Sri Aurobindo had accepted as disciples (see pages 476–78). When letters were circulated, personal references were removed. Persons referred to were indicated by initials, or the letters X, Y, etc.¹ Copies of these typed letters were kept by Sri Aurobindo's secretaries and sometimes presented to him for revision. The typed copies were sometimes filled with "gross errors" (page 476). Sri Aurobindo corrected many of these errors while revising.

The typed copies sometimes also contained intentional textual alterations. Recipients of letters sometimes omitted passages that seemed to them to be of no general interest. In a few cases, recipients added words or phrases that they believed made Sri Aurobindo's intentions clearer. Some such alterations remained intact when the letters were revised.

Sri Aurobindo's revision amounted sometimes to a complete rewriting of the letter, sometimes to making minor changes here and there. He generally removed personal references if this had not already been done by the typist. He also, when necessary, rewrote the openings or other parts of the answers in order to free them from dependence on the correspondent's question. As a result, some letters now read more like brief essays than personal communications.

The Publication of the Letters

Around 1933, Sri Aurobindo's secretary began to compile selections of letters to be published in small books. A total of four such volumes came out during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime: *The Riddle of This World*

¹ This practice continues in the present volume. See pages 857–58 for details.

(1933), *Lights on Yoga* (1935), *Bases of Yoga* (1936), and *More Lights on Yoga* (1948). Sri Aurobindo revised the typescripts and proofs of most of these books before publication. During this revision, he continued the process of removing personal references. A letter he wrote in August 1937 alludes to this approach to the revision:

I had no idea of the book being published as a collection of personal letters—if that were done, they would have to be published whole as such without a word of alteration. I understood the book was meant like the others [*i.e.*, *like Bases of Yoga, etc.*] where only what was helpful for an understanding of things Yogic was kept with necessary alterations and modifications. . . . With that idea I have been not only omitting but recasting and adding freely. Otherwise as a book it would be too scrappy and random for public interest. In the other books things too personal were omitted — it seems to me the same rule must hold here — except very sparingly where unavoidable.

By the mid-1940s, a significant body of letters had been collected, typed and revised, and plans were made for the publication of a multi-volume collection of Sri Aurobindo's letters. At that time, typed or printed copies of letters, some revised, some not, were presented to Sri Aurobindo for approval or further revision. The resulting material was compiled by an editor in four volumes, which were published as *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* in 1947 (Series One), 1949 (Series Two and Three) and 1951 (Series Four). Most of the letters in Series One, Two and Four were later included in *On Yoga II* (1958) and *Letters on Yoga* (1970). Most of the letters in Series Three were later included in *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (1972).

During the early 1950s, the principal editor of Sri Aurobindo's letters conceived and organised two volumes containing Sri Aurobindo's letters on the Mother and on himself. The first of these, *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*, was published in 1951. The second, *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, was published two years later. The editor arranged the contents of *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in three parts: (1) Sri Aurobindo on Himself: Notes and Letters on His Life; (2) Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother;

and (3) Sri Aurobindo on the Mother. The material comprising Parts Two and Three is published in volume 32 of THE COMPLETE WORKS, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*. This material is discussed in the Note on the Texts of that volume.

The editor of *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* subdivided Part One into seven sections: (I) Life before Pondicherry; (II) Beginnings of Yoga; (III) His Path and Other Paths; (IV) Sadhana for the Earth-Consciousness; (V) The Master and the Guide; (VI) The Poet and the Critic; (VII) Reminiscences and Observations. More than half of Section I consisted of corrections of statements made in biographies and in newspaper articles, the rest of letters in which Sri Aurobindo spoke of his early life in passing or in answer to questions. Sections II–V consisted of letters or extracts of letters in which Sri Aurobindo spoke of his own practice of yoga, the path of yoga that he developed for others, and his work as a spiritual guide. Section VI consisted of letters on poetry. (In THE COMPLETE WORKS these and similar letters on poetry, literature and art are included in volume 27, *Letters on Poetry and Art*, and are discussed in the Note on the Texts of that volume.) Section VII consisted of miscellaneous letters in which Sri Aurobindo spoke of happenings in his past and made observations on various subjects.

The letters in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* were published along with edited versions of the correspondents' questions if these were available and the editor thought that they would help readers understand Sri Aurobindo's replies. The letters were preceded by editorial headings and followed by their dates, if known. The editor restored some personal references that Sri Aurobindo had omitted from collections of letters published during his lifetime, because the very purpose of the book was to present aspects of Sri Aurobindo's life.

In 1972, Parts One and Two of *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, both considerably enlarged, were published as *On Himself*.

The Scope and Contents of *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*

Between the publication of *On Himself* in 1972 and the launch of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO in 1995, a good deal of

material of a biographical and historical nature came to light. This necessitated the creation of two different volumes: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* and *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*.² The editors placed material in one or the other volume according to the following scheme: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* contains letters written between November 1926 and November 1950 that deal with any of the four subject areas listed in the first paragraph of this Note. *Autobiographical Notes* consists of various sorts of documentary material, including life sketches and corrections of statements made by biographers and others; letters written by Sri Aurobindo to family members, professional and political associates, newspaper editors, early disciples, and others before the founding of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926; some letters written after 1926 that form parts of series that began before 1926; letters to or for the attention of public figures, regardless of date; late letters on political questions, most of which were released for publication as messages; and public messages on current events or about Sri Aurobindo's ashram and method of yoga.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram includes most of the contents of Sections II, III, IV, V and VII of Part One of *On Himself*, as well as items in Section I that originated as letters and not as corrections. It also contains a fairly large number of letters that had earlier been included in *Letters on Yoga*, a few letters that had earlier been included in *Letters on the Mother*, and many items newly selected by the editors from the corpus of Sri Aurobindo's 1926–1950 letters.

In deciding whether a given letter (whether previously published or not) should go into *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* rather than *Letters on Yoga*, the editors considered whether the letter ought to be framed historically or not. They placed in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* any letter the subject of which fell into one of the four subject areas listed in the first paragraph of this Note. In addition, they placed in this volume some letters that could not properly be understood without reference to the correspondents' questions. Many letters that

² Part One of *On Himself* (1972) comprised 439 text pages. *Autobiographical Notes* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* comprise together 1398 (553 + 845) text pages. The new volumes thus contain over three times as much material as the older one.

appeared in the 1970 edition of *Letters on Yoga* without questions, including almost all the letters making up Part Two, Section IX of that book ("Sadhana in the Ashram and Outside"), have been shifted to Part Four of *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The questions of the correspondents have been provided for many such letters.

When all the above is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the present volume is a compilation and does not represent an organic division of Sri Aurobindo's letters. It is however a lineal descendant of *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, first published more than fifty years ago. It brings together in a single volume letters from the 1926–1950 corpus in which Sri Aurobindo referred directly or indirectly to his inner and outer life, his works, his contemporaries, and his ashram. These letters, together with the documents published in *Autobiographical Notes*, constitute nearly all the surviving biographical and historical source materials that Sri Aurobindo wrote.

The Selection, Arrangement and Editing of the Letters

What has been called the 1926–1950 corpus of Sri Aurobindo's correspondence consists of tens of thousands of replies that he wrote to hundreds of correspondents. Most of the replies, however, went to a few dozen disciples, almost all of them resident members of his ashram. A smaller number of disciples, no more than a dozen, received more than half of the entire body of published letters. In compiling the volumes of Sri Aurobindo's correspondence published in THE COMPLETE WORKS, the editors have gone through all known manuscripts, typed or photographic copies of manuscripts, and printed texts. From these sources they have selected those letters that seemed suitable for publication. This selection includes most letters consisting of more than a few words that deal with topics of general interest. The editorial staff produced electronic texts of all selected letters and checked them against all handwritten, typed and printed versions.

The selection and arrangement of the material in the book is the work of the editors. Whenever possible they retained the divisions and categories found in *On Himself*; however, the great increase in the number of items in the present volume obliged the editors to add new

parts, sections, chapters and groups. In a note of February 1936, Sri Aurobindo wrote that the placing of letters in group categories was possible in the case of "letters about sadhana", which could "very easily fall under different heads".

Letters on Himself and the Ashram consists of almost 1500 separate items, an "item" being defined as what is published between one heading or asterisk and another heading or asterisk. Many items correspond exactly to individual letters; a good number, however, consist of portions of single letters, or two or more letters or portions of letters that were joined together by earlier editors or typists and revised in this form by Sri Aurobindo. The editors of the present volume have sometimes reunited portions of letters that had been separated by previous editors. In some cases, however, they considered the separation justifiable and have retained it.

Whenever possible, letters by Sri Aurobindo are reproduced to their full extent. In some cases, however, the editors, following a pattern set by the editors of previous books, omitted portions of Sri Aurobindo's letters that are of no general interest. A number of Sri Aurobindo's letters begin with personal comments unrelated to the more substantial remarks that follow. The editors have left out many such personal openings. Sri Aurobindo often marked the transition from one part of a letter to another with a phrase such as "As to . . .". Many such phrases now stand at the beginning of abbreviated letters.

In some cases the editors have published texts of a given letter in more than one volume of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Much of this doubling of letters occurs between *Letters on Yoga* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. In many cases, the editors have placed Sri Aurobindo's revised version of a letter in *Letters on Yoga* and retained the original handwritten version, along with the recipient's question, in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*.

As in previous collections of Sri Aurobindo's letters, names of members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and of disciples living outside the Ashram have been replaced by the letters X, Y, Z, etc. In any given letter, X stands for the first name replaced, Y for the second, Z for the third, A for the fourth, and so on. An X in a given letter has no necessary relation to an X in another letter. Names of Ashram members who were referred to by Sri Aurobindo not as sadhaks but as holders

of a certain position — notably Nolini Kanta Gupta in his position as Sri Aurobindo's secretary — are given in full, as are names of people who played a role in the history of the period.

The editors have included the questions to which Sri Aurobindo replied, or the portions of the correspondents' letters on which he commented, whenever these are available and helpful for understanding his replies or comments. As a rule, only as much of a correspondent's letter has been given as is needed in order to understand the response. In some cases the questions have been lightly revised for the sake of clarity. Mistakes of grammar, spelling and punctuation due to some correspondents' imperfect grasp of English have been corrected. Questions written in languages other than English have been translated. When the question is not available, only Sri Aurobindo's reply is printed.

Readers should note that Sri Aurobindo almost always spelled the word "Asram" without an "h", though some of his correspondents wrote "Ashram". Both spellings have been reproduced here following the manuscripts. By the late 1940s, when "Ashram" had become the standard spelling in the Ashram's publications, Sri Aurobindo was no longer writing letters himself but dictating them to a disciple, who tended to write "Ashram". This spelling thus occurs in letters of the last period, as well as in headings and other editorial matter throughout the book.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

and Other Writings of Historical Interest



Sri Aurobindo

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Autobiographical Notes

and Other Writings of Historical Interest



Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, August 1911

Publisher's Note

This volume consists of (1) notes in which Sri Aurobindo corrected statements made by biographers and other writers about his life and (2) various sorts of material written by him that are of historical importance. The historical material includes personal letters written before 1927 (as well as a few written after that date), public statements and letters on national and world events, and public statements about his ashram and system of yoga. Many of these writings appeared earlier in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* (1972). These previously published writings, along with many others, appear here under the new title *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*.

Sri Aurobindo alluded to his life and works not only in the notes included in this volume but also in some of the letters he wrote to disciples between 1927 and 1950. Such letters have been included in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

The autobiographical notes, letters and other writings included in the present volume have been arranged by the editors in four parts. The texts of the constituent materials have been checked against all relevant manuscripts and printed texts.

The Note on the Texts at the end contains information on the people and historical events referred to in the texts.

On account of the documentary nature of the items making up this book, they have been transcribed verbatim, or as close to verbatim as possible. Problems of transcription are discussed on the next page.

Guide to Editorial Notation

Some of the contents of this book were transcribed from unrevised manuscripts or from handwritten or typed copies of lost originals. The texts published here are as far as possible verbatim transcripts of these materials. Problems encountered in reproducing them are indicated by means of the notation shown below.

Notation	Textual Problem
[.....]	Word(s) lost through damage to the manuscript.
[] ¹	Superfluous word(s), often duplicating what immediately precedes; a footnote shows the word(s) as they occur in the manuscript.
[?]	Word(s) omitted by the author that could not be supplied by the editors.
[word]	Word(s) omitted by the author or lost through damage to the manuscript that are required by grammar or sense, and that could be supplied by the editors.
[?word]	Doubtful reading.
[word] ¹	Emendation required by grammar or sense or correcting a factual slip; a footnote gives the manuscript reading. Documentary justifications for corrections of factual slips are given on pages 564–69.
wor[d]	Letter(s) supplied by the editors.
[note]	Textual situation requiring brief explanation. Longer explanations are provided in editorial footnotes, which are printed in italics followed by “—Ed.” (All footnotes printed in roman type were written by Sri Aurobindo.)

CONTENTS

PART ONE

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Section One

Life Sketches and Other Autobiographical Notes

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch	5
Appendix: Letters on “Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch”	11

Incomplete Life Sketches

Incomplete Life Sketch in Outline Form, c. 1922	14
Fragmentary Life Sketch, c. 1928	15

Other Autobiographical Notes

A Day in Srinagar	16
Information Supplied to the <i>King’s College Register</i>	19

Section Two

Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies and Other Publications

Early Life in India and England, 1872–1893

Language Learning	25
At Manchester	26
School Studies	26
In London	27
Early Poetry	29
At Cambridge	29
The Riding Examination	30
Political Interests and Activities	31
The Meeting with the Maharaja of Baroda	33
Departure from England	34

Life in Baroda, 1893–1906

Service in Baroda State	37
-------------------------	----

CONTENTS

Language Study at Baroda	43
Poetry Writing at Baroda	44
Meetings with His Grandfather at Deoghar	45
Political Life, 1893–1910	
A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life	47
The <i>Indu Prakash</i> Articles	67
Beginnings of the Revolutionary Movement	69
Attitude towards Violent Revolution	71
General Note (referring especially to the Alipur Case and Sri Aurobindo's politics)	72
Sister Nivedita	73
<i>Bhawani Mandir</i>	74
The Indian National Congress: Moderates and Extremists	75
The Barisal Conference and the Start of the <i>Yugantar</i>	76
Principal of the Bengal National College	78
Start of the <i>Bande Mataram</i>	78
The Policy of the <i>Bande Mataram</i>	80
The <i>Bande Mataram</i> Sedition Case	81
The Surat Congress	82
The Alipore Bomb Case	84
The Open Letters of July and December 1909	86
The <i>Karmayogin</i> Case	87
The Departure from Calcutta, 1910	
To Charu Chandra Dutt	88
To the Editor, <i>Sunday Times</i>	90
On an Article by Ramchandra Majumdar	92
To Pavitra (Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire)	97
Life in Pondicherry, 1910–1950	
Meeting with the Mother	102
The <i>Arya</i>	102
The Development of the Ashram	102
Support for the Allies	103
Muslims and the 1947 Partition of Bengal	104

CONTENTS

Early Spiritual Development

First Turn towards Spiritual Seeking	106
Beginnings of Yoga at Baroda	106
Meeting with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele	109
Sadhana 1908–1909	110

Philosophy and Writings

Sources of His Philosophy	112
<i>Perseus the Deliverer</i>	113
<i>Essays on the Gita</i>	114
<i>The Future Poetry</i>	114
<i>The Mother</i>	115
Some Philosophical Topics	115

Appendix: Notes of Uncertain Origin	116
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PART TWO

LETTERS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Section One

Letters on Personal, Practical and Political Matters, 1890–1926

Family Letters, 1890–1919

Extract from a Letter to His Father	121
To His Grandfather	122
To His Sister	123
Extract from a Letter to His Brother	125
To His Uncle	138
To His Wife	145
To His Father-in-Law	147

Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892

To Lord Kimberley	149
-------------------	-----

CONTENTS

Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda, 1895–1906	
To the Sar Suba, Baroda State	152
To Bhuban Babu	153
To an Officer of the Baroda State	153
Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular	154
To the Dewan, on the Government's Reply to the Letter on the Curzon Circular	158
To the Naib Dewan, on the Infant Marriage Bill	159
A Letter of Condolence	160
To R. C. Dutt	161
To the Principal, Baroda College	162
To the Dewan, on Rejoining the College	163
To the Maharaja	164
A Letter of Recommendation	165
Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates, 1906–1926	
To Bipin Chandra Pal	166
A Letter of Acknowledgement	166
To Hemendra Prasad Ghose	167
To Aswinicoomar Banerji	167
To Dr. S. K. Mullick	168
Telegrams about a Planned Political Reception	168
Extract from a Letter to Parthasarathi Aiyangar	170
Note on a Forged Document	171
To Anandrao	172
To Motilal Roy	175
Draft of a Letter to Saurin Bose	251
To K. R. Appadurai	252
Fragmentary Draft Letter	253
To a Would-be Contributor to the <i>Arya</i>	254
To Joseph Baptista	254
To Balkrishna Shivaram Moonje	257
To Chittaranjan Das	260

CONTENTS

To Shyamsundar Chakravarty	262
Open Letters Published in Newspapers, 1909–1925	
To the Editor of the <i>Bengalee</i>	263
To the Editor of the <i>Hindu</i>	264
To the Editor of the <i>New India</i>	270
To the Editor of the <i>Hindustan</i>	274
To the Editor of the <i>Independent</i>	275
To the Editor of the <i>Standard Bearer</i>	278
To the Editor of the <i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	279
Section Two	
Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life, 1911–1928	
Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, 1911–c. 1922	
To Paul Richard	283
To the Mother and Paul Richard	285
Draft of a Letter	291
To People in India, 1914–1926	
To N. K. Gogte	293
Draft of a Letter to Nolini Kanta Gupta	295
To A. B. Purani	296
To V. Chandrasekharam	298
Extract from a Letter to K. N. Dixit	301
To Ramchandran	302
To and about V. Tirupati	306
To Daulatram Sharma	328
To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others, 1922–1928	
To Barindra Kumar Ghose	332
To Hrishikesh Kanjilal	368
To Krishnashashi	370
To Rajani Palit	373
Draft Letters to and about Kumud Bandhu Bagchi	378
To People in America, 1926–1927	
To Mr. and Mrs. Sharman	382

CONTENTS

To the Advance Distributing Company	383
Draft of a Letter to C. E. Lefebvre	388
To and about Anna Bogenholm Sloane	389
 Draft Letters, 1926–1928	
To an Unknown Person	397
To and about Marie Potel	397
 Section Three	
Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life, 1921–1938	
 On Yoga and Fund-raising for the Ashram, 1921–1938	
To and about Durgadas Shett	407
To and about Punamchand M. Shah	428
 To and about Public Figures, 1930–1937	
Draft of a Letter to Maharani Chimnabai II	440
On a Proposed Visit by Mahatma Gandhi	442
To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan	444
To and about Morarji Desai	445
On a Proposed Visit by Jawaharlal Nehru	447
To Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury	448
 PART THREE	
PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS	
ON INDIAN AND WORLD EVENTS, 1940–1950	
 Section One	
Public Statements, Messages, Letters and Telegrams on Indian and World Events, 1940–1950	
 On the Second World War, 1940–1943	
Contributions to Allied War Funds	453
Notes about the War Fund Contributions	453
On the War: An Unreleased Statement	455
India and the War	462
On the War: Private Letters That Were Made Public	463

CONTENTS

On Indian Independence, 1942–1947	
On the Cripps Proposal	469
On the Wavell Plan	471
On the Cabinet Mission Proposals	472
The Fifteenth of August 1947	474
On the Integration of the French Settlements in India, 1947–1950	
The Future Union (A Programme)	481
On the Disturbances of 15 August 1947 in Pondicherry	491
Letters to Surendra Mohan Ghosh	492
Note on a <i>Projet de loi</i>	495
Messages on Indian and World Events, 1948–1950	
On the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi	497
On the World Situation (July 1948)	498
On Linguistic Provinces (Message to Andhra University)	498
Letters Related to the Andhra University Award	504
The Present Darkness (April 1950)	506
On the Korean Conflict	507
Section Two	
Private Letters to Public Figures and to the Editor of <i>Mother India</i>, 1948–1950	
Private Letters to Public Figures, 1948–1950	
To Surendra Mohan Ghosh	511
To Kailas Nath Katju	511
To K. M. Munshi	512
Notes and Letters to the Editor of <i>Mother India</i> on Indian and World Events, 1949–1950	
On Pakistan	514
On the Commonwealth and Secularism	514
On the Unity Party	514
On French India and on Pakistan	515

CONTENTS

On Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholicism and Communism	516
On the Kashmir Problem	517
On “New Year Thoughts”	520
Rishis as Leaders	520
On Military Action	521
The Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After	522
On the Communist Movement	523

PART FOUR

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND NOTICES CONCERNING SRI AUROBINDO’S ASHRAM AND YOGA, 1927–1949

Section One

Public Statements and Notices concerning the Ashram, 1927–1937

Public Statements about the Ashram, 1927 and 1934

On the Ashram’s Finances (1927)	529
On the Ashram (1934)	530

Notices for Members of the Ashram, 1928–1937

Notices of May 1928	532
Notices of 1929–1937	534

Section Two

Public Statements about Sri Aurobindo’s Path of Yoga, 1934 and 1949

Sri Aurobindo’s Teaching	547
A Message to America	551

NOTE ON THE TEXTS

557

Part One

Autobiographical Notes

Section One
Life Sketches and
Other Autobiographical Notes

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. In 1879, at the age of seven, he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for fourteen years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in [1884]¹ and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. In 1890 he passed also the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of two years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England in [January],² 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity — for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time — and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East.³ At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages,

¹ MS 1885. *See Table 1, page 565.* —Ed.

² MS February. *See Table 1, page 565.* —Ed.

³ It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo's education in England gave him a wide introduction to the culture of ancient, of mediaeval and of modern Europe. He was a brilliant scholar in Greek and Latin. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself German and Italian sufficiently to read Goethe and Dante in the original tongues. (He passed the Tripos in Cambridge in the first division

assimilated the spirit of Indian civilisation and its forms past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered eight years, from 1902 to 1910. During the first half of this period he worked behind the scenes, preparing with other co-workers the beginnings of the Swadeshi (Indian Sinn Fein) movement, till the agitation in Bengal furnished an opening for the public initiation of a more forward and direct political action than the moderate reformism which had till then been the creed of the Indian National Congress. In 1906 Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal with this purpose and joined the New Party, an advanced section small in numbers and not yet strong in influence, which had been recently formed in the Congress. The political theory of this party was a rather vague gospel of Non-cooperation; in action it had not yet gone farther than some ineffective clashes with the Moderate leaders at the annual Congress assembly behind the veil of secrecy of the "Subjects Committee". Sri Aurobindo persuaded its chiefs in Bengal to come forward publicly as an All-India party with a definite and challenging programme, putting forward Tilak, the popular Maratha leader at its head, and to attack the then dominant Moderate (Reformist or Liberal) oligarchy of veteran politicians and capture from them the Congress and the country. This was the origin of the historic struggle between the Moderates and the Nationalists (called by their opponents Extremists) which in two years changed altogether the face of Indian politics.

The new-born Nationalist party put forward Swaraj (independence) as its goal as against the far-off Moderate hope of

and obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service.) [Sri Aurobindo's note; see pages 12–13.]

colonial self-government to be realised at a distant date of a century or two by a slow progress of reform; it proposed as its means of execution a programme which resembled in spirit, though not in its details, the policy of Sinn Fein developed some years later and carried to a successful issue in Ireland. The principle of this new policy was self-help; it aimed on one side at an effective organisation of the forces of the nation and on the other professed a complete non-cooperation with the Government. Boycott of British and foreign goods and the fostering of Swadeshi industries to replace them, boycott of British law courts and the foundation of a system of Arbitration courts in their stead, boycott of Government universities and colleges and the creation of a network of National colleges and schools, the formation of societies of young men which would do the work of police and defence and, wherever necessary, a policy of passive resistance were among the immediate items of the programme. Sri Aurobindo hoped to capture the Congress and make it the directing centre of an organised national action, an informal State within the State, which would carry on the struggle for freedom till it was won. He persuaded the party to take up and finance as its recognised organ the newly-founded daily paper, *Bande Mataram*, of which he was at the time acting editor. The *Bande Mataram*, whose policy from the beginning of 1907 till its abrupt winding up in 1908 when Aurobindo was in prison was wholly directed by him, circulated almost immediately all over India. During its brief but momentous existence it changed the political thought of India which has ever since preserved fundamentally, even amidst its later developments, the stamp then imparted to it. But the struggle initiated on these lines, though vehement and eventful and full of importance for the future, did not last long at the time; for the country was still unripe for so bold a programme.

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. Up till now an organiser and writer, he was obliged by this event and by the imprisonment or disappearance of other leaders to come forward as the acknowledged head of the party in Bengal and to appear on the platform for the first time as a

speaker. He presided over the Nationalist Conference at Surat in 1907 where in the forceful clash of two equal parties the Congress was broken to pieces. In May, 1908, he was arrested in the Alipur Conspiracy Case as implicated in the doings of the revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra; but no evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as undertrial prisoner in the Alipur Jail, he came out in May, 1909, to find the party organisation broken, its leaders scattered by imprisonment, deportation or self-imposed exile and the party itself still existent but dumb and dispirited and incapable of any strenuous action. For almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the Nationalists in India to revive the movement. He published at this time to aid his effort a weekly English paper, the *Karmayogin*, and a Bengali weekly, the *Dharma*. But at last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme. For a time he thought that the necessary training must first be given through a less advanced Home Rule movement or an agitation of passive resistance of the kind created by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. But he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader. Moreover, since his twelve months' detention in the Alipur Jail, which had been spent entirely in the practice of Yoga, his inner spiritual life was pressing upon him for an exclusive concentration. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field, at least for a time.

In February, 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India. A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the *Karma-yogin*; in his absence it was pressed against the printer of the paper who was convicted, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in the High Court of Calcutta. For the third time a prosecution against him had failed. Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude

of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 to the present moment⁴ he has remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his sâdhanâ.

In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, those published since in book form, the Isha Upanishad, the Essays on the Gita, and others not yet published, the Life Divine, the Synthesis of Yoga,⁵ appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture, the true meaning of the Vedas, the progress of human society, the nature and evolution of poetry, the possibility of the unification of the human race. At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five disciples. Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of sâdhaks had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Asram which has less been created than grown around him as its centre.

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1905. At first gathering into it the essential elements of spiritual experience

⁴ This "Life Sketch" was written in 1930 and published in 1937. Sri Aurobindo's retirement lasted until his passing in December 1950.—Ed.

⁵ These two works, and many others, have since been published in book form.—Ed.

that are gained by the paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India, he passed on in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in this view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvâna, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material Inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a Supermind or eternal Truth-consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of a Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater divine consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

APPENDIX

Letters on “Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch”

[1]

I understand from Ratikanto Nag that you have very nearly finished reading through my manuscript.

I have read through most of the MS. — but the narrative portion of the account of my life is full of inaccuracies of fact. I hope to write about this shortly.

1928

[2]

I do not know where you got the facts in your account of my life; but after starting to correct it I had to give up the attempt in despair. It is chock-full of errors and inaccuracies: this cannot be published. As for the account of my spiritual experience, I mean of the Bombay affair, somebody must have inflicted on you a humorous caricature of it. This too cannot go. The best will be to omit all account or narrative and say—at not too much length, I would suggest—what you think it necessary to say about me.

16 March 1930

[3]

I see that you have persisted in giving a biography—is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for man to see.

You have given a sort of account of my political action, but the impression it makes on me and would make, I believe, on your public is that of a fiery idealist rushing furiously at an impossible aim (knocking his head against a stone wall, which is not a very sensible proceeding) without any grasp on realities

and without any intelligible political method or plan of action. The practical peoples of the West could hardly be well impressed by such a picture and it would make them suspect that, probably, my yoga was a thing of the same type!

25 March 1930

[4]

No, certainly not.¹ If you gave my name, it would be as if I were advertising myself in your book. I did not care to have anything of the kind written, as I told you, because I do not think these things are of any importance. I merely wrote, in the end, a brief summary of the most outward facts, nothing inward or personal, because I have seen that many legends and distortions are afloat, and this will at least put things in the straight line. If you like, you can mention that it is a brief statement of the principal facts of Sri Aurobindo's public life from an authoritative source.

Necessarily I have mentioned only salient facts, leaving out all mere details. As for an *estimate* of myself I have given none. In my view, a man's value does not depend on what he learns or his position or fame or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes, and of that I have said nothing. I do not want to alter what I have written. If you like you can put a note of your own to the "occidental education" stating that it included Greek and Latin and two or three modern languages, but I do not myself see the necessity of it or the importance.

June 1930

[5]

I would prefer another form more in keeping with the tone of the text,—eg

"It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo's education in England gave him a wide introduction to the culture of ancient, of mediaeval and of modern Europe. He was a brilliant scholar

¹ *The question was whether the correspondent could publish the "Life Sketch" over Sri Aurobindo's signature.—Ed.*

in Greek and Latin, | passed the Tripos in Cambridge in the first division, obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service |. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself Italian and German sufficiently to read Dante and Goethe in the original tongue.”²

I have left the detail about the Tripos and the record marks, though I do not find these trifles in place here; the note would read much better with the omission of the part between the vertical lines.

(But what is Beachcroft doing here? He butts in in such a vast and spreading parenthesis that he seems to be one of “these ancient languages” and in him too, perhaps, I got record marks! Besides, any ingenious reader would deduce from his presence in your note that he acquitted me out of fellow-feeling over the two “examinations” and out of university camaraderie,— which was far from being the case. I met him only in the I.C.S classes and at the I.C.S examinations and we never exchanged two words together. If any extralegal consideration came in subconsciously in the acquittal, it must have been his admiration for my prose style to which he gave fervent expression in his judgment. Don’t drag him in like this — let him rest in peace in his grave.)

27 June 1930

² The passage within inverted commas is Sri Aurobindo’s correction of a note that had been submitted to him by the correspondent. The final version of the note appears as footnote 3 on pages 5–6.—Ed.

Incomplete Life Sketches

Incomplete Life Sketch in Outline Form, c. 1922

Born 1872.

Sent to England for education 1879.

Studied at St Paul's School, London, and King's College,
Cambridge.

Returned to India. February, 1893.

Life of preparation at Baroda 1893–1906

Political life — 1902–1910

[The “Swadeshi” movement prepared from 1902–5 and started definitely by Sri Aurobindo, Tilak, Lajpatrai and others in 1905. A movement for Indian independence, by non-cooperation and passive resistance and the organisation (under a national Council or Executive, but this did not materialise,) of arbitration, national education, economic independence, (especially handloom industry including the spinning-wheel, but also the opening of mills, factories and Swadeshi business concerns under Indian management and with Indian capital,) boycott of British goods, British law-courts, and all Government institutions, offices, honours etc. Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement was a repetition of the “Swadeshi”, but with an exclusive emphasis on the spinning-wheel and the transformation of passive resistance, (“Satyagraha”) from a political means into a moral and religious dogma of soul-force and conquest by suffering. The running of the daily paper, “Bande Mataram”, was only one of Sri Aurobindo's political activities.]¹

Imprisonment —

Thrice prosecuted; first for sedition and acquitted
then in 1908 along with his brother
Barindra, (one of the chief leaders of the revolutionary move-

¹ *The square brackets are Sri Aurobindo's. — Ed.*

ment) on a charge of conspiracy to wage war against the established Government. Acquitted after a year's detention as an under-trial prisoner, mostly in a solitary cell last; in his absence in 1910, for sedition. This case also failed on appeal.

After 1909 carried on the political (Swadeshi) movement alone (the other leaders being in prison or in exile) for one year. Afterwards on receiving an inner intimation left politics for spiritual lifework. The intimation was that the Swadeshi movement must now end and would be followed later on by a Home Rule movement and a Non-cooperation movement of the Gandhi type, under other leaders.

Came to Pondicherry 1910.
Started the "Arya". 1914

Fragmentary Life Sketch, c. 1928

Aurobindo was born on August 15th, 1872, in Calcutta. His father, a man of great ability and strong personality, had been among the first to go to England for his education. He returned entirely Anglicised in habits, ideas and ideal,—so strongly that Aurobindo as a child spoke English and Hindustani only and learned his mother tongue only after his return from England. He was determined that his children should receive an entirely European upbringing. While in India they were sent for the beginning of their education to an Irish nuns' school in Darjeeling and in 1879 he took his three sons to England and placed them with an English clergyman and his wife with strict instructions that they should not be allowed to make the acquaintance of any Indian or undergo any Indian influence. These instructions were carried out to the letter and Aurobindo grew up in entire ignorance of India, her people, her religion and her culture.

Other Autobiographical Notes

A Day in Srinagar

Cashmere. Srinagar.

Saturday. [30 May 1903]

In the morning Sardesai dropped in and we went together to Dhond, where I arranged with Rajaram to mess with him; the dinner consisted of the usual Brahminic course, dal & rice, two chupatties with potatoes & greens and amthi,—the whole to be seasoned liberally by a great square of clarified butter at one side of the tray. Fortunately the dishes were not very pungent and, with this allowance, I have made myself sufficiently adaptable to be a Brahmin with the Brahmins

*

Dinner in the morning from Rajaram, who put me au courant with zenana politics. Not having his son to quarrel with, H.H has filled up the gap with his wife; they have been at it hammer & tongs since the Maharani joined him at Murree, chiefly, it seems, about dhobies & other such highly unroyal topics. To spite his wife H.H has raised the subject of Tarabai Ghadge's carriage allowance, which she has been taking very placidly without keeping any carriage; for neglect in suffering this "payment without consideration", Mohite, Raoji Sirgavkar & the Chitnis are each to be fined 105 Rs. Note that Mohite alone is to blame, having signed the usual declaration that he had assured himself the recipient had her own conveyance; but this sort of thing is becoming too common to be wondered at. Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur officials. The order adds that if any of the stricken has objections to make, he may make them and, if found satisfactory, the fine will be withdrawn. This is perilously like hanging a man first and trying him afterwards

— or to put it accurately, I throw my shoe in your face and then permit you to prove that the salutation was causeless, in which case I shall be graciously pleased to put my shoe on my foot again. Another characteristic order is that degrading Savant back from Naib Khangi Karbhariship to Chitnishood & ordering Mohite to make a tippam as to whether his allowance should be continued or not. “His Highness thinks it should not, but still the K.K. should make a tippam about it.” Again if translated this might run, “I sentence the criminal in the dock to six months’ hard labour and the jury may now consider whether he should have been sentenced or not.” The latest trouble is about “unnecessary tongas” from Murree to Srinagar; yet the Maharaja was assured that if he insisted upon starting at once, there was no other course open, and at the time he promised to sanction any expense entailed. Now that he has had his own convenience satisfied, he chooses not to remember that he ever promised anything of the sort, so that he may have the pitiful satisfaction of venting his illtemper on innocent people. He has also ordered that no one shall receive special bhutta at a hill-station, unless the matter is brought to his notice and he is personally satisfied that prices are higher than in Baroda. Where will all this shopkeeping unprinceliness & petty-fogging injustice end?

Ashudada sent Visvas’ son Hemchandra with a note to me; the lad is a young Hercules five foot ten in height & monstrous in muscle with a roaring voice and continual outbursts of boisterous laughter over anything in the shape of a joke good or bad — a fine specimen of the outlander Bengali. His companion, a Kaviraj, rejoices in the name of Satyendranath Banerji Kobirunjun and is something of an ass & much of a coward, but not a bad fellow withal. We adjourned in a body, Sardesai, Ambegavkar, D^r Balabhai, myself & the two Bengalies to the Maharaja’s green-cushioned boat & set out on the broad bosom of Lake Dal and through the lock & a canal into the Jhelum. The boatman swore that we should get drowned if we shot the lock, but Hem Babu though he admitted there might be a little danger, insisted on having it done. In the result we only shipped a little water which sought the left leg of my trousers as naturally as a bird seeks

its nest, but the Kaviraj was in a terrible fright & clamoured protestation till we were right in the swirl of the waters. The water was lined with houseboats of the ogre-monkeys in some of which there were marvellous specimens of Cashmeri beauty. After a visit to Ashu & then to the hospital,—where I found I turned the scale at 113, my old weight, and reached the height of 5 ft 5 in my shoes—we adjourned through the rain to Hem Babu's house. There we [met]¹ his father, the genial & hearty Reception Officer, tall & robust in build, with a fine largely cut jovial face and a venerable beard, and several other Bengalis—let me see if I can remember their names, Chunilal Ray of the Foreign Office, with a face of pure Indo-Afghan type looking more the Punjabi or Cashmeri than a Babu, Gurucharan Dhar, a pleader, Bhabani Babu of the Commissariat, another of the Commissariat, and a certain Lolit Babu, of I know not where. No, I shall never be any good at remembering names. The tea was execrable but the cigarettes & the company were good.

Afterwards the carriage took us through the streets of the town & then, the coachman being unable or unwilling to find his way out, back the same way. The streets are very narrow and the houses poor & rickety, though occasionally picturesque, being built impartially of bricks, stones or other material imposed & intersticed irregularly & without cement, cobbled in fact rather than built. The windows are usually plastered with paper—for the sake of privacy, I suppose,—but it must make the rooms very dingy & gloomy. The roofs are often grown over with a garden of grasses & wildflowers, making a very pretty effect. The Maharaja's palace by the river in the true quaint Hindu way of building was the one building which struck me in Srinagar,—how much superior to the pretentious monstrosities of architecture at Luxmivilas Palace! This drive has finally completed and confirmed my observations of Cashmeri beauty. The men in the country parts are more commonly handsome than the town people & the Hindus than the Mohamedans.

¹ MS might

Information Supplied to the King's College Register

[1]

[Answers (on right) to questions in a form received in 1903]

KING'S COLLEGE REGISTER

PARTICULARS DESIRED.	INFORMATION.
Name.	Ghose
Christian name or names.	Aravind. Acroyd.
Any additional title (e.g. The Reverend) if any.	None
Name and address of Father living or deceased.	D <small>r</small> Krishnadhan Ghose. Civil Surgeon deceased
Name of School or where educated before University. School Honours.	St Paul's School
(a) In Athletics	
(b) In Learning	
University and College athletic distinctions with dates.	None.
University and College prizes and scholarships with dates.	Senior Classical Scholarship 1884 College Prizes for Greek Iambics and Latin Hexameters. 1890 (?)
Cambridge University triposes and degrees, and dates thereof.	Classical Tripos 1892.
Other degrees and dates thereof.	First Class Third Division
College fellowship and offices (if any) with dates.	None
	None

Short particulars of career from date of first degree to present time with business, profession, particulars of publications, political and other honours. etc.

Date of marriage (if any) and maiden name of Wife.

Present occupation (if any).

Present permanent address.
Clubs.

Entered H.H. the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda's service Feb [1893].²
For the greater part of the time on special duty. Lecturer in French for three years and Assistant Professor of English for two years in the Baroda College [April]³ 1901. Mrinalini Bose.

H.H the Maharaja Gaekwar's Service, at present Secretary (acting).
Racecourse Road. Baroda
Baroda Officer's Club.
Baroda Gymkhana

Signed Aravind. A. Ghose
Date 16th Sept. 1903.
Srinagar. Cashmere.

² MS 1903. See *Table 1, page 565.* — Ed.

³ MS June. See *Table 1, page 565.* — Ed.

[2]

[Corrections made in 1928 to the printed entry of 1903]

KING'S COLLEGE REGISTER.

Old Entry

Ghose, Aravinda Acroyd: son of Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, late
of Khulna, Bengal, India.

School, St Paul's.

Admitted 11 Oct. 1890; Scholar; Prizeman; 1st
Class Classical Tripos, Part I., 1892;
in H.H. the Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda's service
**since Feb. 1903; now acting secretary.*

Married, June 1901, Mrinalini Bose.

Address: Racecourse Road, Baroda.

Corrections of above Entry.

**from Feb 1893 to 1905; Professor of English and Vice-Principal, Baroda College.*

Additional Information up to Date.

Principal, National College, Calcutta, from 1906 to 1908. Editor
philosophical monthly, Arya; (1914–1921).

Present Permanent Postal Address and designation (e.g. The Rev.)

Sri Aurobindo Ghose
28 Rue François Martin
Pondicherry

Signature Aurobindo Ghose.
Date August 31, 1928.

Section Two

Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies and Other Publications

Corrections 1

Page 18. In Aurobindo very well to Radcliffe
Grammar School. His two brothers studied there but
he himself was educated privately by Mr. and Mrs. Drexell.
Drexell was an excellent Latin scholar; he did
not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in
Latin that the headmaster of St. Paul's school took
up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek after
which he rapidly took the higher classes of the school.

Page 18. Aurobindo was not Power's first
son; the Powers' son was Porter.

" Aurobindo grew up at home to the classes
at Radcliffe under St. Paul's; but went
abroad with his father for three years, he sufficient being
to take courses undertaken by the leading
English universities, Cambridge and
Oxford. He also spent some time away

2

learning Italian and ungrammatical Spanish. He
overthrew the money party. He does bring
us from a point of view of his time; however
it was the acid did not touch economy & higher
orthodoxy. There would be able to rise
within his College in one year for grace
and this was not

higher. Received undergraduate at Blackbridge. He passed
the first at the first (first class) without
the degree of B.A. or. would grow; but as he had
a two years after his first, he passed in his second
the Blackbridge and the first got given the degree
of it's taken in the third year. The bachelors in the
second year, ready to collect to send for the
passage to help for the degree. Homage
brought the degree of his bachelors a official
for, little did not care to do so, at degrees
England so valuable of course to be sent
as a personal cover.

.

Early Life in India and England

1872–1893

Language Learning

He may have known a smattering of Bengali till he was five years of age. Thereafter till twenty-one he spoke only English.

In my father's house only English and Hindustani were spoken. I knew no Bengali.

*

Quite early he was sent to St. Paul's School at Darjeeling, and then, when he showed unusual promise, to King's College, Cambridge. . . .

. . . His chosen medium of expression is English.

Another error is worth correcting. The reviewer seems to assume that Sri Aurobindo was sent straight from India to King's College, Cambridge, and that he had [to] learn English as a foreign language. This is not the fact; Sri Aurobindo in his father's house already spoke only English and Hindustani, he thought in English from his childhood and did not even know his native language, Bengali. At the age of seven he was taken to England and remained there consecutively for fourteen years, speaking English and thinking in English and no other tongue. He was educated in French and Latin and other subjects under private tuition in Manchester from seven to eleven and studied afterwards in St Paul's School London for about seven years. From there he went to King's College. He had never to study English at all as a subject; though it was not his native language, it had become by force of circumstances from the very first his natural language.

At Manchester

He was sensitive to beauty in man and nature. . . . He watched with pain the thousand and one instances of man's cruelty to man.

The feeling was more abhorrence than pain; from early childhood there was a strong hatred and disgust for all kinds of cruelty and oppression, but the term pain would not accurately describe the reaction.

*

There was no positive religious or spiritual element in the education received in England. The only personal contact with Christianity (that of Nonconformist England) was of a nature to repel rather than attract. The education received was mainly classical and had a purely intellectual and aesthetic influence; it did not stimulate any interest in spiritual life. My attention was not drawn to the spirituality of Europe of the Middle Ages; my knowledge of it was of a general character and I never underwent its influence.

School Studies

Between 1880 and 1884 Sri Aurobindo attended the grammar school at Manchester.

I never went to the Manchester Grammar school, never even stepped inside it. It was my two brothers who studied there. I was taught privately by the Drewetts. M^r Drewett who was a scholar in Latin (he had been a Senior Classic at Oxford)¹ taught me that language (but not Greek, which I began at Saint Paul's, London), and English History etc.; M^{rs} Drewett taught me French, Geography and Arithmetic. No Science; it was not in fashion at that time.

*

¹ See Table 2, page 567.—Ed.

Aurobindo studied in the Manchester Grammar School for a period of about five years. . . . The Head Master of St. Paul's from the first entertained a very high opinion of Aurobindo's character and attainments.

[*First sentence altered to:*] Aurobindo studied at home, learning Latin, French and other subjects from Mr. and Mrs. Drewett.

Sri Aurobindo never went to Manchester Grammar School, it was his two brothers who went there. He himself studied privately with Mr. and Mrs. Drewett. Mr. Drewett was a very fine classical scholar and taught him Latin and grounded him so firmly that the Head Master of St. Paul's after teaching him personally the elements of Greek which he had not yet begun to learn, put him at once from the lower into the higher school. There was no admiration expressed about his character.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo never went to Manchester Grammar School. His two brothers studied there, but he himself was educated privately by Mr. and Mrs. Drewett. Drewett was an accomplished Latin scholar; he did not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in Latin that the headmaster of St. Paul's school took up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek and then pushed him rapidly into the higher classes of the school.

*

[At St. Paul's Aurobindo made the discovery of Homer.]

The Head Master only taught him the elements of Greek grammar and then pushed him up into the Upper School.

In London

[He was sent to boarding school in London.]

St. Paul's was a day school. The three brothers lived in London for some time with the mother of Mr. Drewett but she left them after a quarrel between her and Manmohan about religion. The old Mrs. Drewett was fervently Evangelical and she said she

would not live with an atheist as the house might fall down on her. Afterwards Benoybhusan and Aurobindo occupied a room in the South Kensington Liberal Club where Mr. J. S. Cotton, brother of Sir Henry Cotton, for some time Lieutenant Governor of Bengal,² was the secretary and Benoy assisted him in his work. Manmohan went into lodgings. This was the time of the greatest suffering and poverty. Subsequently Aurobindo also went separately into lodgings until he took up residence at Cambridge.

*

Aurobindo now turned the full fury of his attention to classical studies . . .

Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics at Manchester and at Saint Paul's; but even at St Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course and spent most of his spare time in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, mediaeval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Italian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time too in writing poetry. The school studies during this period engaged very little of his time; he was already at ease in them and did not think it necessary to labour over them any longer. All the same he was able to win all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse etc.

Young Aurobindo had thus achieved rare academic distinctions at a very early age. He had mastered Greek and Latin and English, and he had also acquired sufficient familiarity with continental languages like German, French and Italian. . . .

[*Altered to:*] He had mastered Greek and Latin, English and French, and he had also acquired some familiarity with continental languages like German and Italian.

² See Table 2, page 567.—Ed.

Early Poetry

No doubt the derivative element is prominent in much of his early verse. Not only are names and lineaments and allusions foreign in their garb, but the literary echoes are many and drawn from varied sources.

Foreign to what? He knew nothing about India or her culture etc. What these poems express is the education and imaginations and ideas and feelings created by a purely European culture and surroundings—it could not be otherwise. In the same way the poems on Indian subjects and surroundings in the same book express the first reactions to India and Indian culture after the return home and a first acquaintance with these things.

*

Like Macaulay's *A Jacobite's Epitaph*, [Aurobindo's] *Hic Jacet* also achieves its severe beauty through sheer economy of words; Aurobindo's theme, the very rhythm and language of the poem, all hark back to Macaulay; . . .

If so, it must have been an unconscious influence; for after early childhood Macaulay's verse (*The Lays*) ceased to appeal. The "Jacobite's Epitaph" was perhaps not even read twice; it made no impression.

At Cambridge

It is said that the Provost of King's College, Mr. Austen Leigh, quickly recognized Aurobindo's unusual talent and rich integrity.

[*Altered to:*] Aurobindo's unusual talents early attracted the admiration of Oscar Browning, then a well-known figure at Cambridge.

Austen Leigh was not the name of the Provost; his name was Prothero.³ It was not he but Oscar Browning, a scholar and

³ See Table 2, page 567.—Ed.

writer of some contemporary fame, who expressed admiration for Sri Aurobindo's scholarship,—there was nothing about integrity. He expressed the opinion that his papers, for the Scholarship examination, were the best he had ever seen and quite remarkable.

*

Aurobindo now turned the full fury of his attention to classical studies and in the fullness of time, graduated from King's College in 1892, with a First Class in Classical Tripos.

Sri Aurobindo did not graduate; he took and passed the Tripos in his second year; to graduate one had to take the Tripos in the third year or else pass a second part of the Tripos in the fourth year. Sri Aurobindo was not engrossed in classical studies; he was more busy reading general literature and writing poetry.

[*Another version:*] He did not graduate at Cambridge. He passed high in the First Part of the Tripos (first class); it is on passing this First Part that the degree of B.A. is usually given; but as he had only two years at his disposal, he had to pass it in his second year at Cambridge, and the First Part gives the degree only if it is taken in the third year. If one takes it in the second year, one has to appear for the second part of the Tripos in the fourth year to qualify for the degree. He might have got the degree if he had made an application for it, but he did not care to do so. A degree in England is valuable only if one wants to take up an academical career.

The Riding Examination

At the end of the period of probation, however, he did not appear for the departmental Riding examination and he was consequently disqualified for the Civil Service. Aurobindo was now able to turn the full fury of his attention to Classical studies.

These studies were already finished at that time.

*

After a couple of years of intense study, he graduated from King's College in 1892, with a First Class in Classical Tripos.

This happened earlier, not after the Civil Service failure.

At the end of the period of probation, however, he did not choose to appear for the departmental Riding examination; a something within him had detained him in his room. . . .

[*The last phrase altered to:*] prevented his arriving in time.

Nothing detained him in his room. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage. By certain manoeuvres he managed to get himself disqualified for riding without himself rejecting the Service, which his family would not have allowed him to do.

*

[According to Aurobindo's sister Sarojini, Aurobindo was playing cards at his London residence when he was to have gone to appear for the writing examination.]

Sarojini's memory is evidently mistaken. I was wandering in the streets of London to pass away time and not playing cards. At last when I went to the grounds I was too late. I came back home and told my elder brother, Benoybhusan, that I was chucked. He with a philosophic attitude proposed playing cards and so we [sat]⁴ down playing cards. [Manmohan]⁵ came [later]⁶ and on hearing about my being chucked began to shout at our playing cards when such a calamity had befallen [us].

Political Interests and Activities

[In England at an early age, Aurobindo took a firm decision to liberate his own nation.]

Not quite that; at this age Sri Aurobindo began first to be

⁴ MS (*dictated*) set

⁵ MS (*dictated*) Manomohan

⁶ MS (*dictated*) latter

interested in Indian politics of which previously he knew nothing. His father began sending the newspaper *The Bengalee* with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless Government. At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the idea of the liberation of his own country. But the "firm decision" took full shape only towards the end of another four years. It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for some time secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service; the failure in the riding test was only the occasion, for in some other cases an opportunity was given for remedying this defect in India itself.

*

[Aurobindo's writing a poem on Parnell shows that Parnell influenced him.]

It only shows that I took a keen interest in Parnell and nothing more.

*

While in London he used to attend the weekly meetings of the Fabian Society.

Never once!

*

[Aurobindo formed a secret society while in England.]

This is not correct. The Indian students in London did once meet to form a secret society called romantically the Lotus and Dagger in which each member vowed to work for the liberation

of India generally and to take some special work in furtherance of that end. Aurobindo did not form the society but he became a member along with his brothers. But the society was still-born. This happened immediately before the return to India and when he had finally left Cambridge. Indian politics at that time was timid and moderate and this was the first attempt of the kind by Indian students in England. In India itself Aurobindo's maternal grandfather Raj Narayan Bose formed once a secret society of which Tagore, then a very young man, became a member, and also set up an institution for national and revolutionary propaganda, but this finally came to nothing. Later on there was a revolutionary spirit in Maharashtra and a secret society was started in Western India with a Rajput noble as the head and this had a Council of Five in Bombay with several prominent Mahratta politicians as its members. This society was contacted and joined by Sri Aurobindo somewhere in 1902–3, sometime after he had already started secret revolutionary work in Bengal on his own account. In Bengal he found some very small secret societies recently started and acting separately without any clear direction and tried to unite them with a common programme. The union was never complete and did not last but the movement itself grew and very soon received an enormous extension and became a formidable factor in the general unrest in Bengal.

The Meeting with the Maharaja of Baroda

He obtained, with the help of James Cotton, Sir Henry's son, an introduction to H.H. the late Sayaji Rao, Gaekwar of Baroda, during his visit to England.

James Cotton was Sir Henry's brother not his son.

Sir Henry Cotton was much connected with Maharshi Raj Narayan Bose—Aurobindo's maternal grandfather. His son James Cotton was at this time in London. As a result of these favourable circumstances a meeting came about with the Gaekwar of Baroda.

Cotton was my father's friend — they had made arrangements for my posting in Bengal; but he had nothing to do with my meeting with the Gaekwar. James Cotton was well acquainted with my eldest brother, because C was secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club where we were living and my brother was his assistant. He took great interest in us. It was he who arranged the meeting.

*

Sri Aurobindo was first introduced to H.H. Sri Sayajirao, the great, Maharaja of Baroda by Mr. Khaserao Jadhav in England.

Not true. Sri Aurobindo became acquainted with Khaserao two or three years after his arrival in Baroda, through Khaserao's brother, Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav. [It was]⁷ James Cotton, brother of Sir Henry (who was a friend of Dr. K.D. Ghose) who introduced Sri Aurobindo to the Gaekwar. Cotton became secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club where two of the brothers were living; Benoybhusan was doing some clerical work for the Club for 5 shillings a week and Cotton took him as his assistant; he took a strong interest in all the three brothers and when Sri Aurobindo failed in the riding test, he tried to get another chance for him (much against the will of Sri Aurobindo who was greatly relieved and overjoyed by his release from the I.C.S) and, when that did not succeed, introduced him to the Gaekwar so that he might get an appointment in Baroda. Cotton afterwards came on a visit to Baroda and saw Sri Aurobindo in the College.

Departure from England

For fourteen years he had lived in England, divorced from the culture of his forefathers; he had developed foreign tastes and tendencies and he had been de-nationalised like his own country itself and Aurobindo was not happy with himself.

⁷ Sri Aurobindo cancelled "It was" during revision but left "who" uncancelled.—Ed.

He should begin all again from the beginning and try to re-nationalise himself; . . .

There was no unhappiness for that reason, nor at that time any deliberate will for renationalisation — which came, after reaching India, by natural attraction to Indian culture and ways of life and a temperamental feeling and preference for all that was Indian.

*

He was leaving, he wished to leave, and yet there was a touch of regret as well at the thought of leaving England. . . . He felt the flutter of unutterable misgivings and regrets; he achieved escape from them by having recourse to poetic expression.

There was no such regret in leaving England, no attachment to the past or misgivings for the future. Few friendships were made in England and none very intimate; the mental atmosphere was not found congenial. There was therefore no need for any such escape.

*

Aurobindo was going back to India to serve under the Gaekwar of Baroda; he cast one last look at his all but adopted country and thus uttered his "Envoi".

No, the statement was of a transition from one culture to another. There was an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country; he had no ties there and did not make England his adopted country, as Manmohan did for a time. If there was attachment to a European land as a second country, it was intellectually and emotionally to one not seen or lived in in this life, not England, but France.

*

The steamer by which Aurobindo was to have left England was wrecked near Lisbon. The news came to Dr. Krishnadhan [Ghose] as a stunning blow. He concluded that all his three sons were lost to him for ever.

There was no question of the two other brothers starting. It was only Aurobindo's death that was [reported]⁸ and it was while uttering his name in lamentation that the father died.

*

After his father's demise the responsibility of supporting the family devolved on him and he had to take up some appointment soon.

There was no question of supporting the family at that time. That happened some time after going to India.

*

[The name "Aurobindo Acroyd Ghose"]

Sri Aurobindo dropped the "[Acroyd]"⁹ from his name before he left England and never used it again.

⁸ MS reposed

⁹ MS (*dictated*) Ackroyd

Life in Baroda, 1893–1906

Service in Baroda State

Sri Aurobindo was first introduced to H.H. Sri Sayajirao, the great, Maharaja of Baroda by Mr. Khaserao Jadhav in England.

Not true. Sri Aurobindo made the acquaintance of Khaserao two or three years after reaching Baroda. Cotton introduced him to the Gaekwar.

Struck by the brilliance and the learning of the young Ghose, the Maharaja invited him to be his reader and in that capacity Sri Aurobindo came to Baroda.

Reader. Nothing of the kind. There was no such invitation and this post did not exist. Sri Aurobindo joined the Settlement Department, afterwards went to the Revenue and then to the College.

Sri Aurobindo used to read voluminously and make valuable notes for H.H. with whom he had free and illuminating discussions on various subjects.

Not at all. There were no such discussions.

The Maharaja . . . made him Naib Khangi Kamgar i.e. Asst. Private Secretary.

He had nothing to do with the Khangi Department and was never appointed Private Secretary. He was called very often for the writing of an important letter, order, despatch, correspondence with [the] British Government or other document; he assisted the Maharaja in preparing some of his speeches. At one time he was asked to instruct him in English grammar by

giving exact and minute rules for each construction etc. It was only miscellaneous things like this for which he was called for the occasion, but there was no appointment as Secretary except once in Kashmir.

In this office Sri Aurobindo had to study many important affairs of the administration and though still very young and quite new to the post, he acquitted himself with marvellous keenness and precision, and boldly expressed his views in a straight-forward manner, whether H.H. agreed with him or not. The Maharaja appreciated this frankness, and admired him all the more. Sometimes his drafts used to fix many authorities into a puzzle, as they were invulnerable in reason and clear and thrusting in style.

The whole of this para is pure fancy.

The Maharaja had taken him on tour to places like Kashmir, Ooty and Mahabaleshwar.

Sri Aurobindo was sent for to Ooty in order to prepare a précis of the whole Bapat case and the judicial opinions on it. He was at Naini Tal with the Maharaja. In the Kashmir tour he was taken as Secretary, for the time of the tour only.

Sri Aurobindo always loved a plain and unostentatious life and was never dazzled by the splendour of the court. Invariably he declined invitations to dinners and banquets at the palace though he received them repeatedly.

Sri Aurobindo had nothing to do with the Court; he does not remember to have received any such invitations.

Among his brother officers the most intimate with him were Khaserao Jadhav and Barrister Keshavrao Deshpande, with whom he discussed the problems of Philosophy, Spiritual life and the reconstruction of India.

The most intimate friend at Baroda was Khaserao's brother,

Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav who was associated with him in his political ideas and projects and helped him whenever possible in his political work. He lived with M. in his house most of the time he was at Baroda. There was no such discussion of problems; Sri Aurobindo took no interest in philosophy at all at that time; he was interested in the sayings and life of Ramakrishna and the utterances and writings of Vivekananda, but that was almost all with regard to spiritual life; he had inner experiences, from the time he stepped on to the shores of India, but did not associate them at that time with Yoga about which he knew nothing. Afterwards when he learned or heard something about it from Deshpande and others, he refused to take it up because it seemed to him a retreat from life. There was never any talk about the reconstruction of India, only about her liberation.

He played cricket well.

Never. He only played cricket as a small boy in Mr Drewett's garden at Manchester and not at all well.

It was at Sardar Majumdar's place that he first met Yogi Lele and got some help from him in spiritual Sadhana.

No. Lele came from Gwalior in answer to a wire from Barin and met Sri Aurobindo at the Jadhav's house; Lele took him to Majumdar's house for meditation on the top floor.

*

Shri Arvind Ghosh . . . joined Baroda State Service in February 1893 as an extra professor of English in the Baroda College . . .

Incorrect.

. . . on a salary of Rs. 300/- a month.

It was 200/ not 300/.

His age as recorded in State papers on 31st July 1899 was 26 years, 2 months and 22 days.

Incorrect. 11 months, 16 days

In 1900 his transfer to some other department was under consideration but was postponed. . . . On 17–4–1901 he was transferred to the Revenue Department. . . . Next year (1904) in April, H.H. ordered that Shri Ghosh should work from 1st June as his Asst. Private Secretary . . .

All this certainly incorrect. I did not start with service in the College. I was put at first in the Settlement Department, not on any post, but for learning work. Afterwards I was put in the Revenue-Stamps Department, then in the Secretariat (not as Private Secretary). There were some episodes, I believe, of learning work in the Vahivatdar's office. My first work in the College was as Lecturer in French, but this was for an hour only, the rest of the time being given to other work. I have no recollection of being *appointed* Assistant "Private" Secretary. When I became English Professor in the College (which was after a long time) it was a permanent appointment and I went on in it uninterruptedly till I was appointed Vice-Principal, until, in fact, I left Baroda.¹ This is what I remember. Perhaps by Private Secretary is meant an appointment in the Secretariat; but the English term does not mean that, it would mean work directly with the Maharaja. What work I did directly for the Maharaja was quite irregular and spasmodic, though frequent and I used to be called for that from my house, not from the office.

*

1901. Transfer to Revenue Department 17.4.1901 (not in college) par Rs. 360/-. Chairman of Debating Society and College Union President.

At what time of the year was this? If I was in the Revenue Department, I could not at the same time be occupying []² these posts.

If I was in the Revenue Department from 1901–1904, what

¹ See Table 2, page 568.—Ed.

² MS be occupying

was my post and what was I doing there?³ The only thing I recollect was special work studying a sort of official history of the Administration (Guzerati manuscript) perhaps for summary in English. I don't remember the dates.

1902. Service lent to College for six hours in the week for French (6th August 1902).

My own recollection is that my first connection with the College was as lecturer in French, other duties being added afterwards. There must have been a first lending of services (for French) which was not recorded. There is nothing about the first years outside the College; but I remember very well learning work in the Revenue Department (immediately after the term in the Survey Settlement Office) and also in the Secretariat (without any final appointment in these earlier posts).

He was also given the work of compiling administrative report.

This might be [the] affair I refer to above. I had nothing to do with any current administrative report so far as I can remember. There was however private work at the Palace this time, compilation of a book (supposed to be by the Maharaja about his travels in Europe).

*

Sri Aurobindo's appointments at Baroda. He was first put in the Land Settlement Department, for a short time in the Stamps Office, then in the central Revenue Office and in the Secretariat. Afterwards without joining the College and while doing other work he was lecturer in French at the College and finally at his own request was appointed there as Professor of English. All through, the Maharaja used to call him whenever something had to be written which needed careful wording; he also employed him to prepare some of his public speeches and in other work

³ See Table 2, page 568.—Ed.

of a literary or educational character. Afterwards Sri Aurobindo became Vice-Principal of the College and was for some time acting Principal. Most of the personal work for the Maharaja was done in an unofficial capacity; he was usually invited to breakfast with the Maharaja at the Palace and stayed on to do this work.

*

Aurobindo was appointed Private Secretary to H.H. the Maharaja of Baroda. . . . Whether as the Maharaja's Private Secretary or as an officer in the Revenue Department or as Professor of English and later as Vice-Principal in the Baroda College, Sri Aurobindo always conscientiously "delivered the goods".

Appointed Private Secretary not the fact. He was first sent to the Settlement Department, the idea being to train him for Revenue work. For the same reason he spent some time in the Stamps and other Departments or in the Secretariat, but for training, not with a firm appointment.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo was never appointed to the post of Private Secretary. He was put first in the Settlement Department, not as an officer but to learn the work; then in the Stamps and Revenue Departments; he was for some time put to work in the Secretariat for drawing up dispatches etc; finally he oscillated towards the College and entered it at first as part-time lecturer in French, afterwards as a regular Professor teaching English and was finally appointed Vice-Principal. Meanwhile, whenever he thought fit, the Maharaja would send for him for writing letters, composing speeches or drawing up documents of various kinds which needed special care in the phrasing of the language. All this was quite informal; there was no appointment as Private Secretary. Once H.H. took Sri Aurobindo as Secretary on his Kashmir tour, but there was much friction between them during the tour and the experiment was not repeated.

*

He was diligent and he was serious and he had, so it might have

seemed to many, really settled down to a career of meritorious service.

“diligent, serious, etc.” This valuation of Sri Aurobindo’s qualities was not the Maharaja’s. He gave him a certificate for ability and intelligence but also for lack of punctuality and regularity. If instead of “diligent and serious” and “a career of meritorious service” it were said that he was brilliant and quick and efficient in work, it would be more accurate. The description, as it is, gives an incorrect picture.

Language Study at Baroda

[When he arrived in India, Sri Aurobindo knew no Indian language except a smattering of Bengali, which was one of the subjects he had to study for the I.C.S. examination.]

Bengali was not a subject for the competitive examination for the I.C.S. It was after he had passed the competitive examination that Sri Aurobindo as a probationer who had chosen Bengal as his province began to learn Bengali. The course of study provided was a very poor one; his teacher, a retired English Judge from Bengal was not very competent, but what was learnt was more than a few words. Sri Aurobindo for the most part learnt Bengali for himself afterwards in Baroda.

*

In Baroda, Sri Aurobindo engaged Pundits and started mastering both Bengali and Sanskrit.

A teacher was engaged for Bengali, a young Bengali littérateur — none for Sanskrit.

*

[Sri Aurobindo took regular lessons in Bengali from Dinendra Kumar Roy at Baroda.]

No, there were no regular lessons. Dinendra lived with Sri Aurobindo as a companion and his work was rather to help him to correct and perfect his knowledge of the language and

to accustom him to conversation in Bengali than any regular teaching.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo was not a pupil of Dinendra Kumar; he had learnt Bengali already by himself and only called in Dinendra to help him in his studies.

Sri Aurobindo . . . engaged a teacher — a young Bengali littératuer — and started mastering Bengali. . . .

About the learning of Bengali, it may be said that before engaging the teacher, Sri Aurobindo already knew enough of the language to appreciate the novels of Bankim and the poetry of Madhusudan. He learned enough afterwards to write himself and to conduct a weekly in Bengali, writing most of the articles himself, but his mastery over the language was not at all the same as over English and he did not venture to make speeches in his mother tongue.

*

[He studied Hindi at Baroda.]

Sri Aurobindo never studied Hindi; but his acquaintance with Sanskrit and other Indian languages made it easy for him to pick up Hindi without any regular study and to understand it when he read Hindi books or newspapers. He did not learn Sanskrit through Bengali, but direct in Sanskrit itself or through English.

*

In Baroda after making a comparative study of all literatures, history, etc., he began to realise the importance of the Veda.

No. Started study of V. at Pondicherry.

Poetry Writing at Baroda

[Five of the poems in the book *Songs to Myrtilla*, were written in England, the rest in Baroda.]

It is the other way round; all the poems in the book were written

in England except five later ones which were written after his return to India.

*

Vidula . . . originally appeared in the Weekly *Bandemataram* of June 9, 1907; *Baji Prabhou* appeared serially in the Weekly *Karmayogin* in 1910. It is not, however, unlikely that they had been actually written, or at least mentally sketched, during Sri Aurobindo's last years in Baroda.

No, these poems were conceived and written in Bengal during the time of political activity.

Meetings with His Grandfather at Deoghar

I was at Deoghar several times and saw my grandfather there, first in good health and then bedridden with paralysis. As I was not in the College, I must have gone on privileged leave.

*

[In Deoghar, he stayed with his in-laws (*beaux-parents*).]

Sri Aurobindo always stayed at Deoghar with the family of his maternal grandfather Raj Narayan Bose. The beaux-parents did not live at Deoghar.

*

[Sri Aurobindo owed his views on Indian Nationalism to the influence of Rajnarayan Bose. His turn towards philosophy may be attributed to the same influence.]

I don't think my grandfather was much of a philosopher; at any rate he never talked to me on that subject. My politics were shaped before I came to India; he talked to me of his Nationalist activities in the past, but I learned nothing new from them. I admired my grandfather and liked his writings "Hindu Dharm" [Sresthata]⁴ and "Se Kal ar E Kal"; but it is a mistake to think that he exercised any influence on me. I had gone in England far

⁴ MS Sreshtatwa

beyond his stock of ideas which belonged to an earlier period. He never spoke to me of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

*

[His meetings with his grandfather were for political purposes.]

This is not correct. In these visits he was not concerned with politics. It was some years afterwards that he made a journey along with Devabrata Bose, Barin's co-adjutor in the Yugantar, partly to visit some of the revolutionary centres already formed, but also to meet leading men in the districts and find out the general attitude of the country and the possibilities of the revolutionary movement. His experience in this journey persuaded him that secret action or preparation by itself was not likely to be effective if there were not also a wide public movement which would create a universal patriotic fervour and popularise the idea of independence as the ideal and aim of Indian politics. It was this conviction that determined his later action.

Political Life, 1893–1910

A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.

At that time the military organisation of the great empires and their means of military action were not so overwhelming and apparently irresistible as they now are: the rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became. India was disarmed, but Sri Aurobindo thought that with proper organisation and help from outside this difficulty might be overcome and in so vast a country as India and with the smallness of the regular British armies, even a guerrilla warfare accompanied by general resistance and revolt might be effective. There was also the possibility of a great revolt in the Indian army. At the same time he had studied the temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their political instincts, and he believed that although they would resist any attempt at self-liberation by the Indian people and would at the most only concede very slowly such reforms as would not weaken their

imperial control, still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamantine to the end: if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistent they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands.

In some quarters there is the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection etc. as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of the gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite incorrect. Sri Aurobindo is neither an impotent moralist nor a weak pacifist.

The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as a part of a gospel of Non-violence or pacific idealism. Peace is a part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (moral principle or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, what is now contemplated in the "New Order", if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force, and even then one cannot be sure that it would be permanent. Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations. Sri Aurobindo's position and practice in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of

other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa.¹

For the first few years in India, Sri Aurobindo abstained from any political activity (except the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*) and studied the conditions in the country so that he might be able to judge more maturely what could be done. Then he made his first move when he sent a young Bengali soldier of the Baroda army, Jatin Banerji, as his lieutenant to Bengal with a programme of preparation and action which he thought might occupy a period of 30 years before fruition could become possible. As a matter of fact it has taken 50 years for the movement of liberation to arrive at fruition and the beginning of complete success. The idea was to establish secretly or, as far as visible action could be taken, under various pretexts and covers, revolutionary propaganda and recruiting throughout Bengal. This was to be done among the youth of the country while sympathy and support and financial and other assistance were to be obtained from the older men who had advanced views or could be won over to them. Centres were to be established in every town and eventually in every village. Societies of young men were to be established with various ostensible objects, cultural, intellectual or moral and those already existing were to be won over for revolutionary use. Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement. As soon as the idea was sown it attained a rapid prosperity; already existing small groups and associations of young men who had not yet the clear idea or any settled programme of revolution began to turn in this direction and a few who had already the revolutionary aim were contacted and soon developed activity on organised lines; the few rapidly became many. Meanwhile Sri Aurobindo had met a member of the Secret Society in Western India, and taken the oath of the Society and had been introduced

¹ This and the preceding paragraph were inserted here when this note was first published in 1948. They incorporate, with some changes, most of a previously written note published on pages 72–73.—Ed.

to the Council in Bombay. His future action was not pursued under any directions by this Council, but he took up on his own responsibility the task of generalising support for its objects in Bengal where as yet it had no membership or following. He spoke of the Society and its aim to P. Mitter and other leading men of the revolutionary group in Bengal and they took the oath of the Society and agreed to carry out its objects on the lines suggested by Sri Aurobindo. The special cover used by Mitter's group was association for lathi play which had already been popularised to some extent by Sarala Ghoshal in Bengal among the young men; but other groups used other ostensible covers. Sri Aurobindo's attempt at a close organisation of the whole movement did not succeed, but the movement itself did not suffer by that, for the general idea was taken up and activity of many separate groups led to a greater and more widespread diffusion of the revolutionary drive and its action. Afterwards there came the partition of Bengal and a general outburst of revolt which favoured the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo's activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage, however, of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin's suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, *Yugantar*, which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerrilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control; when a member of the sub-editorial staff, Swami Vivekananda's brother, presented himself on his own motion to the police in a search as the editor of the paper and was prosecuted, the *Yugantar* under Sri Aurobindo's orders adopted the policy of refusing to defend itself in a British Court on the ground that it did not recognise the foreign Government and this immensely increased the prestige and influence of the paper. It had as its chief writers and directors three of the ablest younger writers in Bengal, and it at once acquired an immense influence throughout Bengal. It

may be noted that the Secret Society did not include terrorism in its programme but this element grew up in Bengal as a result of the strong repression and the reaction to it in that province.

The public activity of Sri Aurobindo began with the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*. These [nine]² articles written at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, editor of the paper and Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, under the caption "New Lamps for Old" vehemently denounced the then congress policy of pray, petition and protest and called for a dynamic leadership based upon self-help and fearlessness. But this outspoken and irrefutable criticism was checked by the action of a Moderate leader who frightened the editor and thus prevented any full development of his ideas in the paper; he had to turn aside to generalities such as the necessity of extending the activities of the Congress beyond the circle of the bourgeois or middle class and calling into it the masses. Finally, Sri Aurobindo suspended all public activity of this kind and worked only in secret till 1905, but he contacted Tilak whom he regarded as the one possible leader for a revolutionary party and met him at the Ahmedabad Congress; there Tilak took him out of the pandal and talked to him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra.

Sri Aurobindo included in the scope of his revolutionary work one kind of activity which afterwards became an important item in the public programme of the Nationalist party. He encouraged the young men in the centres of work to propagate the Swadeshi idea which at that time was only in its infancy and hardly more than a fad of the few. One of the ablest men in these revolutionary groups was a Mahratta named Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar who was an able writer in Bengali (his family had been long domiciled in Bengal) and who had written a popular life of Shivaji in Bengali in which he first brought in the name of Swaraj, afterwards adopted by the Nationalists as their word for independence,—Swaraj became one item of the fourfold

² 1948 edition seven. See Table 1, page 565.—Ed.

Nationalist programme. He published a book entitled *Desher Katha* describing in exhaustive detail the British commercial and industrial exploitation of India. This book had an immense repercussion in Bengal, captured the mind of young Bengal and assisted more than anything else in the preparation of the Swadeshi movement. Sri Aurobindo himself had always considered the shaking off of this economic yoke and the development of Indian trade and industry as a necessary concomitant of the revolutionary endeavour.

As long as he was in the Baroda service, Sri Aurobindo could not take part publicly in politics. Apart from that, he preferred to remain and act and even to lead from behind the scenes without his name being known in public; it was the Government's action in prosecuting him as editor of the *Bande Mataram* that forced him into public view. And from that time forward he became openly, what he had been for sometime already, a prominent leader of the Nationalist party, its principal leader in action in Bengal and the organiser there of its policy and strategy. He had decided in his mind the lines on which he wanted the country's action to run: what he planned was very much the same as was developed afterwards in Ireland as the Sinn Fein movement; but Sri Aurobindo did not derive his ideas, as some have represented, from Ireland, for the Irish movement became prominent later and he knew nothing of it till after he had withdrawn to Pondicherry. There was moreover a capital difference between India and Ireland which made his work much more difficult; for all its past history had accustomed the Irish people to rebellion against British rule and this history might be even described as a constant struggle for independence intermittent in its action but permanently there in principle; there was nothing of this kind in India. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action instead of a centre of a timid constitutional agitation which

would only talk and pass resolutions and recommendations to the foreign Government; if the Congress could not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of State within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action; there must be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult or finally impossible, a universal unrest which would wear down repression and finally, if need be, an open revolt all over the country. This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of an army of open revolt, and all other action that could make the programme complete. The part Sri Aurobindo took publicly in Indian politics was of brief duration, for he turned aside from it in 1910 and withdrew to Pondicherry; much of his programme lapsed in his absence, but enough had been done to change the whole face of Indian politics and the whole spirit of the Indian people, to make independence its aim and non-cooperation and resistance its method, and even an imperfect application of this policy heightening into sporadic periods of revolt has been sufficient to bring about the victory. The course of subsequent events followed largely the line of Sri Aurobindo's idea. The Congress was finally captured by the Nationalist party, declared independence its aim, organised itself for action, took almost the whole nation minus a majority of the Mohammedans and a minority of the depressed classes into acceptance of its leadership and eventually formed the first national, though not as yet an independent, Government in India and secured from Britain acceptance of independence for India.³

At first Sri Aurobindo took part in Congress politics only

³ *This sentence, unlike the final one in this "General Note" (see page 66), was not revised before publication in 1948.—Ed.*

from behind the scenes as he had not yet decided to leave the Baroda service; but he took long leave without pay in which, besides carrying on personally the secret revolutionary work, he attended the Barisal Conference broken up by the police and toured East Bengal along with Bepin Pal and associated himself closely with the forward group in the Congress. It was during this period that he joined Bepin Pal in the editing of the *Bande Mataram*, founded the new political party in Bengal and attended the Congress session at Calcutta at which the Extremists, though still a minority, succeeded under the leadership of Tilak in imposing part of their political programme on the Congress. The founding of the Bengal National College gave him the opportunity he needed and enabled him to resign his position in the Baroda service and join the college as its Principal. Subodh Mullick, one of Sri Aurobindo's collaborators in his secret action and afterwards also in Congress politics, in whose house he usually lived when he was in Calcutta, had given a lakh of rupees for this foundation and had stipulated that Sri Aurobindo should be given a post of professor in the college with a salary of Rs. 150; so he was now free to give his whole time to the service of the country. Bepin Pal, who had been long expounding a policy of self-help and non-cooperation in his weekly journal, now started a daily with the name of *Bande Mataram*, but it was likely to be a brief adventure since he began with only Rs. 500 in his pocket and no firm assurance of financial assistance in the future. He asked Sri Aurobindo to join him in this venture to which a ready consent was given, for now Sri Aurobindo saw his opportunity for starting the public propaganda necessary for his revolutionary purpose. He called a meeting of the forward group of young men in the Congress and [they] decided then to organise themselves openly as a new political party joining hands with the corresponding group in Maharashtra under the proclaimed leadership of Tilak and to join battle with the Moderate party which was done at the Calcutta session. He also persuaded them to take up the *Bande Mataram* daily as their party organ and a *Bande Mataram* Company was started to finance the paper, whose direction Sri Aurobindo undertook during the absence of

Bepin Pal who was sent on a tour in the districts to proclaim the purpose and programme of the new party. The new party was at once successful and the *Bande Mataram* paper began to circulate throughout India. On its staff were not only Bepin Pal and Sri Aurobindo but some other very able writers, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Bejoy Chatterji. Shyam Sundar and Bejoy were masters of the English language, each with a style of his own; Shyam Sundar caught up something like Sri Aurobindo's way of writing and later on many took his articles for Sri Aurobindo's. But after a time dissensions arose between Bepin Pal on one side and the other contributors and the directors of the Company because of temperamental incompatibility and differences of political view especially with regard to the secret revolutionary action with which others sympathised but to which Bepin Pal was opposed. This ended soon in Bepin Pal's separation from the journal. Sri Aurobindo would not have consented to this departure, for he regarded the qualities of Pal as a great asset to the *Bande Mataram*, since Pal, though not a man of action or capable of political leadership, was perhaps the best and most original political thinker in the country, an excellent writer and a magnificent orator: but the separation was effected behind Sri Aurobindo's back when he was convalescing from a dangerous attack of fever. His name was even announced without his consent in *Bande Mataram* as editor but for one day only, as he immediately put a stop to it since he was still formally in the Baroda service and in no way eager to have his name brought forward in public. Henceforward, however, he controlled the policy of the *Bande Mataram* along with that of the party in Bengal. Bepin Pal had stated the aim of the new party as complete self-government free from British control but this could have meant or at least included the Moderate aim of colonial self-government and Dadabhai Naoroji as President of the Calcutta session of the Congress had actually tried to capture the name of Swaraj, the Extremists' term for independence, for this colonial self-government. Sri Aurobindo's first preoccupation was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India and to

insist on this persistently in the pages of the journal; he was the first politician in India who had the courage to do this in public and he was immediately successful. The party took up the word Swaraj to express its own ideal of independence and it soon spread everywhere; but it was taken up as the ideal of the Congress much later on at the [Lahore]⁴ session of that body when it had been reconstituted and renovated under Nationalist leadership. The journal declared and developed a new political programme for the country as the programme of the Nationalist Party, non-cooperation, passive resistance, Swadeshi, Boycott, national education, settlement of disputes in law by popular arbitration and other items of Sri Aurobindo's plan. Sri Aurobindo published in the paper a series of articles on passive resistance, another developing a political philosophy of revolution and wrote many leaders aimed at destroying the shibboleths and superstitions of the Moderate Party, such as the belief in British justice and benefits bestowed by foreign government in India, faith in British law courts and in the adequacy of the education given in schools and universities in India and stressed more strongly and persistently than had been done the emasculation, stagnation or slow progress, poverty, economic dependence, absence of a rich industrial activity and all other evil results of a foreign government; he insisted especially that even if an alien rule were benevolent and beneficent, that could not be a substitute for a free and healthy national life. Assisted by this publicity the ideas of the Nationalists gained ground everywhere especially in the Punjab which had before been predominantly moderate. The *Bande Mataram* was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of a people and preparing it for revolution. But its weakness was on the financial side; for the Extremists were still a poor man's party. So long as Sri Aurobindo was there in active control, he managed with great difficulty to secure sufficient public support for running the paper, but not for expanding it as he wanted, and when he was arrested and held in jail

⁴ 1948 edition Karachi. See Table 1, page 565.—Ed.

for a year, the economic situation of *Bande Mataram* became desperate: finally, it was decided that the journal should die a glorious death rather than perish by starvation and Bejoy Chatterji was commissioned to write an article for which the Government would certainly stop the publication of the paper. Sri Aurobindo had always taken care to give no handle in the editorial articles of the *Bande Mataram* either for a prosecution for sedition or any other drastic action fatal to its existence; an editor of *The Statesman* complained that the paper reeked with sedition patently visible between every line but it was so skilfully written that no legal action could be taken. The manoeuvre succeeded and the life of the *Bande Mataram* came to an end in Sri Aurobindo's absence.

The Nationalist programme could only achieve a partial beginning before it was temporarily broken by severe government repression. Its most important practical item was Swadeshi plus Boycott; for Swadeshi much was done to make the idea general and a few beginnings were made, but the greater results showed themselves only afterwards in the course of time. Sri Aurobindo was anxious that this part of the movement should be not only propagated in idea but given a practical organisation and an effective force. He wrote from Baroda asking whether it would not be possible to bring in the industrialists and manufacturers and gain the financial support of landed magnates and create an organisation in which men of industrial and commercial ability and experience and not politicians alone could direct operations and devise means of carrying out the policy; but he was told that it was impossible, the industrialists and the landed magnates were too timid to join in the movement, and the big commercial men were all interested in the import of British goods and therefore on the side of the status quo: so he had to abandon his idea of the organisation of Swadeshi and Boycott. Both Tilak and Sri Aurobindo were in favour of an effective boycott of British goods—but of British goods only; for there was little in the country to replace foreign articles: so they recommended the substitution for the British of foreign goods from Germany and Austria and America so that the fullest pressure might be

brought upon England. They wanted the Boycott to be a political weapon and not merely an aid to Swadeshi; the total boycott of all foreign goods was an impracticable idea and the very limited application of it recommended in Congress resolutions was too small to be politically effective. They were for national self-sufficiency in key industries, the production of necessities and of all manufactures of which India had the natural means, but complete self-sufficiency or autarchy did not seem practicable or even desirable since a free India would need to export goods as well as supply them for internal consumption and for that she must import as well and maintain an international exchange. But the sudden enthusiasm for the boycott of all foreign goods was wide and sweeping and the leaders had to conform to this popular cry and be content with the impulse it gave to the Swadeshi idea. National education was another item to which Sri Aurobindo attached much importance. He had been disgusted with the education given by the British system in the schools and colleges and universities, a system of which as a professor in the Baroda College he had full experience. He felt that it tended to dull and impoverish and tie up the naturally quick and brilliant and supple Indian intelligence, to teach it bad intellectual habits and spoil by narrow information and mechanical instruction its originality and productivity. The movement began well and many national schools were established in Bengal and many able men became teachers, but still the development was insufficient and the economical position of the schools precarious. Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up the movement personally and see whether it could not be given a greater expansion and a stronger foundation, but his departure from Bengal cut short this plan. In the repression and the general depression caused by it, most of the schools failed to survive. The idea lived on and it may be hoped that it will one day find an adequate form and body. The idea of people's courts was taken up and worked in some districts, not without success, but this too perished in the storm. The idea of volunteer groupings had a stronger vitality; it lived on, took shape, multiplied its formations and its workers were the spearhead of the movement of direct action which broke

out from time to time in the struggle for freedom. The purely political elements of the Nationalist programme and activities were those which lasted and after each wave of repression and depression renewed the thread of the life of the movement for liberation and kept it recognisably one throughout nearly fifty years of its struggle. But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit in the country. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of *Bande Mataram* ringing on all sides men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope; the old apathy and timidity were broken and a force created which nothing could destroy and which rose again and again in wave after wave till it carried India to the beginning of a complete victory.

After the *Bande Mataram* case, Sri Aurobindo became the recognised leader of Nationalism in Bengal. He led the party at the session of the [district]⁵ Conference at Midnapore where there was a vehement clash between the two parties. He now for the first time became a speaker on the public platform, addressed large meetings at Surat and presided over the Nationalist conference there. He stopped at several places on his way back to Calcutta and was the speaker at large meetings called to hear him.⁶ He led the party again at the session of the Provincial Conference at Hooghly. There it became evident for the first time that Nationalism was gaining the ascendant, for it commanded a majority among the delegates and in the Subjects Committee Sri Aurobindo was able to defeat the Moderates' resolution welcoming the Reforms and pass his own resolution stigmatising them as utterly inadequate and unreal and rejecting them. But the Moderate leaders threatened to secede if this was maintained and to avoid a scission he consented to allow the Moderate resolution to pass but spoke at the public session explaining his decision and asking the Nationalists to acquiesce in it in spite of their victory so as to keep some unity in the political forces of Bengal. The Nationalist delegates, at first

⁵ 1948 edition Bengal Provincial. See Table 1, page 565.—Ed.

⁶ See Table 2, page 568.—Ed.

triumphant and clamorous, accepted the decision and left the hall quietly at Sri Aurobindo's order so that they might not have to vote either for or against the Moderate resolution. This caused much amazement and discomfiture in the minds of the Moderate leaders who complained that the people had refused to listen to their old and tried leaders and clamoured against them, but at the bidding of a young man new to politics they had obeyed in disciplined silence as if a single body.

About this period Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up charge of a Bengali daily, *Nava Shakti*, and had moved from his rented house in Scott's Lane, where he had been living with his wife and sister, to rooms in the office of this newspaper, and there, before he could begin this new venture, early one morning while he was still sleeping, the police charged up the stairs, revolver in hand, and arrested him. He was taken to the police station and thence to Alipore Jail where he remained for a year during the magistrate's investigation and the trial in the Sessions Court at Alipore. At first he was lodged for some time in a solitary cell but afterwards transferred to a large section of the jail where he lived in one huge room with the other prisoners in the case; subsequently, after the assassination of the approver in the jail, all the prisoners were confined in contiguous but separate cells and met only in the court or in the daily exercise where they could not speak to each other. It was in the second period that Sri Aurobindo made the acquaintance of most of his fellow-accused. In the jail he spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. This he pursued even in the second interval when he had no opportunity of being alone and had to accustom himself to meditation amid general talk and laughter, the playing of games and much noise and disturbance; in the first and third periods he had full opportunity and used it to the full. In the Sessions Court the accused were confined in a large prisoners' cage and here during the whole day he remained absorbed in his meditation attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence. C. R. Das, one of his Nationalist collaborators and a famous lawyer, had put aside his large practice and devoted

himself for months to the defence of Sri Aurobindo who left the case entirely to him and troubled no more about it; for he had been assured from within and knew that he would be acquitted. During this period his view of life was radically changed; he had taken up Yoga with the original idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his work in life. But now the inner spiritual life and realisation which had continually been increasing in magnitude and universality and assuming a larger place took him up entirely and his work became a part and result of it and besides far exceeded the service and liberation of the country and fixed itself in an aim, previously only glimpsed, which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity.

When he came out from jail, Sri Aurobindo found the whole political aspect of the country altered; most of the Nationalist leaders were in jail or in self-imposed exile and there was a general discouragement and depression, though the feeling in the country had not ceased but was only suppressed and was growing by its suppression. He determined to continue the struggle; he held weekly meetings in Calcutta, but the attendance which had numbered formerly thousands full of enthusiasm was now only of hundreds and had no longer the same force and life. He also went to places in the districts to speak and at one of these delivered his speech at Uttarpara in which for the first time he spoke publicly of his Yoga and his spiritual experiences. He started also two weeklies, one in English and one in Bengali, the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*, which had a fairly large circulation and were, unlike the *Bande Mataram*, easily self-supporting. He attended and spoke at the Provincial Conference at [Hooghly]⁷ in 1909: for in Bengal owing to the compromise at [Pabna]⁸ the two parties had not split altogether apart and both joined in the Conference, though there could be no representatives of the Nationalist party at the meeting of the Central Moderate Body which had taken the place of the Congress. Surendra Nath

⁷ 1948 edition Barisal. See Table 1, page 566.—Ed.

⁸ 1948 edition Hooghly. See Table 1, page 566.—Ed.

Banerji had indeed called a private conference attended by Sri Aurobindo and one or two other leaders of the Nationalists to discuss a project of uniting the two parties at the session in [Lahore]⁹ and giving a joint fight to the dominant right wing of the Moderates; for he had always dreamt of becoming again the leader of a united Bengal with the Extremist party as his strong right arm: but that would have necessitated the Nationalists being appointed as delegates by the Bengal Moderates and accepting the constitution imposed at Surat. This Sri Aurobindo refused to do; he demanded a change in that constitution enabling newly formed associations to elect delegates so that the Nationalists might independently send their representatives to the All-India session and on this point the negotiations broke down. Sri Aurobindo began however to consider how to revive the national movement under the changed circumstances. He glanced at the possibility of falling back on a Home Rule movement which the Government could not repress, but this, which was actually realised by Mrs. Besant later on, would have meant a postponement and a falling back from the ideal of independence. He looked also at the possibility of an intense and organised passive resistance movement in the manner afterwards adopted by Gandhi. He saw however that he himself could not be the leader of such a movement.

At no time did he consent to have anything to do with the sham Reforms which were all the Government at that period cared to offer. He held up always the slogan of "no compromise" or, as he now put it in his Open Letter to his countrymen published in the *Karmayogin*, "no co-operation without control". It was only if real political, administrative and financial control were given to popular ministers in an elected Assembly that he would have anything to do with offers from the British Government. Of this he saw no sign until the proposal of the Montagu Reforms in which first something of the kind seemed to appear. He foresaw that the British Government would have to begin trying to meet the national aspiration half-way, but

⁹ 1948 edition Benares. See Table 1, page 566.—Ed.

he would not anticipate that moment before it actually came. The Montagu Reforms came nine years after Sri Aurobindo had retired to Pondicherry and by that time he had abandoned all outward and public political activity in order to devote himself to his spiritual work, acting only by his spiritual force on the movement in India, until his prevision of real negotiations between the British Government and the Indian leaders was fulfilled by the Cripps' proposal and the events that came after.

Meanwhile the Government were determined to get rid of Sri Aurobindo as the only considerable obstacle left to the success of their repressive policy. As they could not send him to the Andamans they decided to deport him. This came to the knowledge of Sister Nivedita and she informed Sri Aurobindo and asked him to leave British India and work from outside so that his work would not be stopped or totally interrupted. Sri Aurobindo contented himself with publishing in the *Karmayogin* a signed article in which he spoke of the project of deportation and left the country what he called his last will and testament; he felt sure that this would kill the idea of deportation and in fact it so turned out. Deportation left aside, the Government could only wait for some opportunity for prosecution for sedition and this chance came to them when Sri Aurobindo published in the same paper another signed article reviewing the political situation. The article was sufficiently moderate in its tone and later on the High Court refused to regard it as seditious and acquitted the printer. Sri Aurobindo one night at the *Karmayogin* office received information of the Government's intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone but in ten minutes was at the river ghat and in a boat plying on the Ganges, in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. He sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take up the editing of the *Karmayogin* in his absence. This was the end of his active

connection with his two journals. At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.

At Pondicherry, from this time onwards Sri Aurobindo's practice of Yoga became more and more absorbing. He dropped all participation in any public political activity, refused more than one request to preside at sessions of the restored Indian National Congress and made a rule of abstention from any public utterance of any kind not connected with his spiritual activities or any contribution of writings or articles except what he wrote afterwards in the *Arya*. For some years he kept up some private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led through one or two individuals, but this also he dropped after a time and his abstention from any kind of participation in politics became complete. As his vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured by the march of Forces of which he became aware, that Britain would be compelled by the pressure of Indian resistance and by the pressure of international events to concede independence and that she was already moving towards that eventuality with whatever opposition and reluctance. He felt that there would be no need of armed insurrection and that the secret preparation for it could be dropped without injury to the nationalist cause, although the revolutionary spirit had to be maintained and would be maintained intact. His own personal intervention in politics would therefore be no longer indispensable. Apart from all this, the magnitude of the spiritual work set before him became more and more clear to him, and he saw that the concentration of all his energies on it was necessary. Accordingly, when the Ashram came into existence, he kept it free from all political connections or action; even when he intervened in politics twice afterwards on special occasions, this intervention was purely personal and the Ashram was not concerned in it. The British Government and numbers of people besides could not believe that Sri Aurobindo

had ceased from all political action and it was supposed by them that he was secretly participating in revolutionary activities and even creating a secret organisation in the security of French India. But all this was pure imagination and rumour and there was nothing of the kind. His retirement from political activity was complete, just as was his personal retirement into solitude in 1910.

But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action; for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced far in Yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can act and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it, and this power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which, as soon as he had attained to it, he used, at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the results or to feel the necessity of any other kind of action. Twice however he found it advisable to take in addition other action of a public kind. The first was in relation to the second World War. At the beginning he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene. He declared himself publicly on the side of the Allies, made

some financial contributions in answer to the appeal for funds and encouraged those who sought his advice to enter the army or share in the war effort. Inwardly, he put his spiritual force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk when everybody was expecting the immediate fall of England and the definite triumph of Hitler, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the rush of German victory almost immediately arrested and the tide of war begin to turn in the opposite direction. This he did, because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, and a set-back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind: it would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but of Asia, and in it India, an enslavement far more terrible than any this country had ever endured, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for her liberation. It was this reason also that induced him to support publicly the Cripps' offer and to press the Congress leaders to accept it. He had not, for various reasons, intervened with his spiritual force against the Japanese aggression until it became evident that Japan intended to attack and even invade and conquer India. He allowed certain letters he had written in support of the war affirming his views of the Asuric nature and inevitable outcome of Hitlerism to become public. He supported the Cripps' offer because by its acceptance India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the use of spiritual force alone against the aggressor and had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything before it, changed immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat. He had also after a time the satisfaction of seeing his previsions about the future of India justify themselves so that she stands independent with whatever internal difficulties.

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The *Indu Prakash* Articles

Sri Aurobindo revolved these things in his mind, and read, wrote and thought incessantly. Could not something be done? Could he not find an opportunity for service in the larger life of Bengal,— of the Indian nation itself?

He had already in England decided to devote his life to the service of his country and its liberation. He even began soon after coming to India to write on political matters (without giving his name) in the daily press, trying to awaken the nation to the ideas of the future. But these were not well received by the leaders of the time, they succeeded in preventing farther publication and he drew back into silence. But he did not abandon either his ideas or his hope of an effective action.

*

[*New Lamps for Old*, the series of articles he published in the *Indu Prakash*, was on Indian civilisation.]

This title did not refer to Indian civilisation but to Congress politics. It is not used in the sense of the Aladdin story, but was intended to imply the offering of new lights to replace the old and faint reformist lights of the Congress.

*

It is said that Sri Aurobindo was persuaded to discontinue his contribution to *Indu Prakash* by the late Mahadeo Govind Ranade.

The facts are: After the first two articles, Ranade called the proprietor [saying] that these articles were revolutionary and dangerous and a case for sedition might be brought against the paper. The proprietor alarmed told the editor K. G. Deshpande that this series must be discontinued. It was finally concluded that the tone should be moderated, the substance made more academic and the thus moderated articles could then continue. Sri Aurobindo lost interest in these muzzled productions, sent in numbers at long intervals and finally dropped the whole affair.

Sri Aurobindo saw Ranade at this time, his only contact; Ranade advised him to take some special subject and write about [it], he recommended Jail Reform, perhaps thinking that this writer would soon have personal experience of jails and thus become an expert on his subject!

[*Another version:*] The facts about the articles in the Indu Prakash were these. They were begun at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, who was editor of the paper, but the first two articles made a sensation and frightened Ranade and other Congress leaders. Ranade warned the proprietor of the paper that, if this went on, he would surely be prosecuted for sedition. Accordingly the original plan of the series had to be dropped at the proprietor's instance. Deshpande requested Sri Aurobindo to continue in a modified tone and he reluctantly consented, but felt no farther interest and the articles were published at long intervals and finally dropped of themselves altogether.

*

[The authorities objected to his patriotic activities.]

Is the reference to the Baroda authorities? Sri Aurobindo is not aware that his utterances or writings were ever objected to by them. His articles in the Indu Prakash were anonymous, although many people in Bombay knew that he was the writer. Otherwise, except for a few speeches at functions in the Palace itself such as the reception of Dr. S. K. Mullick which had nothing to do [with]¹⁰ politics, he spoke mainly as Chairman of the Baroda College Union, there was no objection made at any time and he continued to preside over some of these debates until he left Baroda. It was in England while at Cambridge that he made revolutionary speeches at the meetings of the Indian Majlis which were recorded as a black mark against him by the India Office.

¹⁰ MS (*dictated*) at

Beginnings of the Revolutionary Movement

During his stay at Baroda Sri Aurobindo got into touch with men that counted, groups that counted. He went to Bengal “to see what was the hope of revival, what was the political condition of the people, and whether there was the possibility of a real movement”.

It might be added that he had begun a work that was still nameless; and it was in the course of that work that he went to Bengal “to see what was the hope of revival etc.”

*

He found that in Bengal “the prevailing mood was apathy and despair”. There was no other go except to bide his time.

It should be added, “and continue his political work behind the scenes in silence. The moment for public work had not yet come.”

Once his work was started he continued it until circumstances made it possible to join in a public movement.

*

Even his own intrepid province of Bengal was in no mood to be persuaded by Sri Aurobindo and his gospel of virile nationalism.

It was anything but intrepid at the time; it was the mantra of Bande Mataram and the leap into revolutionary action that changed the people of the province.

*

[He sent some of his friends from Baroda and Bombay to Bengal to prepare for the revolutionary movement.]

It was not any of his friends at Baroda and in Bombay who went to Bengal on his behalf. His first emissary was a young Bengali who had by the help of Sri Aurobindo’s friends in the Baroda Army enlisted as a trooper in a cavalry regiment in spite of the prohibition by the British Government of the enlistment of any

Bengali in any army in India. This man who was exceedingly energetic and capable, formed a first group in Calcutta which grew rapidly (afterwards many branches were established); he also entered into relations with P. Mitter and other revolutionaries already at work in the province. He was joined afterwards by Barin who had in the interval come to Baroda.

*

[Among the leading lights of the day was P. Mitter who was a positivist.]

P. Mitter had a spiritual life and aspiration of his own and a strong religious feeling; he was like Bepin Pal and several other prominent leaders of the new nationalist movement in Bengal, a disciple of the famous Yogi Bejoy Goswami, but he did not bring these things into his politics.

*

[At this time there was at Bombay a secret society headed by a Rajput prince of Udaipur.]

This Rajput leader was not a prince, that is to say a Ruling Chief but a noble of the Udaipur State with the title of Thakur. The Thakur was not a member of the council in Bombay; he stood above it as the leader of the whole movement while the council helped him to organise Maharashtra and the Mahratta States. He himself worked principally upon the Indian Army of which he had already won over two or three regiments. Sri Aurobindo took a special journey into Central India to meet and speak with Indian sub-officers and men of one of these regiments.

*

Since 1902 Sri Aurobindo wished to enter the political fray and to contribute his mite to the forces that were seriously working for the country's redemption and rehabilitation. He held private talks, he corresponded, he put pressure on front-rank leaders; but as yet he could do little.

This does not give a correct idea. He had already joined with some of the more advanced leaders to organise bodies for political action which would act when the time for action came;¹¹ it was only in public as yet that he could do little.

Attitude towards Violent Revolution

[Sri Aurobindo did not believe in, nor did he like, violent revolution.]

This is incorrect. If Sri Aurobindo had not believed in the efficacy of violent revolution or had disliked it, he would not have joined the secret society whose whole purpose was to prepare a national insurrection. His historical studies had not taught him the lesson indicated here. On the contrary, he had studied with interest the revolutions and rebellions which led to national liberation, the struggle against the English in mediaeval France and the revolts which liberated America and Italy. He took much of his inspiration from these movements and their leaders, especially Jeanne d'Arc and Mazzini. In his public activity he took up non-cooperation and passive resistance as a means in the struggle for independence but not the sole means and so long as he was in Bengal he maintained a secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt, in case passive resistance proved insufficient for the purpose.

¹¹ The programme of this organisation was at first Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott—Swaraj meaning to it complete independence. The word Swaraj was first used by the Bengali-Maratha publicist, Sakharan Ganesh Deuskar, writer of *Desher Katha*, a book compiling all the details of India's economic servitude which had an enormous influence on the young men of Bengal and helped to turn them into revolutionaries. The word was taken up as their ideal by the revolutionary party and popularised by the vernacular paper *Sandhya* edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya; it was caught hold of by Dadabhai Naoroji at the Calcutta Congress as the equivalent of colonial self-government but did not long retain that depreciated value. Sri Aurobindo was the first to use its English equivalent "independence" and reiterate it constantly in the *Bande Mataram* as the one and immediate aim of national politics. [Sri Aurobindo's note.]

General Note
(referring especially to the Alipur Case and
Sri Aurobindo's politics)

There seems to be put forth here and in several places the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection etc. as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi and his gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite [incorrect]¹² and, if left, would give a wrong idea about Sri Aurobindo. He has given his ideas on the subject, generally, in the Essays on the Gita, First Series (Chapter IV?) where he supports the Gita's idea of *dharma yuddha* and criticises, though not expressly, the Gandhian ideas of soul-force. If he had held the pacifist ideal, he would never have supported the Allies (or anybody else) in this War, still less sanctioned some of his disciples joining the Army as airmen, soldiers, doctors, electricians etc. The declarations and professions quoted in the book are not his, at the most they may have been put forward by his lawyers or written, more prudentially than sincerely, by colleagues in the *Bande Mataram*. The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as part of a gospel of Non-violence or Peace. Peace is part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (mental principle, or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force,— what is now contemplated in the "New Order",— if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force, and one cannot be sure that it would be permanent.

¹² MS correct

Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations of the Gandhian kind. Sri Aurobindo's position (and practice) in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa. Those of them who took a share in revolutionary activities, kept a veil over them for reasons which need not be discussed now. Sri Aurobindo knew of all these things and took his own path, but he has always remained determined not to lift the veil till the proper time comes.

It follows that the passages which convey the opposite idea must be omitted in the interests of Truth or rewritten. Nothing need be said about the side of the Nationalist activities of that time in connection with Sri Aurobindo.

Sister Nivedita

[Sister Nivedita was invited to Baroda in 1904 by the Maha-raja of Baroda.]

I do not remember whether she was invited but I think she was there as a State guest. Khaserao and myself went to receive her at the station.

*

[Sri Aurobindo had talks with Nivedita about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.]

I do not remember Nivedita speaking to me on spiritual subjects or about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. We spoke of politics and other subjects. On the way from the station to the town she cried out against the ugliness of the College [building]¹³ and its

¹³ MS buildings

top-heavy dome and praised the Dharmashala near it. Khaserao stared at [her] and opined that she must be at least slightly cracked to have such ideas! I was very much enamoured at the time of her book *Kali the Mother* and I think we spoke of that; she had heard, she said, that I was a worshipper of Force, by which she meant that I belonged to the secret revolutionary party like herself and I was present at her interview with the Maharaja whom she invited to support the secret revolution; she told him that he could communicate with her through me. Sayajirao was much too cunning to plunge into such a dangerous business and never spoke to me about it. That is all I remember.

*

[Sri Aurobindo was influenced by the patriotic fervour of Swami Vivekananda's utterances, such as his "Mission of the Vedanta" speech.]

Sri Aurobindo was not aware of this speech or of any political action by Vivekananda. He had only heard casually of Vivekananda's intense patriotic feelings which inspired Sister Nivedita.

Bhawani Mandir

Bhawani Mandir was written by Sri Aurobindo but it was more Barin's idea than his. It was not meant to train people for assassination but for revolutionary preparation of the country. The idea was soon dropped as far as Sri Aurobindo was concerned, but something of the kind was attempted by Barin in the Maniktala Garden and it is to this evidently that Hemchandra refers.

*

[An attempt was made to find a site where the Bhawani Mandir idea could be put into operation; later the plan was dropped.]

Sri Aurobindo does not remember anything of this kind nor of any formal decision to abandon the Bhawani Mandir idea. This selection of a site and a head of the monastery must have been

simply an idea of Barin. He had travelled among the hills trying to find a suitable place but caught hill-fever and had to abandon his search and return to Baroda. Subsequently he went back to Bengal, but Sri Aurobindo did not hear of any discovery of a suitable place. Sakaria Swami was Barin's Guru: he had been a fighter in the Mutiny on the rebel side and he showed at the breaking of the Surat Congress a vehement patriotic excitement which caused his death because it awoke the poison of the bite of a mad dog which he had reduced to inactivity by a process of his Yogic will; but Sri Aurobindo would not have chosen him for any control of the political side of such an institution. The idea of Bhawani Mandir simply lapsed of itself. Sri Aurobindo thought no more about it, but Barin who clung to the idea tried to establish something like it on a small scale in the Maniktala Garden.

The Indian National Congress: Moderates and Extremists

[Allan Hume founded the Indian National Congress to act as an intermediary between the élite of the English and Indian peoples.]

This description of the Congress as an intermediary etc. would hardly have been recognised or admitted by the Congress itself at that time. The British Government also would not have recognised it. It regarded the institution with dislike and ignored it as much as possible. Also, Sri Aurobindo was totally opposed to making any approach on behalf of the nation to the British Government; he regarded the Congress policy as a process of futile petition and protest and considered self-help, non-cooperation and organisation of all forces in the nation for revolutionary action as the sole effective policy.

*

Sri Aurobindo, like all his countrymen, had great respect for Gokhale; . . .

[Altered to:] Sri Aurobindo, like all his countrymen, did not fail

to recognise the finer elements in Gokhale's mind and character; . . .

Alter as indicated. After an hour's conversation with Gokhale in the train between Ahmedabad and Baroda it was impossible for Sri Aurobindo to retain any great respect for Gokhale as a politician, whatever his merits as a man.

*

[In 1904 an extremist section was formed in the Congress; its members were waiting for the December 1904 session in Bombay in order to make themselves felt.]

It is not clear to what this refers. In 1904 the Extremist party had not been publicly formed, although there was an advanced section in the Congress, strong in Maharashtra but still small and weak elsewhere and composed mostly of young men; there were sometimes disputes behind the scenes but nothing came out in public. These men of extremer views were not even an organised group; it was Sri Aurobindo who in 1906 persuaded this group in Bengal to take [a] public position as a party, proclaim Tilak as their leader and enter into a contest with the Moderate leaders for the control of the Congress and of public opinion and action in the country. The first great public clash between the two parties took place in the sessions of the Congress at Calcutta where Sri Aurobindo was present but still working behind the scenes, the second at the [district]¹⁴ Conference at Midnapur where he for the first time acted publicly as the leader of the Bengal Nationalists, and the final break took place at Surat in 1907.

The Barisal Conference and the Start of the *Yugantar*

[At the Barisal Conference (April 1906)]

Sri Aurobindo took part in the Barisal Conference and was in the front row¹⁵ of three persons in the procession which was

¹⁴ MS Bengal Provincial. See Table 1, page 566.—Ed.

¹⁵ See Table 2, page 568.—Ed.

dispersed by the police charge. After the breaking up of the Conference he accompanied Bepin Pal in a tour of East Bengal where enormous meetings were held,—in one district in spite of the prohibition of the District Magistrate.

*

Besides Sri Aurobindo, there were also other fiery propagators of the new gospel of Nationalism—notably Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutt and Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose....

Bhupendranath Dutt.

In the interests of truth this name should be omitted. Bhupen Dutt was at the time only an obscure hand in the Yugantar office incapable of writing anything important and an ordinary recruit in the revolutionary ranks quite incapable of leading anybody, not even himself. When the police searched the office of the newspaper, he came forward and in a spirit of bravado declared himself the editor, although that was quite untrue. Afterwards he wanted to defend himself, but it was decided that the Yugantar, a paper ostentatiously revolutionary advocating armed insurrection, could not do that and must refuse to plead in a British court. This position was afterwards maintained throughout and greatly enhanced the prestige of the paper. Bhupen was sentenced, served his term and subsequently went to America. This at the time was his only title to fame. The real editors or writers of Yugantar (for there was no declared editor) were Barin, Upen Banerji (also a subeditor of the Bande Mataram) and Debabrata Bose who subsequently joined the Ramakrishna Mission (being acquitted in the Alipur case) and was []¹⁶ prominent among the Sannyasis at Almora and as a writer in the Mission's journals. Upen and Debabrata were masters of Bengali prose and it was their writings and Barin's that gained an unequalled popularity for the paper. These are the facts, but it will be sufficient to omit Bhupen's name.

¹⁶ MS a

Principal of the Bengal National College

The Bengal National College was . . . founded and Sri Aurobindo became its Principal. . . . But [his nationalistic activities were] not to the liking of the management, and Sri Aurobindo therefore resigned his position.

At an early period he left the organisation of the college to the educationist Satish Mukherjee and plunged fully into politics. When the Bande Mataram case was brought against him, he resigned his post in order not to embarrass the College authorities but resumed it again on his acquittal. During the Alipur Case he resigned finally at the request of the College authorities.

Now [after resigning from the Bengal National College] Sri Aurobindo was free to associate himself actively with the Nationalist Party and its accredited organ, *Bandemataram*.

It was done long before that as the above account will show.

*

It appears that, when he was in full charge of the College, he used to lecture for ten hours per week, and he taught, in addition to English Literature, British, Greek and Roman History also.

Not correct, should be omitted.

Start of the *Bande Mataram*

Sri Aurobindo was now in Calcutta — and he was in his element. He had given up his Baroda job, its settled salary and its seductive prospects; was he taking a blind leap into the dangerous unknown? . . .

Sri Aurobindo was present at the Congress in 1904 and again in 1906 and took a part in the counsels of the extremist party and in the formation of its fourfold programme — “Swaraj, swadeshi, boycott, national education” — which the Moderate leaders after a severe tussle behind the scenes were obliged to

incorporate in the resolutions of 1906. Bepin Pal had just started a daily paper *Bande Mataram* with only 500 Rs in his pocket. Sri Aurobindo took up joint editorship of the journal, edited the paper during Bepin Pal's absence and induced the Nationalist party to take it up as their organ and finance it. He called a meeting of the party leaders at which it was decided at his instance to give up the behind the scenes jostlings with the Moderates, and declare an open war on Moderatism and place before the country what was practically a revolutionary propaganda. He gave up his Baroda job some time after this; he had taken indefinite leave without pay; for this reason he did not take up officially and publicly the editorship of the *Bande Mataram* although after Bepin Pal left that post, he was practically in full control of the policy of the paper.

*

[The *Bande Mataram* was started on 7 August 1906. The joint stock company was declared on 18 October 1906. From August to October 1906 Bepin Pal was the editor.]

Bepin Pal started the *Bande Mataram* with 500 Rs in his pocket donated by Haridas Haldar. He called in my help as assistant editor and I gave it. I called a private meeting of the Nationalist leaders in Calcutta and they agreed to take up the *Bande Mataram* as their party paper with Subodh and Nirod Mullick as the principal financial supporters. A company was projected and formed, but the paper was financed and kept up meanwhile by Subodh. Bepin Pal who was strongly supported by C. R. Das and others remained as editor. Hemprasad Ghose and Shyamsundar Chakrabarti joined the editorial staff but they could not get on with Bepin Babu and were supported by the Mullicks. Finally Bepin Pal had to retire, I don't remember whether in November or December, probably the latter. I was myself very ill, almost to death, in my father-in-law's house in [Mott's]¹⁷ Lane and did not know what was going on. They put my name as editor on the paper without my consent, but I spoke to the Secretary

¹⁷ MS Serpentine. See Table 1, page 566.—Ed.

pretty harshly and had the insertion discontinued. I also wrote a strong letter on the subject to Subodh. From that time Bepin Pal had no connection with the *Bande Mataram*. Somebody said or wrote that he resumed his editorship after I was arrested in the Alipur Case. I never heard of that. I was told by Bejoy Chatterji after I came out from jail that he, Shyamsundar and Hemprasad had carried on somehow with the paper, but the finances became impossible, so he deliberately wrote an article which made the Govt come down on the paper and stop its publication, so that the *Bande Mataram* might end with some éclat and in all honour.

The Policy of the *Bande Mataram*

In other ways also Sri Aurobindo sought to appeal to the hearts of the Indian and British peoples. . . . *Vidula* . . . appeared in the second issue of the Weekly *Bandemataram*, which also contained “An Unreported Conversation” in verse between a Briton and Ajit Singh on the eve of his arrest. Another inspiring item in the issue was . . .

As a politician it was part of Sri Aurobindo’s principles never to appeal to the British people; that he would have considered as part of the mendicant policy. These articles and other items (satiric verse, parodies, etc.) referred to in these pages (not of course *Vidula* and *Perseus*) were the work of Shyamsundar Chakrabarti, not of Sri Aurobindo. Shyamsundar was a witty parodist and could write with much humour, as also with a telling rhetoric; he had caught some imitation of Sri Aurobindo’s style and many could not distinguish between their writings. In Aurobindo’s absences from Calcutta it was Shyamsundar who wrote most of the *Bande Mataram* editorials, those excepted which were sent by Aurobindo from Deoghar.

*

He was able to contemplate politics purged of all rancour . . .

Sri Aurobindo never brought any rancour into his politics. He

never had any hatred for England or the English people; he based his claim for freedom for India on the inherent right to freedom, not on any charge of misgovernment or oppression; if he attacked persons even violently, it was for their views or political action, not from any other motive.

The *Bande Mataram* Sedition Case

Earlier in the year [1907] he had been prosecuted in connection with his editorship of *Bandemataaram* and the series of articles he wrote for the paper under the heading, "The New Path".

No—the prosecution was for a letter written by somebody to the Editor and for the publication of articles included in the Jugantar case but not actually used by the prosecution. The Bande Mataram was never prosecuted for its editorial articles. The editor of the Statesman complained that they were too diabolically clever, crammed full of sedition between the lines, but legally unattackable because of the skill of the language. The Government must have shared this view, for they never ventured to attack the paper for its editorial or other articles, whether Sri Aurobindo's or from the pen of his three editorial colleagues. There is also the fact that Sri Aurobindo never based his case for freedom on racial hatred or charges of tyranny or misgovernment, but always on the inalienable right of the nation to independence. His stand was that even good government could not take the place of national government,—independence.

*

He had been acquitted then, but the prosecution had succeeded, if anything, only in putting Sri Aurobindo to the fore-front and making the Indian intelligentsia only more than ever eager to read and con the columns of the one and only *Bandemataaram*.

Sri Aurobindo had confined himself to writing and leadership

behind the scenes, not caring to advertise himself or put forward his personality, but the imprisonment and exile of other leaders and the publicity given to his name by the case compelled him to come forward and take the lead on the public platform.

The Surat Congress

This version does not represent accurately the facts as Sri Aurobindo remembers them. So far as he knows there was no attempt at fire. The session of the Congress had first been arranged at Nagpur, but Nagpur was predominantly a Mahratta city and violently extremist. Gujerat was at that time predominantly moderate, there were very few Nationalists and Surat was a stronghold of Moderatism though afterwards Gujerat became, especially after Gandhi took the lead, one of the most revolutionary of the provinces. So the Moderate leaders decided to hold the Congress at Surat. The Nationalists however came there in strength from all parts, they held a public conference with Sri Aurobindo as president and for some time it was doubtful which side would have the majority, but finally in this moderate city that party was able to bring in a crowd of so-called delegates up to the number of 1300 while the Nationalists were able by the same method to muster something over 1100. It was known that the Moderate leaders had prepared a new constitution for the Congress which would make it practically impossible for the extreme party to command a majority at any annual session for many years to come. The younger Nationalists, especially those from Maharashtra, were determined to prevent this by any means and it was decided by them to break the Congress if they could not swamp it; this decision was unknown to Tilak and the older leaders but it was known to Sri Aurobindo. At the sessions Tilak went on to the platform to propose a resolution regarding the presidentship of the Congress; the president appointed by the Moderates refused to him the permission to speak but Tilak insisted on his right and began to read his resolution and speak. There was a tremendous uproar, the young Gujerati volunteers lifted up chairs over the head of Tilak to beat him.

At that the Mahrattas became furious, a Mahratta shoe came hurtling across the pavilion aimed at the President Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and hit Surendra Nath Banerji on the shoulder. The young Mahrattas in a body charged up to the platform, the Moderate leaders fled and after a short fight on the platform with chairs the session broke up not to be resumed. The Moderate leaders decided to suspend the Congress and replace it by a national conference with a constitution and arrangement which would make it safe for their party. Meanwhile Lajpatrai came to Tilak and informed him that the Government had decided, if the Congress split, to crush the Extremists by the most ruthless repression. Tilak thought, and the event proved that he was right, that the country was not yet ready to face successfully such a repression and he proposed to circumvent both the Moderate plan and the Government plan by the Nationalists joining the conference and signing the statement of adhesion to the new constitution demanded by the Moderates. Sri Aurobindo and some other leaders were opposed to this submission; they did not believe that the Moderates would admit any Nationalists to their conference (and this proved to be the case) and they wanted the country to be asked to face the repression. Thus the Congress ceased for a time to exist; but the Moderate conference was not a success and was attended only by small and always dwindling numbers. Sri Aurobindo had hoped that the country would be strong enough to face the repression, at least in Bengal and Maharashtra where the enthusiasm had become intense and almost universal; but he thought also that even if there was a temporary collapse the repression would create a deep change in the hearts and minds of the people and the whole nation would swing over to nationalism and the ideal of independence. This actually happened and when Tilak returned from jail in Burma after 6 years he was able in conjunction with Mrs Besant not only to revive the Congress but to make it representative of a nation pledged to the nationalist cause. The Moderate party shrank into a small body of liberals and even these finally subscribed to the ideal of complete independence.

*

After the Surat debacle, Sri Aurobindo did not return to Bengal immediately, as he had originally intended; impelled by an inner urge, he undertook a political tour instead in the Bombay presidency and the Central Provinces.

There was no tour. Sri Aurobindo went to Poona with Lele and after his return to Bombay went to Calcutta. All the speeches he made were at this time (except those at Bombay and at Baroda) at places on his way wherever he stopped for a day or two.

The Alipore Bomb Case

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* asked editorially: “ . . . but why were they (Aurobindo and others) pounced upon in this mysterious manner, handcuffed and then dragged before the Police Commissioner. . . . ”

No, tied with a rope;¹⁸ this was taken off on the protest of Bhupen Bose, the Congress Moderate leader.

*

The hands were not tied, the cord was put round his waist, but before leaving the house it was removed on the remonstrance of Bhupendra Nath [Bose],¹⁹ the Moderate leader, who on hearing of the arrest had come to question the police about its motive.

*

[Earth from Dakshineshwar was found in Sri Aurobindo's room when the police searched his house in May 1908.]

The earth was brought to me by a young man connected with the Ramakrishna Mission and I kept it; it was there in my room when the police came to arrest me.

*

The case commenced before the Alipore Magistrate's Court on the 19th May, 1908 and continued intermittently for a

¹⁸ See *Table 2, page 568.—Ed.*

¹⁹ MS (*dictated*) Dutt

whole year. Mr. Beachcroft, the magistrate, had been with Sri Aurobindo in Cambridge. . . . The case in due course went up to the Sessions Court and the trial commenced there in October 1908.

[*Sri Aurobindo indicated that the last sentence should be placed before “Mr. Beachcroft”, changed “magistrate” to “Judge in the Sessions Court”, and wrote:*] The preliminary trial (a very long one) took place before Birley, a young man unknown to Sri Aurobindo. Beachcroft was not “magistrate” but Judge in the Sessions Court.

*

In his dignified statement to the court, Sri Aurobindo pointed out that it was perfectly true that he had taught the people of India the meaning and the message of national independence. . . .

Sri Aurobindo never made a public statement in the Court. When asked by the Court, he said he would leave the case to his lawyers, they would speak for him; he himself did not wish to make any statement or answer the Court's questions. If any such statement as the one spoken of was made, it must have been drawn up by the lawyers on his behalf, not made by himself.

[While in the Alipore jail Sri Aurobindo became ill.]

Sri Aurobindo did not fall ill while in prison; he was in normal health except for a superficial ailment for some time which was of no consequence.

A year's seclusion and meditation in the Alipore jail no doubt worked a great transformation in Sri Aurobindo. . . . Once again—now as ever—“service” was Sri Aurobindo's urge to action.

The idea was “work” for the country, for the world, finally for the Divine, *nishkama karma*, rather than an ideal of service.

The Open Letters of July and December 1909

[Sri Aurobindo's "Open Letter to My Countrymen" of July 1909 and the second open letter dated December 1909]

There is some confusion here and generally with regard to the two letters. Sri Aurobindo was not relying upon any change in Government policy for the effect of the first letter.²⁰ He writes clearly that the proposed reforms were false and unreal and not acceptable. All he says is that if real reforms giving real power or control were offered, even if they gave only partial and not complete self-government then the Nationalist Party might accept them as the means towards complete Self-Government. Till then the Nationalists would maintain the struggle and their policy of non-cooperation and passive resistance. He relied not upon this but upon an intuitive perception that the Government would not think it politic or useful to deport him if he left a programme which others could carry out in his absence. Also the considerations about Home Rule and complete passive resistance had no connection with the first letter, because they did not occur to Sri Aurobindo at the time. It was afterwards about the period of the second signed letter²¹ that he weighed the circumstances and the situation in the country and considered whether it would not be necessary for a time to draw back a little in order to make a continued political action possible, reculer pour mieux sauter, as the national movement seemed otherwise threatened with a complete pause. A Home Rule movement or a movement of the South African type suggested themselves to him and he foresaw that they might be resorted to in the near future; but he decided that such movements were not for him to lead and that he must go on with the movement for independence as it was. In the second letter also he rejects the reforms as inadequate and advocates a continuance and reorganisation of

²⁰ "An Open Letter to My Countrymen", Karmayogin, 31 July 1909; reproduced in Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910, Volume 8 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 150–60.

²¹ "To My Countrymen", Karmayogin, 25 December 1909; reproduced in Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910, pp. 372–76.—Ed.

the Nationalist movement.²² This was on December 25th, five months after the first letter. Sri Aurobindo does not understand the reference to the coup de force and the stratagem; if by the coup de force is meant the proposed search and arrest, that was undertaken in connection with and as a result of the second letter which was to be made the subject of a prosecution. As Sri Aurobindo went to Chandernagore and disappeared from view the search was not made and the warrant was held back and the prosecution postponed till he should again reappear. This happened in February, a month or more after the appearance of the second letter. Sri Aurobindo wanted the police to disclose their hand and act and the stratagem he wrote about was an answer to a letter forwarded to him at Chandernagore which he knew to be from a police spy asking him to reappear and face his trial. He replied that he had no reason to do so as there was no public warrant against him and no prosecution had been announced; he thought this would have the effect of the police coming out into the open with a warrant and prosecution and in fact it had this effect.

The *Karmayogin* Case

[The police, unable to serve their warrant against Sri Aurobindo in the *Karmayogin* case, arrested the printer, a simple artisan.]

The printer was in fact only someone who took that title in order to meet the demand of the law for someone who would be responsible for what was printed. He was not always the actual printer.

²² Sri Aurobindo would have accepted Diarchy as a step if it had given a genuine control. It was not till Provincial Autonomy was conceded that he felt a real change in the British attitude had begun; the Cripps offer he accepted as a further progress in that change and the final culmination in the Labour Government's new policy as its culmination. [Sri Aurobindo's note.]

The Departure from Calcutta, 1910

To Charu Chandra Dutt

Charu

This is my answer to the questions arising from your letter.¹ Except on one point which calls for some explanation, I confine myself to the plain facts.

(1) I was the writer of the series of articles on the "Passive Resistance" published in April 1907 to which reference has been made; Bipin Pal had nothing to do with it. He ceased his connection with the paper towards the end of 1906 and from that time onward was not writing any editorials or articles for it. I planned several series of this kind for the Bande Mataram and at least three were published of which "Passive Resistance" was one.

(2) The articles published in Dharma during February and March 1910 were not written by me. The actual writer was a young man on the subeditorial staff of the paper. This is well known to all who were then in the office or connected with it, e.g. Nalini Kanta Gupta who was with me then as he is now still with me here.

(3) I did not go to the Bagbazar Math on my way to Chandernagore or make pranam to Sri Saradamani Devi. In fact I never met or even saw her in my life. It was not from Bagbazar but from another ghat (Ganga ghat) that I went straight by boat to Chandernagore.

(4) Neither Ganen Maharaj nor Nivedita saw me off at the ghat. Neither of them knew anything about my going; Nivedita learned of it only afterwards when I sent a message to her asking her to conduct the Karmayogin in my absence. She consented

¹ Charu Chandra Dutt wrote to Sri Aurobindo in regard to certain points contained in a letter from Swami Sundarananda to Girijashankar Raychaudhuri dated 11 February 1944 and published in the Bengali journal Udbodhan. — Ed.

and from that time to its cessation of publication was in control of the paper; the editorials during that period were hers.

(5) I did not take my wife for initiation to Sri Saradamani Devi; I was given to understand that she was taken there by Sudhira Bose, Debabrata's sister. I heard of it a considerable time afterwards in Pondicherry. I was glad to know that she had found so great a spiritual refuge but I had no hand in bringing it about.

(6) I did not go to Chandernagore on Sister Nivedita's advice. On a former occasion when she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me, she did urge me to leave British India and do my work from outside; but I told her I did not think it necessary, I would write something that would put a stop to this project. It was in these circumstances that I wrote the signed article "My Last Will and Testament". Nivedita afterwards told me that it had served its purpose; the Government had abandoned the idea of deportation. No occasion arose for her to repeat the advice, nor was it at all likely that I would have followed it: she knew nothing beforehand of the circumstances that led to my departure to Chandernagore.

(7) These are the facts of that departure. I was in the Karma-yogin office when I received word, on information given by a high-placed police official, that the office would be searched the next day and myself arrested. (The office was in fact searched but no warrant was produced against me; I heard nothing more of it till the case was started against the paper later on, but by then I had already left Chandernagore for Pondicherry.) While I was listening to animated comments from those around on the approaching event, I suddenly received a command from above in a Voice well known to me, in the three words; "Go to Chandernagore." In ten minutes or so I was in the boat for Chandernagore. Ramchandra Majumdar guided me to the Ghat and hailed a boat and I entered into it at once along with my relative Biren Ghosh and Mani (Suresh Chandra Chakrabarti) who accompanied me to Chandernagore, not turning aside to Bagbazar or anywhere else. We reached our destination while it was still dark and they returned in the morning to Calcutta.

I remained in secret entirely engaged in Sadhana and my active connection with the two newspapers ceased from that time. Afterwards, under the same “sailing orders”, I left Chandernagore and reached Pondicherry on April 4th 1910.

I may add in explanation that from the time I left Lele at Bombay after the Surat Congress and my stay with him in Baroda, Poona and Bombay, I had accepted the rule of following the inner guidance implicitly and moving only as I was moved by the Divine. The spiritual development during the year in jail had turned this into an absolute law of the being. This accounts for my immediate action in obedience to the *adesh* received by me.

You can on the strength of this letter cite my authority for your statements on these points to the editor of the *Udbodhan*.

December 15, 1944

Sri Aurobindo

To the Editor, *Sunday Times*

I am authorised by Sri Aurobindo to contradict the statement quoted in your issue of the 17th instant from the *Hindusthan Standard* that he visited Sri Saradamani Devi on the day of his departure to Pondicherry (?) and received from her some kind of *diksha*.² There was a story published in a Calcutta monthly some time ago that on the night of his departure for Chandernagore in February 1910 Sri Aurobindo visited her at Bagbazar Math to receive her blessings, that he was seen off by Sister Nivedita and a Brahmachari of the Math and that he took this step of leaving British India at the advice of Sister Nivedita. All these statements are opposed to the facts and they were contradicted on Sri Aurobindo’s behalf by Sri Charu Chandra Dutt in the same monthly.

Sri Aurobindo’s departure to Chandernagore was the result of a sudden decision taken on the strength of an *adesh* from

² On 17 June 1945 the *Sunday Times* of Madras reproduced a letter written by K. Ghose to the editor of the *Hindusthan Standard* that had been published in that newspaper on 6 June. This reply by Sri Aurobindo was published in the *Sunday Times* on 24 June with an introductory note stating that the information was provided by his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta. — Ed.

above and was carried out rapidly and secretly without consultation with anybody or advice from any quarter. He went straight from the Dharma office to the Ghat—he did not visit the Math, nobody saw him off; a boat was hailed, he entered into it with two young men and proceeded straight to his destination. His residence at Chandernagore was kept quite secret; it was known only to Srijut Motilal Roy who arranged for his stay and to a few others. Sister Nivedita was confidentially informed the day after his departure and asked to conduct the Karmayogin in place of Sri Aurobindo to which she consented. In his passage from Chandernagore to Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo stopped only for two minutes outside College Square to take his trunk from his cousin and paid no visit except to the British Medical Officer to obtain a medical certificate for the voyage. He went straight to the steamship Dupleix and next morning was on his way to Pondicherry.

It may be added that neither at this time nor any other did Sri Aurobindo receive any kind of initiation from Sarada Devi; neither did he ever take any formal diksha from anyone. He started his sadhana at Baroda in 1904 on his own account after learning from a friend the ordinary formula of Pranayama. Afterwards the only help he received was from the Maharashtrian Yogi, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, who instructed him how to reach complete silence of the mind and immobility of the whole consciousness. This Sri Aurobindo was able to achieve in three days with the result of lasting and massive spiritual realisations opening to him the larger ways of Yoga. Lele finally told him to put himself entirely into the hands of the Divine within and move only as he was moved and then he would need no instructions either from Lele himself or anyone else. This henceforward became the whole foundation and principle of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. From that time onward (the beginning of 1909) and through many years of intensive experience at Pondicherry he underwent no spiritual influence from outside.

published 24 June 1945

On an Article by Ramchandra Majumdar

In his reply to Suresh Chakravarty's article my old friend Ramchandra Majumdar congratulates himself on the strength of his memory in old age.³ His memory is indeed so strong that he not only recollects, very inaccurately, what actually happened, but recalls also and gives body to what never happened at all. His account is so heavily crammed with blunders and accretions that it may provide rich material for an imaginative and romantic biography of Sri Aurobindo in the modern manner but has no other value. It is a pity to have to trample on this fine garden of flowers but historical and biographical truth has its claim. I shall correct some of the most flagrant errors in this narrative.

First of all, Suresh Chakravarty's article about the journey to Chandernagore confined itself to inaccurate statements of the facts and denied the story of a visit to Sri Sarada Devi in the course of that journey. This point has now been practically conceded for we see that the alleged visit has been transferred to another date a few days earlier. I may say that Suresh's narrative of the facts was brought to the notice of Sri Aurobindo who certified that it was true both as a whole and in detail.

But now another story has been brought up which is full of confusions and unrealities and is a good example of how a myth can be established in place of the truth. Sri Aurobindo never spoke with Sister Nivedita about any case intended to be brought against him by the Government in connection with the murder of Shamsul Alam, for the good reason that no such intention was ever reported to him by anybody. Sister Nivedita never directed or advised him to go into hiding. What actually happened had nothing to do with the departure to Chandernagore. What happened was this: Sister Nivedita on a much earlier occasion informed Sri Aurobindo that the Government intended to deport him and advised him "not to hide" but to leave British India and work from outside; Sri Aurobindo did not accept the advice. He

³ *This statement, dictated by Sri Aurobindo in response to an article written in Bengali by Ramchandra Majumdar and published in Prabasi in 1945, was used by Nolini Kanta Gupta as the basis of a rejoinder published in the same journal. — Ed.*

said that he would write an “Open Letter” which he thought would make the Government give up its idea; this appeared in the Karmayogin under the title “My Last Will and Testament”. Afterwards Sister Nivedita told him that it had had the desired effect and there was no more question of deportation.

Sri Aurobindo did not see Sister Nivedita on his way to Chandernagore; this is only a relic of the now abandoned story of his visit to the Math at Baranagar on that occasion in which it was related that she had seen him off at the Ghat. She knew nothing whatever of his departure for Chandernagore until afterwards when he sent her a message asking her to take up the editing of the Karmayogin in his absence. Everything happened very suddenly. Sri Aurobindo, as he has himself related, while at the Karmayogin Office, heard of an approaching search and his intended arrest: he suddenly received an *adesh* to go to Chandernagore and carried it out immediately without informing or consulting anybody — even his colleagues and co-workers. Everything was done in fifteen minutes or so and in the utmost secrecy and silence. He followed Ram Majumdar to the Ghat, Suresh Chakravarty and Biren Ghose following at a little distance; a boat was hailed and the three got in and went off immediately. His stay in Chandernagore also was secret and known only to a few like his later departure to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo never asked Ram Majumdar to arrange for a hiding place; there was no time for any such arrangement. He went unannounced, relying on some friends in Chandernagore to arrange for his stay. Motilal Roy received him first in his own house, then arranged in other places, allowing only a few to know. This is the true account of what happened according to Sri Aurobindo’s own statement.

The new story now told that Devabrata Bose and Sri Aurobindo both asked to be admitted into the Ramakrishna Mission and Devabrata was accepted but Swami Brahmananda refused to accept Sri Aurobindo is another myth. Sri Aurobindo never even dreamed of taking Sannyas or of entering into any established order of Sannyasis. It ought to be well known to everybody that Sannyas was never accepted by him as part of his

yoga; he has founded an Asram in Pondicherry but its members are not Sannyasis, do not wear the ochre garb or practise complete asceticism but are sadhaks of a yoga of life based on spiritual realisation. This has always been Sri Aurobindo's idea and it was never otherwise. He saw Swami Brahmananda only once when he went on a boat trip to visit the Belur math; he had then about fifteen minutes' conversation with Swami Brahmananda but there was no talk about spiritual things. The Swami was preoccupied with a communication from the Government and consulted Sri Aurobindo as to whether there was any need of an answer. Sri Aurobindo said no and the Swami agreed. After seeing the math Sri Aurobindo came away and nothing else happened. He never by letter or otherwise communicated with Swami Brahmananda before or afterwards and never directly or indirectly asked for admission or for Sannyas.

There have been hints or statements about Sri Aurobindo taking or asking for initiation from certain quarters about this time. Those who spread these legends seem to be ignorant that at this time he was not a spiritual novice or in need of any initiation or spiritual direction by anybody. Sri Aurobindo had already realised in full two of the four great realisations on which his yoga and his spiritual philosophy are founded. The first he had gained while meditating with the Maharashtrian Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, at Baroda in January 1908; it was the realisation of the silent spaceless and timeless Brahman gained after a complete and abiding stillness of the whole consciousness and attended at first by an overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world, though this feeling disappeared after his second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore jail and of which he has spoken in his speech at Uttarpara. To the other two realisations, that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind, he was already on his way in his meditations in Alipore jail. Moreover, he had accepted from Lele as the principle of his sadhana to rely wholly on the Divine and his guidance

alone both for his sadhana and for his outward actions. After that it was impossible for him to put himself under any other guidance and unnecessary to seek help from anyone. In fact Sri Aurobindo never took any formal initiation from anyone; he started his Sadhana on his own account by the practice of pranayama and never asked for help except from Lele.

One or two less important points have to be mentioned to show how little reliance can be placed on the details of Ramchandra's narrative. His statement about the automatic writing is only an imaginative inference and in fact quite groundless. Sri Aurobindo totally denies that he used the automatic writing for any kind of moral or other edification of those around him; that would have meant that it was spurious and a sort of trick, for no writing can be automatic if it is dictated or guided by the writer's conscious mind. The writing was done as an experiment as well as an amusement and nothing else. I may mention here the circumstances under which it was first taken up. Barin had done some very extraordinary automatic writing at Baroda in a very brilliant and beautiful English style and remarkable for certain predictions which came true and statements of fact which also proved to be true although unknown to the persons concerned or anyone else present: there was notably a symbolic anticipation of Lord Curzon's subsequent unexpected departure from India and, again, of the first suppression of the national movement and the greatness of Tilak's attitude amidst the storm; this prediction was given in Tilak's own presence when he visited Sri Aurobindo at Baroda and happened to enter just when the writing was in progress. Sri Aurobindo was very much struck and interested and he decided to find out by practising this kind of writing himself what there was behind it. This is what he was doing in Calcutta. But the results did not satisfy him and after a few further attempts at Pondicherry he dropped these experiments altogether. He did not give the same high value to his efforts as Ramchandra seems to have done, for they had none of the remarkable features of Barin's writings. His final conclusion was that though there are sometimes phenomena which point to the intervention of beings of another plane not always or often of a

high order the mass of such writings comes from a dramatising element in the subconscious mind; sometimes a brilliant vein in the subliminal is struck and then predictions of the future and statements of things [unknown]⁴ in the present and past come up, but otherwise these writings have not a great value. I may add that Ramchandra's details are incorrect and there was no guide named Theresa, in fact no guide at all, though someone calling himself Theramenes broke in from time to time. The writings came haphazard without any spirit mentor such as some mediums claim to have.

A smaller but more amazing myth presents Sri Aurobindo as a poet in Tamil — and this apparently after only a few days of study. Far from writing Tamil poetry Sri Aurobindo never wrote a single sentence even of Tamil prose and never spoke a single phrase in the Tamil language. He listened for a few days to a Nair from Malabar who read and explained to him articles in a Tamil newspaper; this was a short time before he left Bengal. At Pondicherry he took up the study of Tamil, but he did not go very far and his studies were finally interrupted by his complete retirement.

R's whole account is crammed with reckless inaccuracies and unreal details. Srish Goswami has pointed out in a letter that the astrological writings of Sri Aurobindo of which R speaks were only some elementary notes and had no importance. Sri Aurobindo drew them up at Baroda to refresh his memory when he was studying the subject with the idea of finding out for himself what truth there might be in astrology. He had never any intention of figuring as an astrologer or a writer on astrology. These notes did not form a book and no book of Sri Aurobindo's on this subject appeared from the A. P. [Arya Publishing] House.

It is not a fact that Sri Aurobindo's wife Mrinalini Devi was residing at Sj. K. K. Mitra's house in College Square; Sri Aurobindo himself lived there constantly between the Alipore trial and his departure to French India. But she lived always with the family of Girish Bose, principal of Bangabasi College.

⁴ MS (*dictated*) are known

One is unable to understand the meaning of the saying attributed to Sri Aurobindo that he was a man rising to humanity unless we suppose that he was only the animal man rising towards the status of a thinking being; certainly Sri Aurobindo never composed such a resonant and meaningless epigram. If it had been to a Divine Humanity it might have had some meaning but the whole thing sounds unlike what Sri Aurobindo could have said. In fact all that Ramchandra puts into Sri Aurobindo's mouth is of a character foreign to his habits of speech e.g. his alleged Shakespearean and Polonius-like recommendation to Ramchandra himself while departing to Chandernagore. He may have enjoined silence on Ramchandra but not in that flowery language.

This should be enough; it is unnecessary to deal with all the inaccuracies and imaginations. But I think I have said enough to show that anyone wanting the truth about Sri Aurobindo would do well to avoid any reliance on Ramchandra's narrative. It can be described in the phrase of Goethe "Poetic fictions and truths" for the element of truth is small and that of poetic fiction stupendous. It is like the mass of ale to the modicum of bread in Falstaff's tavern bill. In fact it is almost the whole. 1945

To Pavitra (Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire)

Pavitra,

The account which seems to have been given to Lizelle Reymond and recorded by her on pages 318–319 of her book⁵ is, I am compelled to say, fiction and romance with no foundation in actual facts. I spent the first part of my imprisonment in Alipore jail in a solitary cell and again after the assassination of Noren Gosain to the last days of the trial when all the Alipore case prisoners were similarly lodged each in his own cell. In between for a short period we were all put together. There is no truth behind the statement that while I was meditating they gathered around me, that I recited the Gita to them and they sang the verses, or that they put questions to me on spiritual

⁵ Nivedita: Fille de l'Inde (*Paris and Neuchâtel: Editions Victor Attinger, 1945*).

matters and received instructions from me; the whole description is quite fanciful. Only a few of the prisoners had been known to me before I met them in prison; only a few who had been with Barin had practised sadhana and these were connected with Barin and would have turned to him for any help, not to me. I was carrying on my yoga during these days learning to do so in the midst of much noise and clamour but apart and in silence and without any participation of the others in it. My yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart; those around me knew I was a sadhak but they knew little more as I kept all that went on in me to myself. It was only after my release that for the first time I spoke at Uttarpura publicly about my spiritual experiences. Until I went to Pondicherry I took no disciples; with those who accompanied me or joined me in Pondicherry I had at first the relation of friends and companions rather than of a guru and disciples; it was on the ground of politics that I had come to know them and not on the spiritual ground. Afterwards only there was a gradual development of spiritual relations until the Mother came back from Japan and the Ashram was founded or rather founded itself in 1926. I began my yoga in 1904 without a guru; in 1908 I received important help from a Mahratta yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana; but from that time till the Mother came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. My sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded on me from within. But in the jail I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads; these were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it, but there were no such happenings in connection with the Gita as are narrated in the book. It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence, but this had

nothing to do with the alleged circumstances narrated in the book, circumstances that never took place, nor had it anything to do with the Gita. The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it had finished saying all that it had to say on that subject.

Then about my relations with Sister Nivedita — they were purely in the field of politics. Spirituality or spiritual matters did not enter into them and I do not remember anything passing between us on these subjects when I was with her. Once or twice she showed the spiritual side of her but she was then speaking to someone else who had come to see her while I was there. The whole account about my staying with her for 24 hours and all that is said to have passed between us then is sheer romance and does not contain a particle of fact. I met Sister Nivedita first at Baroda when she came to give some lectures there. I went to receive her at the station and to take her to the house assigned to her; I also accompanied her to an interview she had sought with the Maharaja of Baroda. She had heard of me as one who “believed in strength and was a worshipper of Kali” by which she meant that she had heard of me as a revolutionary. I knew of her already because I had read and admired her book “Kali the Mother”. It is in these days that we formed our friendship. After I had started my revolutionary work in Bengal through certain emissaries, I went there personally to see and arrange things myself. I found a number of small groups of revolutionaries that had recently sprung into existence but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the barrister P. Mitra as the leader of the revolution in Bengal and a central council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita. The work under P. Mitra spread enormously and finally contained tens of thousands of young men and the spirit of revolution spread by Barin’s paper “Yugantar” became general in the young generation; but during my absence at Baroda the council ceased to exist as it was impossible to keep up agreement among the many groups. I had no occasion to meet Nivedita after that until I settled in Bengal as principal of the National College and the chief editorial writer of the Bande

Mataram. By that time I had become one of the leaders of the public movement known first as extremism, then as nationalism, but this gave me no occasion to meet her except once or twice at the Congress, as my collaboration with her was solely in the secret revolutionary field. I was busy with my work and she with hers, and no occasion arose for consultations or decisions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement. Later on I began to make time to go and see her occasionally at Bagbazar.

In one of these visits she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me and she wanted me to go into secrecy or to leave British India and act from outside so as to avoid interruption of my work. There was no question at that time of danger to her; in spite of her political views she had friendly relations with high Government officials and there was no question of her arrest. I told her that I did not think it necessary to accept her suggestion; I would write an open letter in the Karmayogin which, I thought, would prevent this action by the Government. This was done and on my next visit to her she told me that my move had been entirely successful and the idea of deportation had been dropped. The departure to Chandernagore happened later and there was no connection between the two incidents which have been hopelessly confused together in the account in the book. The incidents related there have no foundation in fact. It was not Gonen Maharaj who informed me of the impending search and arrest, but a young man on the staff of the Karmayogin, Ramchandra Mazumdar, whose father had been warned that in a day or two the Karmayogin office would be searched and myself arrested. There [have]⁶ been many legends spread about on this matter and it was even said that I was to be prosecuted for participation in the murder in the High Court of Shamsul Alam, a prominent member of the C.I.D. and that Sister Nivedita sent for me and informed me and we discussed what was to be done and my disappearance was the result. I never heard of any such proposed prosecution and there was no discussion of the kind; the prosecution intended and afterwards

⁶ MS (*typed copy*) has

started was for sedition only. Sister Nivedita knew nothing of these new happenings till after I reached Chandernagore. I did not go to her house or see her; it is wholly untrue that she and Gonen Maharaj came to see me off at the Ghat. There was no time to inform her; for almost immediately I received a command from above to go to Chandernagore and within ten minutes I was at the Ghat, a boat was hailed and I was on my way with two young men to Chandernagore. It was a common Ganges boat rowed by two boatmen, and all the picturesque details about the French boat and the disappearing lights are pure romance. I sent someone from the office to Nivedita to inform her and to ask her to take up editing of the Karmayogin in my absence. She consented and in fact from this time onward until the suspension of the paper she had the whole conduct of it; I was absorbed in my sadhana and sent no contributions nor were there any articles over my signature. There was never my signature to any articles in the Karmayogin except twice only, the last being the occasion for the prosecution which failed. There was no arrangement for my staying in Chandernagore at a place selected by Nivedita. I went without previous notice to anybody and was received by Motilal Roy who made secret arrangements for my stay; nobody except himself and a few friends knew where I was. The warrant of arrest was suspended, but after a month or so I used a manoeuvre to push the police into open action; the warrant was launched and a prosecution commenced against the printer in my absence which ended in acquittal in the High Court. I was already on my way to Pondicherry where I arrived on April 4. There also I remained in secrecy in the house of a prominent citizen until the acquittal, after which I announced my presence in French India. These are all the essential facts and they leave no room for the alleged happenings related in the book. It is best that you should communicate my statement of facts to Lizelle Reymond so that she may be able to make the necessary corrections or omissions in a future edition and remove this wrong information which would otherwise seriously detract from the value of her life of Nivedita.

13 September 1946

Life in Pondicherry, 1910–1950

Meeting with the Mother

Fate had just then brought him into contact with a remarkable Frenchman and his wife, Paul and Mirra Richard. They had for years been in search of a Master. . . .

[*Altered to:*] . . . with a remarkable Frenchman and his wife, Paul Richard and she who is now known as Sri Mira Devi. They had for years been in search of a Master in whom they could recognize a World-Teacher. . . .

*

Mirra Richard was no less overwhelmed by this vision — this reality — of the new Man.

[*Altered to:*] Mira Devi who had already gone far in spiritual realisation and occult vision and experience, was no less overwhelmed by this vision . . .

The *Arya*

The magazine [*Arya*] was presumably not a financial success.

It was, in fact; it paid its way with a large surplus.

The Development of the Ashram

Sri Aurobindo thought that the time had come to establish in Pondicherry an “ashram”, a rallying centre of aspiration and realization, the nucleus of a new community.

This is hardly the fact. There was no Asram at first, only a few people came to live near Sri Aurobindo and practise Yoga. It was only some time after the Mother came from Japan that it took

the form of the Asram, more from the wish of the sadhaks who desired to entrust their whole inner and outer life to the Mother than from any intention or plan of hers or of Sri Aurobindo.

*

In the meantime, Mirra Richard, after her recent visit to France, returned to Pondicherry on the 24th April, 1920. The number of disciples now showed a tendency to increase rather rapidly and Sri Aurobindo decided to entrust Mirra, the Mother, with the task of organizing the “ashram” on a wider basis. . . .

The facts are In the meantime, the Mother, after a long stay in France and Japan, returned to Pondicherry on the 24th April, 1920. The number of disciples then showed a tendency to increase rather rapidly. When the Asram began to develop, it fell to the Mother to organise it; Sri Aurobindo soon retired into seclusion and the whole material and spiritual charge of it devolved on her.

*

[On a section of a biography in which the writer dwelt at length on the Mother.]

Section V of this Chapter is better omitted. Up till now Sri Aurobindo has prohibited any public propaganda of the idea of his personal divinity and that of the Mother or of certain aspects of the Asram life; these things have been kept private for the Asram itself, and its inmates and the disciples—especially anything in the English language. In later pages of the book all that can be fruitfully said about the life of the Asram and the position of the Mother in the eyes of the disciples and in their life has been said and that should be sufficient.

Support for the Allies

[A telegram was sent to the Secretary of the Viceroy.]

The only telegram to the Secretary of the Viceroy was one

accompanying a donation of Rs.1000/- to the War Fund which was meant as a mark of Sri Aurobindo's adhesion to the cause of the Allies against the Axis. There was also a letter to the Governor of Madras forwarding another contribution along with a statement of his views about the war which was published. Besides this, other contributions were made direct to France. Later on, letters supporting the war were made public. As for the Cripps' offer, it was supported in a long telegram sent not to the Viceroy's Secretary but to Cripps himself after his broadcast in which he announced the offer.

*

[The telegram was a "political gesture".]

Sri Aurobindo does not know whether this can be described as a public political gesture. The interest of your chapters is historical and biographical rather than concerned with the present course of politics or any new intervention in it. At any rate Sri Aurobindo did not intend these notes as constituting any such public intervention or gesture.

Muslims and the 1947 Partition of Bengal

Muslims, the descendants of foreigners, favoured the partition of Bengal.

This would seem to indicate that all the Mohammedans in India are descendants of foreigners, but the idea of two nationalities in India is only a new-fangled notion invented by Jinnah for his purposes and contrary to the facts. More than 90% of the Indian Mussulmans are descendants of converted Hindus and belong as much to the Indian nation as the Hindus themselves. This process of conversion has continued all along; Jinnah is himself a descendant of a Hindu converted in fairly recent times named Jinnabhai and many of the most famous Mohammedan leaders have a similar origin.

*

Assam had a majority of Muslims.

The majority in Assam is made up of the Hindus and the tribal peoples; in Assam proper the Mussulmans are only 20% of the population. The balance has been altered by the inclusion of Sylhet, a Bengali district in Assam, but even so the non-Mussulmans predominate. At present [1946] a Congress Government is in power in Assam elected by a large majority and Assam is vehemently refusing to be grouped with Mussulman Bengal in the new constitution.

Early Spiritual Development

First Turn towards Spiritual Seeking

Sri Aurobindo's first turn towards spiritual seeking came in England in the last year of his stay there. He had lived in the family of a Non-conformist clergyman, minister of a chapel belonging to the "Congregational" denomination; though he never became a Christian, this was the only religion and the Bible the only scripture with which he was acquainted in his childhood; but in the form in which it presented itself to him, it repelled rather than attracted him and the hideous story of persecution staining mediaeval Christianity and the narrowness and intolerance even of its later developments disgusted him so strongly that he drew back from religion altogether. After a short period of complete atheism, he accepted the Agnostic attitude. In his studies for the I.C.S, however, he came across a brief and very scanty and bare statement of the "Six philosophies" of India and he was especially struck by the concept of the Atman in the Adwaita. It was borne in upon his mind that here might be [a] true clue to the reality behind life and the world. He made a strong and very crude mental attempt to realise what this Self or Atman might be, to convert the abstract idea into a concrete and living reality in his own consciousness, but conceiving it as something beyond or behind this material world,—not having understood it as something immanent in himself and all and also universal.

Beginnings of Yoga at Baroda

Sri Aurobindo was preoccupied, even when he was but a conscientious teacher or an accomplished poet . . . with the problem of service and of sacrifice. . . . From the very first the idea of personal salvation or of individual felicity was utterly repugnant to him.

This is a little too strong. It was rather that it did not seem anything like a supreme aim or worth being pursued for its own sake; a solitary salvation leaving the world to its fate was felt as almost distasteful.

*

Sri Aurobindo had acquired a measure of intellectual pre-eminence as a result of his stay in England; but that was not enough, and he was certainly not happy. His deeper perplexities remained; he did not know what exactly he should do to make himself useful to his countrymen or how he should set about doing it. He turned to yoga so that he might be enabled to clarify his own floating ideas and impulses and also, if possible, perfect the hidden instrument within.

There was no unhappiness. “Perplexities” also is too strong: Sri Aurobindo’s habit in action was not to devise beforehand and plan, but to keep a fixed purpose, watch events, prepare forces and act when he felt it to be the right moment. His first organised work in politics (grouping people who accepted the idea of independence and were prepared to take up an appropriate action) was undertaken at an early age, but took a regular shape in or about 1902; two years later he began his practice of Yoga —not to clarify his ideas, but to find the spiritual strength which would support him and enlighten his way.

*

Thus it may be said that Aravind Babu started taking interest in Yoga from 1898–99.

No. I did not start Yoga till about 1904.

*

Such guidance as he received from his earliest gurus and such partial realisation as he was then able to achieve only reinforced his faith in yoga as the sole cure for his own “rooted sorrow” and for the manifold ills of humanity.

[*Sri Aurobindo put a question mark against the word “gurus”, and wrote:*] There was no resort to Yoga as a cure for sorrow;

there was no sorrow to cure. He had always in him a considerable equanimity in his nature in face of the world and its difficulties, and after some inward depression in his adolescence (not due to any outward circumstances, and not amounting to sorrow or melancholy, for it was only a strain in the temperament), this became fairly settled.

*

Aravind Babu used to attend the lectures of the Swami [*Paramhansa Maharaj Indraswarup*] with much interest . . . and personally met him and learnt about *āsanas* and *prāṇā-yāma*.

Only heard his lecture at the Palace, did not go to see him, did not practise Pranayam till long afterwards.

*

He met the saint Madhavadas at Malsar on the banks of the Narmada and learnt about Yoga-āsanas.

Visited, probably with Deshpande, one or two places on the banks of the Narmada, but no recollection of Malsar or Madhavadas, certainly no effect of the meeting, if it happened at all.

*

Sri Aurobindo met, one by one, Sri Hamsa Swarupa Swami, Sri Sadguru Brahmanand and Sri Madhavadas. . . .

He had momentary contacts with Brahmanand, but as a great Yogi, not as a Guru — only darshan and blessing. There was no contact with the others.

*

[He met Brahmananda on the banks of the Narmada for advice on national education activities.]

Sri Aurobindo saw Brahmananda long before there was any question of national education activities. Brahmananda never gave him any counsel or advice nor was there any conversation

between them; Sri Aurobindo went to his monastery only for *darshan* and blessings. Barin had a close connection with Ganganath and his Guru was one of the Sannyasins who surrounded Brahmananda, but the connection with Ganganath was spiritual only.

*

As yet, however, Sri Aurobindo was wavering between Yoga and public life. . . . He established some connection with a member of the Governing Body of Naga Sannyasis. . . .

All this was before he left Baroda, some years before he met Lele.

*

We do not quite know what exactly happened to Sri Aurobindo during the first four years of his retirement in Pondicherry. This was a period of “silent yoga” Sri Aurobindo experimented earnestly and incessantly in the delectable laboratory of his soul; he presently outgrew the instructions that had been given to him by Lele and his predecessors.

That was done long before the sojourn in Pondicherry.

There were no predecessors. Sri Aurobindo had some connection with a member of the governing body of the Naga Sannyasis who gave him a mantra of Kali (or rather a stotra) and conducted certain Kriyas and a Vedic Yajna, but all this was for political success in his mission and not for Yoga.

Meeting with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele

. . . Lele also advised Sri Aurobindo, in the final resort, to trust only to his own inner spiritual inclinations.

[*Last phrase altered to:*] to trust only to the guidance of the Divine within him if once he could become aware of that guidance.

*

What Lele asked him was whether he could surrender himself entirely to the Inner Guide within him and move as it moved him;

if so he needed no instructions from Lele or anybody else. This Sri Aurobindo accepted and made that his rule of sadhana and of life. Before he met Lele, Sri Aurobindo had some spiritual experiences, but that [was] before he knew anything about Yoga or even what Yoga was, — e.g. a vast calm which descended upon him at the moment when he stepped first on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay; (this calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards,) the realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-[Sulaiman]¹ in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine in Chandod on the banks of the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay etc. But these were inner experiences coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of a sadhana. He started Yoga by himself without a Guru, getting the rule from a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda of [Ganganath]²; it was confined at first to the assiduous practice of Pranayama (at one time for 6 hours or more a day). There was no conflict or wavering between Yoga and politics; when he started Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. He wanted however to find a Guru. He met the Naga Sannyasi in the course of his search, but did not accept him as Guru, though he was confirmed by him in a belief in Yoga-power when he saw him cure Barin in almost a moment of a violent and clinging hill-fever by merely cutting through a glassful of water cross-wise with a knife while he repeated a silent mantra. Barin drank and was cured. He also met Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by him; but he had no helper or Guru in Yoga till he met Lele and that was only for a short time.

Sadhana 1908 – 1909

Under the auspices of the Bombay National Union, Sri Aurobindo addressed a large gathering on the 19th January 1908.

¹ MS Sulemani

² MS Ganga Math

He went to the meeting almost in a mood of inexplicable vacancy. . . .

Not inexplicable certainly; it was the condition of silence of the mind to which he had come by his meditation for 3 days with Lele in Baroda and which he kept for many months and indeed always thereafter, all activity proceeding on the surface; but at that time there was no activity on the surface. Lele told him to make namaskar to the audience and wait and speech would come to him from some other source than the mind. So in fact, the speech came, and ever since all speech, writing, thought and outward activity have so come to him from the same source above the brain-mind.

*

The passage bracketed should be omitted.³ It tends to give an incorrect impression about the nature of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and of what was happening in him at the time. The Yoga was going on in him all the time even during all his outward action but he was not withdrawn into himself or "dazed" as some of his friends thought. If he did not reply to questions or suggestions it was because he did not wish to and took refuge in silence.

*

Sri Aurobindo now [*in Alipore jail*] started reading the *Gita* and learning to live its *sadhana*; he fully apprehended the true inwardness and glory of *Sanatana Dharma*.

It should rather be said that he had long tried to apprehend the true inwardness and glory of the Indian religious and spiritual tradition, *Sanatana Dharma*, and to accept it in its entirety.

³ The passage referred to cannot now be identified.—Ed.

Philosophy and Writings

Sources of His Philosophy

Sri Aurobindo's intellect was influenced by Greek philosophy.

Very little. I read more than once Plato's Republic and Symposium, but only extracts from his other writings. It is true that under his impress I rashly started writing at the age of 18 an explanation of the cosmos on the foundation of the principle of Beauty and Harmony, but I never got beyond the first three or four chapters. I read Epictetus and was interested in the ideas of the Stoics and the Epicureans; but I made no study of Greek philosophy or of any of the [?]. I made in fact no study of metaphysics in my school and College days. What little I knew about philosophy I picked up desultorily in my general reading. I once read, not Hegel, but a small book on Hegel, but it left no impression on me. Later, in India, I read a book on Bergson, but that too ran off "like water from a duck's back". I remembered very little of what I had read and absorbed nothing. German metaphysics and most European philosophy since the Greeks seemed to me a mass of abstractions with nothing concrete or real that could be firmly grasped and written in a metaphysical jargon to which I had not the key. I tried once a translation of Kant but dropped it after the first two pages and never tried again. In India at Baroda I read a "Tractate" of Schopenhauer on the six centres and that seemed to me more interesting. In sum, my interest in metaphysics was almost null, and in general philosophy sporadic. I did not read Berkeley and only [?] into Hume; Locke left me very cold. Some general ideas only remained with me.

As to Indian Philosophy, it was a little better, but not much. I made no study of it, but knew the general ideas of the Vedanta philosophies, I knew practically nothing of the others except what I had read in Max Muller and in other general accounts.

The basic idea of the Self caught me when I was in England. I tried to realise what the Self might be. The first Indian writings that took hold of me were the Upanishads and these raised in me a strong enthusiasm and I tried later to translate some of them. The other strong intellectual influence [that] came in India in early life were the sayings of Ramakrishna and the writings and speeches of Vivekananda, but this was a first introduction to Indian spiritual experience and not as philosophy. They did not, however, carry me to the practice of Yoga: their influence was purely mental.

My philosophy was formed first by the study of the Upanishads and the Gita; the Veda came later. They were the basis of my first practice of Yoga; I tried to realise what I read in my spiritual experience and succeeded; in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy, not on ideas by themselves. I owed nothing in my philosophy to intellectual abstractions, ratiocination or dialectics; when I have used these means it was simply to explain my philosophy and justify it to the intellect of others. The other source of my philosophy was the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the plane of the Higher Mind when I reached that level; they [*the ideas from the Higher Mind*] came down in a mighty flood which swelled into a sea of direct Knowledge always translating itself into experience, or they were intuitions starting from experience and leading to other intuitions and a corresponding experience. This source was exceedingly catholic and many-sided and all sorts of ideas came in which might have belonged to conflicting philosophies but they were here reconciled in a large synthetic whole.

Perseus the Deliverer

Polydaon realises his failure — Poseidon's failure; . . . he now supplicates to the new "brilliant god", and falls back dead. It is left to Perseus, the new god, to sum up the career and destiny of Polydaon. . . .

[*Sri Aurobindo struck through “the new god” and wrote:*] The new brilliant god is the new Poseidon, Olympian and Greek, who in Polydaon’s vision replaces the terrible old-Mediterranean god of the seas. Perseus is and remains divine-human throughout.

Essays on the Gita

[*Dharma = devoir (duty)*]

Devoir is hardly the meaning of the [word]¹ Dharma. Performing disinterested[ly] one’s duty is a European misreading of the teaching of the Gita. Dharma in the Gita means the law of one’s own essential nature or is described sometimes as action governed by that nature, *swabhava*.

*

[The asuric and divine natures complement each other.]

This is not in the teaching of the Gita according to which the two natures are opposed to each other and the Asuric nature has to be rejected or to fall away by the power and process of the yoga. Sri Aurobindo’s yoga also insists on the rejection of the darker and lower elements of the nature.

The Future Poetry

The . . . articles that Sri Aurobindo contributed to *Arya* under the general caption, *The Future Poetry*, [were] initially inspired by a book of Dr. Cousins’s: in the fullness of time, however, the review became a treatise of over three hundred pages of *Arya*.

[*Altered to:*] . . . started initially with a review of a book of Dr. Cousins’s; but that was only a starting point for a treatise . . .

It was not the intention to make a long review of Cousins’ book, that was only a starting point; the rest was drawn from Sri Aurobindo’s own ideas and his already conceived view of art and life.

¹ MS (*dictated*) phrase

The Mother

Many of the letters that deal mainly with Yoga have now been edited and published in book form. *The Riddle of This World*, *Lights on Yoga*, *Bases of Yoga*, and *The Mother* . . . are all the fruits of the Ashram period.

The Mother had not the same origin as the other books mentioned. The main part of this book describing the four Shaktis etc. was written independently and not as a letter, so also the first part.

Some Philosophical Topics

These discernable slow gradations — steps in the spiral of ascent — are, respectively, Higher Mind, Intuition (or Intuitive Mind) and Overmind.

No, what is called intuitive Mind is usually a mixture of true Intuition with ordinary mentality — it can always admit a mingling of truth and error. Sri Aurobindo therefore avoids the use of this phrase. He distinguishes between Intuition proper and an intuitive human mentality.

*

When war at last becomes a mere nightmare of the past, peace will indeed reign in our midst, and even our dream of the Life Divine will then become an actuality in the fullness of time.

It is not Sri Aurobindo's view that the evolution of the Life Divine depends on the passing away of war. His view is rather the opposite.

*

He has caught indeed a vision, a vision of the Eternal, a vision of triune glory, a vision in the furthest beyond of transformed Supernature; but the vision is not a reality yet [1944].

Better write "not, on its highest peaks, a concrete embodied reality as yet: something has come down of the power or the influence but not the thing itself, far less its whole."

APPENDIX

Notes of Uncertain Origin

During a whole year a slice or two of sandwich, bread and butter and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening a penny saveloy formed the only food.

*

These invitations [*by the Maharaja*] were usually for some work to be done and could not be refused.

*

Sri Aurobindo's policy in India was not based on Parnellism. It had more resemblance to Sinn Fein but was conceived before the Sinn Fein movement and was therefore not inspired by it.

*

Sri Aurobindo began practising Yoga on his own account, starting with *prāṇāyāma* as explained to him by a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda. Afterwards faced with difficulties, he took the help of Lele who was called for the purpose from Gwalior by Barindra — this was after the Surat Congress in 1908.

*

There was no difference of opinion [*with the College authorities*]; the resignation was because of the *Bande Mataram* case, so as not to embarrass the authorities. After the acquittal, the College recalled him to his post. The final resignation was given from the Alipur jail.

*

The Nationalists wanted to propose Lajpatrai as President, not Tilak.

No Nationalist leader was seated on the dais.

Part Two
Letters of Historical Interest

Section One

Letters on Personal, Practical
and Political Matters

1890–1926

Family Letters, 1890–1919

Extract from a Letter to His Father

Last night I was invited to coffee with one of the Dons and in his rooms I met the Great O.B. otherwise Oscar Browning, who is the feature par excellence of King's. He was extremely flattering; passing from the subject of cotillions to that of scholarships he said to me "I suppose you know you passed an extraordinarily high examination. I have examined papers at thirteen examinations and I have never during that time [seen] such excellent papers as yours (meaning my classical papers at the scholarship examination). As for your essay it was wonderful." In this essay (a comparison between Shakespeare and Milton) I indulged in my Oriental tastes to the top of their bent; it overflowed with rich and tropical imagery; it abounded in antitheses and epigrams and it expressed my real feelings without restraint or reservation. I thought myself that it was the best thing I had ever done, but at school I would have been condemned as extraordinarily Asiatic & bombastic. The Great O.B. afterwards asked me where my rooms were & when I had answered he said "That wretched hole!" then turning to Mahaffy "How rude we are to our scholars! we get great minds to come down here and then shut them up in that box! I suppose it is to keep their pride down."

1890

To His Grandfather

Gujaria
Vijapur Taluka
N. Gujerat.
Jan 11. 1894.

My dear Grandfather

I received your telegram & postcard together this afternoon. I am at present in an exceedingly out of the way place, without any post-office within fifteen miles of it; so it would not be easy to telegraph. I shall probably be able to get to Bengal by the end of next week. I had intended to be there by this time, but there is some difficulty about my last month's salary without which I cannot very easily move. However I have written for a month's privileged leave & as soon as it is sanctioned shall make ready to start. I shall pass by Ajmere & stop for a day with Beno. My articles are with him; I will bring them on with me. As I do not know Urdu, or indeed any other language of the country, I may find it convenient to bring my clerk with me. I suppose there will be no difficulty about accommodating him.

I got my uncle's letter inclosing Soro's, the latter might have presented some difficulties, for there is no one who knows Bengali in Baroda — no one at least whom I could get at. Fortunately the smattering I acquired in England stood me in good stead, and I was able to make out the sense of the letter, barring a word here and a word there.

Do you happen to know a certain Akshaya Kumara Ghosha, resident in Bombay who claims to be a friend of the family? He has opened a correspondence with me — I have also seen him once at Bombay — & wants me to join him in some very laudable enterprises which he has on hand. I have given him that sort of double-edged encouragement which civility demanded, but as his letters seemed to evince some defect either of perfect sanity or perfect honesty, I did not think it prudent to go farther than that, without some better credentials than a self-introduction.

If all goes well, I shall leave Baroda on the 18th; at any rate

it will not be more than a day or two later.

Believe me
Your affectionate grandson
Aravind A. Ghose

To His Sister

[Baroda Camp
25 August 1894]

My dear Saro,

I got your letter the day before yesterday. I have been trying hard to write to you for the last three weeks, but have hitherto failed. Today I am making a huge effort and hope to put the letter in the post before nightfall. As I am now invigorated by three days' leave, I almost think I shall succeed.

It will be, I fear, quite impossible to come to you again so early as the Puja, though if I only could, I should start tomorrow. Neither my affairs, nor my finances will admit of it. Indeed it was a great mistake for me to go at all; for it has made Baroda quite intolerable to me. There is an old story about Judas Iscariot, which suits me down to the ground. Judas, after betraying Christ, hanged himself and went to Hell where he was honoured with the hottest oven in the whole establishment. Here he must burn for ever and ever; but in his life he had done one kind act and for this they permitted him by special mercy of God to cool himself for an hour every Christmas on an iceberg in the North Pole. Now this has always seemed to me not mercy, but a peculiar refinement of cruelty. For how could Hell fail to be ten times more Hell to the poor wretch after the delicious coolness of his iceberg? I do not know for what enormous crime I have been condemned to Baroda but my case is just parallel. Since my pleasant sojourn with you at Baidyanath, Baroda seems a hundred times more Baroda.

I dare say Beno may write to you three or four days before he leaves England. But you must think yourself lucky if he does as much as that. Most likely the first you hear of him, will be

a telegram from Calcutta. Certainly he has not written to me. I never expected and should be afraid to get a letter. It would be such a shocking surprise that I should certainly be able to do nothing but roll on the floor and gasp for breath for the next two or three hours. No, the favours of the Gods are too awful to be coveted. I dare say he will have energy enough to hand over your letter to Mano as they must be seeing each other almost daily. You must give Mano a little time before he answers you. He too is Beno's brother. Please let me have Beno's address as I don't know where to send a letter I have ready for him. Will you also let me have the name of Bari's English Composition Book and its compiler? I want such a book badly, as this will be useful for me not only in Bengalee but in Guzerati. There are no convenient books like that here.

You say in your letter "all here are quite well"; yet in the very next sentence I read "Bari has an attack of fever". Do you mean then that Bari is nobody? Poor Bari! That he should be excluded from the list of human beings, is only right and proper; but it is a little hard that he should be denied existence altogether. I hope it is only a slight attack. I am quite well. I have brought a fund of health with me from Bengal, which, I hope it will take me some time to exhaust; but I have just passed my twenty-second milestone, August 15 last, since my birthday and am beginning to get dreadfully old.

I infer from your letter that you are making great progress in English. I hope you will learn very quickly; I can then write to you quite what I want to say and just in the way I want to say it. I feel some difficulty in doing that now and I don't know whether you will understand it.

With love,

Your affectionate brother,
Auro

P.S. If you want to understand the new orthography of my name, ask uncle.

A.

Extract from a Letter to His Brother

Only a short while ago I had a letter from you—I cannot lay my hands on the passage, but I remember it contained an unreserved condemnation of Hindu legend as trivial and insipid, a mass of crude and monstrous conceptions, a [lumber-room]¹ of Hindu banalities. The main point of your indictment was that it had nothing in it simple, natural, passionate and human, that the characters were lifeless patterns of moral excellence.

I have been so long accustomed to regard your taste and judgment as sure and final that it is with some distrust I find myself differing from you. Will you permit me then to enter into some slight defence of what you have so emphatically condemned and explain why I venture to dedicate a poem on a Hindu subject, written in the Hindu spirit and constructed on Hindu principles of taste, style and management, to you who regard all these things as anathema maranatha? I am not attempting to convince you, only to justify, or at least define my own standpoint; perhaps also a little to reassure myself in the line of poetical art I have chosen.

The impression that Hindu Myth has made on you, is its inevitable aspect to a taste nourished on the pure dew and honey of Hellenic tradition; for the strong Greek sense of symmetry and finite beauty is in conflict with the very spirit of Hinduism, which is a vast attempt of the human intellect to surround the universe with itself, an immense measuring of itself with the infinite and amorphous. Hellenism must necessarily see in the greater part of Hindu imaginations and thoughts a mass of crude fancies equally removed from the ideal and the real. But when it condemns all Hindu legend without distinction, I believe it is acting from an instinct which is its defect,—the necessary defect of its fine quality. For in order to preserve a pure, sensitive and severe standard of taste and critical judgment, it is compelled to be intolerant; to insist, that is, on its own limits and rule out all that exceeds them, as monstrous and unbeautiful. It rejects that

¹ MS (*typed*) lumber-loom

flexible sympathy based on curiosity of temperament, which attempts to project itself into differing types as it meets them and so pass on through ever-widening artistic experiences to its destined perfection. And it rejects it because such catholicity would break the fine mould into which its own temperament is cast. This is well; yet is there room in art and criticism for that other, less fine but more many-sided, which makes possible new elements and strong departures. Often as the romantic temperament stumbles and creates broken and unsure work, sometimes it scores one of those signal triumphs which subject new art forms to the service of poetry or open up new horizons to poetical experience. What judgment would such a temperament, seeking its good where it can find it, but not grossly indiscriminating, not ignobly satisfied, pronounce on the Hindu legends?

I would carefully distinguish between two types of myth, the religious-philosophical allegory and the genuine secular legend. The former is beyond the pale of profitable argument. Created by the allegorical and symbolising spirit of mediaeval Hinduism, the religious myths are a type of poetry addressed to a peculiar mental constitution, and the sudden shock of the bizarre which repels occidental imagination the moment it comes in contact with Puranic literature, reveals to us where the line lies that must eternally divide East from West. The difference is one of root-temperament and therefore unbridgeable. There is the mental composition which has no facet towards imaginative religion, and if it accepts religion at all, requires it to be plain, precise and dogmatic; to such these allegories must always seem false in art and barren in significance. And there is the mental composition in which a strong metaphysical bent towards religion combines with an imaginative tendency seeking symbol both as an atmosphere around religion, which would otherwise dwell on too breathless mountaintops, and as a safeguard against the spirit of dogma. These find in Hindu allegory a perpetual delight and refreshment; they believe it to be powerful and penetrating, sometimes with an epical daring of idea and an inspiration of searching appropriateness which not unoften dissolves into a strange and curious beauty. The strangeness permeating these

legends is a vital part of themselves, and to eliminate the bizarre in them — bizarre to European notion, for to us they seem striking and natural — would be to emasculate them of the most characteristic part of their strength. Let us leave this type aside then as beyond the field of fruitful discussion.

There remain the secular legends; and it is true that a great number of them are intolerably puerile and grotesque. My point is that the puerility is no essential part of them but lies in their presentment, and that presentment again is characteristic of the Hindu spirit not in its best and most self-realising epochs. They were written in an age of decline, and their present form is the result of a literary accident. The *Mahabharata* of Vyasa, originally an epic of 24,000 verses, afterwards enlarged by a redacting poet, was finally submerged in a vast mass of inferior accretions, the work often of a tasteless age and unskilful hands. It is in this surface mass that the majority of the Hindu legends have floated down to our century. So preserved, it is not surprising that the old simple beauty of the ancient tales should have come to us marred and disfigured, as well as debased by association with later inventions which have no kernel of sweetness. And yet very simple and beautiful, in their peculiar Hindu type, were these old legends with infinite possibilities of sweetness and feeling, and in the hands of great artists have blossomed into dramas and epics of the most delicate tenderness or the most noble sublimity. One who glances at the dead and clumsy narrative of the Shacountala legend in the *Mahabharata* and reads after it Kalidasa's masterpiece in which delicate dramatic art and gracious tenderness of feeling reach their climax, at once perceives how they vary with the hands which touch them.

But you are right. The Hindu myth has not the warm passionate life of the Greek. The Hindu mind was too austere and idealistic to be sufficiently sensitive to the rich poetical colouring inherent in crime and sin and overpowering passion; an Oedipus or an Agamemnon stands therefore outside the line of its creative faculty. Yet it had in revenge a power which you will perhaps think no compensation at all, but which to a certain class of minds, of whom I confess myself one, seems of a very

real and distinct value. Inferior in warmth and colour and quick life and the savour of earth to the Greek, they had a superior spiritual loveliness and exaltation; not clothing the surface of the earth with imperishable beauty, they search deeper into the white-hot core of things and in their cyclic orbit of thought curve downward round the most hidden fountains of existence and upward over the highest, almost invisible arches of ideal possibility. Let me touch the subject a little more precisely. The difference between the Greek and Hindu temperaments was that one was vital, the other supra-vital; the one physical, the other metaphysical; the one sentient of sunlight as its natural atmosphere and the bound of its joyous activity, the other regarding it as a golden veil which hid from it beautiful and wonderful things for which it panted.² The Greek aimed at limit and finite perfection, because he felt vividly all our bounded existence; the Hindu mind, ranging into the infinite tended to the enormous and moved habitually in the sublime. This is poetically a dangerous tendency; finite beauty, symmetry and form are always lovely, and Greek legend, even when touched by inferior poets, must always keep something of its light and bloom and human grace or of its tragic human force. But the infinite is not for all hands to meddle with; it submits only to the compulsion of the mighty, and at the touch of an inferior mind recoils over the boundary of the sublime into the grotesque. Hence the enormous difference of level between different legends or the same legend in different hands,—the sublimity or tenderness of the best, the banality of the worst, with little that is mediocre and intermediate shading the contrast away. To take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions, till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning, is an ambition which Hindu poets

² O fostering Sun, who hast hidden the face of Truth with thy golden shield, displace that splendid veil from the vision of the righteous man, O Sun.

O fosterer, O solitary traveller, O Sun, O Master of Death, O child of God, dissipate thy beams, gather inward thy light; so shall I behold that splendour, thy goodliest form of all. For the Spirit who is there and there, He am I.

The Isha Upanishad.

of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.

I have attempted in the following narrative to bring one of our old legends before the English public in a more attractive garb than could be cast over them by mere translation or by the too obvious handling of writers like Sir Edwin Arnold;— preserving its inner spirit and Hindu features, yet rejecting no device that might smooth away the sense of roughness and the bizarre which always haunts what is unfamiliar, and win for it the suffrages of a culture to which our mythological conventions are unknown and our canons of taste unacceptable. The attempt is necessarily beset with difficulties and pitfalls. If you think I have even in part succeeded, I shall be indeed gratified; if otherwise, I shall at least have the consolation of having failed where failure was more probable than success.

The story of Ruaru is told in the very latest accretion-layer of the Mahabharata, in a bald and puerile narrative without force, beauty or insight. Yet it is among the most significant and powerful in idea of our legends; for it is rather an idea than a tale. Bhrigou, the grandfather of Ruaru, is almost the most august and venerable name in Vedic literature. Set there at the very threshold of Aryan history, he looms dim but large out of the mists of an incalculable antiquity, while around him move great shadows of unborn peoples and a tradition of huge half-discernible movements and vague but colossal revolutions. In later story his issue form one of the most sacred clans of Rishies, and Purshurama, the destroyer of princes, was of his offspring. By the Titaness Puloma this mighty seer and patriarch, himself one of the mind-children of Brahma had a son Chyavan—who inherited even from the womb his father's personality, greatness and ascetic energy. Chyavan too became an instructor and former of historic minds and a father of civilization; Ayus was among his pupils, the child of Pururavas by Urvasie and founder of the Lunar or Ilian dynasty whose princes after the great civil wars of the Mahabharata became Emperors of India. Chyavan's son Pramati, by an Apsara or nymph of paradise, begot a son named Ruaru, of whom this story is told. This Ruaru, later,

became a great Rishi like his fathers, but in his youth he was engrossed with his love for a beautiful girl whom he had made his wife, the daughter of the Gundhurva King, Chitroruth, by the sky-nymph Menaca; an earlier sister therefore of Shacountala. Their joy of union was not yet old when Priyumvada perished, like Eurydice, by the fangs of a snake. Ruaru inconsolable for her loss, wandered miserable among the forests that had been the shelter and witnesses of their loves, consuming the universe with his grief, until the Gods took pity on him and promised him his wife back, if he sacrificed for her half his life. To this Ruaru gladly assented and, the price paid, was reunited with his love.

Such is the story, divested of the subsequent puerile developments by which it is linked on to the Mahabharata. If we compare it with the kindred tale of Eurydice, the distinction I have sought to draw between the Hindu and Greek mythopoetic faculty, justifies itself with great force and clearness. The incidents of Orpheus' descent into Hades, his conquering Death and Hell by his music and harping his love back to the sunlight, and the tragic loss of her at the moment of success through a too natural and beautiful human weakness, has infinite fancy, pathos, trembling human emotion. The Hindu tale, barren of this subtlety and variety is bare of incident and wanting in tragedy. It is merely a bare idea for a tale. Yet what an idea it supplies! How deep and searching is that thought of half the living man's life demanded as the inexorable price for the restoration of his dead! How it seems to knock at the very doors of human destiny, and give us a gust of air from worlds beyond our own suggesting illimitable and unfathomable thoughts of our potentialities and limitations.

I have ventured in this poem to combine, as far as might be, the two temperaments, the Greek pathetic and the Hindu mystic; yet I have carefully preserved the essence of the Hindu spirit and the Hindu mythological features. The essential idea of these Hindu legends, aiming, as they do, straight and sheer at the sublime and ideal, gives the writer no option but to attempt epic tone and form,—I speak of course of those which are

not merely beautiful stories of domestic life. In the choice of an epic setting I had the alternative of entirely Hellenising the myth or adopting the method of Hindu Epic. I have preferred the course which I fear, will least recommend itself to you. The true subject of Hindu epic is always a struggle between two ideal forces universal and opposing, while the human and divine actors, the Supreme Triad excepted, are pawns moved to and fro by immense world-impulses which they express but cannot consciously guide. It is perhaps the Olympian ideal in life struggling with the Titanic ideal, and then we have a Ramaian. Or it may be the imperial ideal in government and society marshalling the forces of order, self-subjection, self-effacement, justice, equality, against the aristocratic ideal, with self-will, violence, independence, self-assertion, feudal loyalty, the sway of the sword and the right of the stronger at its back; this is the key of the Mahabharata. Or it is again, as in the tale of Savitrie, the passion of a single woman in its dreadful silence and strength pitted against Death, the divorcer of souls. Even in a purely domestic tale like the Romance of Nul, the central idea is that of the Spirit of Degeneracy, the genius of the Iron age, overpowered by a steadfast conjugal love. Similarly, in this story of Ruaru and Priyumvada the great Spirits who preside over Love and Death, Cama and Yama, are the real actors and give its name to the poem.

The second essential feature of the Hindu epic model is one which you have selected for especial condemnation and yet I have chosen to adhere to it in its entirety. The characters of Hindu legend are, you say, lifeless patterns of moral excellence. Let me again distinguish. The greater figures of our epics are ideals, but ideals of wickedness as well as virtue and also of mixed characters which are not precisely either vicious or virtuous. They are, that is to say, ideal presentations of character-types. This also arises from the tendency of the Hindu creative mind to look behind the actors at tendencies, inspirations, ideals. Yet are these great figures, are Rama, Sita, Savitrie, merely patterns of moral excellence? I who have read their tale in the swift and mighty language of Valmekie and Vyasa and thrilled with

their joys and their sorrows, cannot persuade myself that it is so. Surely Savitrie that strong silent heart, with her powerful and subtly-indicated personality, has both life and charm; surely Rama puts too much divine fire into all he does to be a dead thing,—Sita is too gracious and sweet, too full of human lovingness and loveliness, of womanly weakness and womanly strength! Ruaru and Priyumvada are also types and ideals; love in them, such is the idea, finds not only its crowning exaltation but that perfect *idea* of itself of which every existing love is a partial and not quite successful manifestation. Ideal love is a triune energy, neither a mere sensual impulse, nor mere emotional nor mere spiritual. These may exist, but they are not love. By itself the sensual is only an animal need, the emotional a passing mood, the spiritual a religious aspiration which has lost its way. Yet all these are necessary elements of the highest passion. Sense impulse is as necessary to it as the warm earth-matter at its root to the tree, emotion as the air which consents with its life, spiritual aspiration as the light and the rain from heaven which prevent it from withering. My conception being an ideal struggle between love and death, two things are needed to give it poetical form, an adequate picture of love and adequate image of Death. The love pictured must be on the ideal plane, and touch therefore the farthest limit of strength in each of its three directions. The sensual must be emphasised to give it firm root and basis, the emotional to impart to it life, the spiritual to prolong it into infinite permanence. And if at their limits of extension the three meet and harmonise, if they are not triple but triune, then is that love a perfect love and the picture of it a perfect picture. Such at least is the conception of the poem; whether I have contrived even faintly to execute it, do you judge.

But when Hindu canons of taste, principles of epic writing and types of thought and character are assimilated there are still serious difficulties in Englishing a Hindu legend. There is the danger of raising around the subject a jungle of uncouth words and unfamiliar allusions impenetrable to English readers. Those who have hitherto made the attempt, have succumbed to the passion for "local colour" or for a liberal peppering of Sanscrit

words all over their verses, thus forming a constant stumbling-block and a source of irritation to the reader. Only so much local colour is admissible as comes naturally and unforced by the very nature of the subject; and for the introduction of a foreign word into poetry the one valid excuse is the entire absence of a fairly corresponding word or phrase in the language itself. Yet a too frequent resort to this plea shows either a laziness in invention or an unseasonable learning. There are very few Sanscrit words or ideas, not of the technical kind, which do not admit of being approximately conveyed in English by direct rendering or by a little management, or, at the worst, by coining a word which, if not precisely significant of the original, will create some kindred association in the mind of an English reader. A slight inexactness is better than a laborious pedantry. I have therefore striven to avoid all that would be unnecessarily local and pedantic, even to the extent of occasionally using a Greek expression such as Hades for the lord of the underworld. I believe such uses to be legitimate, since they bring the poem nearer home to the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, there are some words one is loth to part with. I have myself been unable or unwilling to sacrifice such Indianisms as Rishi; Naga, for the snake-gods who inhabit the nether-world; Uswuttha, for the sacred fig-tree; chompuc (but this has been made familiar by Shelley's exquisite lyric); coil or Kokil, for the Indian cuckoo; and names like Dhurma (Law, Religion, Rule of Nature) and Critanta, the ender, for Yama, the Indian Hades. These, I think, are not more than a fairly patient reader may bear with. Mythological allusions, the indispensable setting of a Hindu legend, have been introduced sparingly, and all but one or two will explain themselves to a reader of sympathetic intelligence and some experience in poetry.

Yet are they, in some number, indispensable. The surroundings and epic machinery must necessarily be the ordinary Hindu surroundings and machinery. Properly treated, I do not think these are wanting in power and beauty of poetic suggestion. Ruaru, the grandson of Bhrigou, takes us back to the very beginnings of Aryan civilisation when our race dwelt and warred

and sang within the frontier of the five rivers, Iravatie, Chundrobhaga, Shotodrou, Bitosta and Bipasha, and our Bengal was but a mother of wild beasts, clothed in the sombre mystery of virgin forests and gigantic rivers and with no human inhabitants save a few savage tribes, the scattered beginnings of nations. Accordingly the story is set in times when earth was yet new to her children, and the race was being created by princes like Pururavas and patriarchal sages or Rishies like Bhrigou, Brihuspati, Gautama. The Rishi was in that age the head of the human world. He was at once sage, poet, priest, scientist, prophet, educator, scholar and legislator. He composed a song, and it became one of the sacred hymns of the people; he emerged from rapt communion with God to utter some puissant sentence, which in after ages became the germ of mighty philosophies; he conducted a sacrifice, and kings and peoples rose on its seven flaming tongues to wealth and greatness; he formulated an observant aphorism, and it was made the foundation of some future science, ethical, practical or physical; he gave a decision in a dispute and his verdict was seed of a great code or legislative theory. In Himalayan forests or by the confluence of great rivers he lived as the centre of a patriarchal family whose link was thought-interchange and not blood-relationship, bright-eyed children of sages, heroic striplings, earnest pursuers of knowledge, destined to become themselves great Rishies or renowned leaders of thought and action. He himself was the master of all learning and all arts and all sciences. The Rishies won their knowledge by meditation working through inspiration to intuition. Austere concentration of the faculties stilled the waywardness of the reason and set free for its work the inner, unerring vision which is above reason, as reason is itself above sight; this again worked by intuitive flashes, one inspired stroke of insight quivering out close upon the other, till the whole formed a logical chain; yet a logic not coldly thought out nor the logic of argument but the logic of continuous and consistent inspiration. Those who sought the Eternal through physical austerities, such as the dwelling between five fires (one fire on each side and the noonday sun overhead) or lying for

days on a bed of swordpoints, or Yoga processes based on an advanced physical science, belonged to a later day. The Rishies were inspired thinkers, not working through deductive reason or any physical process of sense-subdual. The energy of their personalities was colossal; wrestling in fierce meditation with God, they had become masters of incalculable spiritual energies, so that their anger could blast peoples and even the world was in danger when they opened their lips to utter a curse. This energy was by the principle of heredity transmitted, at least in the form of a latent and educable force, to their offspring. Afterwards as the vigour of the race exhausted itself, the inner fire dwindled and waned. But at first even the unborn child was divine. When Chyavan was in the womb, a Titan to whom his mother Puloma had been betrothed before she was given to Bhrigou, attempted to carry off his lost love in the absence of the Rishi. It is told that the child in the womb felt the affront and issued from his mother burning with such a fire of inherited divinity that the Titan ravisher fell blasted by the wrath of an infant. For the Rishies were not passionless. They were prone to anger and swift to love. In their pride of life and genius they indulged their yearnings for beauty, wedding the daughters of Titans or mingling with nymphs of Paradise in the august solitudes of hills and forests. From these were born those ancient and sacred clans of a prehistoric antiquity, Barghoves, Barhaspaths, Gautamas, Kasyapas, into which the descendants of the Aryan are to this day divided. Thus has India deified the great men who gave her civilisation.

On earth the Rishies, in heaven the Gods. These were great and shining beings who preserved the established cosmos against the Asuras, or Titans, spirits of disorder between whom and the Hindu Olympians there was ever warfare. Yet their hostility did not preclude occasional unions. Sachi herself, the Queen of Heaven, was a Titaness, daughter of the Asura, Puloman; Yayati, ally of the Gods, took to himself a Daitya maiden Surmishtha, child of imperial Vrishopurvan (for the Asuras or Daityas, on the [terrestrial]³ plane, signified the adversaries of

³ MS (*typed*) territorial

Aryan civilisation), and Bhrigou's wife, Puloma, was of the Titan blood. Chief of the Gods were Indra, King and Thunderer, who came down when men sacrificed and drank the Soma wine of the offering; Vaiou, the Wind; Agni, who is Hutaashon, devourer of the sacrifice, the spiritual energy of Fire; Varouna, the prince of the seas; Critanta, Death, the ender, who was called also Yama (Government) or Dhurma (Law) because from him are all order and stability, whether material or moral. And there were subtler presences; Cama, also named Modon or Monmuth, the God of desire, who rode on the parrot and carried five flowery arrows and a bow-string of linked honey-bees; his wife, Ruthie, the golden-limbed spirit of delight; Saruswatie, the Hindu Muse, who is also Vach or Word, the primal goddess—she is the unexpressed idea of existence which by her expression takes visible form and being; for the word is prior to and more real, because more spiritual, than the thing it expresses; she is the daughter of Brahma and has inherited the creative power of her father, the wife of Vishnou and shares the preservative energy of her husband; Vasuqie, also, and Seshanaga, the great serpent with his hosts, whose name means finiteness and who represents Time and Space; he upholds the world on his hundred colossal hoods and is the couch of the Supreme who is Existence. There were also the angels who were a little less than the Gods; Yukshas, the Faery attendants of Kuvere, lord of wealth, who protect hoards and treasures and dwell in Ullaca, the city of beauty,

the hills of mist
 Golden, the dwelling place of Faery kings,
 And mansions by unearthly moonlight kissed:—
 For one dwells there whose brow with the young moon
 Lightens as with a marvellous amethyst—

Ullaca, city of beauty, where no thought enters but that of love, no age but that of youth, no season but that of flowers. Then there are the Gundhurvas, beautiful, brave and melodious beings, the artists, musicians, poets and shining warriors of heaven; Kinnaries, Centaresses of sky and hill with voices of Siren melody; Opsaras, sky-nymphs, children of Ocean, who

dwell in Heaven, its songstresses and daughters of joy, and who often mingle in love with mortals. Nor must we forget our own mother, Ganges, the triple and mystic river, who is Mundaqinie, Ganges of the Gods, in heaven, Bhagirathie or Jahnavie, Ganges of men, on earth, and Boithorinie or coiling Bhogavatie, Ganges of the dead, in Patala, the grey under-world and kingdom of serpents, and in the sombre dominions of Yama. Saraswatie, namesake and shadow of the Muse, preceded her in her sacredness; but the banks of those once pure waters have long passed to the barbarian and been denounced as unclean and uninhabitable to our race, while the deity has passed to that other mysterious underground stream which joins Ganges and Yamouna in their tryst at Proyaga.

Are there not here sufficient features of poetical promise, sufficient materials of beauty for the artist to weave into immortal visions? I would gladly think that there are, that I am not cheating myself with delusions when I seem to find in this yet untrodden path,

via . . . qua me quoque possim
Tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora.

Granted, you will say, but still *Quorsum haec putida tendunt?* or how does it explain the dedication to me of a style of work at entire variance with my own tastes and preferences? But the value of a gift depends on the spirit of the giver rather than on its own suitability to the recipient. Will you accept this poem as part-payment of a deep intellectual debt I have been long owing to you? Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged me from my childhood to be a poet. From your sun my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain and faltering footsteps. If I have now in the inevitable development of an independent temperament in independent surroundings departed from your guidance and entered into a path, perhaps thornier and more rugged, but my own, it does not lessen the obligation of that first light and example. It is my hope that in the enduring fame which your calmer and more luminous genius must one day

bring you, on a distant verge of the skies and lower plane of planetary existence, some ray of my name may survive and it be thought no injury to your memory that the first considerable effort of my powers was dedicated to you.

To His Uncle

c/o Rao Bahadur K.B. Jadhava
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
15th August 1902

My dear Boromama,

I am sorry to hear from Sarojini that Mejdada has stopped sending mother's allowance and threatens to make the stoppage permanent unless you can improvise a companion to the Goddess of Purulia. This is very characteristic of Mejdada; it may even be described in one word as Manomaniac. Of course he thinks he is stopping your pension and that this will either bring you to reason or effectually punish you. But the main question is What is to be done now? Of course I can send Rs 40 now and so long as I am alone it does not matter very much, but it will be rather a pull when Mrinalini comes back to Baroda. However even that could be managed well enough with some self-denial and an effective household management. But there is a tale of woe behind.

Sarojini suggests that I might bring her or have her brought to Baroda with my wife. I should have no objection, but is that feasible? In the first place will she agree to come to the other end of the world like that? And if she does, will not the violent change and the shock of utterly unfamiliar surroundings, strange faces and an unintelligible tongue or rather two or three unintelligible tongues, have a prejudicial effect upon her mind? Sarojini and my wife found it intolerable enough to live under such circumstances for a long time; how would mother stand it? This is what I am most afraid of. Men may cut themselves off from home and everything else and make their own atmosphere

in strange places, but it is not easy for women and I am afraid it would be quite impossible for a woman in her mental condition. Apart from these objections it might be managed. Of course I could not give her a separate house, but she might be assured that whenever a Boro Bou came, she should have one to receive her in; I daresay that would satisfy her. In case however it does not or the experiment should be judged too risky, I must go on sending Rs 40 as long as I can.

But there comes the tale of woe I have spoken of. We have now had three years of scarcity, the first of them being a severe famine. The treasury of the State is well nigh exhausted—a miserable 30 or 40 lakhs is all that remains, and in spite of considerable severity and even cruelty in collection the revenues of the last year amount simply to the tail of the dog without the dog himself. This year there was no rain in Baroda till the first crop withered; after July 5th about 9 inches fell, just sufficient to encourage the cultivators to sow again. Now for want of more rain the second crop is withering away into nothingness. The high wind which has prevented rain still continues, and though there is a vague hope of a downpour after the 15th, one cannot set much store by it. Now in case there should be a severe famine this year, what may happen is something like this; either we shall all be put on half pay for the next twelve months,—in other words I who can only just manage to live on Rs 360 will have to do it on Rs 180—or the pay will be cut down permanently (or at least for some years) by 25 per cent, in which case I shall rejoice upon Rs 270; or thirdly (and this may Heaven forbid) we shall get our full pay till December and after that live on the munificent amount of nothing a month. In any case it will be impossible to bring mother or even Mrinalini to Baroda. And there is worse behind. The Ajwa reservoir after four years of drought is nearly exhausted. The just-drinkable-if-boiled water in it will last for about a month; the nondrinkable for still two months more. This means that if there is no rain, there will be a furious epidemic of cholera before two months are out and after three months this city, to say nothing of other parts of the Raj, will be depopulated by a water famine. Of course the old

disused wells may be filled up, but that again means cholera in excelsis. The only resource will be for the whole State to go and camp out on the banks of the Narmada and the Mahi.

Of course if I get half pay I shall send Rs 80 to Bengal, hand over Rs 90 as my contribution to the expenses to Khaserao and keep the remaining 10 for emergencies; but supposing the third course suggested should be pursued? I shall then have to take a third class ticket to Calcutta and solicit an 150 Rs place in Girish Bose's or Mesho's College—if Lord Curzon has not abolished both of them by that time. Of course I could sponge upon my father-in-law in Assam, becoming a *ghor jamai* for the time being, but then who would send money to Deoghur and Benares? To such a pass have an allwise Providence and the blessings of British rule brought us! However let us all hope that it will rain.

Please let me know whether Mejdada has sent any money by the time this reaches you. If he has not, I suppose I must put my shoulder to the burden. And by the way if you have found my MS of verse translations from Sanscrit, you might send it to me “by return of post”. The Seeker had better remain with you instead of casting itself on the perilous waters of the Post-Office.

My health has not been very good recently; that is to say, although I have no recognised doctor's illness, I have developed a new disease of my own, or rather a variation of Madhavrao's special brand of nervous debility. I shall patent mine as A.G's private and particular. Its chief symptom is a ghastly inability to do any serious work; two hours' work induces a feverish exhaustion and a burning sensation all over the body as well as a pain in the back. I am then useless for the rest of the day. So for some time past I have had to break up the little work I have done into half an hour here, half an hour there and half an hour nowhere. The funny thing is that I keep up a very decent appetite and am equal to any amount of physical exercise that may be demanded of me. In fact if I take care to do nothing but kasrat and croquet and walking and rushing about, I keep in a grand state of health,—but an hour's work turns me again into

an invalid. This is an extremely awkward state of things and if you know any homoeopathic drug which will remove it, I will shut my eyes and swallow it.

Of course under such circumstances I find it difficult to write letters. I do not know how many letters to Sarojini & my wife I have begun, written two lines and left. The other day, however, there was a promising sign. I began to write a letter to you and actually managed to finish one side and a half. This has encouraged me to try again and I do believe I shall finish this letter today — the second day of writing.⁴ The improvement, which is part of a general abatement of my symptoms, I attribute to a fortnight's determined and cynical laziness. During this time I have been to Ahmedabad with our cricket eleven and watched them get a jolly good beating; which happy result we celebrated by a gorgeous dinner at the refreshment room. I believe the waiters must have thought us a party of famine-stricken labourers, dressed up in stolen clothes, perhaps the spoils of massacred famine officers. There were six of us and they brought us a dozen plentiful courses; we ate them all and asked for more. As for the bread we consumed — well, they brought us at first a huge toast-rack with about 20 large pieces of toast. After three minutes there was nothing left except the rack itself; they repeated the allowance with a similar result. Then they gave up the toast as a bad job, and brought in two great plates each with a mountain of bread on it as large as Nandanpahad. After a short while we were howling for more. This time there was a wild-eyed consultation of waiters and after some minutes they reappeared with large trays of bread carried in both hands. This time they conquered. They do charge high prices at the refreshment rooms but I don't think they got much profit out of us that time. Since then I have been once on a picnic to Ajwa with the District Magistrate and Collector of Baroda, the second Judge of the High Court and a still more important and solemn personage whom you may have met under the name of Mr. Anandrao Jadhav. A second picnic was afterwards organized in which some dozen rowdies, not to

⁴ I didn't after all.

say Hooligans, of our club — the worst among them, I regret to say, was the father of a large family and a trusted officer of H.H. the Maharajah Gaekwar, — went down to Ajwa and behaved in such a manner that it is a wonder we were not arrested and locked up. On the way my horse broke down and so four of us had to get down and walk three miles in the heat. At the first village we met a cart coming back from Ajwa and in spite of the carters' protests seized it, turned the bullocks round and started them back — of course with ourselves in the cart. The bullocks at first thought they were going to do the journey at their usual comfortable two miles an hour, but we convinced them of their error with the ends of our umbrellas and they ran. I don't believe bullocks have ever run so fast since the world began. The way the cart jolted, was a wonder; I know the internal arrangements of my stomach were turned upside down at least 300 times a minute. When we got to Ajwa we had to wait an hour for dinner; as a result I was again able to eat ten times my usual allowance. As for the behaviour of those trusted pillars of the Baroda Raj at Ajwa, a veil had better be drawn over it; I believe I was the only quiet and decent person in the company. On the way home the carriage in which my part of the company installed itself, was the scene of a remarkable tussle in which three of the occupants and an attendant cavalier attempted to bind the driver, (the father of a large family aforesaid) with a horse-rope. As we had been ordered to do this by the Collector of Baroda, I thought I might join in the attempt with a safe conscience. Paterfamilias threw the reins to Providence and fought — I will say it to his credit — like a Trojan. He scratched me, he bit one of my coadjutors, in both cases drawing blood, he whipped furiously the horse of the assistant cavalier, and when Madhavrao came to his assistance, he rewarded the benevolent intention by whipping at Madhavrao's camel! It was not till we reached the village, after a six-miles conflict, and got him out of the carriage that he submitted to the operation. The wonder was that our carriage did not get upset; indeed, the mare stopped several times in order to express her entire disgust at the improper and turbulent character of these proceedings. For the greater part of the way

home she was brooding indignantly over the memory of it and once her feelings so much overcame her that she tried to upset us over the edge of the road, which would have given us a comfortable little fall of three feet. Fortunately she was relieved by this little demonstration and her temper improved wonderfully after it. Finally last night I helped to kidnap Dr. Cooper, the Health Officer of the State, and make him give us a big dinner at the Station with a bottle and a half of sherry to wash it down. The Doctor got so merry over the sherry of which he drank at least two thirds himself, that he ordered a *special-class* dinner for the whole company next Saturday. I don't know what Mrs. Cooper said to him when he got home. All this has had a most beneficial effect upon my health, as the writing of so long a letter shows.

I suppose you have got Anandrao's letter; you ought to value it, for the time he took to write it is, I believe, unequalled in the history of epistolary creation. The writing of it occupied three weeks, fair-copying it another fortnight, writing the address seven days and posting it three days more. You will see from it that there is no need to be anxious about his stomach: it righted itself the moment he got into the train at Deoghur Station. In fact he was quite lively and warlike on the way home. At Jabalpur we were unwise enough not to spread out our bedding on the seats and when we got in again, some upcountry scoundrels had boned Anandrao's berth. After some heated discussion I occupied half of it and put Anandrao on mine. Some Mahomedans, quite inoffensive people, sat at the edge of this, but Anandrao chose to confound them with the intruders and declared war on them. The style of war he adopted was a most characteristically Maratha style. He pretended to go to sleep and began kicking the Mahomedans, in his "sleep" of course, having specially gone to bed with his boots on for the purpose. I had at last to call him off and put him on my half-berth. Here, his legs being the other way, he could not kick; so he spent the night butting the upcountryman with his head; next day he boasted triumphantly to me that he had conquered a foot and half of territory from the intruder by his brilliant plan of campaign. When the Boers rise

once more against England, I think we shall have to send them Anandrao as an useful assistant to Generals Botha and Delarey.

No rain as yet, and it is the 15th of August. My thirtieth birthday, by English computation! How old we are all getting!

Your affectionate nephew
Aurobind Ghose.

P.S. There is a wonderful story travelling about Baroda, a story straight out of Fairyland, that I have received Rs 90 promotion. Everybody seems to know all about it except myself. The story goes that a certain officer rejoicing in the name of Damn-you-bhai wanted promotion, so the Maharaja gave him Rs 50. He then proceeded to remark that as this would give Damn-you-bhai an undue seniority over M^r. Would-you-ah! and M^r. Manoeu(vre)bhai, the said Would-you-ah and Manoeu(vre)bhai must also get Rs 50 each, and "as M^r. Ghose has done good work for me, I give him Rs 90". The beautiful logical connection of the last bit with what goes before, dragging M^r. Ghose in from nowhere & everywhere, is so like the Maharaja that the story may possibly be true. If so, it is very satisfactory, as my pay will now be — Famine permitting — Rs 450 a month. It is not quite so good as Mejdada's job, but it will serve. Rs 250 promotion after ten years' service does not look very much, but it is better than nothing. At that rate I shall get Rs 700 in 1912 and be drawing about Rs 1000 when I am ready to retire from Baroda either to Bengal or a better world. Glory Halleluja!

Give my love to Sarojini and tell her I shall write to her — if I can. Don't forget to send the MS of translations. I want to typewrite and send to England.

To His Wife

c/o K.B. Jadhav Esq
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
20th August 1902

Dearest Mrinalini,

I have not written to you for a long time because I have not been in very good health and had not the energy to write. I went out of Baroda for a few days to see whether change and rest would set me up, and your telegram came when I was not here. I feel much better now, and I suppose there was nothing really the matter with me except overwork. I am sorry I made you so anxious; there was no real cause to be so, for you know I never get *seriously* ill. Only when I feel out of sorts, I find writing letters almost impossible.

The Maharajah has given me Rs 90 promotion — this will raise my pay to Rs 450. In the order he has made me a lot of compliments about my powers, talent, capacity, usefulness etcetera, but also made a remark on my want of regularity and punctual habits. Besides he shows his intention of taking the value of the Rs 90 out of me by burdening me with overwork, so I don't feel very grateful to him. He says that if convenient, my services can be utilized in the College. But I don't see how it will be convenient, just now, at least; for it is nearly the end of the term. Even if I go to the College, he has asked the Dewan to use me for writing Annual Reports etc. I suppose this means that he does not want me to get my vacations. However, let us see what happens.

If I join the College now and am allowed the three months' vacation, I shall of course go to Bengal and to Assam for a short visit. I am afraid it will be impossible for you to come to Baroda just now. There has been no rain here for a month, except a short shower early this morning. The wells are all nearly dried up; the water of the Ajwa reservoir which supplies Baroda is very low and must be quite used up by next November; the crops in the

fields are all parched and withering. This means that we shall not only have famine; but there will be no water for bathing and washing up, or even, perhaps for drinking. Besides if there is famine, it is practically sure that all the officers will be put on half-pay. We are hoping, rather than expecting, that there may be good rain before the end of August. But the signs are against it, and if it comes, it will only remove the water difficulty or put it off for a few months. For you to come to Baroda and endure all the troubles & sufferings of such a state of things is out of the question. You must decide for yourself whether you will stay with your father or at Deoghur. You may as well stay in Assam till October, and then if I can go to Bengal, I will take you to Deoghur where you can stop for the winter at least. If I cannot come then, I will, if you like, try and make some arrangement for you to be taken there.

I am glad your father will be able to send me a cook when you come. I have got a Maratha cook, but he can prepare nothing properly except meat dishes. I don't know how to get over the difficulty about the *jhi*. Sarojini wrote something about a Mahomedan *ayah*, but that would never do. After so recently being readmitted to Hindu society, I cannot risk it; it is all very well for Khaserao & others whose social position is so strong that they may do almost anything they like. As soon as I see any prospect of being able to get you here, I shall try my best to arrange about a maid-servant. It is no use doing it now.

I hope you will be able to read and understand this letter; if you can't, I hope it will make you more anxious to learn English than you have been up to now. I could not manage to write a Bengali letter just now—so I thought I had better write in English rather than put off writing.

Do not be too much disappointed by the delay in coming to Baroda; it cannot be avoided. I should like you to spend some time in Deoghur, if you do not mind, Assam somehow seems terribly far off; and besides, I should like you to form a closer intimacy with my relatives, at least those among them whom I especially love.

Your loving husband

To His Father-in-Law

[1]

Calcutta

June 8th 1906.

My dear father-in-law,

I could not come over to Shillong in May, because my stay in Eastern Bengal was unexpectedly long. It was nearly the end of May before I could return to Calcutta, so that my programme was necessarily changed. I return to Baroda today. I have asked for leave from the 12th, but I do not know whether it will be sanctioned so soon. In any case I shall be back by the end of the month. If you are anxious to send Mrinalini down, I have no objection whatever. I have no doubt my aunt will gladly put her up until I can return from Baroda and make my arrangements.

I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it. Of course that is no excuse for my culpability in not writing letters,—a fault I am afraid I shall always be quicker to admit than to reform. I can easily understand that to others it may seem to spring from a lack of the most ordinary affection. It was not so in the case of my father from whom I seem to inherit the defect. In all my fourteen years in England I hardly got a dozen letters from him, and yet I cannot doubt his affection for me, since it was the false report of my death which killed him. I fear you must take me as I am with all my imperfections on my head.

Barin has again fallen ill, and I have asked him to go out to some healthier place for a short visit. I was thinking he might go to Waltair, but he has set his heart on going to Shillong—I don't quite know why, unless it is to see a quite new place and at the same time make acquaintance with his sister-in-law's family. If he goes, I am sure you will take good care of him for the short time he may be there. You will find him, I am afraid, rather wilful & erratic,—the family failing. He is especially fond of

knocking about by himself in a spasmodic and irregular fashion when he ought to be sitting at home and nursing his delicate health, but I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect; if checked, he is likely to go off at a tangent & makes things worse. He has, however, an immense amount of vitality which allows him to play these tricks with impunity in a good climate, and I think a short stay at Shillong ought to give him another lease of health.

Your affectionate
son-in-law
Aurobindo Ghose

[2]

Pondicherry
19 February 1919

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you with regard to this fatal event in both our lives; words are useless in face of the feelings it has caused, if even they can ever express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irreparable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Mrinalini would have desired, should be done, and I have no doubt this is what she would have approved of. I consent to the chudis being kept by her mother; but I should be glad if you would send me two or three of her books, especially if there are any in which her name is written. I have only of her her letters and a photograph.

Aurobindo

Pondicherry
19 February 1919

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you at all regard to this fatal event in both our lives; words are useless or free of the feelings it has caused, & even they can never express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irreparable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection absts for me. When I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Nomialni would have desired, should

Sri Aurobindo's letter to his father-in-law, 19 February 1919

19

be done, and I have no doubt this is what she
would have approved of. I consent to the
sketches being kept by her mother; but I should
be glad if you would send me two or three of
her books, especially if there are any in which
her name is written. I have only of her her
letters and a photograph.

Aurobindo

Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892

To Lord Kimberley

[1]

To
the Right Hon the Earl of
Kimberley
Secretary of State
for
India.

6 Burlington Rd
Bayswater W
Monday. Nov. 21. 1892

May it please your Lordship

I was selected as a probationer for the Indian Civil Service in 1890, and after the two years probation required have been rejected on the ground that I failed to attend the Examination in Riding.

I humbly petition your Lordship that a farther consideration may, if possible, be given to my case.

I admit that the Commissioners have been very indulgent to me in the matter, and that my conduct has been as would naturally lead them to suppose me negligent of their instructions; but I hope your Lordship will allow me to lay before you certain circumstances that may tend to extenuate it.

I was sent over to England, when seven years of age, with my two elder brothers and for the last eight years we have been thrown on our own resources without any English friend to help or advise us. Our father, D^r. K. D. Ghose of Khulna, has been unable to provide the three of us with sufficient for the most necessary wants, and we have long been in an embarrassed position.

It was owing to want of money that I was unable always to report cases in London at the times required by the Commissioners, and to supply myself with sufficiently constant practice in Riding. At the last I was thrown wholly on borrowed resources and even these were exhausted.

It was owing to difficulty in procuring the necessary money, that I was late at my appointment on Tuesday Nov 15. I admit that I did not observe the exact terms of the appointment; however I went on to Woolwich by the next train, but found that the Examiner had gone back to London.

If your Lordship should grant me another chance, an English gentleman, M^r Cotton, (editor of the Academy) of 107 Abingdon Road, Kensington. W. has undertaken that want of money shall not prevent me from fulfilling the exact instructions of the Commissioners.

If your Lordship should obtain this for me, it will be the object of my life to remember it in the faithful performance of my duties in the Civil Service of India.

I am
Your Lordship's obedient
servant
Aravinda. Acroyd. Ghose

[2]

6 Burlington Rd
Bayswater W
Monday Dec 12 1892

May it please your Lordship

As the Civil Service Commissioners have decided that they cannot give me a Certificate of qualification for an appointment to the Civil Service of India, I beg to apply to your Lordship for the remainder of the allowance that would have been due to me as a Probationer.

I am fully aware that I have really forfeited this sum by my failure in the Final Examination but in consideration of my bad

pecuniary circumstances, I hope your Lordship will kindly listen to my petition.

I enclose the required Certificate as to residence and character at the University.

I am
Your Lordship's obedient
servant
A. A. Ghose

Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda 1895–1906

To the Sar Suba, Baroda State

Ootacamund.
June 1. 1895

Sir

I have the honour to report that I arrived at Ootacamund on Thursday the 30th instant & that I saw H.H. the Maharaja Saheb yesterday (Friday). It appears that His Highness wishes to keep me with him for some time farther, I have also the honour to state that as I desired a peon rather at Ootie than on the journey & even so it was not *absolutely* necessary, I did not think myself justified in taking advantage of your kind permission to engage one at Bombay as far as Ootie.

I beg to remain,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Aravind. A. Ghose.

To
Rao Bahadur
the Sar Suba Saheb
Baroda State.

To Bhuban Babu

[June 1901]

Dear Bhuban Babu,

I have been here at Nainital with my wife & sister since the 28th of May. The place is a beautiful one, but not half so cold as I expected. In fact, in the daytime it is only a shade less hot than Baroda, except when it has been raining. The Maharaja will probably be leaving here on the 24th, — if there has been rain at Baroda, — but as he will stop at Agra, Mathura & Mhow, he will not reach Baroda till the beginning of July. I shall probably be going separately & may also reach on the 1st of July. If you like, you might go there a little before & put up with Deshpande. I have asked Madhavrao to get my new house furnished, but I don't know what he is doing in that direction.

Banerji is, I believe, in Calcutta. He came up to see me at Deoghur for a day.

Yours sincerely
Aurobind Ghose

To an Officer of the Baroda State

Baroda.
14th Feb 1903.

My dear Sir,

I shall be very much obliged if you can kindly arrange for the letter to the Residency¹ to be seen by His Highness and approved tomorrow, Sunday, so that I may be able to leave Baroda tomorrow night. I am sending the draft to the Naib Dewan Saheb for his perusal and approval. I am obliged to make this request because it will put me in serious difficulties if the arrangements I have made are upset.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose

¹ See "Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular" on the next page. — Ed.

Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular

My dear Sir,

In reference to your letter of the 11th February last, conveying the remarks and views of the Government of India on the representation of His Highness' Government dated the 19th December 1902, I am to express to you His Highness' extreme disappointment that the Government of India has not seen its way to give a more favourable consideration to the representation, I had the honour to submit in December last. That letter expresses a hope that His Highness will now withdraw his objections to the provisions of the circular. It further makes certain remarks on the delay in sending the protest, the absence of His Highness from Baroda and its results on the administration of the State.

I am anxious therefore to place before the Government of India certain facts and circumstances relating to those matters and in explanation of His Highness' objections to the circular.

It must be admitted that the protest reached the Government of India more than 2 years after the circular was issued but in explanation of that circumstance I have to state in the first instance that no copy of the circular has ever been formally and officially communicated to His Highness' Government and even now any knowledge they may have of the contents of the circular is that which they share with the general public and which is drawn from the portion extracted in the Government Gazette and the public prints of the country. It was indeed His Highness' wish to disregard the absence of a formal intimation and submit a protest forthwith but I may perhaps be allowed to say that as things are constituted it is naturally felt as no light thing to appeal to the Government of India against its own orders. This course was therefore abandoned under the advice of His Highness' responsible officers that it would be inadvisable and might be thought premature and uncalled for to submit any protest before the circular was officially communicated to this Government or it became clear on occasions arising that what would involve in the case of the Baroda State an important

change of procedure was really intended to apply to this State. Such occasion first arose in 1902 when in answer to this Government's intimation of His Highness' wish to proceed to Europe on account of ill health the Government of India required His Highness to conform to the provisions of the circular for the first time. This was in May 1902 about 2 years after the circular had been issued. Thereupon the protest was forwarded in December last. This explanation of the apparent delay in sending the protest will it is hoped serve to dispel the doubt which seems to be conveyed in your letter as to the strength of His Highness' feelings on the subject of the circular.

The next point which calls for an explanation is the implication clearly conveyed in the letter that no efficient administration of the State is possible during the absence of H.H. from Baroda. With reference to this I beg to submit that the administration of the Baroda State has been systematically regulated by H.H. so that it can be worked by his officers even when he is not present in person at the Capital. It stands therefore on a very different footing from unregulated administrations in which every detail is dependent on the personal will of the ruler. Further His Highness when going to a hill station during the hot months of the year takes with him his staff & office & the supervision of administrative work goes on with the same regularity as at Baroda. Indeed it is a fact that owing to better health & greater freedom from harassment more work is done by H.H. outside than at Baroda.

In the case of absences in Europe efficient control is no doubt more difficult but on such occasions H.H. has to delegate some of his powers & those matters which require reference to him can in these days of easy communication be answered in a comparatively short space of time & in urgent cases orders can even be obtained by wire. Incidentally it may be remarked here that in making arrangements for the conduct of administration during the absence of H.H. in Europe H.H. is not allowed a free hand which his close knowledge of the administration & the people & the intimate & permanent manner in which his interests are bound up with the good government of the State

would seem to require. If greater freedom of action were allowed H.H. feels that more satisfactory arrangements could be made than are now possible.

It may be added that the administration of a Native State when regularized is largely a matter of routine; no new & considerable problems are to be apprehended & such questions as do arise, can with the thorough knowledge of the administration which H.H. possesses be easily grasped by him even when he is not on the spot.

With regard to the discontent consequent on the injury to the administration referred to in your letter, I wish to state that His Highness' Government is not aware of any genuine dissatisfaction which has resulted from his absence from Baroda. It must be remembered that there are grievance mongers everywhere especially in a Native State where there is the representative of the paramount power to whom they can prefer their complaints whether imaginary or real. The amount of credence given to them must in the nature of things depend on the judgment and discretion of the individual officer who for the time being represents the *paramount power*. From the reports of that officer, the Government of India derives its information whilst His Highness' Government has generally hardly any occasion to give its own version of the contents of those reports. This is an inevitable disadvantage of the position in which Native States are at present placed, but as I have said so far as His Highness' Government is aware no real injury has up to now resulted to the administration by the absence of His Highness from Baroda much less any discontent consequent on such injury.

It is true that in 1894 considerable agitation was created in the State against its land policy, but this was due in His Highness' opinion entirely to the policy itself and not to his absence and the agitation would have soon subsided if the Resident had not unfortunately taken a position of active hostility to that policy which eventually turned out to be an unjustifiable attitude.

Further in regard to these trips to Europe it has always to be borne in mind that there is such worry & difficulty in making arrangements for them that they can never be undertaken except

under the strongest necessity. Even were it otherwise the deep interest which H.H. takes in the administration of his state — an interest which has been testified to by more than one Resident — who have warned him against an excess of zeal rather than its deficiency, would not admit of his frequent absence from India. Thus it happens that H.H. has not been out of India for more than 4 years during the 22 years of his active rule & his trips have always been necessitated by considerations of health.

It need hardly be stated that in sending the protest nothing was further from His Highness' mind than either to challenge the policy of Government or to question their authority. What His Highness intended was to place before the Government of India his feelings and present for their consideration the effect which the Circular was calculated to produce on his status and dignity as a Ruler. The Circular it is stated in itself establishes no new principle and that the Government of India always exercises the right to give advice on the subject of His Highness' trips to Europe. But such advice both by its form and the rare occasions on which it is given is more suited to the position and dignity of His Highness whilst the necessity now imposed of an application for permission in every instance leaves no independent power of movement out of India & gives room for the inference that in the estimation of the Government of India H.H. if left to himself cannot be trusted to enjoy this privilege in a reasonable & judicious manner. At least this is the view which would be taken by the public at large. The advice again was given & received confidentially so that the public had no authentic means of knowing whether the trip was given up because vetoed by the Government of India or by the Prince himself of his own motion.

It fell in with the policy of the Government of India to maintain the prestige of Indian Chiefs by allowing their public acts to bear the appearance of having proceeded from the Chiefs themselves rather than by direction of the Government of India. It may be that some Princes fell short of their responsibilities but a general rule which applies equally to all is calculated to discourage those who may have been devoting their whole time and energy to the welfare and good Government of their subjects.

Your letter no doubt contains an assurance that there is no idea of curtailing the judicious & moderate enjoyment by Native Chiefs of the privilege of absenting themselves from their States. What is a moderate enjoyment, however, would in the nature of things have to be determined by the Resident in the first instance & ultimately by the Government of India. In your letter you calculate the absences of H.H. from Baroda at $7\frac{1}{2}$ years since 1886, thereby probably implying that they were not moderate. Of these only 4 years were spent out of India & that too during the course of the 22 years of his rule. It would seem to H.H. that this was not an immoderate exercise of the privilege but possibly it is thought otherwise by the Government of India.

In the same way though previous absences may not have been frequent still a particular trip may not be considered to be judicious and as it is not possible to define the requirements of a judicious trip, no definite meaning is conveyed to the mind as to the extent to which the privilege will hereafter be allowed.

These are some of the objections to the Circular which still hold good. His Highness therefore can only express his regret that the Government of India could not see their way to alter its provisions.

**To the Dewan, on the Government's Reply
to the Letter on the Curzon Circular**

Confidential

Gulmarg
Aug 14. 1903.

My dear Sir,

In reference to the answer of the Government of India to our protest dated the 2^d May, 1903, His Highness directs me to write that you must think over the whole matter and consider what is to be done. You must clearly understand that it is not because His Highness wishes to go to Europe often, as is popularly supposed, that he stands by his protest, for he does not care about the matter in that light, but because he is bound to defend a natural right

which is being hedged in with humiliating conditions and that without rhyme or reason. It is under such circumstances your part as Minister to consult with M^r. Bhandarkar, M^r. Samarth and other officers on whose abilities and devotion His Highness places confidence, and if they merit that confidence, they should surely be able to suggest some course which would meet the peculiar difficulties of the situation, and advise His Highness in a wise and fruitful manner.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose
Secretary

P.S. His Highness wishes you to consult M^r. Pherozshah Mehta *very confidentially* on the point, paying him his fees, as to what action he would advise the Maharaja to take.

A. A. G.

H.E.

R. V. Dhamnaskar
Dewan Saheb
Baroda

Re Govt answer to protest against the Circular about visits to Europe.

To the Naib Dewan, on the Infant Marriage Bill

Rao Bahadur
V. Y. Bhandarkar
Naib Dewan
Baroda

Gulmarg
July 8. 1903

My dear Sir,

Many articles have been published in the papers regarding the proposed Infant Marriage Bill and one or two private representations have reached the Maharaja Saheb and others will, doubtless, have reached yourself. I have already written to you asking you to take steps to observe and carefully weigh all public

criticisms that may seem to deserve consideration. His Highness directs me to write again repeating that he wishes you to go thoroughly into all private representations and the arguments urged on either side in the public prints and draw up a *very* full and exhaustive memo balancing the pros and cons under each head of reasoning. His Highness does not wish to hurry you unduly, but he would like you at the same time to submit the memo without any unnecessary delay.

Yours sincerely
Aravind A Ghose
Secretary.

A Letter of Condolence

Gulmarg
July 10 1903

My dear Dr. Sumant,

I am desired by His Highness to write to you expressing his sorrow at the death of your father and his sympathy with you in your great and sudden loss. This sympathy cannot come to very much, but His Highness hopes you will accept it as a tribute and expression of the regard he entertained for your father. Even when Dr. Batukram was in the State service, before he entered on personal duties, he came much into contact with His Highness, and afterwards when he was in personal service, His Highness had special occasion to become acquainted with his character and personality. In that character there were some fine qualities which His Highness can never afford to forget. One of these was the sincere and steadfast interest he took in the welfare of His Highness and the State; he was a friend with whom His Highness could always converse and interchange views freely, a thing which is very rare amongst our countrymen and particularly in these days when the personality of the Raja is being detached from the administration and the interests of the servants being secured by rules and regulations. As to his professional abilities His Highness has not the requisite knowledge which

would entitle him to say anything, but as a personal physician His Highness had great confidence in him; he was, he thinks, prudent, sympathetic and strong, able to withstand influences, which are not uncommon in a palace and surroundings, such as obtain in a Native State. His Highness feels that it would be long before his place can be filled, if indeed it can ever be filled at all.

His Highness would like to do something which would show in a slight degree his appreciation of the good qualities and services of D^r. Batukram and since your father has left two young sons and a little daughter, His Highness intends to give a scholarship of Rs 25/- to each for ten years while they are being educated, by which time, he hopes, they will be able to look after their own interests. If at the expiry of this period a farther continuation of the scholarship is necessary, His Highness will take into consideration a request to that effect.

I am forwarding this letter through the Minister who will give effect to its contents unless you wish anything different.

Yours sincerely
Aravind A. Ghose.
Secretary

To R. C. Dutt

Baroda
July 30. 1904.

My dear M^r. Dutt,

I received your two letters this morning and they have been read by His Highness. There is no necessity to apply to the Government of India previous to engaging your services, now that you have retired. With an English Civilian it would have been different, but that would have been on the general rule against engaging Europeans or Americans without the previous sanction of the Govt.

The position is that of Councillor with Rs 3000 British as pay; Baroda currency is not at present in use, as we have given up the right to mint for a season.

His Highness sympathises with you entirely about your health and will give you every facility possible in that respect. The only difficulty that could arise, would be in case of some considerable emergency or some very serious question cropping up which would necessitate your presence. But as you will very easily understand, such contingencies occur rarely enough in a state like Baroda and are not really anticipated. The details need not be discussed just now, as they will be satisfactorily arranged by personal conversation when you come.

His Highness would like you to join as soon as possible and if you can do so within the month, he will be glad, but he does not wish to put you to inconvenience. If therefore you require a full month for your preparations, you will of course take it. Please let me know, as soon as you find it possible and convenient, when you propose to join so as to give me a little notice beforehand.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose

To the Principal, Baroda College

L. V. Palace.
18-9-04.

My dear M^r. Clarke,

Under His Highness' directions I have written to the Chief Engineer not to build the rooms for the students' quarters as yet. His Highness wants to make some important alterations in the plans.

His Highness would like you, in consultation with M^r. Krumbiegel if necessary, to draw up a plan showing the relative positions in which all the buildings it may be necessary to erect in future, will stand, Students' Quarters, Professors' houses etc. This will make it convenient for future building so that buildings may be put up at any time when necessary or desired without difficulty or inconvenience.

Though we may not build Professors' houses just now, yet

sooner or later His Highness would like to build some at least; so will you please take the Professors into consultation, and after fixing on all the requirements and conveniences necessary, make out a model plan which should be accompanied with elevations, estimates and a computation of the rent which may be charged, all complete, so that whenever it is thought desirable to build, orders can at once be given without going each time into details and estimates.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose.

A. B. Clarke Esq.
Principal
Baroda College.

To the Dewan, on Rejoining the College

Huzur Kamdar's Office
28th September 1904.

My dear Dewan Saheb,

I have been directed by H.H. the Maharaja Saheb to join the College immediately if that were possible so that there might be no delay in my beginning to draw the increment in my salary. In accordance with these instructions I have reported myself to M^r. Clarke today, having forwarded the original order of my appointment in due course. I am also instructed, as there will be vacation for three months, to continue to help M^r. Karandikar in the work of Huzur Kamdar as before.

These directions will, I presume, emend the last paragraph of the Huzur Order of the 26th September 1904 on the tippan for M^r. Clarke's confirmation as Principal, since in the original order it is directed that the increment shall begin from the day I join the College.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose.
Huzur Kamdar

To the Maharaja

29 March 1905

May it please Your Highness,

Last December Your Highness was graciously pleased to grant my request that my brother might be entertained in Your Highness' service and directed me to remind Your Highness of the matter subsequently.

Owing to my brother's ill-health during the last two months, I have not thought it right to do so as yet, but now that Your Highness is leaving for Europe, I am obliged to take advantage of Your Highness' kind permission, hoping that Your Highness will consent to his joining whatever work may be assigned to him in June after he has recovered his health by a change.

My brother has read up to the F. A. of the Calcutta University. He had to give up the University course for certain family reasons, but since then he has studied privately with my elder brother and myself and can both speak and write English well and fluently; he has indeed some little literary ability in this direction. He can speak Hindustani fluently and has learned by this time to read and understand Marathi to some extent.

Your Highness asked me in December in what Department I should like him to be put. A work [?in which]² his knowledge of English would be immediately useful would perhaps be most suitable to him at the beginning. But this is a matter which I would prefer to leave entirely in Your Highness' hands. Your Highness is aware of the circumstances which oblige me to request this kindness at Your Highness' hands and it will be a great obligation to me if Your Highness will graciously keep them in mind when deciding this point.

Your Highness was once gracious enough to offer under similar circumstances to make an appointment of Rs 60. A start of the same kind [of] Rs 50 or 60 would be enough to induce my brother to settle here in preference to Bengal. If Your Highness will give him this start, it will be only adding one more act

² MS damaged; conjectural reconstruction. — Ed.

of grace to the uniform kindness and indulgence which Your Highness has shown to me ever since I came to Baroda.

I remain
Your Highness' loyal servant
Aravind. A. Ghose

A Letter of Recommendation

I have visited the Vividha Kala Mandir and seen specimens of the work as well as some groups taken for College classes. The work is admirably conceived and executed; the grouping etc is done with great taste and a keen eye for effect, and the details of the work brought out with both firmness and delicacy, being especially noticeable indeed for what should be always present in Indian work, but is too often deficient nowadays, minute care and finish. It is gratifying to note that the photographers are former students of the Baroda Kalabhavan and that this institution is producing silently and unobtrusively this among other admirable results.

Aravind. A. Ghose
Vice Principal, Baroda College

Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates 1906–1926

To Bipin Chandra Pal

Wednesday.

Dear Bepin Babu,

Please let us know by bearer when and where we can meet yourself, Rajat and Kumar Babu today.

Subodh Babu is going away today, and there are certain conditions attached by Dickinson to the arrangement about the type which it may be difficult to get him to agree to. Yet it must be done today if it is to be done at all. Can you not come by 3 o'clock and help us to persuade Subodh Babu to give signature before he goes.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

A Letter of Acknowledgement

Deoghur,
9th March 1907.

Madam,

I beg to acknowledge, with many thanks, the receipt of Rs.10 forwarded to me by Mr. H. C. Das on your behalf towards the National University Fund.

Yours faithfully,
Aurobindo Ghose, Principal
Bengal National College.

To Hemendra Prasad Ghose

[19 April 1907]

Dear Hemendra Babu,

Will you kindly meet me and let us talk over the matter a little? It is a great pity that the work should be spoiled by friction and misunderstanding, and I think if we can talk things over, it ought not to be impossible to have an understanding by which they can be avoided.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

To Aswinicoomar Banerji

[1]

12 Wellington Square
June 26.1907.

Dear Aswini Babu,

I quite forgot about it. I am afraid I cannot just now think of any such book as you want. There is Marriot's *Makers of Italy* but that is not a biography nor anything like comprehensive. Bent's *Life of Garibaldi* is crammed full of facts and very tedious reading. I don't think there is any good life of Mazzini in English — only the translation of his autobiography. However, I will look up the subject and, if I find anything, will let you know.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose.

[2]

[July–August 1907]

My dear Banerji,

Yes, I am still at large, though I hear warrants are out against myself, Subodh & three others. The contribution is not with us, it is in other hands at present, but I will get hold of it & return

it, if I am not previously arrested.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose.

To Dr. S. K. Mullick

BENGAL NATIONAL COLLEGE AND SCHOOL
166, Bowbazar Street
Calcutta, the 8th Feb. [1908]¹

Dear Dr Mullick,

Your students have asked me to visit the National Medical College. They want to come for me here at 3.30. Will it inconvenience you if the thing is delayed for a while as I have very important work at the Bande Mataram Office from 3 pm? They might come for me there at 4.30 —

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

[Dr. Mullick's reply:]

Let us split the difference with 4 pm
Excuse haste am lecturing
SKM

Telegrams about a Planned Political Reception

[1]

[Telegrams from Aravinda Ghose and Chittaranjan Das,
Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Kaminikumar Chanda,
Silchar, and from Aravinda Ghose and Rabindranath
Tagore, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Muktear Library,
Netrakara:]

JOIN PALS RELEASE DEMONSTRATION NINTH HELP PURSE WIRE
AMOUNT.

¹ MS 1907. See Note on the Texts, page 576. — Ed.

[2]

[*Telegrams from Aurobindo, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Satyendra Basu, Midnapur, and Jamini Sen, Chittagong:*]

CELEBRATE PAL DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[3]

[*Telegrams from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta to Sitanath Adhikari, Pabna; Ananda Sen, Jalpaiguri; Jatin-dra Sen care Citizen, Allahabad; Lajpat Rai, Lahore; Bharati, 15 Broadway, Madras; Dr Moonje, Nagpur:*]

CELEBRATE PAL DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[4]

[*Telegrams from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Chidambaram Pillai, Tuticorin and Ramaswami Iyer, Tanjore:*]

CELEBRATE DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[5]

[*Telegram from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Monoranjan Guha, Giridih:*]

CELEBRATE DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE PERSONALLY ALSO FRIENDS. WIRE AMOUNT.

[6]

[*Telegram from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to G. S. Khaparde, Amraoti:*]

JOIN DEMONSTRATION NINTH THROUGHOUT BERAR. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[7]

[*Telegram from Ghose, Calcutta, to Balgangadhar Tilak, Poona:*]

PLEASE JOIN DEMONSTRATION NINTH THROUGHOUT MAHARASHTRA. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

6 March 1908

Extract from a Letter to Parthasarathi Aiyangar

Be very careful to follow my instructions in avoiding the old kind of politics. Spirituality is India's only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. I have no doubt we shall have to go through our Parliamentary period in order to get rid of the notion of Western democracy by seeing in practice how helpless it is to make nations blessed. India is passing really through the first stages of a sort of national Yoga. It was mastered in the inception by the inrush of divine force which came in 1905 and aroused it from its state of complete tamasic ajnanam. But, as happens also with individuals, all that was evil, all the wrong sanskaras and wrong emotions and mental and moral habits rose with it and misused the divine force. Hence all that orgy of political oratory, democratic fervour, meetings, processions, passive resistance, all ending in bombs, revolvers and Coercion laws. It was a period of asuddha rajasic activity and had to be followed by the inevitable period of tamasic reaction from disappointed rajas. God has struck it all down,—Moderatism, the bastard child of English Liberalism; Nationalism, the mixed progeny of Europe and Asia; Terrorism, the abortive offspring of Bakunin and Mazzini. The latter still lives, but it is being slowly ground to pieces. At present, it is our only enemy, for I do not regard the British coercion as an enemy, but as a helper. If it can only rid us of this wild pamphleteering, these theatrical assassinations, these frenzied appeals to national hatred with their watchword of Feringhi-ko-maro, these childish conspiracies, these idiotic schemes for facing a modern army with half a dozen guns and some hundred lathis,—the opium

visions of rajogun run mad, then I say, "More power to its elbow." For it is only when this foolishness is done with that truth will have a chance, the sattwic mind in India emerge and a really strong spiritual movement begin as a prelude to India's regeneration. No doubt, there will be plenty of trouble and error still to face, but we shall have a chance of putting our feet on the right path. In all I believe God to be guiding us, giving the necessary experiences, preparing the necessary conditions.

13 July 1911

Note on a Forged Document

1 The card purports to issue from the Mymensingh Sadhana Samaj. The word is spelt Mâymensingh with a long a. Every Bengali in Bengal knows that it is Moymensingh with a short a and would at once be able to point out the mistake.

2. The word Swaraj wellknown to everyone in Bengal, is spelt Saraj and that this is no casual slip of the pen is shown by its faithful repetition, the only other time that "Saraj" appears in the card (on the flag to the left).

3. "Bande Mataram" is twice spelt Bade Mataram. This is interesting because it shows that the card was written by a man unaccustomed to the Bengali character and more habituated to the Devanagari (Sanskrit) alphabet. In the Devanagari the *n* is usually represented by a nasalising dot over the previous letter which might easily be dropped by an unpractised writer. In Bengali the *nd* is a conjunct letter and even the most ignorant Bengali writer would be incapable of dropping the *n*. If by an inconceivable blunder he dropped [it], the most casual look at the word would show him what was wrong; but here the mistake is twice consistently repeated and not corrected even in a card the details of which have been so carefully and boldly executed.

4. The writer drops the characteristic dots which differentiate b from r (ବ, ର) and y from impure j in Bengali. Thus he writes Pujar as Pujab and Viceroy as Viceroj. Only a foreigner writing the Bengali character, would commit an error of this kind so easily and repeatedly or would fail to correct it at the first glance.

5. The peculiar form of the l in Balidan shows again a man accustomed to write the Devanagari and not accustomed to write the Bengali l.

6. The formation of g in Durga Puja is a sheer impossibility to a Bengali eye or a Bengali hand. Other letters, m, p, etc give minor evidence in the same direction.

7. The mistakes are of such a nature that they could readily be made by a man copying his Bengali letters from the book forms and not accustomed to the written character. The convincing proof is the j in Samaj and Puja which is drawn rather than written by some foreigner acquainted with the printed j, but not acquainted with the very different form given to j in handwriting (ଜୀ).

8. Note beside that these few Bengali words have been written with great labour; but while some of the letters are very finely formed, almost as if they had been drawn, others are very rudely done — a difference so great that we must suppose either two writers of each word or else a man copying unfamiliar forms sometimes carefully, sometimes with deficient care and skill.

No tribunal in Bengal, presided over by a Bengali judge, would admit for a moment this clumsy forgery.

April 1912

To Anandrao

[June 1912]

Dear Anandrao,

My Bengal correspondent writes to me that you have sent me the following message, "The Baroda friend has left service and therefore there is difficulty in finding money. He asks, now you have become a Sannyasin, on what ground he can collect money. Still, if you let him know clearly your future, the time it will take to effect your siddhi and the amount of money you need, he will try to collect from Rs 600 to 1000."

I cannot understand why on earth people should make up their minds that I have become a Sannyasin! I have even

made it clear enough in the public Press that I have not taken Sannyasa but am practising Yoga as a householder, not even a Brahmacharin. The Yoga I am practising has not the ghost of a connection with Sannyasa. It is a Yoga meant for life & life only. Its object is perfection of the moral condition & mental & physical being along with the possession of certain powers — the truth of which I have been establishing by continuous practical experiment, — with the object of carrying out a certain mission in life which God has given me. Therefore there is or ought to be no difficulty on that score. If I were a Sannyasin, there would indeed be no money difficulty to solve.

The question about the siddhi is a little difficult to answer precisely. There are four parts of the siddhi, roughly, moral, mental, physical & *practical*. Starting from December 1908 the moral has taken me three years and a half and may now be considered complete. The mental has taken two years of regular sadhana and for the present purpose may be considered complete; the physical is backward and nearing completion only in the immunity from disease — which I am now attempting successfully to perfect & test by exposure to abnormal conditions. The physical also does not matter so much for practical purposes, as the moral, mental and a certain number of practical siddhis are sufficient. It is these practical siddhis that alone cause delay. I have had first to prove to myself their existence and utility, secondly to develop them in myself so as to be working forces, thirdly to make them actually effective for life & impart them to others. The development will, I think, be complete in another two months, but the application to life & the formation of my helpers will take some time — for the reason that I shall then have a greater force of opposition to surmount than in the purely educative exercises I have hitherto practised. The full application to life will, I think, take three years more, but it is only for a year of that time (if so long) that I expect to need outside assistance. I believe that I may have to stay in French India for another year. I presume that is what the question about my future means. But on this point also I cannot speak with certainty. If, however, it refers to my future work, that is a big question &

does not yet admit of a full answer. I may say briefly that I have been given a religious & philosophical mission, to re-explain the Veda & Vedanta (Upanishads) in the ancient sense which I have recovered by actual experience in Yoga and to popularise the new system of Yoga (new in arrangement & object) which has been revealed to me & which, as I progress, I am imparting to the young men staying with me & to others in Pondicherry; I have also to spread certain ideas about God & life by literary work, speech & practice, to try & bring about certain social changes &, finally, to do a certain work for my country, in particular, as soon as the means are put in my hands. All this to be done by God's help only & not to be begun till things & myself are ready.

The amount of money I shall need for the year in question, are Rs 300 to clear up the liabilities I have contracted during the last nine or ten months (in which I have had only fortuitous help) and some Rs 1200 (or 1400, reckoning up to August 1913) to maintain myself & those I am training. I had hoped to get the money from a certain gentleman who had promised me Rs 2000 a year for the purpose & given it for the first year from October 1910 to October 1911. But there are great difficulties in the way & I can no longer reckon surely on this support which would have made it unnecessary for me to tax my friends. Please ask my friend if, with this explanation, he can manage the money to the amount suggested. If I get other help from this side, I shall let him know so that the [?burden can]² be lightened.

At present I am at the height of my difficulties, in debt, with no money for the morrow, besieged in Pondicherry & all who could help are in temporary or permanent difficulties or else absent & beyond communication. I take it, from my past experiences as a sign that I am nearing the end of the period of trial. I would ask you if you can do no more, at least to send me some help to tide over the next month or two. After that period, for certain reasons, it will be easier to create means, if they are not created for me.

AG.

² MS damaged; conjectural reconstruction. — Ed.

To Motilal Roy

[1]

3 July 1912

Dear M.

Your money (by letter & wire) & clothes reached safely. The French Post Office here has got into the habit (not yet explained) of not delivering your letters till Friday; that was the reason why we wired to you thinking you had not sent the money that week. I do not know whether this means anything — formerly we used to get your letters on Tuesday, afterwards it came to Wednesday, then Thursday & finally Friday. It may be a natural evolution of French Republicanism. Or it may be something else. I see no signs of the seals having been tampered with, but that is not an absolutely sure indication of security. The postman may be paid by the police. Personally, however, I am inclined to believe in the Republican administration theory — the Republic always likes to have time on its hands. Still, if you like, you can send *important* communications to any other address here you may know of, for the present (of course, by French post & a Madras address). All others should come by the old address — you may be sure, I think, no letter will be actually intercepted, on this side. By the way, please let us know whether Mr. Banomali Pal received a letter by Fr. post from Achari enclosing another to Partha Sarathi.

I have not written all this time because I was not allowed to put pen to paper for some time — that is all. I send enclosed a letter to our Marathi friend. If he can give you anything for me, please send it without the least delay. If not, I must ask you to procure for me by will power or any other power in heaven or on earth Rs 50 at least as a loan. If you cannot get it elsewhere, why not apply to Barid Babu? Also, if Nagen is in Calcutta, ask him whether the Noakhali gentleman can let me have anything. I was told he had Rs 300 put aside for me if I wanted it; but I did not wish to apply to him except in case of necessity. The situation just now is that we have Rs 1½ or so in hand. Srinivasa

is also without money. As to Bharati, living on nothing a month means an uncertain quantity, the only other man in P^y whom I could at present ask for help absent *sine die* and my messenger to the South not returned. The last time he came he brought a promise of Rs 1000 in a month and some permanent provision afterwards, but the promise like certain predecessors has not yet been fulfilled & we sent him for cash. But though he should have been here three days ago, he has not returned, & even when he returns, I am not quite sure about the cash & still less sure about the sufficiency of the amount. No doubt, God will provide, but He has contracted a bad habit of waiting till the last moment. I only hope He does not wish us to learn how to live on a minus quantity, like Bharati.

Other difficulties are disappearing. The case brought against the Swadeshis (no one in this household was included in it although we had a very charmingly polite visit from the Parquet & Juge d'Instruction) has collapsed into the nether regions & the complainant & his son have fled from P^y & become, like ourselves, "political refugees" in Cuddalore. I hear he has been sentenced by default to five years imprisonment on false accusation, but I don't know yet whether the report is true. The police were to have left at the end of [the month]³ but a young lunatic (one of Bharati's old disciples in patriotism & atheism) got involved in a sedition-search (for the Indian Sociologist of all rubbish in the world!) and came running here in the nick of time for the Police to claim another two months' holiday in Pondicherry. However, I think their fangs have been drawn. I may possibly send you the facts of the case for publication in the Nayak or any other paper, but I am not yet certain.

I shall write to you about sadhana etc. another time.

Kali

³ MS Pondicherry

[2]

[August 1912 or after]

Dear M

P.S. has sent to his brother an address for sending Yogini Chakras. He says it is approved by you. Now we want to know, not only whether they are religious people there—he says you have assured him of that—but whether there is any likelihood of [their]⁴ being taken by the P.O. authorities for anything else. There are religious people who are openly mixed up with politics. We do not think it wise to send our purely religious Tantric instruments to any such.⁵ Kindly answer by return post. If the answer is satisfactory & we get the money promised, we will send Chakras.

15th August is usually a turning point or a notable day for me personally either in sadhana or life—indirectly only for others. This time it has been very important for me. My subjective sadhana may be said to have received its final seal and something like its consummation by a prolonged realisation & dwelling in Parabrahman for many hours. Since then, egoism is dead for all in me except the Annamaya Atma,—the physical self which awaits one farther realisation before it is entirely liberated from occasional visitings or external touches of the old separated existence.

My future sadhan is for life, practical knowledge & shakti,—not the essential knowledge or shakti in itself which I have got already—but knowledge & shakti established in the same physical self & directed to my work in life. I am now getting a clearer idea of that work & I may as well impart something of that idea to you; since you look to me as the centre, you should know what is likely to radiate out of that centre.

1. To reexplain the Sanatana Dharma to the human intellect

⁴ MS there

⁵ In these letters to Motilal, terms such as “tantric instruments” and “tantric kriyas” are code-words for revolutionary materials and activities. The “Yogini Chakras” mentioned above were, according to an associate of Motilal’s, revolvers that Motilal wanted Sri Aurobindo to send to Chandernagore via the French post.—Ed.

in all its parts, from a new standpoint. This work is already beginning, & three parts of it are being clearly worked out. Sri Krishna has shown me the true meaning of the Vedas, not only so but he has shown me a new Science of Philology showing the process & origins of human speech so that a new Nirukta can be formed & the new interpretation of the Veda based upon it. He has also shown me the meaning of all in the Upanishads that is not understood either by Indians or Europeans. I have therefore to reexplain the whole Vedanta & Veda in such a way that it will be seen how all religion arises out of it & is one everywhere. In this way it will be proved that India is the centre of the religious life of the world & its destined saviour through the Sanatana Dharma.

2. On the basis of Vedic knowledge to establish a Yogic sadhana which will not only liberate the soul, but prepare a perfect humanity & help in the restoration of the Satyayuga. That work has to begin now but will not be complete till the end of the Kali.

3. India being the centre, to work for her restoration to her proper place in the world; but this restoration must be effected as a part of the above work and by means of Yoga applied to human means & instruments, not otherwise.

4. A perfect humanity being intended society will have to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.

You must remember that I have not given you the whole Yogic sadhana. What I have given you is only the beginning. You have to get rid of ahankara & desire & surrender yourself to God, in order that the rest may come. You speak of printing Yoga & its Objects. But remember that what I have sent you is only the first part which gives the path, not the objects or the circumstances. If you print it, print it as the first of a series, with the subtitle, the Path. I am now busy with an explanation of the Isha Upanishad in twelve chapters; I am at the eleventh now and will finish in a few days. Afterwards I shall begin the second part of the series & send it to you when finished.

I have also begun, but on a very small scale the second part of my work which will consist in making men for the new age by

imparting whatever siddhi I get to those who are chosen. From this point of view our little colony here is a sort of seed plot & a laboratory. The things I work out in it, are then extended outside. Here the work is progressing at last on definite lines and with a certain steadiness, not very rapid; but still definite results are forming. I should be glad to have from you clearer knowledge of the results you speak of over there; for my drishti is not yet sufficiently free from obstruction for me to know all that I need to know at this stage.

What you say about the Ramakrishna Mission is, I dare say, true to a certain extent. Do not oppose that movement or enter into any conflict with it; whatever has to be done, I shall do spiritually, for God in these matters especially uses the spiritual means & the material are only very subordinate. Of course, you can get into that stream, as you suggest, and deflect as much as you can into a more powerful channel, but not so as to seem to be conflicting with it. Use spiritual means chiefly, will & vyapti. They are more powerful than speech & discussion. Remember also that we derive from Ramakrishna. For myself it was Ramakrishna who personally came & first turned me to this Yoga. Vivekananda in the Alipore jail gave me the foundations of that knowledge which is the basis of our sadhana. The error of the Mission is to keep too much to the forms of Ramakrishna & Vivekananda & not keep themselves open for new outpourings of their spirit,—the error of all “Churches” and organised religious bodies. I do not think they will escape from it, so long as their “Holy Mother” is with them. She represents now the Shakti of Ramakrishna so far as it was manifested in his life. When I say do not enter into conflict with them, I really mean “do not enter conflict with her.” Let her fulfil her mission, keeping always ours intact and ever-increasing.

As to other work (Tantric), I am not yet in possession of knowledge. The Shakti is only preparing to pour herself out there, but I don't know what course she will take. You must remember I never plan or fix anything for myself. She must choose her own paddhati or rather follow the line Krishna fixes for her.

I am glad you have arranged something about money. It is indifferent to me whether you get it from others or provide it yourselves, so long as my energies which are badly needed for sadhan & for the heavy work laid on me, are not diverted at present into this lower effort in which they would be sorely wasted. You will be relieved of the burden as soon as this physical resistance is overcome, but I do not know yet how soon or late that will be. Reward, of course, those who give to God, shall have; but what reward He will determine. Remember the importance of keeping up this centre, for all my future work depends on what I work out here.

I shall write about the Sikh pamphlet, which is an excellent thing with one or two blemishes; but I could not understand who wrote the accompanying letter or what gentleman he refers to.

The letter you sent me last time from our man in Chandannagar is practically answered here. Biren may have made some mistake about my "shoes". It was intended that they should be got from Amiyas. The glass case theory is all right, — only the exhibits have got to be maintained.

Kali

[3]

[c. January 1913]

Dear M.

We have received from you in December Rs 60, & Rs 20, and in this month Rs 10. According to N's account, Rs 10 belongs to November account, Rs 50 to December; Rs 20 we suppose to have been sent in advance on the January account. If so, we still expect from you Rs 20, this month. I should be glad to know if there is any prospect of your being able to increase the amount now or shortly. Up till now we have somehow or other managed to fill in the deficit of Rs 35 monthly; but, now that all our regular sources here are stopped, we have to look to mere luck for going on. Of course if we were bhaktas of the old type this would be the regular course, but as our sadhan stands upon

karmayoga with jnana & bhakti, this inactive nirbhara can only continue so long as it is enjoined on us as a temporary movement of the sadhana. It cannot be permanent. I think there will have to be a change before long, but I cannot see clearly whether the regular & sufficient arrangement which must be instituted some time, is to come from you or from an unexpected quarter or whether I have myself to move in the matter. It is a question of providing some Rs 450 a year in addition to what you send,— unless, of course, God provides us with some new source for the *sharīrayātrā* as He did two years ago.

All these matters, as well as the pursuance of my work to which you allude in your last (commercial) letter, [depend]⁶ on the success of the struggle which is the crowning movement of my sadhana — viz the attempt to apply knowledge & power to the events and happenings of the world without the necessary instrumentality of physical action. What I am attempting is to establish the normal working of the siddhis in life ie the perception of thoughts, feelings & happenings of other beings & in other places throughout the world without any use of information by speech or any other data. 2^d, the communication of the ideas & feelings I select to others (individuals, groups, nations,) by mere transmission of will-power; 3^d, the silent compulsion on them to act according to these communicated ideas & feelings; 4th, the determining of events, actions & results of action throughout the world by pure silent will power. When I wrote to you last, I had begun the general application of these powers which God has been developing in me for the last two or three years, but, as I told you, I was getting badly beaten. This is no longer the case, for in the 1st, 2^d & even in 3rd I am now largely successful, although the action of these powers is not yet perfectly organized. It is only in the 4th that I feel a serious resistance. I can produce single results with perfect accuracy, I can produce general results with difficulty & after a more or less prolonged struggle, but I can neither be sure of producing the final decisive result I am aiming at nor of securing that orderly arrangement of events which

⁶ MS depends

prevents the results from being isolated & only partially effective. In some directions I seem to succeed, in others partly to fail & partly to succeed, while in some fields, eg, this matter of financial equipment both for my personal life & for my work I have hitherto entirely failed. When I shall succeed even partially in that, then I shall know that my hour of success is at hand & that I have got rid of the past karma in myself & others, which stands in our way & helps the forces of Kaliyuga to baffle our efforts.

About Tantric yoga; your experiment in the smashâna was a daring one,—but it seems to have been efficiently & skilfully carried out, & the success is highly gratifying.⁷ In these kriyas there are three considerations to be held in view, 1st, the object of the kriya. Of course there is the general object of mukti-bhukti which Tantriks in all ages have pursued, but to bring it about certain subjective results & conditions are necessary in ourselves & our surroundings & each separate kriya should be so managed as to bring about an important result of the kind. Big kriyas or numerous kriyas are not always necessary; the main thing is that they should be faultlessly effective like your last kriya or the small one with which you opened your practices. That is the second consideration viz the success of the kriya itself & that depends on the selection & proper use of the right mantra & tantra,—mantra, the mental part, & tantra, the practical part. These must be arranged with the greatest scrupulousness. All rashness, pride, ostentation etc, the rajasic defects,—also, all negligence, omission, slipshod ritual,—the tamasic defects, must be avoided. Success must not elate your minds, nor failure discourage. 3^{dly}, angarakshana is as important as siddhi. There are many Tantriks in this Kaliyuga who are eager about siddhi, careless in angarakshana. They get some siddhi, but become the prey of the devils & bhutas they raise. Now what is the use of a particular siddhi, if the sadhakas are destroyed? The general & real object,—mukti & bhukti,—remains unfulfilled. Angarakshana is managed, first, by the

⁷ This is apparently a reference to the attempt to assassinate the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi on 23 December 1912.—Ed.

selection & arrangement of the right siddhi-mantra & kriya, secondly, by the presence behind the sadhaka of one who repeats what is called an angarakshaka mantra destructive of the pretas & Rakshasas or prohibitive of their attacks. The last function I have taken on myself; it is your business so to arrange the kriya that the bhutas get no chance for প্রকেশ or for the seizure & destruction of the sadhaka. I have found that my mantra has been more & more successful in protection, but it is not yet strong enough to prevent all ড়েন্দুর of a dangerous character. It will take some more আবৃত্তি to increase its power. It is for this reason that I do not yet tell you to go on swiftly in your course of practices. Still there is no harm in quickening the pace in comparison with the past. Remember always the supreme necessity of mauna in Tantric practices. In Vedantic & Puranic exercises expansion is not dangerous, but the goddess of the Tantra does not look with a favourable eye on those who from pride, ostentation or looseness blab about the mantra or the kriya. In Tantric sadhana secrecy is necessary for its own sake. Those who reveal mantra or kriya to the unfit, suffer almost inevitably; even those who reveal them unnecessarily to the fit, impair somewhat the force of their Tantric action.

Kali

P.S. Please send the rest of this month's money at once if you have not already sent it, & next month's as early as you can.

[4]

[February 1913]

Dear M

I have received Rs 60 by wire & Rs 20 by letter. It was a great relief to us that you were able to send Rs 80 this time & Rs 85 for March; owing to the cutting off of all other means of supply, we were getting into a very difficult position. I welcome it as a sign of some preliminary effectiveness, through you, in this direction, in which, hitherto, everything has gone against us; also, as one proof of several, that the quality of your power

& your work is greatly improving in effectiveness & sureness. I need not refer to the other proofs; you will know what I mean. But just now, I find every forward step to be made is violently combated & obstinately obstructed. Our progress is like the advance of a modern regiment under fire in which we have to steal a few yards at a run & then lie down under covert & let the storm of bullets sweep by. I neither hope for nor see yet any prospect of a more successful rapidity.

I have been lying down under covert ever since the middle of February, after a very brilliant advance in January & the early part of February. I keep the positions gained, but can make as yet no sure progress farther. There is only a slow preparation for farther progress. The real difficulty is to bring force, sureness & rapidity into the application of power & knowledge to life,—especially sureness,—for it is possible to bring force & rapidity, but if not attended by unfailing sureness of working, they may lead to great errors in knowledge & great stumbles & disasters in action which counteract the successes. On the other hand, if sureness has to be gained only by not stepping except where everything is sure (which is the first stage of action & knowledge necessary to get rid of rajasic rashness) progress is likely to be slow. I am trying to solve the dilemma.

I have not kept your last letter & I only remember that you asked me to write something about your sadhan. I cannot just now, but I shall try to do it in my next, as I expect by then to be clear of some of my present difficulties.

There is the pressing cry for clothes in this quarter, as these articles seem to be with us to remind us now constantly of the paucity of matter. I have received Bepin Pal's Soul of India. Can you add to it by getting from Hiranyagarbha Sister Nivedita's My Master as I saw him. I am also in need, as I wrote to you once before, of R. C. Dutt's Bengali translation of the Vedas. Neither of these books is urgently wanted but please []⁸ keep them in mind & send them when you can.

Kali

⁸ MS them

[5]

[June–July 1913]

Dear M.

I subjoin certain explanations about the matter of the Tantric books.⁹ I put them in cipher because there are certain things, as you can understand, not *comme il faut* according to the ideas of modern social decorum which ought not to fall under unfit eyes. It appears that you did not understand my last letter. However, from henceforth please leave this matter entirely in my hands. You will see from the explanations given how highly undesirable is the kind of correspondence you have been carrying on hitherto in another quarter. I have taken Rs 50 from S, but this sum or part of it (at least Rs 30) ought to be replaced for expenses attached to that particular transaction. Meanwhile I await Rs 35 for June & all the July money. I delay other matters in consideration of the urgency of the accompanying note.

Kali

PS. I received information of your Tantric kriyas. It is clear that you are far from perfect yet. All the more reason why you should not be in a hurry to progress physically. Get rid of the remnants of sattwic ahankara and rajoguna, for that which we are within, our karmas & kriyas will be without. Kali demands a pure adhara for her works, & if you try to hurry her by rajasik impatience, you will delay the success instead of hastening it. I will write to you fully about it later.

[6]

[June–July 1913]

Dear M.

Your letter, money etc have reached me without delay or mishap. Please make it a rule, in future, not to be anxious or troubled when you get no answer; when I do not reply, it is

⁹ These "explanations", written on a separate sheet of paper, have not survived.—Ed.

not because I have not received your letters, but because silence was necessary, for my siddhi, for yours or for the work that has to be done. At such times, keep calm, repel any suggestions of perplexity or anxiety and do not allow any disturbing mental waves to interfere between. A still heart, a clear mind and untroubled nerves are the very first necessity for the perfection of our Yoga.

I enclose a letter for C. R. Das. Please transmit it & get a reply written or verbal. You will see, I did not authorise Bhaga to ask him for money; at the same time, in doing so, he obeyed an unspoken general *vyapti* from myself which his mind seems to have got hold of & mixed up with its own desires & anxieties. I am drawing now towards the close of my internal Yogic tapasya and the time is not very distant when I shall have to use its results for the work God has sent me to do in the world. For that work I shall need large sums of money. So long as I was only perfecting myself and sending out Shakti to others, all I needed was enough for the maintenance of myself & those who are with me. This charge I gave to you and the charge is not withdrawn; but, as you know, it covers only the bare physical necessities of our life in Pondicherry. More than that, you are not likely to be able to afford; and certainly you could not provide me with the sums I shall need even in the earlier part of my work. To limit myself to the Rs 85 a month you can send me, would be to deny myself the material means for doing what I have to do and to accept stagnation and quiescence. It is true I am not beginning that work immediately, but, before it begins, I have to bend circumstances to my will in this very particular so that the obstacle of paucity of means which has been my chief stumbling block for the beginning may be got rid of once for all. My will has to become effective on this point above all & the impediments both subjective and objective to its mastery have to be eliminated. Therefore I have sent out the general *vyapti* I spoke of. Biren's action was one of the first responses, but, as it was [an] impure response, it has created more golmal than effect. As to confining the appeal for pecuniary assistance to those who are entirely of one way of thinking with ourselves, it

was a good rule for you to observe; but it cannot bind me when I begin my larger movement. From whatever quarter money or help comes to me, it comes from God.

With regard to the Tantric books, the Psalmodist was here, & wrote to you and went away, expecting to return in a fortnight; but several fortnights have passed without his return. He has written to us to say he has received money from you and we have written to him to come here. He is expected daily, but he does not arrive. He will, no doubt, be a good karmavira in time; but at present he is too rajasic, with intervals of tamas, has too much faith in European religions & the arms of the flesh & too little faith in Yoga & the arms of the spirit. He went northward on his own initiative; I could have told him his efforts there would be fruitless, but it is always well for a man to get experience for himself, when he will not take the benefit of superior experience. Your scheme about the books is impracticable under present conditions of which you are ignorant. When he comes, we will consult together & see if any blameless way can be found. But there is a time for all things & the time for free publication of Tantric works has not arrived. Still, your particular order may be met. Your letter to him, if addressed to Pd, did not reach us; whether he got it in Madras or not, I do not know.

Your working, remember, is not yet definitive working; it is still in the nature of experiment, with some minor results. When your sadhan of our tantric kriya has become more perfect and the necessary spiritual force can be sent from here,—then, real Tantra can begin. Meanwhile, don't be over-eager; let nothing disconcert, discourage or perplex you. Eagerness, anxiety & discouragement are all different faces of one defect. I shall write to you on all matters connected with the Tantra after the Psalmodist arrives. Also about the Vedanta. If he does not come soon, I shall write all the same.

Bejoy was to have seen Ramchandra in Calcutta & given you news of us, on his way to Khulna, but from your not sending the June money & from Sudhir's letter, it seems the interview did not take place or else no report was given to you. Please send

the money. I am going on somehow, but the money I am doing with, will have to be replaced.

Kali

P.S. The Psalmist has written, announcing his immediate arrival here, but he has so often disappointed us that I send off this letter, without farther waiting. If he comes, I shall write to you as soon as anything is settled.

[7]

[August 1913]

Dear M.

I enclose a letter to C. R. Das. Please let me know as soon as possible whether he has received the MSS. Also let me have the address of your West Indian friend in that connection which you omitted to give in your last letter,—of course in the usual formula. Please explain how you expect him to befriend you if there is any difficulty in the final stage of the publication. I am too exhausted to write anything at length this time—we shall see afterwards when I have recovered my physical equilibrium. I expect Rs 40 for July & the money for August (current) which will complete our regular account for the present if C. R. Das sends in the rest of his money as proposed. By the way, his agents Grindlay & Co send me Rs 300 with a note saying that I shall get Rs 1000 for the translations. Is the Rs 300 part of the Rs 1000 or separate. I ask this for information only, because you wrote that he intended to give me one year's expenses & Rs 300 extra. I need some extra money badly now for materials for the work I have now seriously entered on in connection with the Veda and the Sanscrit language. In that same connection will you please make a serious effort this time to get hold of Dutt's Bengali translation of the Rigveda & send it to me—or any translation for that matter which gives the European version.

Kali

[8]

[c. 1913]

Dear M.

I send the proofs. Your Rs 50 for Narayan etc.'s travelling expenses reached duly and were by him duly spent. He has promised to repay the sum, but I don't know when he will be able to do so. He will see you, he told me, when he first goes to Calcutta from his place; as his mother was ill, he would not stop to see you on the way. But perhaps other reasons prevented him just then, for I believe he did stop a day or two in Calcutta.

Biren is all right, I believe; he said nothing to anybody about that matter. There were some legitimate doubts in some quarters owing to his unsteady nature & other defects of character. I thought it right to give them as much value for practical purposes as was reasonable; therefore I wrote to you.

I do not write to you this time about the despatch of the books, because that is a long matter & would delay the proofs which have already been too long delayed. But I shall write a separate letter on that subject. I have also to write about your Tantric Yoga, but I think I shall await what else you have to tell me on that subject before doing so.

Kali

P.S. Don't delay long in sending the money.

[9]

[1913]

Dear M.

I write only about 3 points today.

1. Your R. S. Sharma I hold to be a police spy. I have refused to see him because originally when he tried to force his way into my house & win my confidence by his extravagances I received a warning against him from within which has always been repeated. This was confirmed afterwards by two facts, first, that the Madras Police betrayed a very benevolent interest in the

success of his mission, secondly, that he came to Pondicherry afterwards as subeditor of a new Pondicherry paper, the Independent, subsequently defunct and replaced by another the Argus, belonging to the same proprietor who has been openly acting in concert with the British Police against us in Pondicherry. In this paper he wrote a very sneering & depreciatory paragraph about me, (not by name, but by allusion,) in which he vented his spite at his failure. Failing even so to get any footing here, for the Swadeshis were warned against him, he returned to Madras. He seems now to have tried his hand with you at Calcutta & succeeded, probably, beyond his expectations! I wonder when you people will stop trusting the first stranger with a glib tongue who professes Nationalist fervour & devotion. Whether you accept my estimate of him or not, you may be sure that his bhakti for me is humbug—as shown by the above newspaper incident—& you must accept at least the facts I have given you and draw any conclusions that common sense may suggest to you.

2. Do not print Yoga & its Objects unless & until I give you positive directions. It cannot be printed in its present form, & I may decide to complete the work before it is printed. In any case parts of it would have to be omitted or modified.

3. Next, money matters. I could not understand your arithmetic about the Rs 40 and how we should gain by not getting it. The only reason why we wrote constantly for it, was that it was necessary to us in our present financial position, in which we have to provide anxiously for every need and the failure of any expected sum reduces us to difficulties. I had reckoned on the remainder of Madgaokar's money to pay the sum still due for the rent of our last house. Fortunately, the litigation connected with the house has kept the matter hanging; but it may be demanded from us one day & we shall have to pay at once, or face the prospect of being dragged into court & losing our prestige here entirely. In future, let me ask you, never to undertake any payment to us which you are not sure of being able to fulfil, because of the great disorder in our arrangements which results.

Our position here now is at its worst; since all efforts to get some help from here have been temporarily fruitless & we have to depend on your Rs 50 which is insufficient. We have to pay Rs 15 for rent, other expenses come to not less, & the remaining Rs 20 cannot suffice for the food expenses of five people. Even any delay in your money arriving makes our Manager "see darkness". That is why we had to telegraph. We did not know then that your last remittance of Rs 20 had arrived; & our available money was exhausted. Our correspondence agent has turned merchant & walked off to Madras indefinitely; in his absence we had great difficulty in getting hold of your letter & indeed it is only today that it reached our hands. Narayan will give you a new address to which please address all letters in future.

There is no "reason" for my not writing to you. I never nowadays act on reasons, but only as an automaton in the hands of Another; sometimes He lets me know the reasons of my action, sometimes He does not, but I have to act — or refrain from action — all the same, according as He wills.

I shall write nothing about sadhan etc. until I am out of my present struggle to make the Spirit prevail over matter & circumstances, in which for the present I have been getting badly the worst of it. Till then you must expect nothing but mere business letters, — if any.

Kali

[10]

[March 1914]

Dear M.

Recently in the papers there has appeared a case of one Rashbehary Bose against whom a warrant of extradition has been granted by the Chandannagar Administrator *in a political case*. Although ordinarily we do not concern ourselves with political matters, this concerns me & my friends because it is an attack on the security of our position. If this kind of thing is allowed to go unchallenged, then any of us may at any moment

be extradited on a trumped up charge by the British police. I must therefore ask you to interest yourself in the matter, even though it interferes with your Yoga. The case is clearly a political one; for the main charges in the Delhi case seem to be (1) a charge of conspiracy on a clause relating to State (ie political) offences; (2) a charge of murder under Sc.-302 (?) read in connection with this State offence section, therefore an assassination with a political intention; (3) a charge under the Explosive Act, which is an extraordinary measure passed in view of certain political conditions. Moreover all these cases are tried together & form part of the same transaction, ie a political conspiracy directed against the existing form of Gov^t & having for its object the change or overthrow of that Gov^t. Under the Extradition Treaty between France & England,—unless that has been altered by the latest Treaty to which I have not had access, there can be no extradition for (1) a political offence, (2) an offence of a political character or tendency, (3) on a charge which, though preferred as for an ordinary offence, is really an excuse or device for laying hands on a political offender. Rashbehary Bose is reported to be in hiding either in Chandannagar or the Panjab. If anybody moves therefore it can only be a relative or friend on his behalf,—a relative would be much better. What you have to do is to get hold of someone entitled to act for him, consult the text of the latest Extradition Treaty between France & England and, if it is as I have stated, then let it be put in the hands of a lawyer of the French Courts who must move in the matter according to the French procedure about which I know nothing. I presume he would have to move the Gov^t in France or, failing there, the Court of Cassation in Paris, but the latter would be an expensive affair. So long as Bose is not handed over to the British (if he is in Chandannagar), the Court of Cassation has, I should suppose the power of cancelling the warrant. I do not know whether it is necessary first to appeal to the Procureur Général in Pondicherry before going to the Higher Court. On these points of procedure Bose's representative will have to consult a French lawyer. In case he is handed over, the Hague decision with regard to Savarkar will come in the way

& make the thing almost hopeless. The French Gov^t might still move on the ground that Bose is a French subject, but it could only succeed by strong diplomatic pressure which the present Fr. Gov^t might be unwilling to employ. In any case it might be worthwhile to get a decree of the Court of Cassation so as to establish the principle. There is always, however, the danger in these political cases, where justice & law are so seldom observed, of an opposite decision making the position worse than before. It would be worthwhile finding out what exactly was done & on what grounds in Charu Chander Ray's case & seeing whether these grounds can be made to apply. If you will give me the exact facts of the warrant, the charges etc, I may be able to get a letter written to France so that Jaurès or others may move in the matter.

As to your Tantric Yoga, the reasons of your failures are so obvious that I am surprised you should attribute it all to the Goddess and not to the unpardonable blunders we have all been making in our Yogic Kriya. Kali of the Tantra is not a goddess who is satisfied with mere tamasic faith & adoration. Perfection in Kriya is indispensable or at least a conscientious and diligent attempt at perfection. This has not been made; on the contrary all the defects that have made Tantra ineffective throughout the Kaliyuga abound in your *anusthana*. All this must be changed; the warning has been given & it will be wise to give heed to it. If not,— well, you know what the Gita says about those who from *ahankara* hear not.

The root of the whole evil is that we have been attempting an extension of Tantric Kriya without any sufficient Vedantic basis. You especially were going on the basis that if a man had faith, enthusiasm, intellectual & emotional sincerity & proffered self-surrender, all that was necessary was there & he could go on straight to difficult Tantric anusthana. This basis is condemned. A much stronger & greater foundation is necessary. It was the basis of the sattwic ahankara; which said to itself, "I am the chosen of Kali, I am her bhakta, I have every claim on her, I can afford to be negligent about other things, she is bound to help & guard me". It is this sattwic ahankara which I have long felt

to be the great obstacle in our Yoga; some have it in the sattwa-rajasic form, others in the sattwo-tamasic, but it is there in you all, blinding your vision, limiting your strength, frustrating your progress. And its worst quality is that it is unwilling to admit its own defects, or if it admits one, it takes refuge in another. Open your eyes to this enemy within you and expel it. Without that purification you can have no success. To "do rajasic kriya in a sattwic spirit" is merely to go on in the old way while pretending to oneself that there is a change. Going on in the old way is out of the question. That path can only lead to the pit. I speak strongly because I see clearly; if not yet with absolute vision yet without that misleading false light which marred all my seeing till now & allowed me to be swept in the flood of confused sattwo-rajasic impure Shakti which came with you from Bengal.

My first instruction to you therefore is to pause, stand on the defensive against your spiritual enemies & go on with your Vedantic Yoga. God is arranging things for me in my knowledge, but the process is not yet finished. I shall send you (it will take two or three letters) the lines on which I wish the Vedantic & Tantric lines to be altered & developed; afterwards we shall see when we have recovered from the stress that was upon us, how He intends to work them out in practice.

Please send me the Rs 50 with you, as I am again in the position of having to replace money diverted to current expenses & have very little [if]¹⁰ any living money left. Also try & get the rest of the money from Das. If not, you will have to find me an additional 20 for the last month & another 20 for next in addition to the monthly Rs 50 & deduct the sum of Rs 30 from Das' payment when you do get it.

Kali

P.S. I have a sum of Rs 10 to pay monthly for a purpose unconnected with our own expenses & in addition certain additional expenses of my own which I cannot dispense with; for this reason Rs 50 is insufficient. I hope Das will be in a position to send the balance of the money this time.

¹⁰ MS of

[11]

[April 1914]

Dear M.

I send you today the electoral declaration of M. Paul Richard, one of the candidates at the approaching election for the French Chamber. This election is of some importance to us; for there are two of the candidates who represent our views to a great extent, Laporte & Richard. Richard is not only a personal friend of mine and a brother in the Yoga, but he wishes, like myself, & in his own way works for a general renovation of the world by which the present European civilisation shall be replaced by a spiritual civilisation. In that change the resurrection of the Asiatic races & especially of India is an essential point. He & Madame Richard are rare examples of European Yogins who have not been led away by Theosophical and other aberrations. I have been in material and spiritual correspondence with them for the last four years. Of course, they know nothing of Tantric Yoga. It is only in the Vedantic that we meet. If Richard were to become deputy for French India, that would practically mean the same thing as myself being deputy for French India. Laporte is a Swadeshi with personal ambitions; his success would not mean the same but at any rate it would mean a strong and, I believe, a faithful ally in power in this country and holding a voice in France.

Of course, there is no chance, humanly speaking, of their being elected this time. Laporte is not strong enough to change the situation singlehanded. Richard has come too late; otherwise so great is the disgust of the people with Bluysen & Lemaire, Gaebelé and Pierre that I think we could have managed an electoral revolution. Still, it is necessary, if it can at all be done, to stir things a little at the present moment and form a nucleus of tendency &, if possible, of active result which would be a foundation for the future & enable us at the next election to present one or other of these candidates with a fair chance of success.

I want to know whether it is possible, without your exposing yourself, to have the idea spread in Chandernagore, especially

among the younger men, of the desirability of these candidatures & the abandonment of the old parochial & rotten politics of French India, with its following of interested local Europeans & subservience to their petty ambitions in favour of a politics of principles which will support one of our own men or a European like Richard who is practically an Indian in beliefs, in personal culture, in sympathies & aspirations, one of the Nivedita type. If also a certain number of votes can be recorded for Richard in Chandernagore so much the better; for that will mean a practical beginning, a tendency from the sukhsha world materialised initially in the sthula. If you think this can be done, please get it done — always taking care not to expose yourself. For your main work is not political, but spiritual. If there can be a Bengali translation of Richard's manifesto, or much better, a statement of the situation & the desirability of his candidature succeeding, — always steering clear of extremism and British Indian politics, — it should be done & distributed. I lay stress on these things because it is necessary that the conditions of Chandernagore & Pondicherry should be changed, the repetition of recent events rendered impossible and the cession of French territory put out of the question. There would be other & more positive gains by the change, but these I need not emphasise now.

I have just received your letter & the money. I shall delay answering it for the present, as this letter must go immediately. I shall answer soon, however. I am only waiting till this election is over to give some shape to the decision I have arrived at to resume personally my work on the material plane and it is necessary that there should be some arrangement by which the Vedantic work can go on unhampered by the effect of errors in Tantric kriya. For Tantric kriya carried on in the old style, to which your people seem to be so undivorceably attached, can only help so far as to keep up the Yogic flame in the hearts of a few, while on the other hand it is full of dangers to the spirit & the body. It is only by a wide Vedantic movement leading later to a greater Tantra that the work of regeneration can be done; & of that movement neither you nor Saurin can be the head. It needs a wider knowledge & a greater spiritual force

in the Adhara through which it is engineered; it needs, in fact, the greatest which India contains & which is at the same time willing to take it up. I see only Devavrata & myself who have the idea — for the Dayanandas & others are a negligible quantity, & Devavrata seems to me to have gone off for the moment on a wrong route & through egoism has even allowed his spiritual force to be used against us by secret forces in the sukshma world which he is not yet advanced enough to understand. Therefore, if God wills, I will take the field.

K.

P.S. Gaebelé has given me strenuous assurances that Bluysen is not working for the cession of Chandannagar & has sworn that he (Gaebelé) will ever be a stern and furious opponent of any such cession as well as a staunch defender of the Swadeshi refugees! Such is the fervour of electoral promises! He has given a number of the Journal des Débats in which there is a full account of Bluysen's interpellations, from which it appears that both Bluysen & Doumergue were agreed that there can be no question of cession but only of "rectification of Pondicherry boundaries". But only then did Bluysen tell us solemnly that the cession was a "settled fact" & any refugee in Ch must run to Pondicherry at once. However, I am trying to send you or get sent to Banamali Pal the copy of the Journal, so that Bluysen may have the benefit of his public declarations. They are in a sense binding, if anything can bind a French politician. If you don't get the Journal, at any rate contrive that the substance of it as given by me here should be known in Ch, if it is not known already. For you must remember that Lemaire has made no such declaration and is not bound at all by any past professions, but has rather been an advocate of the cession.

[12]

17 April, 1914

Dear M.

The political situation here is as follows. In appearance Bluysen and Lemaire face each other on the old lines and the

real fight is between them. Bluysen has the support of the whole administration, except a certain number of Lemairistes who are quiescent and in favour of it. The Governor Martineau, Gaebelé, the Police Lieutenant & the Commissaire form his political committee. By threats & bribes the Maires of all the Communes except two have been forced or induced to declare on his side. He has bought or got over most of the Hindu traders in Pondicherry. He has brought over 50,000 Rupees for his election & is prepared to purchase the whole populace, if necessary. Is it British rupees, I wonder? The British Gov^t is also said to be interfering on his behalf and it is certain the Mahomedan Collector of Cuddalore has asked his coreligionists to vote for this master of corruption. A violent administrative pressure is being brought to bear both at Pondicherry & Karikal, & the Maires being on his side the Electoral Colleges will be in his hands with all their possibilities of fraud & violence.

Lemaire has for him most of the Christians & Renonçants (except the young men who are for Richard) and Pierre. But the Pierre party is entirely divided. Kotia refuses to declare himself, most of the others are Bluysenites, the Comité Radical has thrice met without Pierre being able to overcome the opposition against him. Lemaire had two chances, one that if the people could be got to vote, Pierre's influence over the mass might carry the day for him, the other that Nandagopalu might intimidate the enemy & counteract the administration. But Nandagopalu instead of intimidating is himself intimidated; he is hiding in his house & sending obsequious messages to Gaebelé & Martineau. So great at one time was the despair of the Lemairistes, that Pierre offered through Richard to withdraw Lemaire, if Gaebelé withdraws Bluysen, the two enemies then to shake hands & unite in support of Richard or another candidate. Gaebelé would have been glad to accept the offer, but he cannot, he has taken huge sums from Bluysen. The leaders are almost all bought over by Bluysen & those who remain on Lemaire's side dare not act. The only weapon now in Lemaire's hands is vague threat and rumour, that the Cabinet has fallen, that Martineau is suspended, that the new Police Captain is his man etc. There are also rumours of a sudden

coup d'état by Lemaire on the election day, of Appa Swami being carried off or killed, of the [Recensement]¹¹ Committee being in his hands & it is true that the President is a Lemairiste. But I do not see how these things are going to be done. There may, of course, be a sudden Lemairiste rally, but at present it seems as if Bluysen by the help of the Administration money, the British Government and the devil were likely to win an easy victory.

Laporte had some chance of strong backing at the beginning but his own indolence & mistakes have destroyed it. He is now waiting on God and Lemaire into whose shoes he dreams of stepping,—for Lemaire has promised him that if he gets no favourable answer from France he will desist in Laporte's favour and Laporte being a man of faith is sitting quiet in that glorious expectation.

Then there is Richard. He has neither agent, nor committee, nor the backing of a single influential man. What he has is the sympathy & good wishes of all the Hindus & Mahomedans in Pondicherry & Karikal with the exception of the Vaniyas who are for Bluysen. The people are sick to death of the old candidates, they hate Bluysen, they abhor Lemaire & if only they could be got to vote according to their feelings, Richard would come in by an overwhelming majority. But they are overawed by the Gov^t and wait for some influential man among the Hindus to declare for him. No such man is forthcoming. All are either bought by Bluysen or wish to be on the winning side. Under these circumstances the danger is that the people will not vote at all and the electoral committees will be free to manufacture in their names bogus votes for Bluysen. On the other hand an impression has been made at Karikal, where the young men are working zealously for Richard; some of its communes are going to support him; some of the leaders who are themselves pledged to Bluysen have promised to tell their followers that they are free to vote for Richard if they wish; the Mahomedan leaders of Karikal are for Bluysen or rather for his money, but the mass have resolved to vote neither for

¹¹ MS Recension

B. nor Lemaire, & either not to vote at all or for Richard. At Pondicherry, Villenour has promised to declare for Richard the day before the election so as to avoid prolonged administrative pressure. Certain sections of the community e.g. the young men among the Christians and a number of the Mahomedans,—Richard is to speak at the mosque and a great number may possibly come over,—and a certain nucleus of the Hindus are certain to vote for him. We count also on the impression that can be given during the next few days. If in addition Chandernagore can give a large vote for Richard, there is a chance not of carrying Richard but of preventing a decisive vote at the first election, so that there may be a second ballot. If that is done, great numbers who hesitate to vote for Richard in the idea that Bluysen must carry all before him, may pick up courage & turn the whole situation,—to say nothing of the chances of Lemaire retiring & his whole vote coming over or a great part of it. Therefore, I say, throw aside all other considerations and let the young men of Chandernagore at least put all their strength on Richard's side and against the two unspeakable representatives of Evil who dispute the election between them. For if they do not, humanly speaking, Chandernagore seems to be doomed.

I wrote to you in my last doubtfully about Bluysen's or rather Gaebelé's professions about Ch. and the Swadeshis. Since then, even Martineau has condescended to let us know that he is trying to get the British police sent away from Pondicherry. But all this is either sheer falsehood or late repentance for the convenience of the moment. The damning facts are that Bluysen saw the Viceroy on his last visit, that it is known on this occasion the whole talk was about this cession of Chandernagore, that on his return he told Bharati the cession of Ch was a settled fact and while *before* his trip northward, he was gushing over to the Swadeshis, *afterwards* he roundly declared that he could not help us openly because the Cabinet was pro-English & he must follow the Cabinet, that he went to Karikal and declared to a number of people (this has only yesterday come to my knowledge) that Chandernagore was going to be ceded

to the British with Bluysen's consent; that, on his second & present visit, he was entertained by the Collector of Cuddalore on his way & that that Collector has condescended to act as an electoral agent for him with his coreligionists. It is perfectly clear now that the man has sold himself to England — selling & buying himself & others seem to be his only profession in the world. Therefore every vote given for Bluysen in Ch. is a vote for the cession of Chandernagore to the British.

On the other hand if you vote for Lemaire, it means the same thing at a later date. For he was the first to broach the question in the public press in France, he has advised the suppression of the vote in French India, he has English connections & is an Anglophil. Not only so, but although asked by the Hindus to recant his former views if he wanted their vote, he has refused to do it, & this refusal has contributed largely to the failure of Pierre to carry the Hindus with him. Let these facts be widely known in Chandernagore, both about Bluysen & Lemaire, let it be known that Richard is a Hindu in faith, a Hindu in heart and a man whose whole life is devoted to the ideal of lifting up humanity & specially Asia & India & supporting the oppressed against the strong, the cause of the future which is our cause against all that hampers and resists it. If after that, Chandernagore still votes for Bluysen or Lemaire, it is its own choice & it will have itself to thank for anything that may follow.

I have more to write of these things from the spiritual point of view, but I shall leave it till tomorrow or the day after as this letter must go at once. Put faith in God & act. You have seen that when He wills, He can bring about impossibilities. Do not look too much at the chances of success & failure in this matter.
কর্ম্যবাধিকারন্তে

Kali

[13]

5 May [1914].

Dear M—

The election is over—or what they call an election—with the result that the man who had the fewer real votes has got the majority. As for M. Richard's votes, they got rid of them in Pondicherry & Karikal by the simple process of reading Paul Bluysen wherever Paul Richard was printed. Even where he brought his voters in Karikal to the poll himself, the results were published "Richard—0". At Villenur people were simply prevented from voting for him or anyone else. As for the results they had been arranged on the evening before the election by M. Gaebelé & were made to fit in with his figures. The extent to which this was done you can imagine from the fact that at Nandagopal's village where there is no single Bluysenite, there were only 13 "votes" for Lemaire and all the rest for Bluysen. The same result in Mudrapalli which is strong for Pierre, except in one college where Sada (President of the Cercle Sportif) was interpreter & did not allow any humbug; knowing whom they had to deal with, they did not dare to falsify the results. There Bluysen got only 33 votes against 200 & more for Lemaire. In most places, this would have been the normal result, if there had been any election at all. As for Richard, he would probably have got a thousand votes beside the Chandernagore total; as in some five Colleges of Pondicherry alone he had about 300 which were transmuted into zero, & we know of one village in which he had 91 who were prevented forcibly from voting. Bluysen normally would hardly have got 5000 in the whole of French India. Of course protests are being prepared from every side, & if Bluysen is not supported by the Cabinet which is likely to come in after the elections in France, the election may be invalidated. Otherwise, for some time, he may reign in spite of the hatred & contempt of the whole population by the terror of the administration and the police. This Madras population is so deficient in even the rudiments of moral courage that one cannot hope very much from it.

Meanwhile Richard intends to remain in India for 2 years & work for the people. He is trying to start an Association of the young men of Pondicherry & Karikal as a sort of training ground from which men can be chosen for the Vedantic Yoga. Everything is a little nebulous as yet. I shall write to you about it when things are more definite.

Since writing the above I have received your last letter. As for the election, we must wait to see whether Bluysen is validated or not. Even if he is not, I do not think Richard can stand again until the new party in Pondicherry is increased & organised & that will have to be done quietly at first. There is, however, just one possibility, that if something happens which it is just now needless to mention, it might be feasible to unite Gaebelé & Pierre in a candidature of reconciliation. The idea was raised by Pierre himself & very reluctantly rejected by Gaebelé before the elections. Another time it might succeed & even if Richard were not the candidate chosen, he would get a great influence by engineering the settlement. Otherwise we shall have to await a more favourable opportunity. As for Bluysen he has made himself a byword for every kind of rascality & oppression, & is now the enemy much rather than Lemaire. These things we shall see to afterwards. The young men of Pondicherry & Karikal are sending a protest with signed declarations of facts observed in the election & two hundred signatures to the Minister, the Chambre & the Temps newspaper. It has also been read aloud by the President in the Commission of Recensement & produced a great impression — moral only, of course. In France, the opinion of the “jeunesse” is much valued and, joined with the Lemairiste protests, it may possibly have some effect, unless either Bluysen buys the Validation Committee or is supported by the French “hommes d'état”. There is an ugly rumour that Poincaré supports Bluysen; & there are always corrupt financial dealings underlying French politics which the outside world does not see. If so, we must put spiritual force against the banded forces of evil & see the result.

Next as to money matters. My present position is that I have exhausted all my money along with Rs 60 Richard forced

on me & am still in debt for the Rs 130 due for the old rent. I do not like to take more money from Richard, for he has sold one fourth of his wife's fortune (a very small one) in order to be able to come & work for India, & the money he has can only carry him through the 2 years he thinks of staying here. I should therefore be impoverishing them by taking anything from them. Of course, they believe that money will come whenever it is necessary; but then God's idea of necessity & ours do not always agree. As for Rangaswamy, there is a fatality about his money,—it is intercepted by all sorts of people & very little reaches me even on the rare occasions when he sends anything. I have no hope, therefore, of any regular help from that quarter. Even in the fact of your being unable to meet him, fate has been against us. On the other hand, Saurin writes that he has been able to "fix" Rs 1000 a year for me in Bengal. Is this merely the refixing of Das' promise or something else. As for fixing anything may be fixed orally or on paper; the difficulty is to realise what has been fixed. He says also there is Rs 500 awaiting me, my share of the garden money. He wants it for his "commerce", but when I have no money to live on, I can hardly comply. He does not tell me what I am to do to get the money, but only that I can get it whenever I want it. I am writing to him to Meherpur, but if you see him in Calcutta, ask him to get it & send it to me at once. With this money I may be able to go on for a few months till something definite & regular can be settled & worked out. As for the sum I need monthly, so long as S & the others do not return, I need Rs 50 monthly for my own expenses + Rs 10 not for myself, but still absolutely indispensable. When S & the others return, that will no longer be sufficient. I am writing to S to try and make some real bandobast about money before coming back. Please also press Shyama Babu and the others for the money due to me. This habit of defalcation of money for "noble & philanthropic" purposes in which usually the ego is largely the beneficiary is one of the curses of our movement &, so long as it is continued, Lakshmi will not return to this country. I have sharply discontinued all looseness of the kind myself & it must be discouraged henceforth wherever we meet it. It is

much better & more honest to be a thief for our own personal benefit, than under these holy masks. And always, if one must plunder, it is best to do it as a Kshatriya, not with the corruption of the Vaishya spirit of gain which is the chief enemy in our present struggle. What you have to do, is to try to make some real arrangement, not a theoretical arrangement, by which the burden of my expenses may be shifted off your shoulders until I am able to make my own provision. Meanwhile get me Rs 150 & the Rs 500 due to me (garden money) &, if afterwards we can make no other arrangement, we shall then have to consider the question again. It is this point of equipment, not only for myself but for my work in which the opposition of the Kaliyuga forces is just now the most obstinate. It has somehow to be overcome.

Richard has paid the Rs 51. I am keeping the sum as the Rs 50 for last month + 1. Please cut it off from the sum you would otherwise have sent—(not, however, from the Rs 130 for the payment of the rent). Please also get us some cloths sent from Calcutta, as they are very urgently needed, especially as I may now have to go out from time to time breaking my old rule of seclusion. I am also in need of a pair of shoes as Bharati has bagged the pair I had.

Then for more important subjects. You write about Biren being here. I do not hold the same opinion about Biren as Saurin etc do, who are inclined towards a very black interpretation of his character & actions. It seems to me that events have corroborated all he said about his relations with certain undesirable persons. Moreover I see that he has taken Yoga earnestly & has made for him a rapid progress. I am also unaware of anything he has said to others which would help any evil-minded person in establishing a wrong interpretation of your philosophic & social activities. I fail to find in him, looking at him spiritually, those ineffable blacknesses which were supposed to dwell in him,—only flightiness, weakness, indiscretion, childish & erratic impulsiveness & self-will & certain undesirable *possibilities* present in many young Bengalis, in a certain type, indeed, which has done much harm in the past. All these have recently much diminished & I hope even to eradicate them by the Yoga. In fact, the view

of his presence here forced on me by that which guides me, is that he was sent here as the representative of this type & that I have to change & purify it. If I can do this in the representative, it is possible in the future to do so in the class, & unless I can do it, the task I have set for myself for India will remain almost too difficult for solution. For as long as that element remains strong, Bengal can never become what it is intended to be.

You will say, supposing I am wrong & Saurin right, or supposing I fail. In any case, he cannot strike your work except by first striking at me, since he does not know anything about you directly or independently of his stay here. Still, there is the possibility (intellectually) of even that happening. That raises a whole question which it is necessary to settle — the entire separation of Vedantic Yoga from other activities. You must realise that my work is a very vast one & that I must in doing it, come in close contact with all sorts of people including Europeans, perhaps even officials, perhaps even spies & officials. For instance, there is Biren. There is a French man named Stair Siddhar now in Chandernagore, who came to me & whom I had to see & sound. He is a queer sort of fool with something of the knave, but he had possibilities which I had to sound. There is Richard who is to know nothing about Tantricism. There are a host of *possible* young men whom I must meet & handle, but who may not turn out well. It is obviously impossible for me to do this work, if the close connection with Tantriks remains & everyone whom I meet & receive is supposed by people there to be a mighty & venerable person who is to be taken at once into perfect confidence by reason of having been for a time in my august shadow. It won't do at all. The whole thing must be rearranged on a reasonable basis.

First, it must be known among our friends that my whole action is about to be such as I have described, so that they may not again repeat that kind of mistake.

Secondly, those immediately connected with me must be aloof physically from Tantricism — because of the discredit it brings, — & intangible by evil-minded persons.

Thirdly, Biren & others of that kind must be made to under-

stand that Tantra for us is discontinued until farther notice which can be only in the far future.

Fourthly, the written basis of Vedantic Yoga has now become impossible & must be entirely changed &, as far as possible, withdrawn from circulation.

These are details, but important details. There is one matter, however, which has to be settled, that of the Brahmin. The Brahmin, it appears, has made himself impossible as an agent or, at least, he is so considered. Then as for your direct communication with Sarathi, it is looked upon with dislike by Sarathi's people & I do not know what S's own sentiments in the matter may be. Of course, the reason they allege is obvious enough. There is one of my own people here who might do it, but he is so useful in other important matters that I hesitate to use him as an agent in this. That is why I am in a difficulty & I get no light on the question from above, only the intellect stumbles about between possibilities against all of which there is an objection, especially from the new point of view which demands for the present a spotless peace & irreproachable reputation in these matters for the centre of Yogic activity here. Nevertheless, the thing must be done, although as the last legacy of the old state of things. I shall write to you on the old lines about it in a few days, as also about the future of the Tantric Yoga. Judging from what I have heard of the facts, I do not think the difficulty about S is likely to materialise — unless there are facts behind of which I do not know. Unfortunately the manner in which the Tantric Yoga has been carried on is so full of the old faults of former Tantric sadhana that a catastrophe was inevitable. The new Yoga cannot be used as a sort of sauce for old dishes; it must occupy the whole place on peril of serious difficulties in the siddhi & even disasters.

I shall write to you about what I propose to do about Vedantic Yoga & publication; as yet it has not been sufficiently formulated to write. At present we have only started a new society here called *L'Idée Nouvelle* (the New Idea) & are trying to get an authorisation.

K.

[*postscript in another hand:*]

Dear Moti baboo

We are in absolute want of clothes. Will you please take a little attention on that point and relieve us from this absolute want. K is going out now a days and at least for that we want some clothes.

Do not send it [in] Jigin's name they are going back to Bengal. Send it to David.

Yours,
B.

[14]

[June 1914]

Dear M

I have received from Grindlays Rs 400. That leaves Rs 200 out of the Rs 1000, which I hope will be received by next August. We have also the clothes & shoes,— but for myself only the slippers are useful as the shoes are too large. I have written to Saurin about the garden money & he says he has asked Sukumar to send it. But I have received nothing as yet. If I get this money and the remaining 200 from Das, that will be Rs 1100 in hand. With 100 more and 130 on account of the old rent, say Rs 250 altogether, we shall be provided for bare necessities for a year, during which other conditions may arise. That Rs 250 ought to come from Sham Babu and Sharma, but there is little hope of money once swallowed by a patriot being disgorged again. His philanthropic stomach digests sovereignly. I must seek it elsewhere. If this can be done, the only burden which will fall on you is to refurnish us with apparel and footwear from time to time. At the same time an attempt should be made to keep up the arrangement with Das, if possible; for we do not know whether our attempt to provide otherwise will succeed.

That attempt takes the form of a new philosophical Review with Richard and myself as Editors—the Arya, which is to be brought out in French & English, two separate editions,— one

for France, one for India, England & America. In this Review my new theory of the Veda will appear as also a translation and explanation of the Upanishads, a series of essays giving my system of Yoga & a book of Vedantic philosophy (not Shankara's but Vedic Vedanta) giving the Upanishadic foundations of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move. You will see so far as my share is concerned, it will be the intellectual side of my work for the world. The Review will be of 64 pages to start with and the subscription Rs 6 annually. Of the French edition 600 copies will be issued, and it will cost about Rs 750 a year minus postage. Richard reckoned 200 subscribers in France at the start, ie Rs 1200 in the year. For the English edition we are thinking of an issue of 1000 copies, at a cost of about Rs 1200 annually. We shall need therefore at least 200 subscribers to meet this expense & some more so that the English edition may pay all its own expenses. Let us try 250 subscribers to start with, with the ideal of having 800 to 1000 in the first year. If these subscribers can be got before the Review starts, we shall have a sound financial foundation to start with. The question is, can they be got. We are printing a prospectus with specimens of the writings from my translation & commentary on a Vedic hymn, and an extract from Richard's collections of the central sayings of great sages of all times called the Eternal Wisdom to show the nature of the Review. This is supposed to come out in the middle of this month, & the Review on the 15th August, so there will be nearly two months for collecting subscribers. How far can you help us in this work? There is always one thing about which great care has to be taken, that is, there should be no entanglement of this Review in Indian politics or a false association created by the police finding it in the house of some political suspects they search for; in that case people will be afraid to subscribe. My idea is that young men should be got as agents who would canvas for the Review all over Bengal, but there so many young men are now political suspects that it may not be easy to find any who will be free & active & yet above suspicion. In that case some other method must be tried. I should like to know from you *as soon as possible* how far you

can help us & how many copies of the prospectus we should send to you. If the review succeeds, if, that is to say, we get in India 850 regular subscribers, and 250 in France etc. we shall be able to meet the expenses of the establishment, translation-staff etc. and yet have enough for each of the editors to live on with their various kinds of families, say Rs 100 a month for each. In that case the money-question will practically be solved. There will of course be other expenses besides mere living & there may be from time to time exceptional expenses, such as publication of books etc., but these may be met otherwise or as the Review increases its subscribers. Therefore use your best endeavours towards this end.

The second part of my work is the practical, consisting in the practice of Yoga by an ever increasing number of young men all over the country. We have started here a society called the New Idea with that object, & a good many young men are taking up Vedantic Yoga & some progressing much. You say that it has spread in the North all over. But in what way? I am not at all enamoured of the way in which it seems to be practised outside Bengal. It seems there to be mixed up with the old kind of Tantra sometimes of the most paishachic & undesirable kind & to be kept merely as a sauce for that fiery & gruesome dish. Better no vyapti at all outside Bengal, if it is not to be purified and divine Yoga. In Bengal itself, there are faults which cannot but have undesirable consequences. In the first place, there is the misplacement of values. Vedanta is practised, or so it seems to be in some quarters, for the sake of Tantra, & in order to give a force to Tantra. That is not right at all. Tantra is only valuable in so far as it enables us to give effect to Vedanta & in itself it has no value or necessity at all. Then the two are mixed up in a most undesirable fashion, so that the Vedanta is likely to be affected by the same disrepute and difficulties on the way of profession as hamper the recognition of the truth in Tantra ie in its real sense, value and effectivity. There are difficulties enough already, let us not wilfully increase them. You have seen, for instance, that in recent political trials Yoga pamphlets & bombs seem to have been kept together everywhere with the queerest incongruity.

That is a thing we could not control, we can only hope that it will not happen again. But meanwhile the work of publicity and spreading our yoga has got an unnecessary difficulty thrown in its way. Do not let any add to it by associating Vedanta & Tantra together in an inextricable fashion. The Tantric Yogins are few and should be comparatively reticent—for Vedanta is a wider thing and men may then help to fulfil it in all kinds of ways. Let the Tantriks then practise Vedanta silently, not trumpeting abroad its connection with their own particular school but with self-restraint and the spirit of self-sacrifice, knowing that they are only one small corps in a march that is vast and so meant to be world-embracing. The more they isolate themselves from the rest of the host that is in formation, the more they will be free for their own work & the more they will help without hampering the wider march.

Then as to the work of the Tantric discipline & kriya itself. Remember that Tantra is not like Vedanta, it exists as a Yoga for material gains, that has always been its nature. Only now not for personal gains, but for effectivity in certain directions of the general Yoga of mankind. The question I wish you to ask yourself, is whether you think that with its present imperfect basis it can really do the work for which it was intended. I see that it cannot. There have been two stages; first the old Tantra which has broken down & exists only in a scattered way ineffectual for any great end of humanity. Secondly, our own new Tantra which succeeded at first because it was comparatively pure in spite of the difficulties created by the remnants of egoism. But since then two things have happened. It has tried to extend itself with the result of bringing in undesirable elements; secondly, it has tried to attempt larger results from a basis which was no longer sufficient & had begun to be unsound. A third stage is now necessary, that of a preparation in full knowledge no longer resting on a blind faith in God's power and will, but receiving consciously that will, the illumination that guides its workings and the power that determines its results. If the thing is to be done it must be done no longer as by a troop stumbling on courageously in the dark & losing its best strength by failures &

the results of unhappy blunders, but with the full divine power working out its will in its instruments.

What is necessary for that action? First, that the divine knowledge & power should manifest perfectly in at least one man in India. In myself it is trying so to manifest as rapidly as the deficiencies of my mind & body will permit, and also—this is important—as rapidly as the defects of my chief friends & helpers will permit. For all those have to be taken on myself spiritually and may retard my own development. I advance, but at every fresh stage have to go back to receive some fresh load of imperfection that comes from outside. I want now some breathing time, however brief which will enable me to accomplish the present stage which is the central [?] of my advance. This once accomplished, all the rest is inevitable. This not accomplished, the end of our Yogic movement is, externally, a failure or a pitiful small result. That is the first reason why I call a halt.

The second necessity is that others should receive the same power & light. In the measure that mine grows, theirs also will increase & prosper provided always they do not separate themselves from me by the ahankara. A sufficient Vedantic basis provided, a long, slow & obscure Tantra will no longer be necessary. The power that I am developing, if it reaches consummation, will be able to accomplish its effects automatically by *any method chosen*. If it uses Tantric kriya, it will then be because God has chosen that means, because He wishes to put the Shakta part of Him forward first & not the Vaishnava. And that kriya will then be irresistible in its effects, perhaps even strange & new in its means & forms. I have then to effect that power & communicate it to others. But at present the forces of the material Prakriti strive with all their remaining energy against the spiritual mastery that is being sought to impose on them. And it is especially in the field to which your kriyas have belonged and kindred fields that they are still too strong for me. You will remember what has been written, that the sadhana shall first be applied in things that do not matter & only afterwards used for life. This is not an absolute rule, but it is the rule of necessity to apply for some time now in this particular matter. I

see that I have the necessary powers; I shall communicate them next to you and some others so that there may be a centre of irresistible spiritual light & effective force wherever needed. Then a rapid & successful kriya can be attempted. This is the second reason why I have cried a halt.

The first & supreme object you must have now is to push forward in yourself & in others the Vedantic Yoga in the sense I have described. The spread of the idea is not sufficient, you must have real Yogins, not merely men moved intellectually & emotionally by one or two of the central ideas of the Yoga. Spreading of the idea is the second necessity — for that the Review at present offers itself among other means. The other means is to form brotherhoods, not formal but real, (not societies of the European kind but informal groups of people united by one effort & one feeling) for the practice of Vedantic Yoga (without any necessary thought of the Tantric). But of this I shall write to you hereafter.

Finally as to commercial matters. I had arranged things according to the last idea, but at the last moment an objection was made that the arrangement was not a very reasonable one, — an objection which my reason was forced to admit. It was then proposed to send the Brahmin as a commercial agent & I so wrote to you. But a few days afterwards when I asked for him to be sent, I was informed that the Brahmin was no longer possible as a commercial agent as he was now an object of suspicion to the third party. Another man I had fixed on is so circumstanced that he cannot go now. There the matter stands. As for your suggestion, these people here never objected to dealing direct with you, the objection was mine due to the terms & the accidents of your correspondence. On the other hand every attempt I have made personally to get the matter settled has been frustrated by Krishna. I have made these attempts contrary to the inner instructions received & by the light of the reason. That always fails with me; if it succeeds momentarily, it brings some coarse result afterwards. The point now is that if you do as you suggest, it must be so done that there shall not be the least chance of the transaction interfering with our business here — I

mean not any commercial business, but the enterprises (Society, Review etc.) we are starting. The question is not one of direct communication, but of right handling & especially of the right person not only from the point of view of the buyer and seller, but with regard to the third party who is indirectly interested in the transaction. In any case you must write to me what you propose to do, before you act.

By the way, there was a very shocking and অশ্রীল word in your last letter to me with regard to my past activities, Bande Mataram, Karmayogin etc. I do not wish to repeat it here. Please do not use such an indecorous expression in writing in future. In personal talk it does not matter; but not, if you please, in correspondence.

As to your request for details of my life, about which you wrote to Bijoy, it is a very difficult matter for there is very little one can write without offending people, eg S. Mullick, B. Pal, S. S. Chakraborty & revealing party secrets. However we shall see what can be done. But let me know what you are writing about me & how & where you mean to publish it.

A. K.

[15]

[July 1914]

Dear M.

I write today only about two business matters. As to the Review, I do not think we can dispense with the 200 subscribers whom you promise. The only difficulty is that, if there are political suspects among them, it will give the police a handle for connecting politics & the Review & thus frightening the public. But this is not a sufficient reason for the Review refusing so many subscribers or for so large a number being deprived of the enlightenment it may bring them. Therefore, some arrangement should be made. I should suggest that you should make those subscribers who are mainly interested in Yoga, and as for those who decline to give up political opinions of a vehement nature

or to conceal them so as not to fall into police snares, they may without becoming subscribers on our list receive the Review from trustworthy agents appointed by you as our representative. The agent must let us or you know the number of copies wanted, send in the money and receive the Review from us or you in a packet as a declared agent commissioned to sell a certain number of copies, receiving (nominally) a discount on each copy sold. I suggest this arrangement but if another would be more convenient, please let us know. You must organise the subscription matter before starting for your pilgrimage so that we may have a fair start in August. I shall write a longer letter to you about Yoga & other matters as soon as I have a little time.

The Psalmist was here. He asked for the Calcutta address & I gave it to him. It appears he is sending it to Calcutta in connection with a business he wants to wind up. It is difficult to understand because he says it is a commercial secret, but he tells me you will understand if I send you the accompanying cabalistic figures — God save us from all mysteries except those of Tantric Yoga.

Kali

[16]

[July–August 1914]

Dear M.

Again a business letter. Enclosed you will find two samples of paper, taken from a sample book of the Titaghur Mills which we want made to order, of a certain size, for our Review. Will you please see *at once* the agent in Calcutta, whose address is given, and ask him for all the particulars, the price, whether the paper of that sample, of the size required, is available or can be made to order by them, in what minimum amount, within what time etc and let the Manager know immediately by the British post.

What about the commercial transaction and my last letter? The Psalmist's brother is asking for a reply.

K.

P.S. Received your letter. Please let us know how many copies of the Arya you want sent to you for sale, since you cannot get subscribers. I shall write later. The divorce from Tantrism is necessary if you are to do the work of the Review or the other work I wish you to undertake. You must surely see that. Neither will march if there are any occurrences of the old kind mixing them up together.

[Postscript in another hand:]

If it is possible please send some subscribers. Subscribers book is nearly as blank as it was at the time [of] our purchasing it.

Yours,
[Illegible signature]

[17]

29 August 1914

Dear M.

Before your letter came, ie yesterday, the news was published that the Government had drawn back from its proposal, and today the Amrita [Bazar]¹² with its comment arrived. I presume, therefore, no immediate answer from me is needed. But in case anything of the kind is raised again, I shall give you my opinion in the matter.

We gain nothing by preaching an unconditional loyalty to the Government, such as is the fashion nowadays, or doing anything which even in appearance strengthens the disposition towards an abject & unmanly tone in politics. Gandhi's loyalism is not a pattern for India which is not South Africa, & even Gandhi's loyalism is corrected by passive resistance. An abject tone of servility in politics is not "diplomacy" & is not good politics. It does not deceive or disarm the opponent; it does encourage nervelessness, fear & a cringing cunning in the subject people. What Gandhi has been attempting in S. Africa is to secure for Indians the position of kindly treated serfs,—as a

¹² MS Bazaar

stepping-stone to something better. Loyalty + Ambulance Corps mean the same thing in India. But the conditions of India are not those of S. Africa; our position is different & our aim is different, not to secure a few privileges, but to create a nation of men fit for independence & able to secure & keep it. We have been beaten in the first attempt, like every other nation similarly circumstanced. That is no reason why the whole people should go back to a condition of abject fear, grovelling loyalty & whining complaints. The public Nationalist policy has always been

1. Eventual independence
2. No cooperation without control.
- 3 A masculine courage in speech & action

Let us add a fourth,

4. Readiness to accept real concessions & pay their just price, but no more. Beyond that, I do not see the necessity of any change. We recognise that immediate independence is not practicable & we are ready to defend the British rule against any foreign nation, for that means defending our own future independence.

Therefore, if the Government accepts volunteers or favours the institution of Boy-Scouts, we give our aid, but not to be mere stretcher-bearers.

That is the side of principle; now let us look at that of policy.

(1) I don't appreciate Sarat Maharaj's position. If self-sacrifice is the object, every human being has the whole of life as a field for self-sacrifice & does not depend on any Government for that. We can show our sacrificing activities every moment, if we want. It is not a question of sacrifice at all, it is a question of military training. If the young men wish to organise for charitable work, the Government is not going to stop it, even though they may watch and suspect. I put that aside altogether.

(2) The leaders suggested cooperation in return for some substantial self-government. They are now offering cooperation without any return at all. Very self-sacrificing, but not political. If indeed, Gov^t were willing to train "thousands of young men" in military service as volunteers, Territorials or boy-scouts, whether for keeping the peace or as a reserve in case of invasion, then we

need not boggle about the return. But, after so much experience, do these addle-headed politicians think the Gov^t is going to do that except in case of absolute necessity and as a choice between two evils? When will that absolute necessity come? Only if the war goes against them seriously & they have to withdraw their troops from India. I shall discuss that point later on.

(3) Meanwhile what have the Government done? After testing the temper of the people &, you may be sure, watching closely what young men came forward as volunteers & who did not, they have removed an offer which had already been whittled down to a mere harmless Ambulance Corps in which the young men have plenty of chances of getting killed, but none of learning real warfare. Mere common sense warns us not to trust such an administration & to think ten times before accepting its offers. We know Lord Hardinge's policy; (1) sweet words, (2) quiet systematic coercion, (3) concession where obstinacy would mean too great a row & too much creation of deep-seated hostility.

Having prefaced so much, let us look at the utility of the things offered us or offered by us.

1. Ambulance Corps —

The only possible utilities would be two, (1) to train two thousand young men to be steady under fire (2) to train them to act together under discipline in an easy but dangerous service. Now it is quite possible for us to create courage in our young men without these means, & I hope our best men, or let me say, our men generally do not need to become stretcher bearers in a European war in order to have the necessary nerve, courage, steadiness & discipline. If therefore an Ambulance Corps is again suggested & accepted, either refuse or let only those young men go who are enthusiastic, but still lightheaded, self-indulgent or undisciplined. Possibly, the experience may steady & discipline them. It may be necessary to let this be done, if the circumstances are such that to refuse entirely would reflect on our national courage or be interpreted as a backing out from a national engagement.

2. Boy-Scouts — Volunteer Corps — Territorials.

All these are entirely good, provided the police are kept at

a distance, & provided officers as well as men are trained & the Govt control is limited to the giving of military discipline in the first two cases. Even without the second proviso, any of these things would be worth accepting.

Only in the case of volunteers going to the scene of war, you must see that we are not crippled by all our best men or even a majority being sent; only enough to bring in an element among us who have seen actual warfare –

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I think any of these things may one day become possible. Since the last year, new forces have come into the world and are now strong enough to act, which are likely to alter the whole face of the world. The present war is only a beginning not the end. We have to consider what are our chances & what we ought to do in these circumstances.

The war is open to a certain number of broad chances.

I. Those bringing about the destruction of the two Teutonic empires, German & Austrian.

This may happen either by an immediate German defeat, its armies being broken & chased back from Belgium & Alsace-Lorraine to Berlin, which is not probable, or by the Russian arrival at Berlin & a successful French stand near Rheims or Compiègne, or by the entry of Italy & the remaining Balkan states into the war & the invasion of Austro-Hungary from two sides.

II Those bringing about the weakening or isolation of the British power.

This may be done by the Germans destroying the British expeditionary force, entering Paris & dictating terms to France while Russia is checked in its march to Berlin by a strong Austro-German force operating in the German quadrilateral between the forts of Danzig, Thorn, Posen and Königsberg. If this happens Russia may possibly enter into a compact with Germany based on a reconciliation of the three Empires and a reversion to the old idea of a simultaneous attack on England and a division of her Empire between Germany & Russia.

III. Those bringing about the destruction of British power.

This may happen by the shattering of the British fleet and a German landing in England.

In either of the two last cases an invasion of India by Germany, Russia or Japan is only a question of time, and England will be unable to resist except by one of three means.

- (1) universal conscription in England & the Colonies
- (2) the aid of Japan or some other foreign power
- (3) the aid of the Indian people.

The first is useless for the defence of India, in case III, & can only be applied in case II, if England is still mistress of the seas. The second is dangerous to England herself, since the ally who helps, may also covet. The third means the concession of self-government to India.

In case I, there will only remain four considerable powers in Europe & Asia, Russia, France, England, Japan—with perhaps a Balkan Confederacy or Empire as a fifth. That means as the next stage a struggle between England & Russia in Asia. There again England is reduced to one of the three alternatives or a combination of them.

Of course, the war may take different turns from the above, with slightly altered circumstances & results; the one thing that is impossible, is that it should leave the world as it was before. In any case, the question of India must rise at no very long date. If England adopts more or less grudgingly the third alternative, our opportunity arrives and we must be ready to take it—on this basis, continuance of British rule & cooperation until we are strong enough to stand by ourselves. If not, we must still decide how we are to prepare ourselves, so as not to pass from one foreign domination to a worse.

I want those of you who have the capacity, to consider the situation as I have described it, to think over it, enlarging our old views which are no longer sufficient, and accustom yourselves to act always with these new & larger conceptions in your minds. I shall write nothing myself about my views, just as yet, as that might prevent you from thinking yourselves.

Only, two things you will see obviously from it, first, the

necessity of seizing on any opportunity that arises of organisation or military training (not self-sacrificing charity, that has already been done); secondly, the necessity of creating an organisation & finding the means, if no opportunity presents itself. It will be necessary for someone from Bengal to come & see me before long, but that will probably not be till October or later.

I shall write to you before long farther on the subject, as also on other matters.

K.

[18]

[after October 1914]

Dear M—

I have not written for a long time for several reasons. Our position here since the war has become increasingly difficult and delicate, as the administration is run for the moment by certain subordinates who are actively hostile to the Swadeshis. I have therefore adopted a policy of entire reserve, including abstention from correspondence with Bengal even with officially unobjectionable people. Our correspondence now is chiefly limited to Arya business.

Your internal struggle in the Yoga has naturally its causes. I shall help you as much as possible spiritually, but you must get rid of everything that gives a handle to the enemy in ourselves. Your letters for a long time showed a considerable revival of rajasic egoism, contracted, I suppose, by association with the old Tantrics, and that always [brings]¹³ in our Yoga disagreeable consequences. If you could make yourselves entirely pure instruments, things would go much better. But there is always something in the prana and intellect which kicks against the pricks and resists the purifier. Especially get rid of the *Aham Karta* element, which usually disguises itself under the idea "I am the chosen yantra". Despise no one, try to see God in all and

¹³ MS bring

the Self in all. The Shakti in you will then act better on your materials and environment.

There is another point. You sent a message about an "Aurobindo Math" which seemed to show you had caught the contagion which rages in Bengal. You must understand that my mission is not to create maths, ascetics and Sannyasis; but to call back the souls of the strong to the Lila of Krishna & Kali. That is my teaching, as you can see from the Review, and my name must never be connected with monastic forms or the monastic ideal. Every ascetic movement since the time of Buddha has left India weaker and for a very obvious reason. Renunciation of life is one thing, to make life itself, national, individual, world-life greater & more divine is another. You cannot enforce one ideal on the country without weakening the other. You cannot take away the best souls from life & yet leave life stronger & greater. Renunciation of ego, acceptance of God in life is the Yoga I teach,— no other renunciation.

Saurin has written to you about Bejoy's detention. M. Richard wrote to the Madras Government, but with the usual result.

Here one of the Swadeshis, a certain VVS. Aiyar has been hauled up for circulating unauthorised pamphlets from America. It appears the Gov^t of Pondicherry has established a censorship in the French P.O. and opens letters etc from abroad. They have intercepted some wonderful pamphlets of the usual sanguinary order asking India to rise & help Germany which some fool had sent to his address from New York. On the strength of this a case has been trumped up against Aiyar who knew nothing about either the New York idiot or his pamphlets. The funny thing is that all the time Aiyar seems to be fervently Anti-German in his sentiments & pro-Belgian & pro-Servian! So this wonderful French administration insists on making him a martyr for the cause he denounces! One thing I could never appreciate is the utility of this pamphleteering business of which Indian revolutionists are so fond. Pamphlets won't liberate India; but they do seem to succeed in getting their distributors and non-distributors also into prison. My connection with Aiyar has been practically

nil, as in normal times I only see him once in two years. But here all the Swadeshis are lumped together; so we have to be careful not only that we give no handle to our enemies, but that other people don't give them a handle against us — which is just a little difficult.

You have decided, it seems, to carry on Tantra & Mantra, *anushthan* and pure Vedanta together! My objection to it was from the standpoint of the Review and Vedantic work generally. *Anusthan* & the Review do not go well together. Of course, a synthesis is always possible, but amalgamation is not synthesis.

G.

P.S. By the way, try to realise one thing. The work we wish to do cannot produce its effects on the objective world until my Ashtasiddhi is strong enough to work upon that world organically and as a whole, & it has not yet reached that point. No amount of rajasic eagerness on my part or on yours or anybody else's will fill the place or can substitute itself as the divine instrument which will be definitely effective. In the matter of the Review Bejoy has found that out by this time! I have found it out myself by constant experience & warning. You also, if you wish to profit by my teaching, should learn it also — without the necessity of experience.

[19]

[1914–1915]

Dear M.

Your letter and enclosure (50) reached us all right. We have not received the Rs. 200 due from Das. As for the Rs. 500, that has nothing to do with the garden money of my uncle, it is a sum promised to me which Saurin was to have brought, but it was not paid in time. He tells me he told you about it before he came and he wrote also from here. Our actual expenses here are Rs. 115 a month; this can be reduced if we get another house, but you know that is not easy in Pondicherry. I note that we are to get Rs. 50 from you in the latter part of this month.

So much for money matters. It is regrettable that the Government should think you are mixed up in political matters and that you are on the list of suspects. But once they get that idea into their heads, it is impossible to change it; once a suspect, always a suspect is their rule. They are particularly good at purchasing trouble for themselves and others in this way and just now they are all fear and suspicion and see revolutions in every bush. The only thing is to be extremely careful. You should not on any account move out of Chandernagore so long as the war measures are in force; for in these times innocence is no defence.

It is regrettable that Bengal should be unable to find anything in the Arya, but not surprising. The intellect of Bengal has been so much fed on chemical tablets of thought and hot spiced foods that anything strong and substantial is indigestible to it. Moreover people in India are accustomed only to second-hand thoughts,—the old familiar ideas of the six philosophies, Patanjali etc. etc. Any new presentation of life and thought and Yoga upsets their expectations and is unintelligible to them. The thought of the Arya demands close thinking from the reader; it does not spare him the trouble of thinking and understanding and the minds of the people have long been accustomed to have the trouble of thought spared them. They know how to indulge their minds, they have forgotten how to exercise them.

It does not matter very much just now, so long as the people who practise the Yoga, read and profit. The Arya presents a new philosophy and a new method of Yoga and everything that is new takes time to get a hearing. Of course, in reality it is only the old brought back again, but so old that it has been forgotten. It is only those who practise and experience that can at first understand it. In a way, this is good, because it is meant to change the life of people and not merely satisfy the intellect. In France it has been very much appreciated by those who are seeking the truth, because these people are not shut up in old and received ideas, they are on the lookout for something which will change the inner and outer life. When the same state of mind can be brought about here, the Arya will begin to be appreciated. At

present, Bengal only understands and appreciates politics and asceticism. The central ideas of the Arya are Greek to it.

Soon after the Arya began, I got a letter from some graduates saying that what they wanted was "man-making". I have done my share of man-making and it is a thing which now anybody can do; Nature herself is looking after it all over the world, though more slowly in India than elsewhere. My business is now not man-making, but divine man-making. My present teaching is that the world is preparing for a new progress, a new evolution. Whatever race, whatever country seizes on the lines of that new evolution and fulfils it, will be the leader of humanity. In the Arya I state the thought upon which this new evolution will be based as I see it, and the method of Yoga by which it can be accomplished. Of course, I cannot speak plainly yet my whole message, for obvious reasons, I have to put it in a severe, colourless fashion which cannot be pleasing to the emotional and excitement-seeking Bengali mind. But the message is there, for those who care to understand. It has really three parts (1) for each man as an individual to change himself into the future type of divine humanity, the men of the new Satyayuga which is striving to be born; (2) to evolve a race of such men to lead humanity and (3) to call all humanity to the path under the lead of these pioneers and this chosen race. India and especially Bengal have the best chance and the best right to create that race and become the leaders of the future — to do in the right way what Germany thought of doing in the wrong way. But first they must learn to think, to cast away old ideas, and turn their faces resolutely to the future. But they cannot do this, if they merely copy European politics or go on eternally reproducing Buddhistic asceticism. I am afraid the Ramakrishna Mission with all its good intentions is only going to give us Shankaracharya & Buddhistic humanitarianism. But that is not the goal to which the world is moving. Meanwhile remember that these are very difficult times and careful walking is necessary. It is just possible that the war may come to an end in a few months, for the old immobility is beginning to break down and the forces at work behind the veil are straining towards a solution. While the war

continues, nothing great can be done, we are fettered on every side. Afterwards things will change and we must wait for the development.

K.

[20]

[1916–1918]

Dear M.

I have not written for a long time because nothing definite came to me to be written. We are in a state of things in which every movement fails to come to a decisive result because everywhere and in everything the forces are balanced by contrary forces. At the present moment the world is passing through an upheaval in which all forces possible have been let loose and none therefore has a triumphant action. Ordinarily, there are certain puissances, certain ideas which are given a dominant impulsion and conquest, those opposing them being easily broken after a first severe struggle. Now everything is different. Wherever a force or an idea tries to assert itself in action, all that can oppose rushes to stop it and there follows a “struggle of exhaustion”. You see that in Europe now; no one can succeed; nothing is accomplished; only that which already was, maintains itself with difficulty. At such a time one has to act as little as possible and prepare and fortify as much as possible—that is to say, that is the rule for those who are not compelled to be in the battle of the present and whose action tends more towards the future.

I had hoped that we should be much more “forward” at this period, but the obstacles have been too great. I have not been able to get anything active into shape. Consequently, we have to go on as before for some time longer. Our action depends on developing sufficient spiritual power to overcome the enormous material obstacles opposed to us, to shape minds, men, events, means, things. This we have got as yet in very insufficient quantity.

You have done well in confining yourself to Vedantic Yoga;

you can see for yourself that the Tantric bears no secure and sufficient fruit without a very strong and faultless Vedantic basis. Otherwise you have a medley of good and bad sadhakas associating together and the bad spoil the Kriya of the good; for a collective yoga is not like a solitary one, it is not free from collective influences; it has a collective soul which cannot afford to be in some parts either raw or rotten. It is this which modern Tantrics do not understand, their aspiration is not governed by old Shastra founded on the experience of centuries. A *chakra*, for instance, must either be perfectly composed or immediately governed and protected by the spiritual force of some powerful guru. But our modern minds are too impatient to see to these things.

As for your external difficulties, I mean with regard to the bad ideas the Government or the police have about you and the consequent obstacles and pressure, that is a result of past Karma and probably of some present associations and can hardly be cured. I see people are interned who have no connection at all with politics or have long cut off whatever connection they had. Owing to the war, the authorities are uneasy & suspicious and being ill served by their police act on prejudgments and often on false reports. You have to sit tight, spiritually defend yourself and physically avoid putting yourself where the police can do you any harm and, so far as possible, avoid also doing anything which would give any colour or appearance of a foundation for their prejudices. More can hardly be done. One cannot throw aside friends because they are "suspects"; in that case, we should have to begin with ourselves. If on the ground of such associations we are ourselves more suspected,—as, for instance, the officials make it a grievance against me that although I am doing nothing political myself, yet I associate with my Madrasi friends against whom they have chosen to launch warrants for sedition, etc, it cannot be helped. We cannot suffer political or police dictation in our private friendships.

What has become of the "Pravartaka". The last number was very good, but for a long time we have had no other. Is the administration withholding visa or are there other reasons for

the irregularity? I hope it is not a discontinuance. We have the "Arya" here visaed without delay or difficulty.

If you have difficulties of any kind, it is as well to let me know at once; for I can then concentrate what force I have more particularly to help you. The help may not be always or immediately effective, but it will count and may be more powerful than a general will, not instructed in the particular necessity. You must not mind if you do not get always a written answer; the unwritten will always be there.

I leave it to the Manager of the Arya to write to you about business matters.

K.

[21]

[1918–1919]

Dear M—

If you want discipline, the first thing of that kind I would impose on you or ask you to impose on yourselves is self-discipline, *âtma-sanyama*, and the first element in that is obedience to the law of the Yoga I have given to you. If you bring in things which do not belong to it at all and are quite foreign to it, such as "hunger-strikes" and vehement emotional revolt against the divine Will, it is idle to expect any rapid progress. That means that you insist on going on your own bypath and yet demand of me that I shall bring you to my goal. All difficulties can be conquered, but only on condition of fidelity to the Way that you have taken. There is no obligation on anyone to take it,—it is a difficult and trying one, a way for heroes, not for weaklings,—but once taken, it must be followed, or you will not arrive.

Remember what is the whole basis of the Yoga. It is not founded upon the vehement emotionalism of the Bhakti-marga to which the temperament of Bengal is most prone, though it has a different kind of Bhakti, but on *samata* and *atma-samarpana*. Obedience to the divine Will, not assertion of self-will, is the very first *mantra*. But what can be a more violent assertion of self-will than to demand the result you desire, whether external

or internal, at once, ఎహి ముహూర్త ఎహి కణా and not in God's muhurta, God's moment? You say that there is complete *utsarga*, but it cannot be complete, if there is any kind of revolt or vehement impatience. Revolt and impatience mean always that there is a part of the being or something in the being which does not submit, has not given itself to God, but insists on God going out of his way to obey it. That may be very well in the Bhakti-marga, but it will not do on this Way. The revolt and impatience may come and will come in the heart or the prana when these are still subject to imperfection and impurity; but it is then for the will and the faith in your buddhi to reject them, not to act upon them. If the will consents, approves and supports them, it means that you are siding with the inner enemy. If you want rapid progress, the first condition is that you should not do this; for every time you do it, the enemy is strengthened and the *shuddhi* postponed. This is a difficult lesson to learn, but you must learn it. I do not find fault with you for taking long over it, I myself took full twelve years to learn it thoroughly, and even after I knew the principle well enough, it took me quite four years and more to master my lower nature in this respect. But you have the advantage of my experience and my help; you will be able to do it more rapidly, if you consciously and fully assist me, by not associating yourself with the enemy Desire; *jahi kāmam durāsadam*, remember that utterance of the Gita, it is a keyword of our Yoga.

As for Haradhan, he should show the way in calm, patience and endurance. He has been a soldier. How does he think the nations of Europe could have carried this war to an end, if they had grown so impatient of the fatigue of the trenches, suffering, disturbance, scarcity, continual postponement of the result, and declared that either they must have victory in a given time or throw up the struggle? Does he expect the inner war with our lower selves, the personal habit of thousands of lives and the human inheritance of ages, to be less arduous or to be carried out by a rapid and easy miracle? Hunger-striking to force God or to force anybody or anything else is not the true spiritual means. I do not object to M^r. Gandhi or anyone else following it

for quite other than spiritual purposes, but here it is out of place; these things, I repeat, are foreign to the fundamental principle of our Yoga.

Shuddhi is the most difficult part of the whole Yoga, it is the condition of all the rest, and if that is once conquered, the real conquest is accomplished. The rest becomes a comparatively easy building on an assured basis,—it may take longer or shorter, but it can be done tranquilly and steadily. To prevent the shuddhi the lower nature in you and around you will exhaust all its efforts, and even when it cannot prevent, it will try to retard. And its strongest weapon then is, when you think you have got it, suddenly to break in on you and convince you that you have not got it, that it is far away, and so arouse disappointment, grief, loss of faith, discouragement, depression and revolt, the whole army of troubles that wait upon impure Desire. When you have once found calm, peace of mind, firm faith, equality and been able to live in it for some time, then and only then you may be sure that suddhi is founded; but you must not think it will not be disturbed. It will be, so long as your heart and prana are still capable of responding to the old movements, have still any memory and habit of vibrating to the old chords. The one thing necessary when the renewed trouble comes, is to stand back in your mind and will from it, refuse it the sanction of your higher being, even when it is raging in the lower nature. As that habit of refusal fixes itself,—at first you may not be able to do it, the buddhi may be lost in the storm,—you will find that the asuddhi, even though it still returns, becomes less violent, more and more external, until it ceases to be anything more than a faint and short-lived touch from outside and finally comes no more. That is the course it has followed with me, not only with regard to this kind of disturbance, but with regard to all imperfections. You, since you have chosen to share my Yoga for mankind, must follow the same way, undergo the same disturbances.

This is a thing which it is necessary for you to understand clearly. I myself have had for these fourteen years, and it is not yet finished, to bear all the possible typical difficulties, troubles, downfalls and backslidings that can rise in this great effort to

change the whole normal human being. How else could I have been able to help or guide others on the same way? Those who join me at the present stage, must share in my burden, especially those who are themselves chosen in any degree to lead, help and guide. It may be that when I have the complete siddhi,— which I have not yet, I am only on the way to it,—then, if it be God's will to extend very largely and rapidly my work in this body, those who come after may have the way made very easy for them. But we are the pioneers hewing our way through the jungle of the lower prakriti. It will not do for us to be cowards and shirkers and refuse the burden, to clamour for everything to be made quick and easy for us. Above all things I demand from you endurance, firmness, heroism,—the true spiritual heroism. I want strong men, I do not want emotional children. Manhood first, দেবত্ব can only be built upon that. If I do not get it in those who accept my Yoga, then I shall have to understand that it is not God's will that I should succeed. If that be so, I shall accept his will calmly. But meanwhile I go on bearing whatever burden he lays on me, meeting whatever difficulties he puts in the way of my siddhi. Personally, I am now sure of success in everything except in the *kaya-siddhi*, which is still doubtful, and in my work. The work can only succeed if I find noble and worthy helpers, fitted for it by the same struggles and the same endurance. I expect them in you.

Again you must not expect the *shuddhi* or any part of the *siddhi* to be simultaneous and complete at once in all whom you associate with you. One may attain, others progress, others linger. You must not expect a sudden collective miracle. I have not come here to accomplish miracles, but to show, lead the way, help, on the road to a great inner change of our human nature,— the outer change in the world is only possible if and when that inner transmutation is effected and extends itself. You must not expect to establish a perfect *sangha* all at once and by a single leap. If you make such demands on me, I can only say that I cannot do what is not God's will. Go forward calmly and firmly, not attached to success, not disturbed by unsuccess; my help will then not fail you.

As to your idea of work, it seems to me a little crude in form; but I have no objection to your beginning it, since you feel the pressing necessity. I shall write to you later on about it at more length. The only reason why I do not lay great stress on outer work, is that it must always be *kaccha*, much embarrassed by difficulties, at best only a preparatory thing, until we are inwardly and spiritually ready. That is no reason why it should not be done. Work done in the right spirit will itself become a means of the inner siddhi.

Kali

[22]

[end 1919]

Dear M.

About your scheme of a weekly paper — as for the name it is not difficult to find; it could be called the “Standard-bearer”. But are you quite sure you will be able to live up to the name and carry the thing on in the requisite manner? Nalini and Suresh are not likely to be able to write; one does not write at all in English, the other can do it if he likes, but is even more মন্তব্যগতি than in Bengali. To write for an English weekly would be beyond his present energies. As for myself, I am at present unable to write or do anything substantial, because of the extreme pressure of my Yoga, which has entirely occupied my time, — except for what I am obliged to give to the “Arya” and even that I have cut short as much as possible, — for the last few months. This state of things is likely to go on for the rest of the (English) year; whether it will be changed in the beginning of the next is more than I can tell with any certainty. The whole work might fall on your two Chandernagore writers. An English weekly cannot be conducted like a Bengali monthly or fortnightly. And it is not going to be a political paper of the ordinary kind which can be filled up anyhow. It will have to maintain a high reputation to be at all successful. These things however are for you to consider; you know your own strength and how far the field in Bengal is ready. As to the symbol, none has come to me. I

am not altogether favourably inclined to the Uttara Yogi idea, nor anyone else here. It sounds too like the old style of spiritual pretension, and, when it is put in a current English production, suggests *bujruki*. Plain colours and as few symbols as may be are what we want at the beginning. Indian spirituality has lost itself in a jungle of symbols and shlokas and we have to get out of them on to the plain and straight ways and the open heights, where we can see the "much work that has still to be done". Why any editor? Let the Shakti herself be the editor.

As to articles for the Prabartak, Nalini used to be your mainstay and he is now in another atmosphere,—mainly hitherto of marriage and football, and complains of an inability to write. As for the other he has produced nothing since he left here, except a drama for the "Bijoli" and the answer to [?] even his Prabasi article was written and sent before he left for Bengal. Moni's inspiration flows in channels hardly suitable for the Prabartak. As for myself, it was only as a result of a solitary inspiration and with much trouble of rewriting that I got one thing done for you. Since then I have been too much occupied by my Yoga and not at all visited by any *preranâ* or at least none which lasted long enough to produce more than a few lines. In this matter I am entirely dependent on the যথা নিয়ন্ত্রণস্থি, as I have no natural control of the language and I have no time at present for increasing it by constant practice. It seems to me that Prabartak is getting on well enough as it is, though, if Nalini could write, it would produce an element of greater variety. You should be able to develop more writers with the necessary spiritual experience, grasp of the thought and literary ability,—these things the inner Shakti can bring to the surface if it is called upon for them,—so that Prabartak will not have to depend on three or four people only for its sustenance.

There is nothing more, I think, to add immediately,—if there is I will keep it for later answering, so that this letter may not be farther delayed. By the way, with regard to your design for the paper, the only thing that now suggests itself to me is the Hansa in the Sun, ie the free Soul lodged in the *vijnâna*, and the legend "In this sign thou shalt conquer," which is appropriate,

but has the disadvantage of being borrowed from Christianity and Constantine. It would perhaps be better if you could find a Sanscrit equivalent or substitute.

K.

[23]

Jan 2. 1920

Dear M—

I write today only for your question about Manindranath and the other. We have been imprisoned in an inferno of rain for the last few days and I have only just been able to get a reliable answer. They have only to get a *sauf-conduit* from the Chandernagore Administrator and then, as they are called here by the French Government for government work, nobody can interfere with their going and coming. This is what I am told and it ought obviously to be so. How are your people going to vote? Martineau and Flandin are the two candidates at present and Martineau is impossible.

I note with some amusement the Secretary's letter to Bejoy Chatterji. The logic of the Bengal Government's attitude is a little difficult to follow. However, I suppose the King's proclamation will make some difference, but I fancy the Gov^t. of India is the chief obstacle in these matters and they will perhaps try to limit the scope of this qualified amnesty. Still I hope that the restrictions on your own movements will be removed before long. We have received a postcard from Bejoy notifying to the "Arya" a change of address which shows that after five long years he has been released from his quite causeless imprisonment, but he is now interned in or near Ramnagar in Birbhum. As for me, I do not see, if Lajpatrai is coming to India, how they can object to my going to Bengal. But, allowed or not allowed, I have not the least intention of doing that at present or for another year at the earliest. When I do go, this or that circumstance will make no difference. Mr Gandhi, like the man in Macedonia with St Paul, sent me a message to "come over and help", but I had to say that I was not ready to join in the old politics and had no

new programme formed for a more spiritual line of work, and it would be no use my going out till I saw my way.

As to the *Standard-bearer*, I cannot write now, as it would take too long and delay this letter. I shall write afterwards or send word. Your insured packet reached us yesterday. The increase comes in a good moment, as with Saurin in Bengal the Aryan Stores is simply marking time and the Arya is in a new economic phase which means for the moment some diminution of income.

A. G.

[*Postscript in another hand:*]

In a few days you will be getting 50 copies of "War & S. D."

K. Amrita

[24]

Pondicherry
May 1920

Dear M.

It is only now for the first time since Sirish left that I get some time to write. It is not possible for me to write all I have to say, much must wait till you come here; I will confine myself to what is of pressing importance for the work.

The circumstances under which you have to work have now changed a great deal and you will have in order to meet it to enlarge your view and inner attitude on many sides; this I think you are preparing to do, but it will be as well for me to make it as precise as possible. Up till now you were working alone in a Bengal which was in a state, first, of the last fragmentary and chaotic agitations of the old violent spirit of rajasic politics and then of torpor and inaction; and the thing that had to be done was to get rid of the errors of the past (errors once necessary for the development, but likely if persisted in to ruin and frustrate the future), to get at a firm spiritual basis and found a centre of spiritual unity and action, a *sangha*, on a small scale but sure of its principle and capable of a large development. This has

now been done, but at the moment of its firm effectuation, new conditions have come in which create a new and larger problem. First, many imprisoned forces have been set loose and, secondly, the chaos of incertitude, confused agitation and unseeing unrest which has followed upon the war and is felt all over the world, is now at work in Bengal. The nature of this unrest is a haste to get something done without knowing what has to be done, a sense of and vague response to large forces without any vision of or hold on the real possibilities of the future of humanity and the nation. The old things are broken up in their assured mould and are yet persisting and trying to form themselves anew, the new exist for the most part only in vague idea without a body or clear action and without any power as yet to form what is lacking to them. The old politics in India persist in a chaos of parties and programmes centred round the Congress quarrel and the Reforms, and in Bengal we have a rush of the commercial and industrial spirit which follows the Western principle and, if it succeeds on those lines, is likely to create a very disastrous reproduction or imitation of the European situation with its corrupt capitalism and the labour struggle and the war of classes. And all that is the very reverse of our own ideal. The one advantage for us is that it is a chaos and not a new order, and it is essential that we should throw our spirit and idea upon this fermentation, and draw what is best among its personalities and forces to the side and service of our ideal so as to get a hold and a greater mass of effectuation for it in the near future.

This, as I conceive it, has to be done on two lines. First, what has already been created by us and given a right spirit, basis and form, must be kept intact in spirit, intact in basis and intact in form and must strengthen and enlarge itself in its own strength and by its inherent power of self-development and the divine force within it. This is the line of work on which you have to proceed. We have to confront the confusion around us with a thing that is sure of itself and illumined by self-knowledge and a work that by its clear form and firm growth will present more and more the aspect of an assured solution of the problems of the present and the future. The mind of the outside world may

be too shallow, restless and impatient to understand a great, profound and difficult truth like ours on the side of the idea, but a visible accomplishment, a body of things done has always the power to compel and to attract the world to follow it. The only danger then is that when this body of things becomes prominent and attractive, numbers may rush into it and try to follow the externals without realising and reproducing in themselves the truth and the power of the real thing that made it possible. It was that against which I warned you when there came the first possibility of a considerable expansion. It is your business to enlarge your field of work and the work itself but not at the cost of any lowering or adulteration of its spirit. The first condition you have to assure is that all who have the work in hand or share in its direction must be of the spirit and work from the self outward; they must be men of the Yoga; but, secondly, all who enter in must have this imposed on them as the thing to be developed, must learn to develop this self-realisation first and foremost and the work only as its expression. The safety of the work lies in a strict adherence to this principle. The majority of the educated people of Bengal care only to get something done — and are not troubled by the fact that really nothing sure and lasting does get done or else only something that is likely to do as much harm as good; they care nothing about the spiritual basis of life which is India's real mission and the only possible source of her greatness, or give to it only a slight, secondary or incidental value, a something that has to be stuck on as a sentiment or a bit of colouring matter. Our whole principle is different and you have to insist on our principle in all that you say and do. Moreover, you have got a clear form for your work in association and that form as well as the spirit you must maintain; any loosening of it or compromise would mean confusion and an impairing of the force that is working in your sangha.

But on the other hand there is another line of work which is also necessary at the present moment, because the Shakti is moving in that direction also and the Shakti is the doer of the work,— and that is for others, like Barin to enter into the fermenting mass and draw out of it elements that are fit but not

yet ready to take our whole idea and first to get into and then occupy existing or newly created means and activities,—as he is doing with the Narayan,—which can be increasingly made instruments of our purpose. This work will be attended with all the difficulties and uncertainties and obstacles which go with a mixed and yet unformed working,—such as you had at the beginning, but have now got over,—but we must trust to the divine Shakti to overcome them. The one difficulty that it is in our power to avoid is that of the relation between those who are working on these different lines. There the first necessity is that there should be no clash or spirit of rivalry, sense of division or monopolising personal or corporate egoism to bring discord among those who receive their inspiration from the same source and have the same ideal. A spiritual unity and a readiness for cooperation must be the guiding principle of their relations.

I have already answered to Sirish the first very natural question that arose in your mind at the inception of these new conditions, why Barin and others should cast themselves separately into the ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ କ୍ଷୟ to create a କ୍ଷୟ out of it, when there is already a form and a body of associated communal work in the spirit of our ideal and why all should not unite in that form and create a greater power of associated driving force to bring about a rapid enlargement and victory of the ideal. The first thing is that the particular form given is the right thing for those who are already associated together, because it has arisen naturally out of themselves and by the Will that guides, but it may well be that the same precise form may not be applicable or intended everywhere. The spirit, the truth must be the same, but the formations may be different with advantage to the spirit. To insist on one form only might well bring in that rigidity which grew upon Indian society and its civilisation in the past and brought about an imprisonment and decline of the spirit. India was strongest and most alive when she had many variations of form but one spirit. And I think,—that at least was the prevision that came on me in the Alipur jail and I do not yet see a different prospect,—that this will be the case also in the future. Then, secondly, there is a psychological

necessity which we cannot at the present moment leave out of consideration. The sangha at Chandernagore is a thing that has grown up with my power behind and yours at the centre and it has assumed a body and temperament which is the result of this origination. But there are others, people of strong personality and full of shakti, who receive the spiritual force direct from me and are made themselves to be central spirits and direct radiators of the shakti, and for these to subordinate themselves to the existing body and temperament would not be easy for any and in most cases impossible,—such a subordination would not have grown out of themselves and would only be imposed by *nigraha*, a thing contrary to the *prakriti*,—and it would besides clog up the natural action of the power in them. And on the other hand to bring them in as coordinated central figures into the existing form would not be feasible, for it would mean a disturbing change and new fermentation of forces in the work that is already being well done on established lines. It would mean, even if at all successful, a sort of conducting by spiritual committee and that is not the line on which the Shakti has proceeded at Chandernagore. The more perfect coordination of all who are at work can only come, as far as I can see, after I myself go to Bengal and can act by my direct presence. Thirdly, there are a considerable number of people in the country who are not yet of us, yet can be given the necessary turn, but owing to temperamental and other causes they would not be drawn to the existing centre, but could be easily drawn by Barin, Saurin, Bijoy and others. And in all these and similar cases we must leave freedom to the guiding Shakti to use her own means and instruments. Finally, there are things to be done which need to be done, but which I would not like to impose on your sangha as it now stands, first, because it would disturb the characteristic frame and ideal temperament of your work, a thing which it is important to keep, and secondly because it would impose on you unnecessary complications; and these things can best be done by Barin and others while seeming to work independently for their own hand. And there are needs also to be met for which these other activities are required. Of that I can better speak to

you in person than by letter. This being the situation, the need that remains is to keep a right relation between those who are working, and that means to extend the spirit of unity which is our basis so as to embrace all the work and workers, undeterred by differences of mentality and divergences of action.

In our work we have to fix our relations with three different kinds of people, first, those who are working for the country but without any greater idea or spiritual motive, secondly, those who have the spiritual motive but not the same ideal and inspiration as ourselves, thirdly, those who have the same ideal and inspiration, but are working in different bodies and at first on different lines. Our relation to the first class of people and their work must be based on the fundamental principle of our Yoga to see God in all and the one Self in all acting through different natures and all energies, even those which are hostile, as workings of the divine Shakti although behind the veil of the *ahankara* and the ignorant mentality. There are movements at work new and old which are not the definite reality of the future but are needed at the present moment as part of the transition. It is in this light for example that I regard many things that are in process in Europe and I am even moved to give a temporary spiritual support to efforts and movements which are not in consonance with our own and must eventually fail or cease by exhaustion of their utility but are needed as transitional powers. This too is how I regard the work of men like Tilak and Gandhi. We work in the faith that it is our vision of the future that is the central divine will, the highest actualisable possibility and therefore the one thing that must be made the object of our action; but that does not mean that the Shakti is not working in her own covert way and for her own ends through others. No doubt their movements are of a western and materialistic inspiration or else an imperfect mixture, and some day it may be we shall have to give battle to them as certainly we shall have to overcome the spirit that informs them. But that time has not come yet, and meanwhile what we have to do is to develop and spread our own vision and idea and give it body so as eventually to confront the things that are in possession of the present with

a realisation of the things that belong to the future. I think that at this juncture we should avoid a too direct attack or criticism of them as that only creates avoidable opposition to our own work. The positive rather than the negative method is the one we should adopt until we are strong enough to convince by our visible strength and work the minds that are now attracted by the present power and activity of other movements,—to assert our own ideal as the true and the right way but not to invite conflict by a destructive frontal attack on the others.

As for the second class, such as the other spiritual movements in Bengal, our attitude to most should be that of a benevolent neutrality and a sympathy for such of their elements as are at all in consonance with our own ideal. The one thing which we have to get rid of is the idea of Maya and ascetic abandonment of the life and effort of humanity and also, though that is social and religious rather than directly spiritual, the clinging to old forms and refusal to admit new development. The movements that admit life and Ananda and are ready to break away from the old narrowness of social and other forms, are so much to the good even though they have not the full largeness of the integral spiritual idea and realisation. These we must leave to go on their way and run themselves out or else enlarge themselves till they are ready to coalesce with us. I do not mean that with regard to either of these classes we should refrain from all criticism of the insufficiency of ideal or method, but this should be as far as possible quite general, a discussion and the enforcement of a greater principle and truer method, distinguishing truth from error but not too pointedly aggressive against particular things or so expressed as to seem to hit straight at this or that person or body. To insist on our own propaganda and work is always necessary and sometimes though not always to meet any attack on it; but we need not go out of our way to invite conflict. To this rule there may be particular exceptions; I only indicate what seems to me for the present the right general attitude.

This once understood, the really important thing becomes at once our own work and the relation between different workers,

and here, as I have said, what we need is the growth of spiritual unity and a readiness to take the work of others as supplementing one's own and, wherever it is called for and possible, to cooperate. There is a danger here from the subtler forms of egoism. It is not enough to realise unity among those who are already working with one mind as one soul in many bodies; there must be unity of spirit with others who are following different ways or working separately for the present and complete *samata* with regard to their action, even if it seems to one wrong or imperfect, and patience with regard to mental and moral divergences. This should be easy for you, as it means only getting rid of the remnants of your sattwic ahankara; it may not be so easy for others who have still a rajasic ahankara to trouble them. But if people like you and Barin give the example, that difficulty can eventually be got over; if on the contrary you also allow misunderstandings among yourselves, the work is likely to be very unnecessarily hampered. I may give as an instance, the matter about the *Prabartak*. Certain casual utterances of Saurin's, made in answer to queries and not volunteered, have come to you quite misreported as a sort of intentional campaign to belittle the paper and the other half of what he said, namely, that the *Prabartak* was inspired, though not actually written by me and the spirit and substance were that of my ideal, never reached your ears. I may add also that the alleged incident to which you took exception, as to his method of raising money, never actually happened. Again the advertisement or rather paragraph about Narayana in the *Amrita [Bazar]*¹⁴ was not inserted by Barin, but by someone else according to that other person's idea after a conversation with him: Barin was not responsible for the form nor had he any intention of claiming the Narayana as the sole and direct mouthpiece of my ideas. It is these misunderstandings which I want to see all of you avoid and it can be easily done if those who are among the principal channels of the Shakti preserve the spiritual unity which ought to prevail among those who derive their inspiration from the same source and follow

¹⁴ MS Bazaar

the same ideal. Others less developed may give cause for offence owing to their inability to control the rajasic ego still working in them, but calm, patience, *prema* and *samata* are the spirit in which we should meet such causes of offence; otherwise where is the perfection we seek by our Yoga? Let me add, while I am on this subject, that Haradhan seems to have been misinformed about Nalini. As a matter of fact he has mixed with no *प्॒र्ण*, nor engaged in any kind of associated activity while in Bengal. And if he had, it would have been with no other purpose than to draw others to our Yoga and our way of thinking; but as a matter of fact he remained inactive.

As for the other matter of the different lines of work, there is one instance which illustrates the difficulties that may arise. Barin has taken up the "Narayan" with the idea of gradually and eventually making it another instrument of propaganda for our ideas, and if he succeeds, that will be so much the more strength for us. It will not be a mere doubling of the work of the *Prabartak*, as it will present our ideas in a different way and so as to catch minds of a different type from those who are naturally attracted by the *Prabartak* which demands from its readers a mind already turned to spiritual things or at least naturally able to enter into that atmosphere. To others who are of a less spiritual and intuitive, a more intellectual or literary and artistic temperament, the articles of the *Prabartak* written out of an experience to which they are strangers, are not easily assimilable, and it is these minds which it may be possible to approach through the "Narayan". But if there is not a right understanding, the attitude of the two to each other may be that of separation and competition rather than of activities supplementary to each other in the same work. In addition he has now the chance of getting hold of a strong publishing agency in Calcutta, as Sirish must already have told you, but he hesitates to take it up from fear that it may be regarded as a rival agency to the *Prabartak* Publishing House. He is not afraid of any misunderstanding between you and him, but of others connected with either work taking things in the wrong light and bringing in an unwholesome spirit of competition. This is a thing which

might easily happen, but must not be allowed to happen. I have told him that I would write to you and ask you to see that there is no misunderstanding in the matter, before giving him sanction to take up the possibility. Afterwards it will be for you and him to see that things on both sides are managed in the right spirit. This agency, if it comes into Barin's control, will be conducted with the same idea and method as the "Narayan" and all the profits except what is necessary for the maintenance and extension of the agency, will come to us and our work. These two things are the first fields the Shakti has offered to his energy and they are of a kind for which he is well fitted; their success means for us a great advantage. A time is now coming in which the Shakti is pressing to break down the barriers in which we have had hitherto to move and we must be ready to follow her indications without allowing our personal preferences and limitations to attempt to dictate to her any mind-made limits.

As for the extension of the work you are doing, I have spoken in general terms to Sirish and it is not necessary to add anything in this letter. When you come, I shall perhaps have more to say about it. It is regrettable that at this moment the physical strain should take an effect on your body; I trust it is only a part of a temporary invasion of Roga of which many of us including myself have recently felt some touch. But you must be careful not to throw too much strain on the physical system. A timely sparing of the physical system when there is an indication of overstrain is often necessary before the Shakti has taken perfect possession of the more external parts of the adhara or the *vijnana* will be strong enough to set right at once weakenings and disturbances. There remains the question of your visit to Pondicherry. I had thought to delay it for a short time until I saw my way more clearly on certain important matters; but I now believe this is not necessary and it will be as well for you to come as soon as may be. I hardly suppose that Nelson's curious reservation about your visit means anything serious; otherwise he would have been more positive about it. I take it that they do not like the idea and would be suspicious about its motive and watch your actions more narrowly after it; but as they are

obstinately determined to be suspicious about anything we do in any case, this by itself cannot be allowed to be an obstacle. I should suggest therefore that you might come over after making arrangements for the work in your absence in such a way that the visit may be a fairly long one.

The work of the Arya has fallen into arrears and I have to spend just now the greater part of my energy in catching up, and the rest of my time, in the evening, is taken up by the daily visit of the Richards. I hope to get over the worst part of this necessity by the middle of June, so that by the time you come I may have a freer atmosphere to attend to the currents of the work and the world about me. There is now the beginning of a pressure from many sides inviting my spiritual attention to the future कर्म and this means the need of a greater outflowing of energy than when I had nothing to do but support a concentrated nucleus of the Shakti. I doubt however whether I shall be in a fit condition for meeting the demand till August, especially as I have not been able to get the physical basis yet put right by the power of the vijnana. After that we shall see what and how much can actually be done under the new circumstances. Meanwhile your visit may help to get things into preparatory line both in the inward motor-power and the outward determination.

A. G.

[25]

Pondicherry
Sept. 2. 1920

Dear M.

My impression about your marriage idea is that you are going too fast. What you say about the commune and the married couple is quite right as our ideal or rather as one side of our ideal, but there is here a question of time and tactics. In our work, especially in the preparatory and experimental part of it, there must be not only spiritual hardihood, साहस्र, but skill and prudence, कौशलं. The question is whether it is necessary or wise

and advisable to engage in a battle with society at the moment on a point which it considers to be vital but which is to us subordinate. Our first business is to establish our communal system on a firm spiritual, secondly on a firm economical foundation, and to spread it wide, but the complete social change can only come as a result of the other two. It must come first in spirit, afterwards in form. If a man enters into the commune by spiritual unity, if he gives to it his life and labour and considers all he has as belonging to all, the first necessity is secured. The next thing is [to] make the movement economically self-sufficient, and to do that requires at the present moment all the energy you can command. These two things are, the one a constant, the other an immediate necessity. The institution of a communal ceremony of marriage can only be a future necessity; it involves nothing essential at the moment. The idea is that the family in future is not to be a separate unit, but a sub-unit of the communal whole. It is too early to decide exactly what form the family life will take, it may take many forms, not always the same. The principle is the important thing. But this principle can be observed whatever the form of the marriage ceremony they may have gone through at the time of personal union, whether recognised or not by the present social system. An external necessity does not arise in the present case, as Khagen is not marrying outside his caste.

It remains to be seen whether this step, though not necessary, is advisable. In the first place by your action you declare your commune to be an entirely separate thing from the rest of Hindu society; you will be following in the way of the Brahma Samaj or more exactly in that of Thakur Dayananda. That means a violent scission and a long struggle, which is likely greatly to complicate your other work and put difficulties in the way which need not have been there. My own idea was for our system to grow up in the society, not out of it, though different from it, first bringing in a new spiritual idea,—a field in which opposition and intolerance cannot now long endure,—secondly, justifying itself on the outward plane by becoming a centre of economical regeneration and new power for the country, a work in which we shall have sympathy more than opposition, and getting forward

with other matters according to need and opportunity and with a considerable freedom and latitude, meeting social orthodoxy with the plea of re embodying the old free Hindu idea in new forms rather than with the profession of a violent rejection both of the past and the present. In this process a clash will be inevitable sooner or later, but a deliberate precipitation of the conflict in so extreme a form as you suggest was not within my intentions. That was to come, but only when we were strong and had already a hold on the country, so that we might have a strong support as well as enemies.

Your point is that the commune should not depend either on Government or society for the validity of the union. It seems to me sufficient if that is spiritually insisted on or at most given an outward indication. I would suggest that the exchange of garlands should be done before the commune, as it was done in the old Swayamvara before the assembly. The conventional marriage can then be added as a concession to the present society, as in old times the *sampradana* by the father was added to the *swayamvara* although in fact the *svayamvara* itself would have been quite valid without it. If a case should arise in future where the mutual giving would be necessary by itself, we might then go to the more extreme course. This would, it seems to me, satisfy everything immediately necessary or advisable,—first, the assertion of free choice as the principle of marriage, secondly, the formal inclusion of the couple in their united life in the commune, apart from any conventional marriage ceremony, thirdly, the justification of a continuity between our movement and the great past of India. The movement of course is not to stop with the forms of the past or a modernisation of them, but this sort of preliminary advance under cover will prepare more easily its future advance into the open, which we can afterwards make as rapid as we choose. At the same time it will have the advantage of awaking a less vehement opposition at a moment when it seems to me we are not yet ready for a frontal attack in the social field and a decisive battle. If a battle becomes necessary, of course we must not flinch from it, but I should myself prefer to have it after I have reached the proper stage in my Yoga and

after I return to Bengal. At present I have so many calls upon an energy which is still largely occupied with pushing forward to its own perfection that I do not quite like the idea of the heavy drain on it such a struggle would entail. This at least is my present view on the matter.

The Standard Bearer is, I am afraid, subject to the criticism passed on it; the criticism is general and I felt it myself. It is a sort of weekly "Arya"; but the Arya style and method are not what is wanted for a weekly paper. What you need to do, is to make the ideas easy to the people and give them a practical direction. At present you give only a difficult philosophy and abstract principles. I shall write more about this matter hereafter as soon as I find time.

A. G.

[26]

Pondicherry
Nov 11. 1920

Dear M.

It has become necessary for me to give a categorical denial to all the rumours and ascriptions of opinion which irresponsible people are publishing from time to time about me. The Janmabhumi nonsense is especially idiotic and I do not understand how anyone with brains in his head could have accepted such childish rubbish as mine. Please write an article in the next issue of the Standardbearer saying that in view of the conflicting rumours that have been set abroad, some representing me as for the Reforms and others as for Non-Cooperation, you (that is the St. B.) have written to me and received the following reply which you are authorised to publish. "All these assertions are without foundation. I have made no pronouncement of my political views. I have authorised nobody whether publicly or privately to be the spokesman of my opinions. The rumour suggesting that I support the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and am opposed to Non-Cooperation is without basis. I have nothing to do personally with the manifesto of Sir Ashutosh

Chaudhuri and others citing a passage from my past writings. The recorded opinions of a public man are public property and I do not disclaim what I have written; but the responsibility for its application to the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and the present situation rests entirely with the signatories to the manifesto. The summary of my opinions in the *Janmabhumi*, representing me as an enthusiastic follower of Mahatma Gandhi, of which I only came to know the other day, is wholly unauthorised and does not "render justice to my views" either in form or in substance. Things are attributed to me in it which I would never have dreamed of saying. It is especially adding insult to injury to make me say that I am ready to sacrifice my conscience to a Congress mandate and recommend all to go and do likewise. I have not stated to anyone that "full responsible self-government completely independent of British control" or any other purely political object is the goal to the attainment of which I intend to devote my efforts and I have not made any rhetorical prophecy of a colossal success for the Non-Cooperation movement. As you well know, I am identifying myself with only one kind of work or propaganda as regards India, the endeavour to reconstitute her cultural, social and economic life within larger and freer lines than the past on a spiritual basis. As regards political questions, I would request my friends and the public not to attach credence to anything purporting to be a statement of my opinions which is not expressly authorised by me or issued over my signature."

I shall write to you about other matters in another letter.

A. G.

P.S. Please ask Mani Naik to see my sister before he comes here. She wants to send with him certain utensils for our use.

[27]

TIME INOPPORTUNE. INTERVIEW NOT POSSIBLE. WHY NOT WRITE?

13 May 1925

[28]

[8 May 1930]

Nalini.

There are certain words (marked) I fail to decipher and I don't understand the first line of the second paragraph. Can you enlighten me as to what he really wants, behind the twists and vagueness of his rhetoric?¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo

Write to Motilal in Bengali telling him that Sri Aurobindo for the last few years does not see anybody, not even his disciples here, except on the three days of the year set apart for darshan and even then does not speak to anyone. At first an occasional exception was made but now even this has not been done for a long time. It is through the Mother and not by personal contact that he directs the work. If anyone wants to ask him a question of importance, get a difficulty solved etc, he writes and the answer is given in writing.

Add that the difficulty for which he wants a solution is not clear to Sri Aurobindo from his letter. He appears to say that the Sangha is securely founded on a spiritual basis and that he wishes now to go out in search of *mukti*. He knows that *mukti* in the ordinary sense (*moksha*), release from the world and life, is not an aim in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. *Mukti* here means liberation from ego and all its movements and elevation into a divine and spiritual consciousness. For this it may be necessary to come out of the ordinary life and its unsuitable atmosphere, surroundings and activities. But if the Sangha is well founded on a spiritual basis then there ought to be a spiritual atmosphere there favourable to this kind of *mukti*, the very work itself being a help and a means toward it and not an obstacle. It is therefore not clear why it should be necessary for him to go out of it to get *mukti*.

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo wrote these two sentences to his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta on the back of a letter from Motilal. He wrote the two paragraphs that follow on the back of the same letter, apparently after getting the required clarification.—Ed.

Draft of a Letter to Saurin Bose

[June 1914]

Dear Saurin,

I have received your letter and I reply first to the one or two points in it which demand an answer. We have changed the name of the review from the New Idea to the Arya. We are bringing out a prospectus with specimens of the content which will have to be distributed so as to attract subscribers. It will probably be out in the middle of the month. Please let us know before then how many copies we should send to you to distribute. The address of the Review will be 7 Rue Dupleix & subscriptions should be sent to the Manager, Arya at that address. This is the house that has been found for M & Madame Richard; they have not occupied it yet but will do so within a week or so. It is Martin's house over on the other side of the street just near to the Governor's. It is also to be the headquarters of the Review & the Society, at least for the present.

Sukumar has not yet sent the garden-money but I presume he will do so before long. I have received Rs 400 of the Rs 600 due to me from another quarter & hope to get the remainder by August. With the garden money, this will mean Rs 1100, & with another Rs 100 & 130 for payment of the old rent, we could just go on for a year even without the Rs 1000 arrangement yearly or other money. But Rs 150 is the real minimum sum needed, especially if we keep this house after Nagen goes, as Richard wishes. If the Review succeeds, the problem will be solved; for with 500 subscribers abroad & 1500 in India, we could run the Review, pay the assistants & keep a sufficient sum for the two Editors.

As for your loans, my point was not about a legal process or any material trouble as the result of non-payment. It was that those who give the loan should not have any feeling of not being rightly dealt with, if we should fail to repay them, any feeling that advantage had been taken of their friendship. I have had too bad an experience of money-matters & their power to cool down friendly relations not to be on my guard in this respect.

Therefore, I desire that there should be no ground left for future misunderstanding in any matter of the kind, & loans are the most fruitful of these things, much more than money asked or taken as a gift.

You will of course return before August, — as soon in fact as it is no longer necessary for you to stay in Bengal to get matters arranged there. I await your farther information with regard to the idea of Mrinalini coming here. At present it seems to me that that will depend very much on the success of the Review & a more settled condition in my means of life. We shall see, however, whether anything else develops.

To K. R. Appadurai

“ARYA”
Revue de Grande Synthèse Philosophique
 7, rue Dupleix, PONDICHÉRY.

—
 13th April. 1916

Dear M^r. Appadurai

Thanks for the money. About the Raja of Pittapur, the difficulty is that I do not know Pundit Shivanath very well, and secondly we were never associated politically. I am even afraid that any letter of mine might do a disservice, if, as I think, the Pundit belongs to the Moderate school of politics; it might cause him to look upon M^r. K.V.R. as an extreme politician to be avoided rather than supported. However, if you don't mind taking the risk, you can use the letter which I send.

Kindly ask M^r. K.V.R. to send me money from time to time if he can for a while as just at present my sources of supply in Bengal are very much obstructed and I am in considerable difficulty.

Yours sincerely
 Aurobindo Ghose

Fragmentary Draft Letter

[.....] with whatever the superior wisdom and political experience of the ruling race to grant to them. You are asking for a thing contrary to human nature.*¹⁶

I state the difficulty broadly as I see it; I shall try to make my meaning more precise in a subsequent letter. Meanwhile all I can say is that whatever can be done to alter this state [of] things — subject to my conscience and lights, I am always willing to do. But my scope of action is very limited. I am an exile in French India, in danger of arrest or internment if I step across the border. I have long abstained from all intermischence in politics, and anything I might say, write or do now would be misunderstood by the Government. They regard me, I believe, as an arch revolutionary and irreconcilable; any assertion of mine to the contrary would be regarded probably as camouflage or covert for unavowable designs. Nor could I engage to satisfy them by my utterances or action, I would necessarily have to speak and act from the point of view of Indian aspiration to liberty and this is a thing which they seem still to regard [as] objectionable. All that I can see at present to do is in the line I am doing, but that is necessarily a [?samadhic] kind of action which can only bear fruit indirectly and not in the present

But if the English mind would take the first step and try to see things from the Indian's standpoint — see their mind and act accordingly, all difficulties might be solved. The Indian mind has not the Irish memory for past wrongs and discords, it forgives and forgets easily. Only it must be made to feel that the approach on the other side is frank and whole hearted. If it once felt that, every difficulty would be solved.

I send you my volume of poems since you have desired to read it, but with some hesitation. I doubt whether you will find much that is worth your perusal except two or three of the shorter poems, they were written long ago, some as many as 20 or 25 years, and are rather gropings after verse and style than a

¹⁶ The asterisk is Sri Aurobindo's; its significance is not known. — Ed.

self-expression. It is only now that I am doing work which I feel has some chance of living, but it is not yet ready for publication.

To a Would-be Contributor to the *Arya*

Pondicherry
Sept. 3. 1919

Dear Sir,

I regret that not knowing you would require the copy back, — we do not usually return manuscripts, — I have entered upon it certain alterations to indicate the kind of changes which would be needed if you wished to have it published in the "Arya". The magazine aims at a very high standard of style and thinking, and I make it a rule to admit nothing which is not in my judgment as perfect as possible in both directions. Your poem is noble throughout in idea and has fine lines, but is not throughout of one piece; that is to say, it is written in a high and almost epic strain, but there are dissonant turns and phrases which belong to a lower pitch of writing. I was about to write to you to this effect. I understand from your letter that you wish now to publish the poem elsewhere; but the copy is spoilt for the purpose, though I can return it if you still desire.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose
Director, "Arya"

To Joseph Baptista

Pondicherry
Jan. 5, 1920

Dear Baptista,

Your offer is a tempting one, but I regret that I cannot answer it in the affirmative. It is due to you that I should state explicitly my reasons. In the first place I am not prepared at present to return to British India. This is quite apart from any political obstacle. I understand that up to last September

the Government of Bengal (and probably the Government of Madras also) were opposed to my return to British India and that practically this opposition meant that if I went back I should be interned or imprisoned under one or other of the beneficent Acts which are apparently still to subsist as helps in ushering in the new era of trust and cooperation. I do not suppose other Governments would be any more delighted by my appearance in their respective provinces. Perhaps the King's Proclamation may make a difference, but that is not certain since, as I read it, it does not mean an amnesty, but an act of gracious concession and benevolence limited by the discretion of the Viceroy. Now I have too much work on my hands to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary Government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics — in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done, — and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds. Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya, — not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself. I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled

will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile ambling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms, the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?

You may ask why not come out and help, myself, so far as I can, in giving a lead? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilisation, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me, since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many and an offence and stumbling block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines; I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely

furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I should be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field, would do all I could to help them, I am almost incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed. I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affectation or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

To Balkrishna Shivaram Moonje

[1]

Pondicherry
Aug 30. 1920

Dear D^r. Moonje,

As I have already wired to you, I find myself unable to accept your offer of the Presidentship of the Nagpur Congress. There are reasons even within the political field itself which in any case would have stood in my way. In the first place I have never signed and would never care to sign as a personal declaration of faith the Congress creed, as my own is of a different character. In the next place since my retirement from British India I have developed an outlook and views which have diverged a great deal from those I held at the time and, as they are remote from present actualities and do not follow the present stream of political action, I should find myself very much embarrassed what to say to the Congress. I am entirely in sympathy with all that is being done so far as its object is to secure liberty for India, but I should

be unable to identify myself with the programme of any of the parties. The President of the Congress is really a mouthpiece of the Congress and to make from the presidential chair a purely personal pronouncement miles away from what the Congress is thinking and doing would be grotesquely out of place. Not only so, but nowadays the President has a responsibility in connection with the All India Congress Committee and the policy of the Congress during the year and other emergencies that may arise which, apart from my constitutional objection and, probably, incapacity to discharge official duties of any kind or to put on any kind of harness, I should be unable to fulfil, since it is impossible for me to throw over suddenly my fixed programme and settle at once in British India. These reasons would in any case have come in the way of my accepting your offer.

The central reason however is this that I am no longer first and foremost a politician, but have definitely commenced another kind of work with a spiritual basis, a work of spiritual, social, cultural and economic reconstruction of an almost revolutionary kind, and am even making or at least supervising a sort of practical or laboratory experiment in that sense which needs all the attention and energy that I can have to spare. It is impossible for me to combine political work of the current kind and this at the beginning. I should practically have to leave it aside, and this I cannot do, as I have taken it up as my mission for the rest of my life. This is the true reason of my inability to respond to your call.

I may say that in any case I think you would be making a wrong choice in asking me to take Tilak's place at your head. No one now alive in India, or at least no one yet known, is capable of taking that place, but myself least of all. I am an idealist to the marrow and could only be useful when there is something drastic to be done, a radical or revolutionary line to be taken, (I do not mean revolutionary by violence) a movement with an ideal aim and direct method to be inspired and organised. Tilak's policy of "responsive cooperation", continued agitation and obstruction whenever needed — and that would be oftener than not in the present circumstances — is, no doubt,

the only alternative to some form of non-cooperation or passive resistance. But it would need at its head a man of his combined suppleness, skill and determination to make it effective. I have not the suppleness and skill — at least of the kind needed — and could only bring the determination, supposing I accepted the policy, which I could not do practically, as, for []¹⁷ reasons of my own, nothing could induce me to set my foot in the new Councils. On the other hand a gigantic movement of non-cooperation merely to get some Punjab officials punished or to set up again the Turkish Empire which is dead and gone, shocks my ideas both of proportion and of common sense. I could only understand it as a means of "embarrassing the Government" and seizing hold of immediate grievances in order to launch an acute struggle for autonomy after the manner of Egypt and Ireland, — though no doubt without the element of violence. All the same, it could be only on a programme involving an entire change of the creed, function and organisation and policy of the Congress, making it a centre of national reconstruction and not merely of political agitation that I could — if I had not the other reason I have spoken of — re-enter the political field. Unfortunately the political mind and habits created by the past methods of the Congress do not make that practicable at the moment. I think you will see that, holding these ideas, it is not possible for me to intervene and least of all on the chair of the President.

Might I suggest that the success of the Congress can hardly depend on the presence of a single person and one who has long been in obscurity? The friends who call on me are surely wrong in thinking that the Nagpur Congress will be uninspiring without me. The national movement is surely strong enough now to be inspired with its own idea especially at a time of stress like the present. I am sorry to disappoint, but I have given the reasons that compel me and I cannot see how it is avoidable.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

¹⁷ MS my

[2]

RECONSIDERATION IMPOSSIBLE [SUBSEQUENT]¹⁸ EVENTS ONLY
CONFIRM MY DECISION.

19 September 1920

To Chittaranjan Das

“Arya” Office
Pondicherry
the 18th November, 1922

Dear Chitta,

It is a long time, almost two years I think, since I have written a letter to anyone. I have been so much retired and absorbed in my Sadhana that contact with the outside world has till lately been reduced to a minimum. Now that I am looking outward again, I find that circumstances lead me to write first to you, I say circumstances, because it is a need that makes me take up the pen after so long a disuse.

The need is in connection with the first outward work that I am undertaking after this long inner retirement. Barin has gone to Bengal and will see you in connection with it, but a word from me is perhaps necessary and therefore I send you through Barin this letter. I am giving him also a letter of authority from which you will understand the immediate nature of the need for which I have sent him to raise funds. But I may add something to make it more definite.

I think you know my present idea and the attitude towards life and work to which it has brought me. I have become confirmed in a perception which I had always, less clearly and dynamically then, but which has now become more and more evident to me, that the true basis of work and life is the spiritual, that is to say, a new consciousness to be developed only by Yoga. I see more and more manifestly that man can never get out of the futile circle the race is always treading until he has raised himself on to the new foundation. I believe also that it is the mission of

¹⁸ MS (*telegram*) SUBSEQUENTLY

India to make this great victory for the world. But what precisely was the nature of the dynamic power of this greater consciousness? What was the condition of its effective truth? How could it be brought down, mobilised, organised, turned upon life? How could our present instruments, intellect, mind, life, body be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge and some mastery of the secret. Not yet its fulness and complete imperative presence — therefore I have still to remain in retirement. For I am determined not to work in the external field till I have the sure and complete possession of this new power of action, — not to build except on a perfect foundation.

But still I have gone far enough to be able to undertake one work on a larger scale than before — the training of others to receive this Sadhana and prepare themselves as I have done, for without that my future work cannot even be begun. There are many who desire to come here and whom I can admit for the purpose, there are a greater number who can be trained at a distance; but I am unable to carry on unless I have sufficient funds to be able to maintain a centre here and one or two at least outside. I need therefore much larger resources than I at present command. I have thought that by your recommendation and influence you may help Barin to gather them for me. May I hope that you will do this for me?

One word to avoid a possible misunderstanding. Long ago I gave to Motilal Roy of Chandernagore the ideas and some principles and lines of a new social and economical organisation and education and this with my spiritual force behind him he has been trying to work out in his own way in his Sangha. This is quite a separate thing from what I am now writing about, — my own work which I must do myself and no one can do for me.

I have been following with interest your political activities specially your present attempt to give a more flexible and practically effective turn to the non-cooperation movement. I doubt whether you will succeed against such contrary forces, but I wish you success in your endeavour. I am most interested however in

your indications about Swaraj; for I have been developing my own ideas about the organisation of a true Indian Swaraj and I shall look forward to see how far yours will fall in with mine.

Yours
Aurobindo.

To Shyamsundar Chakravarty

Pondicherry, March 12–1926

Dear Chakravarty,

I have been obliged to answer in the negative to your request by wire for contributions to the [“Bengalee”]¹⁹ on the occasion of your taking it over on behalf of the Nationalist party. I have been for a long time under a self-denying ordinance which precludes me from making any public utterance on politics and I have had to refuse similar requests from “Forward” and other papers. Even if it were not so, I confess that in the present confused state of politics I should be somewhat at a loss to make any useful pronouncement. No useful purpose could be served by any general statements on duties in the present situation. Everybody seems to be agreed on the general object and issue and the only question worth writing on is that of the best practical means for securing the agreed object and getting rid of the obstacles in the way. This is in any case a question for the practical leaders actually in the field and not for a retired spectator at a distance. It would be difficult for me even to pass an opinion on the rival policies in the field; for I have been unable to gather from what I have seen in the papers what is the practical turn they propose to give these policies or how they propose by them to secure Swaraj or bring it nearer. Please therefore excuse my refusal.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose.

¹⁹ MS “Bengali”

Open Letters Published in Newspapers 1909–1925

To the Editor of the *Bengalee*

BABU AUROBINDO GHOSE'S LETTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "BENGALEE",

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me to express through your columns my deep sense of gratitude to all who have helped me in my hour of trial? Of the innumerable friends known and unknown, who have contributed each his mite to swell my defence fund, it is impossible for me now even to learn the names, and I must ask them to accept this public expression of my feeling in place of a private gratitude. Since my acquittal many telegrams and letters have reached me and they are too numerous to reply to individually. The love which my countrymen have heaped upon me in return for the little I have been able to do for them, amply repays any apparent trouble or misfortune my public activity may have brought upon me. I attribute my escape to no human agency, but first of all to the protection of the Mother of us all who has never been absent from me but always held me in Her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster, and secondarily to the prayers of thousands which have been going up to Her on my behalf ever since I was arrested. If it is the love of my country which led me into danger, it is also the love of my countrymen which has brought me safe through it.

AUROBINDO GHOSE.

6, College Square, May 14.

published 18 May 1909

To the Editor of the *Hindu*

[1]

BABU AUROBINDO GHOSE AT PONDICHERRY

A STATEMENT

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from 42, Rue de Pavillon, Pondicherry, under date November 7, 1910:—

I shall be obliged if you will allow me to inform every one interested in my whereabouts through your journal that I am and will remain in Pondicherry. I left British India over a month before proceedings were taken against me and, as I had purposely retired here in order to pursue my Yogic sadhana undisturbed by political action or pursuit and had already severed connection with my political work, I did not feel called upon to surrender on the warrant for sedition, as might have been incumbent on me if I had remained in the political field. I have since lived here as a religious recluse, visited only by a few friends, French and Indian, but my whereabouts have been an open secret, long known to the agents of the Government and widely rumoured in Madras as well as perfectly well-known to every one in Pondicherry. I find myself now compelled, somewhat against my will, to give my presence here a wider publicity. It has suited certain people for an ulterior object to construct a theory that I am not in Pondicherry, but in British India, and I wish to state emphatically that I have not been in British India since March last and shall not set foot on British territory even for a single moment in the future until I can return publicly. Any statement by any person to the contrary made now or in the future, will be false. I wish, at the same time, to make it perfectly clear that I have retired for the time from political activity of any kind and that I will see and correspond with no one in connection with political subjects. I defer all explanation or justification of my action in leaving British India until the High Court in Calcutta shall have pronounced on the culpability or innocence of the writing in the KARMAYOGIN on which I am indicted.

published 8 November 1910

[2]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose.

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes from 42, Rue de Pavillon, Pondicherry, under date the 23rd instant:—

I am obliged to seek the protection of publicity against attempts that are being made to prejudice my name and reputation even in my retirement at Pondicherry. A number of individuals have suddenly begun to make their appearance here to whom my presence seems to be the principal attraction. One of these gems heralded his advent by a letter in which he regretted that the Police had refused to pay his expenses to Pondicherry, but informed me that in spite of this scurvy treatment he was pursuing his pilgrimage to me “jumping from station to station” without a ticket. Since his arrival he has been making scenes in the streets, collecting small crowds, shouting *Bande Mataram*, showing portraits of myself and other Nationalists along with copies of the Geneva *Bande Mataram* and the *Indian Sociologist* as credentials, naming men of advanced views as his “gurus”, professing to possess the Manicktola bomb-formula, offering to kill to order all who may be obnoxious for private or public reasons to any Swadeshist and informing everyone, but especially French gendarmes, that he has come to Pondicherry to massacre Europeans. The man seems to be a remarkable linguist, conversing in all the languages of Southern India and some of the North as well as in English and French. He has made three attempts to force or steal his way into my house, once disguised as a Hindustani and professing to be Mr. Tilak’s durwan. He employs his spare time, when not employed in these antics for which he claims to have my sanction, in watching trains for certain Police-agents as an amateur detective. I take him for a dismissed police spy trying to storm his way back into the kingdom of heaven. Extravagant and barefaced as are this scoundrel’s tactics, I mention them because he is one of a class, some of whom are quieter but more dangerous. I hear also that there are some young men without ostensible means of livelihood, who go about Madras figuring as

my shishyas, instructed by me to undertake this or that activity, and request people to pay money for work or for my maintenance. After this letter I hope they will lose this easy source of income. I have authorised no such youths to collect money on my behalf and have directed none to undertake any political activity of any description. Finally I find myself besieged by devotees who insist on seeing me whether I will or not. They have crossed all India to see me — from Karachi's waters, from the rivers of the Panjab, whence do they not come? They only wish to stand at a distance and get mukti by gazing on my face; or they will sit at my feet, live with me wherever I am or follow me to whatever lands. They clamber on to my windows to see me or loiter and write letters from neighbouring Police-stations. I wish to inform all future pilgrims of the kind that their journey will be in vain and to request those to whom they may give reports of myself and my imaginary conversations, to disbelieve entirely whatever they may say. I am living in entire retirement and see none but a few local friends and the few gentlemen of position who care to see me when they come to Pondicherry. I have written thus at length in order to safeguard myself against the deliberate manufacture or mistaken growth of "evidence" against me, e.g. such as the statement in the Nasik case that I was "maintained" by the Mitra Mela. I need hardly tell my countrymen that I have never been a paid agitator, still less a "maintained" revolutionist, but one whom even hostile Mahatmas admit to be without any pecuniary or other axe to grind. Nor have I ever received any payment for any political work except occasional payments for contributions to the Calcutta *Bande Mataram* while I was on its staff.

published 24 February 1911

[3]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from Pondicherry:—
An Anglo-Indian paper of some notoriety both for its language and views, has recently thought fit to publish a libellous

leaderette and subsequently an article openly arraigning me as a director of Anarchist societies, a criminal and an assassin. Neither the assertions nor the opinions of the *Madras Times* carry much weight in themselves and I might have passed over the attack in silence. But I have had reason in my political career to suspect that there are police officials on the one side and propagandists of violent revolution on the other hand who would only be too glad to use any authority for bringing in my name as a supporter of Terrorism and assassination. Holding it inexpedient under such circumstances to keep silence, I wrote to the paper pointing out the gross inaccuracy of the statements in its leaderette, but the *Times* seems to have thought it more discreet to avoid the exposure of its fictions in its own columns. I am obliged therefore to ask you for the opportunity of reply denied to me in the paper by which I am attacked.

The Anglo-Indian Journal asserts, (1) that I have adopted the saffron robes of the ascetic, but "continue to direct" the movements of the Anarchist society from Pondicherry; (2) that one Balkrishna Lele, a Lieutenant of Mr. Tilak, is in Pondicherry for the same purpose; (3) that the most dangerous of the Madras Anarchists (it is not clear whether one or many) is or are at Pondicherry; (4) that a number of seditious journals are being openly published from French India; (5) that revolutionary literature is being manufactured and circulated from Pondicherry, parts of which the police have intercepted, but the rest has reached its destination and is the cause of the Ashe murder.

It is untrue that I am masquerading or have ever masqueraded as an ascetic; I live as a simple householder practising Yoga without sannyas just as I have been practising it for the last six years. It is untrue that any Balkrishna Lele or any lieutenant of Mr. Tilak is at Pondicherry; nor do I know, I doubt if anybody in India except *Madras Times* knows, of any Mahratta politician of that name and description. The statement about Madras Anarchists is unsupported by facts or names and therefore avoids any possibility of reply. It is untrue that any seditious journal is being published from French India. The paper *India* was discontinued in April, 1910, and has never been issued since.

The only periodicals published from Pondicherry are the Tamil *Dharma* and *Karmayogi* which, I am informed, do not touch politics; in any case, the harmless nature of their contents, is proved by the free circulation allowed to them in British India even under the rigours of the Press Act. As to the production of revolutionary literature, my enquiries have satisfied me,— and I think the investigations of the police must have led to the same result,— that the inflammatory Tamil pamphlets recently in circulation cannot have been printed with the present material of the two small presses owned by Nationalists. In the nature of things nobody can assert the impossibility of secret dissemination from Pondicherry or any other particular locality. As to the actuality, I can only say that the sole publications of the kind that have reached me personally since my presence here became public, have either come direct from France or America or once only from another town in this Presidency. This would seem to show that Pondicherry, if at all guilty in this respect, has not the monopoly of the trade. Moreover, though we hear occasionally of active dissemination in some localities of British India, the residents of Pondicherry are unaware of any noticeable activity of this kind in their midst. Finally, the impression which the *Times* seeks sedulously to create that Pondicherry is swarming with dangerous people from British India, ignores facts grossly. To my knowledge, there are not more than half a dozen British Indians here who can be said to have crossed the border for political reasons. So much for definite assertions; I shall refer to the general slander in a subsequent letter.

published 20 July 1911

[4]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose.

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from Pondicherry:—

In continuation of my last letter, I proceed to deal with the allegation that I “continue to direct Anarchist activities from Pondicherry,” an allegation self-condemned by the gross implied

imputation of a charge from which I have been exonerated by British tribunals. Here too a simple statement of facts will be the best answer. My political conduct has been four times under scrutiny by different tribunals and each time the result has been favourable to me. I have been twice accused of sedition. In the first case I was charged, not as responsible for the editorial columns of the "Bande Mataram," which were never impugned as infringing the law while I was connected with the paper, but for a stray correspondence and a technical violation of the law by the reproduction of articles in connection with a sedition case; my freedom from responsibility was overwhelmingly established by the prosecution evidence itself, the only witness to the contrary, a dismissed proof-reader picked up by the police, destroying his own evidence in cross examination. In the second, an article over my signature was somewhat hastily impugned by the authorities and declared inoffensive by the highest tribunal in the land. The article was so clearly unexceptionable on the face of it that the judges had to open the hearing of the appeal by expressing their inability to find the sedition alleged! My name has been brought twice into conspiracy trials. In the Alipur Case, after a protracted trial and detention in jail for a year, I was acquitted, the Judge condemning the document which was the only substantial evidence of a guilty connection. Finally, my name was dragged prominently into the Howrah Case by an approver whose evidence was declared by three High Court Judges to be utterly unreliable,— a man, I may add, of whose very name and existence I was ignorant till his arrest at Darjeeling. I think I am entitled to emphasise the flimsy grounds on which in all the cases proceedings originated, so far as I was concerned. Even in the Alipur trial, beyond an unverified information and the facts that my brother was the leader of the conspiracy and frequented my house, there was no original ground for involving me in the legal proceedings. After so many ordeals, I may claim that up to my cessation of political activity my public record stands absolved from blame.

I left British India in order to pursue my practice of Yoga undisturbed either by my old political connections or by the

harassment of me which seemed to have become a necessity of life to some police officials. Ceasing to be a political combatant, I could not hold myself bound to pass the better part of my life as an undertrial prisoner disproving charge after charge made on tainted evidence too lightly accepted by prejudiced minds. Before discontinuing activity myself I advised my brother Nationalists to abstain under the new conditions from uselessly hampering the Government experiment of coercion and reform and wasting their own strength by the continuance of their old activities, and it is well known, to use the language of the *Madras Times*, that I have myself observed this rule to the letter in Pondicherry. I have practised an absolute political passivity. I have discountenanced any idea of carrying on propaganda from British India, giving all who consulted me the one advice, "Wait for better times and God's will." I have strongly and repeatedly expressed myself against the circulation of inflammatory literature and against all wild ideas and reckless methods as a stumbling block in the way of the future resumption of sound, effective and perfect action for the welfare of the country. These facts are a sufficient answer to the vague and reckless libel circulated against me. I propose, however, with your indulgence, to make shortly so clear an exposition of my views and intentions for the future as will leave misrepresentation henceforward no possible character but that of a wanton libel meriting only the silence of contempt.

published 21 July 1911

To the Editor of the *New India*

[1]

National Education is, next to Self-Government and along with it, the deepest and most immediate need of the country, and it is a matter of rejoicing for one to whom an earlier effort in that direction gave the first opportunity for identifying himself with the larger life and hope of the Nation, to see the idea, for a time submerged, moving so soon towards self-fulfilment.

Home Rule and National Education are two inseparable

ideals, and none who follows the one, can fail the other, unless he is entirely wanting either in sincerity or in vision. We want not only a free India, but a great India, India taking worthily her place among the Nations and giving to the life of humanity what she alone can give. The greatest knowledge and the greatest riches man can possess are hers by inheritance; she has that for which all mankind is waiting. But she can only give it if her hands are free, her soul free, full and exalted, and her life dignified in all its parts. Home Rule, bringing with it the power of self-determination, can give the free hands, space for the soul to grow, strength for the life to raise itself again from darkness and narrow scope into light and nobility. But the full soul rich with the inheritance of the past, the widening gains of the present, and the large potentiality of her future, can come only by a system of National Education. It cannot come by any extension or imitation of the system of the existing universities with its radically false principles, its vicious and mechanical methods, its dead-alive routine tradition and its narrow and sightless spirit. Only a new spirit and a new body born from the heart of the Nation and full of the light and hope of its resurgence can create it.

We have a right to expect that the Nation will rise to the level of its opportunity and stand behind the movement as it has stood behind the movement for Home Rule. It should not be difficult to secure its intellectual sanction or its voice for National Education, but much more than that is wanted. The support it gives must be free from all taint of lip-service, passivity and lethargic inaction, evil habits born of long political servitude and inertia, and of that which largely led to it, subjection of the life and soul to a blend of unseeing and mechanical custom. Moral sympathy is not enough; active support from every individual is needed. Workers for the cause, money and means for its sustenance, students for its schools and colleges, are what the movement needs that it may prosper. The first will surely not be wanting; the second should come, for the control of the movement has in its personnel both influence and energy, and the habit of giving as well as self-giving for a great public cause is growing more widespread in the country. If the third condition is not from

the beginning sufficiently satisfied, it will be because, habituated individually always to the customary groove, we prefer the safe and prescribed path, even when it leads nowhere, to the great and effective way, and cannot see our own interest because it presents itself in a new and untried form. But this is a littleness of spirit which the Nation must shake off that it may have the courage of its destiny.

If material and prudential considerations stand in the way, then let it be seen that, even in the vocational sphere, the old system opens only the doors of a few offices and professions overcrowded with applicants, whence the majority must go back disappointed and with empty hands, or be satisfied with a dwarfed life and a sordid pittance; while the new education will open careers which will be at once ways of honourable sufficiency, dignity and affluence to the individual, and paths of service to the country. For the men who come out equipped in every way from its institutions will be those who will give that impetus to the economic life and effort of the country without which it cannot survive in the press of the world, much less attain its high legitimate position. Individual interest and National interest are the same and call in the same direction. Whether as citizen, as worker or as parent and guardian, the duty of every Indian in this matter is clear: it lies in the great and new road the pioneers have been hewing, and not in the old stumbling cart-ruts.

This is an hour in which, for India as for all the world, its future destiny and the turn of its steps for a century are being powerfully decided, and for no ordinary century, but one which is itself a great turning-point, an immense turn-over in the inner and outer history of mankind. As we act now, so shall the reward of our karma be meted out to us, and each call of this kind at such an hour is at once an opportunity, a choice, and a test offered to the spirit of our people. Let it be said that it rose in each to the full height of its being and deserved the visible intervention of the Master of Destiny in its favour.

published 8 April 1918

[2]

[The following letter to Mrs. Annie Besant is from the pen of a well-known Nationalist.]¹

I do not see that any other line can be taken with regard to these astonishing reforms than the one you have taken. It can only be regarded as unwise by those who are always ready to take any shadow,—how much more a bulky and imposing shadow like this,—and are careless of the substance. We have still, it appears, a fair number of political wise men of this type among us, but no Home Rule leader surely can stultify himself to that extent. A three days' examination of the scheme,—I have only the analysis to go upon and the whole thing is in the nature of a cleverly constructed Chinese puzzle—has failed to discover in them one atom of real power given to these new legislatures. The whole control is in the hands of Executive and State Councils and Grand Committees and irresponsible Ministers, and for the representative bodies,—supposing they are made really representative, which also is still left in doubt —there is only a quite ineffective and impotent voice. They are, it seems, to be only a flamboyant *édition de luxe* of the present Legislative Councils. The only point in which there is some appearance of control is the Provincial Budget and what is given by the left hand is taken away by the right. Almost every apparent concession is hedged in by a safeguard which annuls its value. On the other hand new and most dangerous irresponsible powers are assumed by the Government. How, under such circumstances, is acceptance possible? If, even, substantial control had been definitely secured by the scheme within a brief period of years, five or even ten, something might have been said in favour of a sort of vigilant acceptance. But there is nothing of the kind: on the contrary there is a menace of diminution of even these apparent concessions. And as you say the whole spirit is bad. Not even in the future is India to be allowed to determine its own destinies [or]² its rate of progress! Self-determination, it

¹ Square brackets in New India. — Ed.

² New India on

seems, has gone into the waste paper basket, with other scraps, I suppose.

If by unwise is meant the continuation of the present political struggle and what is advised, is a prudent submission and making the best of a bad matter, it seems to me that it is the latter course that will be the real unwise. For the struggle cannot be avoided; it can only be evaded for the moment, and if you evade it now, you will have it to-morrow or the day after, with the danger of its taking a more virulent form. At present it is only a question of agitating throughout the country for a better scheme and getting the Labour Party to take it up in England. And if the Congress does less than that, it will stultify itself entirely. I hope your lead will be generally followed; it is the only line that can be taken by a self-respecting Nation.

published 10 August 1918

To the Editor of the *Hindustan*

In answer to your request for a statement of my opinion on the intermarriage question, I can only say that everything will have my full approval which helps to liberate and strengthen the life of the individual in the frame of a vigorous society and restore the freedom and energy which India had in her heroic times of greatness and expansion. Many of our present social forms were shaped, many of our customs originated, in a [time]³ of contraction and decline. They had their utility for self-defence and survival within narrow limits, but are a drag upon our progress in the present hour when we are called upon once again to enter upon a free and courageous self-adaptation and expansion. I believe in an aggressive and expanding, not in a narrowly defensive and self-contracting Hinduism. Whether Mr. Patel's Bill is the best way to bring about the object intended is a question on which I can pronounce no decided opinion. I should have preferred a change from within the society rather than one brought about by legislation. But I recognise the difficulty

³ *Hindustan* line

created by the imposition of the rigid and mechanical notions of European jurisprudence on the old Hindu Law which was that of a society living and developing by an organic evolution. It is no longer easy, or perhaps in this case, possible to develop a new custom or revert to an old — for the change proposed amounts to no more than such a [reversion].⁴ It would appear that the difficulty created by the legislature can only be removed by a resort to legislation. In that case, the Bill has my approval.

1918

To the Editor of the *Independent*

“A GREAT MIND, A GREAT WILL”

A great mind, a great will, a great and pre-eminent leader of men has passed away from the field of his achievement and labour. To the mind of his country Lokamanya Tilak was much more, for he had become to it a considerable part of itself, the embodiment of its past effort, and the head of its present will and struggle for a free and greater life. His achievement and personality have put him amidst the first rank of historic and significant figures. He was one who built much rapidly out of little beginnings, a creator of great things out of an un-worked material. The creations he left behind him were a new and strong and self-reliant national spirit, the reawakened political mind and life of a people, a will to freedom and action, a great national purpose. He brought to his work extraordinary qualities, a calm, silent, unflinching courage, an unwavering purpose, a flexible mind, a forward-casting vision of possibilities, an eye for the occasion, a sense of actuality, a fine capacity of democratic leadership, a diplomacy that never lost sight of its aim and pressed towards it even in the most pliant turns of its movement, and guiding all, a single-minded patriotism that cared for power and influence only as a means of service to the Motherland and a lever for the work of her liberation. He sacrificed much for her and suffered

⁴ *Hindustan* revision

for her repeatedly and made no ostentation of his suffering and sacrifices. His life was a constant offering at her altar and his death has come in the midst of an unceasing service and labour.

The passing of this great personality creates a large and immediate void that will be felt acutely for a time, but it is the virtue of his own work that this vacancy must very soon be filled by new men and new forces. The spirit he created in the country is of that sincere, real and fruitful kind that cannot consent to cease or to fail, but must always throw up minds and capacities that will embody its purpose. It will raise up others of his mould, if not of his stature, to meet its needs, its demands, its call for ability and courage. He himself has only passed behind the veil, for death, and not life, is the illusion. The strong spirit that dwelt within him ranges now freed from our human and physical limitations, and can still shed upon us, on those now at work, and those who are coming, a more subtle, ample and irresistible influence; and even if this were not so, an effective part of him is still with us. His will is left behind in many to make more powerful and free from hesitations the national will he did so much to create, the growing will, whose strength and single wholeness are the chief conditions of the success of the national effort. His courage is left behind in numbers to fuse itself into and uplift and fortify the courage of his people; his sacrifice and strength in suffering are left with us to enlarge themselves, more even than in his life-time, and to heighten the fine and steeled temper our people need for the difficult share that still lies before [their]⁵ endeavour. These things are his legacy to his country, and it is in proportion as each man rises to the height of what they signify that his life will be justified and assured of its recompense.

Methods and policies may change but the spirit of what Lokamanya Tilak was and did remains and will continue to be needed, a constant power in others for the achievement of his own life's grand and single purpose. A great worker and creator is not to be judged only by the work he himself did, but also

⁵ *Independent* its

by the greater work he made possible. The achievement of the departed leader has brought the nation to a certain point. Its power to go forward from and beyond that point, to face new circumstances, to rise to the more strenuous and momentous demand of its future will be the greatest and surest sign of the soundness of his labour. That test is being applied to the national movement at the very moment of his departure.

The death of Lokamanya Tilak comes upon us at a time when the country is passing through most troubled and poignant hours. It occurs at a critical period, it coincides even with a crucial moment when questions are being put to the nation by the Master of Destiny, on the answer to which depends the whole spirit, virtue and meaning of its future. In each event that confronts us there is a divine significance, and the passing away at such a time of such a man, on whose thought and decision thousands hung, should make more profoundly felt by the people, by every man in the nation, the great, the almost religious responsibility that lies upon him personally.

At this juncture it is not for me to prejudge the issue; each must meet it according to his light and conscience. This at least can be demanded of every man who would be worthy of India and of her great departed son that he shall put away from him in the decision of the things to be done in the future, all weakness of will, all defect of courage, all unwillingness for sacrifice. Let each strive to see with that selfless impersonality taught by one of our greatest scriptures, which can alone enable us to identify ourselves both with the Divine Will and with the soul of our Mother. Two things India demands for her future, the freedom of soul, life and action needed for the work she has to do for mankind; and the understanding by her children of that work and of her own true spirit that the future India may be indeed India. The first seems still the main sense and need of the present moment, but the second is also involved in [it]⁶—a yet greater issue. On the spirit of our decisions now and in the next few years depends the truth, vitality and greatness of

⁶ *Independent them*

our future national existence. It is the beginning of a great Self-Determination not only in the external but in the spiritual. These two thoughts should govern our action. Only so can the work done by Lokamanya Tilak find its true continuation and issue.

AUROBINDO GHOSE
published 5 August 1920

To the Editor of the *Standard Bearer*

Sri Aurobindo's declaration

In view of the conflicting rumours that have been set abroad, some representing Sri Aurobindo as for the Reforms and others as for Non-co-operation, Sri Mati Lal Roy, his spiritual agent in Bengal was requested by those in charge of their spiritual organ, in this humble instrumentality of our "Standard Bearer," to write to him in Pondicherry and as a result of the letter he had written to his Master, Sri Matilal has received the following reply which we are authorised to publish:—

Dear M—

* * * * *

All these assertions are without foundation.⁷ I have made no pronouncement of my political views. I have authorised nobody whether publicly or privately to be the spokesman of my opinions. The rumour suggesting that I support the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and am opposed to Non-Co-operation is without basis. I have nothing to do personally with the manifesto of Sir Ashutosh Choudhuri and others citing a passage from my past writings. The recorded opinions of a public man are public property and I do not disclaim what I have written; but the responsibility for its application to the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and the present situation rests entirely with the signatories to the manifesto. The summary of my opinions in the *Janmabhumi*, representing me as an enthusiastic follower of Mahatma Gandhi, of which I only came to know the other day, is wholly unauthorised and does NOT "render justice to my views" either

⁷ This is an extract from a letter that is published in full on pages 248–49. — Ed.

in form or in substance. Things are attributed to me in it which I would never have dreamed of saying. It is especially adding insult to injury to make me say that I am ready to sacrifice my conscience to a Congress mandate and recommend all to go and do likewise. I have not stated to anyone that "full responsible Self-Government completely independent of British control" or any other purely political object is the goal to the attainment of which I intend to devote my efforts and I have not made any rhetorical prophecy of a colossal success for the Non-Co-operation movement. As you well know, I am identifying myself with only one kind of work or propaganda as regards India, the endeavour to reconstitute her cultural, social and economic life within larger and freer lines than the past on a spiritual basis. As regards political questions, I would request my friends and the public not to attach credence to anything purporting to be a statement of my opinions which is not expressly authorised by me or issued over my signature.

A. G.
published 21 November 1920

To the Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*

Chittaranjan's death is a supreme loss. Consummately endowed with political intelligence, constructive imagination, magnetism, driving force combining a strong will and an uncommon plasticity of mind for vision and tact of the hour, he was the one man after Tilak who could have led India to Swaraj.

Aurobindo Ghose.
published 22 June 1925

Section Two

Early Letters on Yoga
and the Spiritual Life

1911–1928

Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, 1911–c. 1922

To Paul Richard

[1]

I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my Yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane. . . .

I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases. The power of guiding action by the mere exercise of will is also developing, but it is not so powerful as yet as the other. My communication with the other world is yet of a troubled character, though I am certainly in communication with some very great powers. But of all these things I will write more when the final obstacles in my way are cleared from the path.

What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga

have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.

12 July 1911

[2]

My Yoga is proceeding with great rapidity, but I defer writing to you of the results until certain experiments in which I am now engaged, have yielded fruit sufficient to establish beyond dispute the theory and system of yoga which I have formed and which is giving great results not only to me, but to the young men who are with me. . . . I expect these results within a month if all goes well.

20 September 1911

[3]

A great silence and inhibition of action has been the atmosphere of my Yoga for the last year and it is only now beginning to lift from me. The most serious part of my difficulties,—the inward struggle,—is over; I have conquered, or rather One whose instrument I am has conquered for me. I am turning now to the outward struggle, preparing my powers for it, awaiting the time and the signal to begin. The details I will not write to you now; the hour has not yet struck; for the enemy in the subtle parts of the material world, although beaten, is still struggling desperately to prevent my Yoga materialising in the objective plane. I await the issue of the struggle, towards which every day of the Yoga brings me nearer with a long stride.

* * *

In spite of that, however, my work in its foundations proceeds. There are means in this world, fortunately for the humanity, which Govts & authorities cannot touch or prevent. For the outward work, I see now, why it has been held back. It was necessary for me to have myself a perfect knowledge & power before I seriously undertook it. My knowledge and my power

are now making rapid strides towards the necessary perfection and, once that is secured, it will be impossible for the material difficulties to remain.

18 December 1912

To the Mother and Paul Richard

[1]

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

* * *

I had one of my etheric writings, "Build desolated Europe into a city of God". I give it [to] you for what it is worth. Perhaps it is only an aspiration of the powers that have brought about your recall. But is not the whole world and not Europe only in a state of decomposition? As for the idea of a quiet country somewhere in Asia, where does it exist? The whole earth is now under one law and answers to the same vibrations and I am sceptical of finding any place where the clash of the struggle will not pursue us. In any case, an effective retirement does not seem to be my destiny. I must remain in touch with the world until I have either mastered adverse circumstances or succumbed or carried on the struggle between the spiritual and physical so far as I am destined to carry it on. This is how I have always seen things and still see them. As for failure, difficulty and apparent impossibility I am too much habituated to them to be much impressed by their constant self-presentation except for passing moments.

* * *

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

6 May 1915

[2]

Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, “Heaven and Earth equal and one”.

20 May 1915

[3]

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

28 July 1915

[4]

I have begun in the issue of the Arya which is just out a number of articles on the Ideal of Human Unity. I intend to proceed very cautiously and not go very deep at first, but as if I were leading the intelligence of the reader gradually towards the deeper meaning of unity,— especially to discourage the idea that mistakes uniformity and mechanical association for unity.

* * *

Nothing seems able to disturb the immobility of things and all that is active outside our own selves is a sort of welter of dark and sombre confusion from which nothing formed or luminous can emerge. It is a singular condition of the world, the very definition of chaos with the superficial form of the old world resting apparently intact on the surface. But a chaos of long disintegration or of some early new birth? It is the thing that is being fought out from day to day, but as yet without any approach to a decision.

* * *

These periods of stagnation always conceal work below the surface which produces some advance afterwards.

16 September 1915

[5]

Reflection, where there is no directing voice, thought or impulse, does not carry one any farther. It only makes the mind travel continuously the round of [uncertain]¹ possibilities.

These things really depend on ourselves much more than on outside factors. If we do not raise difficulties by our thoughts and mental constructions or do not confirm them if they rise, if we have the calm and peace within and there is not that in us which excites the enemy to throw himself on us, then outward possibilities, usually, will not concretise themselves.

Our business at present is to gather spiritual force, calm knowledge and joy regardless of the adverse powers and happenings around us so that when our work really begins we shall be able to impose ourselves on the material world in which our work lies. (This [I] am slowly doing: you, I think, more rapidly.)

I am always of the opinion that the internal must precede the external, otherwise whatever work we attempt beyond our internal powers and knowledge is likely to fail or be broken.

This is precisely my present struggle to get outside the circle of forces and possibilities into the light of the Truth, the vijnana.

Abdul Baha's prevision is possibly correct, but at present it seems to me to be put into too rigid a form. A centre of light, not necessarily translated into the terms of a physical grouping, but in which a few can stand, an increasing circle of luminosity into which more & more can enter, and outside the twilight world

¹ MS (copy) certain

struggling with the light, this seems to be the inevitable course.

* * *

We live still more in the reflection of the light than in the light itself, and until we get nearer to the centre we cannot know.

* * *

The Scheme that was sent me seems to me to be a mental construction formed largely under the influence of the environment. I do not think it could be put into practice; for the world is not ready and if any such thing were attempted it would not be loyally initiated or loyally executed. . . . A change in the heart of mankind, a new heart, would be necessary before any such scheme could at all serve the great ends we contemplate. I would prefer a general breaking up to any premature formation, however harmful this dissolution might be. 18 November 1915

[6]

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense,² though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves [Vedic]³. It is the union of the “Earth” of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which this world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.

31 December 1915

[7]

The difficulties you find in the spiritual progress are common to us all. In this Yoga the progress is always attended with these relapses into the ordinary mentality until the whole being is so remoulded that it can no longer be affected either by any

² See *The Mother, Prayers and Meditations* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), pp. 311–12; entry of 26 November 1915.

³ MS (copy) Yogic

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

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

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

When the Unity has been well founded, the static half of our work is done, but the active half remains. It is then that in the One we must see the Master and His Power,—Krishna and Kali as I name them using the terms of our Indian religions; the Power occupying the whole of myself and my nature which becomes Kali and ceases to be anything else, the Master using, directing, enjoying the Power to his ends, not mine, with that which I call myself only as a centre of his universal existence and responding to its workings as a soul to the Soul, taking upon itself his image until there is nothing left but Krishna and Kali. This is the stage I have reached in spite of all setbacks and recoils, imperfectly indeed in the secureness and intensity of the state, but well enough in the general type. When that has been done, then we may hope to find securely the play in us of his divine Knowledge governing the action of his divine Power. The rest is the full opening up of the different planes of his world-play and the subjection of Matter and the body and the material world to the law of the higher heavens of the Truth. To these things towards which in my earlier ignorance I used to press forward impatiently before satisfying the first conditions—the effort,

however, was necessary and made the necessary preparation of the material instruments—I can now only look forward as a subsequent eventuality in a yet distant vista of things.

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

23 June 1916

Draft of a Letter

He wishes me to say that he sent back the MS according to your request because he felt that it was quite impossible for him to deal with it in the near future.⁴ He is now living entirely retired and engrossed in his yoga. He has put off all external activities and so organised his time as to be able entirely to concentrate upon it alone. He has removed from his immediate surroundings all who are out of harmony with the atmosphere necessary to the yogic quietude. He sees no one and receives no visits. His friends in Madras do not see him when they come. Even his old guru Vishnu Lele who proposed to come here at this time has been requested to postpone indefinitely his visit. For the same reason he has ceased altogether to write. His own works, even those of which the publication has been arranged,—except the few of which others take the responsibility and which make no demand on him,—are lying unpublished for want of time to

⁴ In this draft, Sri Aurobindo referred to himself in the third person because he intended the letter to be sent over the signature of his secretary.—Ed.

retouch them. It is not only that he does not wish but that he cannot any longer allow himself to be disturbed or interrupted by anything that would perturb the balance or break the mould of his present arrangement of his life or draw him aside from the concentration of his energies. All else must be postponed until he has finished what he has to do and is free again to apply himself to external things and activities. Under these conditions a work so considerable as the retranslation or revised translation of the "Seigneur des Nations" becomes quite impossible. If he undertook it, he would not be able to carry it out. He hopes therefore that you will be able to make some other arrangement for it, as for the translations of your recent addresses which have been admirably done. Once you understand in the light of the above the conditions here, you can understand also why — apart from all other considerations — he is unable to assent to the suggestions in your letter.

To People in India, 1914–1926

To N. K. Gogte

[1]

Dear Sir,

I regret that I have not been able to reply as yet to your postcard. I am entirely occupied with the work for the Review which has to be given to the Press shortly. After the 17th I shall be more free and hope then to be able to reply to the questions you have put to us.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

Pondicherry
9 Sept. 1914

[2]

Pondicherry
21 Sept 1914

Dear Sir,

I hope you received duly my card explaining the delay in my answer.

Your questions cover the whole of a very wide field. It is therefore necessary to reply to them with some brevity, touching only on some principal points.

1. *What meditation exactly means.*

There are two words used in English to express the Indian idea of *Dhyana*, “meditation” and “contemplation”. Meditation means properly the concentration of the mind on a single train of ideas which work out a single subject. Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration. Both these things are forms of *dhyana*; for the principle of *dhyana* is mental

concentration whether in thought, vision or knowledge.

There are other forms of *dhyana*. There is a passage in which Vivekananda advises you to stand back from your thoughts, let them occur in your mind as they will and simply observe them & see what they are. This may be called concentration in self-observation.

This form leads to another, the emptying of all thought out of the mind so as to leave it a sort of pure vigilant blank on which the divine knowledge may come and imprint itself, undisturbed by the inferior thoughts of the ordinary human mind and with the clearness of a writing in white chalk on a blackboard. You will find that the Gita speaks of this rejection of all mental thought as one of the methods of Yoga and even the method it seems to prefer. This may be called the *dhyana* of liberation, as it frees the mind from slavery to the mechanical process of thinking and allows it to think or not think as it pleases and when it pleases, or to choose its own thoughts or else to go beyond thought to the pure perception of Truth called in our philosophy *Vijnana*.

Meditation is the easiest process for the human mind, but the narrowest in its results; contemplation more difficult, but greater; self-observation and liberation from the chains of Thought the most difficult of all, but the widest and greatest in its fruits. One can choose any of them according to one's bent and capacity. The perfect method is to use them all, each in its own place and for its own object; but this would need a fixed faith and firm patience and a great energy of Will in the self-application to the Yoga.

2. *What should be the objects or ideas for meditation?*

Whatever is most consonant with your nature and highest aspirations. But if you ask me for an absolute answer, then I must say that Brahman is always the best object for meditation or contemplation, and the idea on which the mind should fix is that of God in all, all in God and all as God. It does not matter essentially whether it is the Impersonal or the Personal God or, subjectively, the One Self. But this is the idea I have found the best, because it is the highest and embraces all other

truths, whether truths of this world or of the other worlds or beyond all phenomenal existence,— “All this is the Brahman.”

In the third issue of Arya, at the end of the second instalment of the Analysis of the Isha Upanishad, you will find a description of this vision of the [Brahman]¹ which may be of help to you in understanding the idea. (October number now in the Press.)²

3. Conditions internal and external that are most essential for meditation.

There are no *essential* external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of the body are helpful, sometimes almost necessary to the beginner. But one should not be bound by external conditions. Once the habit of meditation is formed, it should be made possible to do it in all circumstances, lying, sitting, walking, alone, in company, in silence or in the midst of noise etc.

The first internal condition necessary is concentration of the will against the obstacles to meditation, ie wandering of the mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience and restlessness etc.

The second is an increasing purity and calm of the inner consciousness (*citta*) out of which thought and emotion arise; ie a freedom from all disturbing reactions, such as anger, grief, depression, anxiety about worldly happenings etc. Mental perfection and moral are always closely allied to each other.

Aurobindo Ghose

P.S. The answer to your last question cannot be given so generally; it depends on the path chosen, the personal difficulties, etc.

Draft of a Letter to Nolini Kanta Gupta

Dear Nalini,

Quorsum haec incerta? Do you really mean to perpetrate

¹ MS All. See Note on the Texts, page 586.—Ed.

² See “The Vision of the Brahman” in Isha Upanishad, volume 17 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 30. The passage was first published in the third issue of the Arya, dated October 1914.—Ed.

the sexual union dignified by the name of marriage, or don't you? Will you, won't you, will you, won't you—to quote the language of the spider to the fly? Whither does all this tend, to fructuation (I was going to use another word) or fluctuation,—footballing and floating and flirting as much as exchange of eyes in the delicious brevity of *kanya dekha* and the subsequent vast freedom of imagination will give you of that modern amusement. But all this seems too Robindranathian, too *ki jani ki*, to come to a practical conclusion. To weigh in the subtle scales of amorous thought noses and chins and lips and eyes and the subtleties of expression is no doubt a charming mathematics, but it soars too much into the region of the infinite, there is no reason why it should work out into any sum of action. Saurin's more concrete and less poetic and philosophic mind seems to have realised this at an early stage and he wrote asking me whether it was worth while to marry with our ideas and aims under present social conditions. After about two months' absence of cogitation, I have returned a sort of non committal answer,—that I don't think it is—very, but it may turn out to be and on the whole he had better consult his *antarâtman* and act or not act accordingly.

c. 1919

To A. B. Purani

Pondicherry
Feb 21. 1920

Dear Purani,

It is not easy to get a letter out of me, I hardly write more than a dozen in the year, so you must not be surprised at my long delay in answering you. On the two matters you mentioned in your first letter — what *word* did you want? There is no need of a word, when there is personal contact; the spirit is always greater than the word. And if there was anything that needed to be said, I believe it was spoken between us. I do not know if there is anything definite of which you feel the necessity. If there is, the best way is to try and get it from within first, and only if there is still doubt, would there be the need to come for it to

a definite word from me. It would be well, however, to let me know from time to time how you are proceeding with your Yoga and especially of any obstacles or difficulties you experience; for, even if I do not answer, I can always then give the silent help which I have usually found to be the most effective. As regards malady or illness, it is true that the chief reliance should be on the inner will and secondly on simple remedies. But this rule should not at first be rigorously applied in affections of a strongly physical character, because the gross body is the most obstinately recalcitrant to the will; there it is better in the earlier stages to respect to a certain extent the habits of the bodily consciousness which being physical relies upon physical remedies. When you find that the will is strong enough to deal rapidly with even these affections, then you can dispense with remedies.

You have written to Amrita about a translation of the "Secret of the Veda" and "To the Nations." The latter book is not my property, it is M. Richard's and it is possible that he has given the rights of translation to the publisher who, if he knew, might take objection to your publishing a translation without his permission. M. Richard himself would no doubt give the permission at my request, but I do not know whether he has kept the right in his own hands. Please therefore do not publish that at present, but let me know the name of the translator. M. Richard is expected here at any time during the next month or two; but even if he does not come, I can ask the publisher for permission on behalf of the translator. The "Secret of the Veda" is not complete and there are besides many imperfections and some errors in it which I would have preferred to amend before the book or any translation of it was published. Perhaps, however, it does not matter so much in a Gujerati translation which will not come under close criticism such as would meet a book on the subject in English. It would be better, however, whenever there is question of a translation of a book — as opposed to an article or chapter here and there — to let me know first so that I may see whether there is any modification needed or indispensable change.

Yours
Aurobindo Ghose

To V. Chandrasekharam

[1]

Pondicherry
13th July 1920

Dear Chandrashekhar,

I have not been able to write to you before for want of time — a thing of which I have always a very short supply nowadays. I hope that your illness has “improved” — in the right way — by this time; if not, please write and keep us informed of your state of health. Above all, do not harbour that idea of an unfit body — all suggestions of that kind are a subtle attack on the will to siddhi and especially dangerous in physical matters. It has been cropping up in several people who are doing the Yoga and the first business is to expel it bag and baggage. Appearances and facts may be all in its favour, but the first condition of success for the Yogi and indeed for anybody who wants to do anything great or unusual is to be superior to facts and disbelieve in appearances. Will to be free from disease, however formidable, many-faced or constant its attacks, and repel all contrary suggestions.

It is now precisely in this physical field that I am getting most obstruction nowadays. I have myself been sporting a choice kind of cough for the last month or so which took up its lodgings in my throat and cheerfully promised to be my companion for the longest possible period it could manage of my physical existence; and though ill received and constantly discouraged, it is still hanging about the premises. In other matters I progress with and in spite of the customary obstructions, much faster than at any previous period of my Yoga. Nothing absolutely new—I am simply going on developing to a higher degree the *vijnana* and turning other things into something of its substance.

It is bad that you do not find things favourable for your own Yoga. In case you find it too difficult there, why not try another period here? This time there would be no inconveniences. Our

friends the R-s had intended to ask you to stay with them; they were only waiting to get things into order and were sorry you went away suddenly before they could put it to you. Another time the arrangement could be made, and I think there would be no objection on your side. I think you said something to someone about being here for the 15th August. Was that only an idea, an intention or a resolution?

Please write sometimes about your health and your Yoga.

Yours
Aurobindo Ghose

[2]

Pondicherry
13 April 1921

Dear Chandrasekhar,

I am glad to get your letter after so long a time. I have myself written no letters for the last six months to anyone, both on account of lack of time and absorption in Yoga, which explains my silence. I will do my best to help you; but until you come, write to me, for even if I do not answer, that creates a physical link which makes transmission of help easier on the material plane — for the physical consciousness. It will certainly be better for you if you come to Pondicherry, but I recognise the difficulties. We are trying, not yet with success, to arrange for a house here where people who come for the Yoga may stop. Perhaps it would be best for you to wait a little and see whether this materialises. It would hardly do in your present state of health for you to expose yourself to the difficulties of bad food of the Tamil hotel type etc. Amrita will write and inform you as soon as we can get the thing settled.

Yours
Aurobindo Ghose

[3]

[21 July 1924]

It is not easy to get into the silence.³ That is only possible by throwing out the mental and vital activities. It is easier to let the silence get into you, i.e., to open yourself and let it descend. The way to do this and the way to call down the higher powers is the same. It is to remain quiet at the time of meditation, not fighting with the mind or making mental efforts to pull down the power of the Silence but keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them. If the mind is active, one has only to learn to look at it, drawn back and not giving any sanction from within, until its habitual or mechanical activities begin to fall quiet for want of support from within. If it is too persistent, a steady rejection without strain or struggle is the one thing to be done.

The mental attitude you are taking with regard to “the Lord is the Yogeswara” can be made a first step towards this quietude.

Silence does not mean absence of experiences. It is an inner silence and quietude in which all experiences happen without producing any disturbance. It would be a great mistake to interfere with the images rising in you. It does not matter whether they are mental or psychic. One must have experience not only of the true psychic but of the inner mental, inner vital and subtle physical worlds or planes of consciousness. The occurrence of the images is a sign that these are opening and to inhibit them would mean to inhibit the expansion of consciousness and experience without which this Yoga cannot be done.

All this is an answer to the points raised by your letter. It is not meant that you should change suddenly what you are doing. It is better to proceed from what you have attained which seems to be solid, if small, and proceed quietly in the direction indicated.

³ This letter and the next were written by K. Amrita at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or following his oral instructions.—Ed.

[4]

[4 October 1924]

He asks me to tell you that there are two kinds of movements in the Sadhana, the ascent and the descent. The ascent or the upward movement takes place when there is a sufficient aspiration from the being, i.e. from the various mental, vital and physical planes. Each in turn ascends above the mind to the place where it meets the supramental and can then receive the origination of all its movements from above.

The Higher descends when you have a receptive quietude in the various planes of your being prepared to receive it. In either case whether in aspiring upward to rise to the Higher or in remaining passive and open to receive the Higher, an entire calmness in the different parts of the being is the true condition. If you do not have the necessary force in the quiet aspiration or will and if you find that a certain amount of effort will help you in rising upward, you may go on using it as a temporary means until there is the natural openness in which a silent call or simple effortless will is sufficient to induce the action of the Higher Shakti.

Extract from a Letter to K. N. Dixit

Finally, I must inform you that AG is not inclined to give permission at the present time.⁴ He does not want any, even the least disturbance of his concentration on his own sadhana as he is passing through a most difficult period when any diversion of his energies or impact from the outside world may have undesirable consequences. For yourself also it is not a favourable time and by coming here you are likely, even if you get some help, to have also more and perhaps very acute difficulties. AG asks me to tell you that you would do best to return home, write to him whatever obstacles in sadhana you may have and await a more favourable time for renewing your request about coming to Pondicherry.

30 March 1924

⁴ This paragraph was written by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand at the end of a letter written by A. B. Purani on his behalf.—Ed.

To Ramchandran

[30 September 1925]

Dear Ramchandran,

I am answering your second letter which reached me today. And first I must say something about the very extraordinary line of conduct you propose to adopt in case of not hearing from me. I think it is because, as you say, your mind is not in a completely right condition that you have proposed it. No one with any common sense and certainly no one with a clear moral sense would support you in your intention. As to the law, it is not usual in France to take up things of this kind but only public offences against morals. The court would probably take no notice of your self-accusation and in any case it would not proceed in the absence of evidence from others which would here be lacking. But supposing it were otherwise, what would your action amount to? First, it would be putting an almost insuperable obstacle in the way of your own mental and moral recovery and of your leading a useful life in future. Secondly, it would be bringing an unmerited disgrace upon your father and family. Thirdly, it would mean, if it took any form, the ruin of the life of someone else, for, if I understand rightly what you say, some other or others would be involved, and your suggestion that you are entirely responsible would be absurd in law and could have no value and all this havoc you propose to cause merely in order to satisfy a morbid moral egoism. It would be, in fact, if it could be seriously executed, a greater immorality than anything you have yet done. The true way to set yourself right for your act is not to do untold harm to others in the name of honesty or any other virtue but to put yourself right inwardly and do otherwise in future.

I shall answer briefly the questions you put in your second para. (1) The way to set yourself right is, as I have said, to set your nature right and make yourself master of your vital being and its impulses. (2) Your position in human society is or can be that of many others who in their early life have committed excesses of various kinds and have afterwards achieved self-control

and taken their due place in life. If you [were]⁵ not so ignorant of life, you would know that your case is not exceptional but on the contrary very common and that many have done these things and afterwards become useful citizens and even leading men in various departments of human activity. (3) It is quite possible for you to recompense your parents and fulfil the past expectations you spoke of, if you make that your object. Only you must first recover from your illness and achieve the proper balance of your mind and will. (4) The object of your life depends upon your own choice and the way of attainment depends upon the nature of the object. Also your position will be whatever you make it. What you have to do is, first of all, to recover your health; then, with a quiet mind to determine your aim in life according to your capacities and preferences. It is not for me to make up your mind for you. I can only indicate to you what I myself think should be the proper aims and ideals.

Apart from external things there are two possible inner ideals which a man can follow. The first is the highest ideal of ordinary human life and the other the divine ideal of Yoga. I must say in view of something you seem to have said to your father that it is not the object of the one to be a great man or the object of the other to be a great Yогин. The ideal of human life is to establish over the whole being the control of a clear, strong and rational mind and a right and rational will, to master the emotional, vital and physical being, create a harmony of the whole and develop the capacities whatever they are and fulfil them in life. In the terms of Hindu thought, it is to enthronе the rule of the purified and sattvic *buddhi*, follow the *dharma*, fulfilling one's own *svadharma* and doing the work proper to one's capacities, and satisfy *kāma* and *artha* under the control of the *buddhi* and the *dharma*. The object of the divine life, on the other hand, is to realise one's highest self or to realise God and to put the whole being into harmony with the truth of the highest self or the law of the divine nature, to find one's own divine capacities great or small and fulfil them in life as

⁵ MS (copy) are

a sacrifice to the highest or as a true instrument of the divine *Sakti*. About the latter ideal I may write at some later time. At present I shall only say something about the difficulty you feel in fulfilling the ordinary ideal.

This ideal involves the building of mind and character and it is always a slow and difficult process demanding patient labour of years, sometimes the better part of the lifetime. The chief difficulty in the way with almost everybody is the difficulty of controlling the desires and impulses of the vital being. In many cases as in yours, certain strong impulses run persistently counter to the ideal and demand of the reason and the will. The cause is almost always a weakness of the vital being itself, for, when there is this weakness it finds itself unable to obey the dictates of the higher mind and obliged to act instead under the waves of impulsion that come from certain forces in nature. These forces are really external to the person but find in this part of him a sort of mechanical readiness to satisfy and obey them. The difficulty is aggravated if the *seat* of the weakness is in the nervous system. There is then what is called by European science a neurasthenia tendency and under certain circumstances it leads to nervous breakdowns and collapses. This happens when there is too great a strain on the nerves or when there is excessive indulgence of the sexual or other propensities and sometimes also when there is too acute and prolonged a struggle between the restraining mental will and these propensities. This is the illness from which you are suffering and if you consider these facts you will see the real reason why you broke down at Pondicherry. The nervous system in you was weak; it could not obey the will and resist the demand of the external, vital forces, and in the struggle there came an overstrain of the mind and the nerves and a collapse taking the form of an acute attack of neurasthenia. These difficulties do not mean that you cannot prevail and bring about a control of your nerves and vital being and build up a harmony of mind and character. Only you must understand the thing rightly, not indulging in false and morbid ideas about it and you must use the right means. What is needed is a quiet mind and a quiet will, patient, persistent, refusing

to yield either to excitement or discouragement, but always insisting [tranquilly]⁶ on the change needed in the being. A quiet will of this kind cannot fail in the end. Its effect is inevitable. It must first reject in the waking state, not only the acts habitual to the vital being, but the impulses behind them which it must understand to be external to the person even though manifested in him and also the suggestions which are behind the impulses. When thus rejected, the once habitual thoughts and movements may still manifest in the dream-state, because it is a well-known psychological law that what is suppressed or rejected in the waking state may still recur in sleep and dream because they are still there in the subconscious being. But if the waking state is thoroughly cleared, these dream-movements must gradually disappear because they lose their food and the impressions in the subconscious are gradually effaced. This is the cause of the dreams of which you are so much afraid. You should see that they are only a subordinate symptom which need not alarm you if you can once get control of your waking condition.

But you must get rid of the ideas which have stood in the way of effecting this self-conquest.

(1) Realise that these things in you do not come from any true moral depravity, for that can exist only when the mind itself is corrupted and supports the perverse vital impulses. Where the mind and the will reject them, the moral being is sound and it is a case only of a weakness or malady of the vital parts or the nervous system.

(2) Do not brood on the past but turn your face with a patient hope and confidence towards the future. To brood on the past failure will prevent you from recovering your health and will weaken your mind and will, hampering them in the work of self-conquest and rebuilding of the character.

(3) Do not yield to discouragement if success does not come at once, but continue patiently and steadfastly until the thing is done.

(4) Do not torture your mind by always dwelling on your

⁶ MS (*copy*) tranquility

weakness. Do not imagine that they unfit you for life or for the fulfilment of the human ideal. Once having recognised that they are there, seek for your sources of strength and dwell rather on them and the certainty of conquest.

Your first business is to recover your health of mind and body and that needs quietness of mind and for some time a quiet way of living. Do not rack your mind with questions which it is not yet ready to solve. Do not brood always on the thing. Occupy your mind as much as you can with healthy and normal occupations and give it as much rest as possible. Afterwards when you have your right mental condition and balance, then you can with a clear judgment decide how you will shape your life and what you have to do in the future.

I have given you the best advice I can and told you what seems to me the most important for you at present. As for your coming to Pondicherry, it is better not to do so just now. I could say to you nothing more than what I have written. It is best for you so long as you are ill, not to leave your father's care, and above all, it is the safe rule in [an] illness like yours not to return to the place and surroundings where you had the breakdown, until you are perfectly recovered and the memories and associations connected with it have faded in intensity, lost their hold on the mind and can no longer produce upon it a violent or disturbing impression.

Aurobindo Ghose

To and about V. Tirupati

[1]

Pondicherry. February 21st - 1926.

Tirupati, my child -

Our Divine Lord sends you the following message:⁷

⁷ This letter-draft and those numbered [5], [6], and [8] below were written by the Mother at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or following his oral instructions. Items [3], [4], [7], [9] and [11], also drafts, were written by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand. Item [10]

Your letters have been received and read with pleasure. Haradhan came back yesterday morning bringing the two last ones and also the news that, during the time he remained with you, you were eating and sleeping — which we have been very pleased to hear. It is a great first step forward; and if you go on like that, you will soon establish a solid basis for your complete physical recovery.

We heard also with pleasure that your family is ready to help you without intruding or forcing themselves upon you, and that arrangements are made for you to live quietly.

In your letters you ask for detailed instructions and also Haradhan reported that you were insisting very much to receive them. Here are, then, the instructions we have to give you:

First the outer condition.

1) Be careful to always eat well and never think that to eat well or to take pleasure in eating is in any way wrong. On the contrary you must try to recover the ananda of food; without fearing the attachment for food; if there is such [a] thing in you, it will fall off from you as the ananda grows.

2) You must take long, peaceful sleeps. Never believe that there is anything wrong in sleeping well and deeply. And fear not that the time you give to sleep is wasted for your sadhana. In a good, quiet sleep necessary things are done by the super-consciousness and in the sub-consciousness.

3) You need good fresh air and a moderate amount of exercise in the open every day. Vizianagaram is near the hills, it is surely a wholesome place; and a daily walk of one hour or so in the country will help you much to recover completely your physical strength.

4) We have heard that there are several alternatives for your lodging: an empty family house in front of the house where your family lives, or a villa out of town, or another two storied house. Because of its situation, the villa seems the best, provided arrangements can be made for your material needs. If not

was written partly in the Mother's and partly in Sri Aurobindo's hand. Items [2] and [12] were recorded by A. B. Purani. — Ed.

possible, you might live in the empty family house and receive food prepared for you in your family's house.

5) Haradhan said also that you wished to cook for yourself. If you can take pleasure in cooking and making the necessary material arrangements, marketing, etc. it would be a good thing. But if you do not take pleasure and interest in it, it would be better to receive the food from your family or any of your friends.

6) You write: "it is most painful for me to have to accept this obligation from these people." This is a wrong way of looking at the matter. This help is given to you *through* the family and that involves no obligation on your part and binds you to nothing. The spiritual sadhaka is entitled to receive help from others, and that puts him to no obligation to them and leaves him perfectly free. Those that help are merely instruments used by the Divine Power to provide the sadhaka with the needed conditions for his living.

7) About the inner condition.

Write regularly, fully and frankly everything, whether you think it good or bad. It is important that you should conceal nothing; and if you feel some hesitation in writing some things that appear to you as crude or non important, you must overcome this hesitation. To make everything as clear and open as possible is the essential condition for receiving a complete help and guidance; it is also the necessary condition for the transformation of the movements that are to be changed. So, you must write everything internal and external.

Do not forget that your absence from Pondichéry is only temporary. The sooner you get into the right condition, the sooner you will be able to come back.

And the right condition is to have a strong body, strong nerves, a calm mind capable of action and will; no shrinking from contact with life and with the others. These conditions are necessary because, before your return, we shall have to ask you to make certain arrangements, and you must have full power of will and action in order to succeed.

Write everything always, and we shall guide you and know

how you are progressing. And when we see that you are ready, we shall tell you what to do.

P.S. We have received your letters of the 19th and the telegram of the 21st. We will answer fully, but meanwhile we write a few necessary words.

It is not sufficient to strengthen your body, you must also strengthen your mind; you must absolutely get rid of these ideas about sin, this brooding upon suggestions of sexual impulse and this habit of seeing dark vital forces everywhere. Your people are quite ordinary human beings, they are not evil spirits or forces, your attitude to them must be one neither of attachment nor of fear, horror and shrinking, but of quiet detachment.

Do not seek for inspirations, but act quietly and rationally according to our instructions, with a calm mind and a quiet will. Get rid of your obsession about coming here and falling at our feet. This and the other suggestions and voices are not inspirations but merely things created by your own mind and its impulses. Your safety lies in remaining quiet and doing what we tell you quietly and persistently, with a perfect confidence, until you are entirely recovered.

We have written one letter on the 16th, one yesterday [the] 20th and this is the third. Let us know each time you receive a letter from us.

[2]

[24 February 1926]

INFORM TIRUPATI MY ANGER. PREVENT COMING TO PONDICHERRY. I REFUSE TO RECEIVE HIM.⁸

[3]

[26 February 1926]

I received this morning your letter about Tirupati.⁹ I shall try to

⁸ Telegram to S. Duraiswami, an advocate living in Madras, to whom Tirupati had gone on his way to Pondicherry.—Ed.

⁹ Draft of a letter to Dasari Narayana Swamy Chetty, Tirupati's father-in-law.—Ed.

explain to you Tirupati's condition, the reasons why I have been obliged to send him away from Pondicherry and the conditions which are necessary for his recovery from his present abnormal state of mind.

Some time ago Tirupati began to develop ideas and methods of Yoga-sadhana which are quite inconsistent with the ideas and methods that underlie my system of Yoga. Especially, he began practices that belong entirely to the most extreme form of Bhakti sadhana, practices that are extremely dangerous because they lead to an excited, exalted, abnormal condition and violently call down forces which the body cannot bear. They may lead to a break-down of the physical body, the mind and the nervous system. As soon as I became aware of this turn, I warned him of the danger and prohibited the continuance of these practices. At first he attempted to follow my instructions, but the attraction of his new experiences was so great that he resumed his practices in secret and in the end openly returned to them in defiance of my repeated prohibitions. The result was that he entered into and persisted in an abnormal condition of mind which still continues and at times rises to an alarming height dangerous to the sanity of his mind and the health of his body.

The following are the peculiarities of this condition.

1. There is a state of mind in which he loses hold to a great extent of physical realities and lives in a world of imaginations which do not at all belong to the terrestrial body and the physical human life.

2 He conceives a great distaste for eating and sleeping and believes that the power in him is so great that he can live without sleep and without food.

3 He is listening all the time to things which he calls inspirations and intuitions, but which are simply the creations and delusions of his own excited and unduly exalted state of mind. This exalted state of mind gives him so much pleasure, so much a false sense of strength and Ananda and of being above the human condition that he is unwilling to give it up and feels unhappy and fallen when he is brought down to a more ordinary consciousness.

4 In this condition he has no longer enough discrimination left or enough will-power to carry out my instructions or even his own resolutions, but obeys blindly and like a machine these false inspirations and impulses. Everything contrary to them he explains away or ignores—that is the reason why he ignores my orders and puts no value on my telegrams or letters.

5 Also he feels in this condition an abnormal shrinking (not any spiritual detachment) from physical life, from his family, from his friends—for some time he withdrew even from the society of his fellow sadhakas,—and considers anything that comes from them or turns him from his exalted condition as the prompting of evil forces.

Please understand that all these things are the delusions of his own abnormal and exalted state of mind and are *not*, as he falsely imagines and will try to persuade you, signs of a high spiritual progress. On the contrary, if he persists in them, he will lose altogether such spiritual progress as he had made and may even destroy by want of food and want of sleep his body.

To allow him to remain here would be quite disastrous for him. He would count it as a victory for his own aberrations and would persist in them without any farther restraint with results that might be fatal to him. And the intensity of the spiritual atmosphere here would prevent him from coming back to his normal self. Besides when in this condition he brings about here a state of confusion and perturbation,—the one thing to be absolutely avoided in this way of Yoga,—which if prolonged would make the sadhana of my other disciples impossible and would spoil my own spiritual work altogether.

His one chance is if he can settle down in Vizianagaram for a considerable time and in the surroundings of his old physical life return to a normal condition. Please therefore do not send him back or give him money to return to Pondicherry. It will be of no use and may do him great and irreparable harm. He promised, when he went from here first, to eat well and sleep regularly, and he has now promised, on my refusing to see or receive him on account of his disobedience of my orders, to remain quietly at Vizianagaram, to cease listening to his false

inspirations and intuitions and to obey my written orders. I had already written to him to that effect and also to throw away his shrinking from life and from his contact with others, but he came away without waiting for my letter. If this time he carries out my instructions, he may yet recover. He must eat well, he must sleep regularly, he must give up his wrong sadhana and live for some time as a normal human being, he must do some kind of physical action, he must resume normal contact with life and others. If he returns to his erratic movements, the remedy is not to let him leave Vizianagaram, but to remind him of my instructions and his promises and insist on his carrying them out. Only you must do it in my name and remind him always that if he does not obey me, I have resolved not to see him again nor to receive him. This is the only thing at present that can make him do what is requisite.

I consented to an arrangement by which he could live quietly by himself because that was what he asked for; but the best would have been that he should live either with his family in their house so that his needs could be looked after or with some one who would see to his needs, some one *with a strong will* who will quietly insist, always in my name, on his doing what he has promised. But I do not know if there is anyone there who could do this for him or whom he would consent to have with him.

You should not understand by what I have written, that he should live as a householder, resume his relations with his wife etc, or that he should not be left mostly to quiet and solitude, if that is what he likes. What I mean is that he must come gradually, if not at first, to deal with those around him as a human being with human beings, without his present nervous shrinkings and abnormal repulsions. The spiritual attitude I have told him to take is one of calm freedom from attachment (*ásakti*), not of an excited shrinking. It may be that after a time this will seem more possible to him than it does at present.

It will be best if you let me know fairly often what he is doing and whether he is carrying out my instructions, as it is likely that he will not write himself to me all the truth when he is in the wrong condition.

[4]

[February 1926]

You must by this time have read the first three letters we wrote to you and we hope you have understood and will act according to our instructions. But it is necessary to make some of them more precise and clear. Today I will write only on two subjects

1 First as to your so-called inspirations and intuitions.

Understand henceforth that you must put no reliance on these suggestions which merely come to you from your mind. They are altogether false. If they seem to come from very high, they are still false; they come from the heights of vital error and not from the truth. If they present themselves as inspirations and intuitions or commands, they are still false; they are only arrogant creations of the vital mind. If they claim to be from me, they are still false; they are not from me at all. If they seem imperative, loud, grand, full of authority, they are all the more false. If they excite and elate you and drive you to act blindly in contradiction to my written orders and instructions, they are most false; they are the suggestions of a power that wants only its own satisfaction and not the Truth.

Henceforth do not seek at all for inspirations and intuitions to guide your conduct. Get back into touch with physical realities, act with a plain practical mind that sees things as they are and not as you want them to be.

You ought to see now that your inspirations were entirely untrue. The explanations by which you try to account for their failure, are equally untrue. For instance you told Duraiswami that because you did not start by the first train from Madras, therefore you lost your chance. This is absurd and false. By whatever train, at whatever time, whatever you might have done, I would not have seen you or received you, for you may [not] come without my written orders [to] come and even against my orders.

2 Next, as to your coming back to Pondicherry. You are always thinking that you have only to act for one or two days according to my orders and then I will call you back. You are

always expecting an immediate recall. Put this out of your head altogether. You cannot come back until I am satisfied that you have entirely got out of your present false consciousness which makes you act and think as you have been doing, and that there is no danger of your going back to it. This will take time. You will be called back to Pondicherry if you obey my orders consistently for a long time and satisfy my conditions, but you must no longer be always thinking of a rapid coming back; you must think only of doing what I tell you and satisfying my conditions. Remember what those conditions are

(1) You must eat and sleep and build up again a strong body.

(2) You must come out of your present state of vital consciousness, give up its false excitement, false elations, harmful depressions, give up your false inspirations and intuitions and come down into a plain, natural quiet physical consciousness. That is your only chance of coming back to reality and the Truth.

(3) You must get rid of your nervous shrinkings from life and others; you must be able to look at people naturally as human beings and deal with them calmly, quietly with a sane calm practical mind. Until you have done this, you will not be in the right condition for returning here.

3dly, about your stay there. You must not talk or think of Vizianagaram or your surroundings as a bad or dangerous atmosphere. It is nothing of the kind. I would not have sent you there, if it were — on the contrary, it is the best place for what you have to do now and what you will have to do hereafter before you can return to Pondicherry.

If you cannot stay in your family house, which would be the most convenient, you can stay in your father-in-law's villa — or the empty family house. But then it will be much better if you allow somebody to stay with you who will look after your needs and [*incomplete*]

[5]

4-3-26

Dear Tirupati,

We have received your letters and noted all the points on

which you have asked for instruction and enlightenment. We intend to answer fully, but the letter will take a day or two to write. In the meanwhile try to carry out the instructions already given. In your relations with your people, act simply and naturally; get rid of these nervous shrinkings which are a weakness. The important thing is to have the right inner attitude, calm and without attachment. If you do that, all these details—about how to address them, food and bathing, etc—become trifling matters which will arrange themselves according to convenience and common sense. It is simply that you have to stay at Vizianagaram for some time—as you have rightly seen, for several months, and during that time you must take what help they can give you for your material needs, without that binding you in any way to them. But on this matter as on the other questions raised in your letter we shall write fully in our next letter.

[6]

5.3.26

Dear Tirupati.

This morning we have received your letter probably of the 2nd of March (please put dates on your letters) and it is necessary to reply to it at once, for it is evident from it that you are persisting in a wrong effort which prevents the very object that you have in view. You want to have what you call the “divinisation”; but you cannot have it in the way you are trying.

I will point out your mistakes; please read carefully and try to understand rightly. Especially understand my words in their plain sense and do not put into them any “hidden meaning” or any other meaning which might be favourable to your present ideas.

The Divine Consciousness we are trying to bring down is a Truth Consciousness. It shows us all the truth of our being and nature on all the planes, mind, life and body. It does not throw them away or make an impatient effort to get rid of them immediately and substitute something fantastic and wonderful in their place. It works upon them patiently and slowly to perfect

and raise in them all that is capable of perfection and to change all that is obscure and imperfect.

Your first mistake is to imagine that it is possible to become divine in a moment. You imagine that the higher consciousness has only to descend in you and remain there, and all is finished. You imagine that no time is needed, no long, hard or careful work, and that all will be done for you in a moment by the Divine Grace. This is quite wrong. It is not done in that way; and so long as you persist in this error, there can be no permanent divinisation, and you will only disturb the Truth that is trying to come, and disturb your own mind and body by a fruitless struggle.

Secondly, you are mistaken in thinking that because you feel a certain force and Presence, therefore you are at once divine. It is not so easy to become divine. There must be to whatever force or presence comes, a right interpretation and response, a right knowledge in the mind, a right preparation of the vital and physical being. But what you are feeling is an abnormal vital force and exaltation due to the impatience of your desire, and with this there come suggestions born of your desire, which you mistake for truth and call inspirations and intuitions.

I will point out some of the mistakes you make in this condition.

1) You immediately begin to think that there is no further need of my instructions or guidance, because you imagine you are henceforth one with me. Not only so, but the suggestions which you want to accept go quite against my instructions. How can this be if you are one with me? It is obvious that these ideas that go against my instructions come from your mind and impulses, and not from me or from any Divine Consciousness or from anything that can be called the Sri Aurobindo Consciousness.

2) In this connection, you write: "I see one difficulty: that even when I am filled with you the idea of obeying and following your instructions still works—even when you have made me yourself. I pray for the needful." The idea of following and obeying my instructions is not a difficulty, it is the only thing

that can help you. That obedience is the thing that is needful.

3) What do you mean by saying: "You have made me yourself"? The words seem to have no meaning. You cannot mean that you become the same individual self as I; there cannot be two Aurobindos; even if it were possible it would be absurd and useless. You cannot mean that you have become the Supreme Being, for you cannot be God or the Iswara. If it is in the ordinary (Vedantic) sense, then everyone is myself, since every Jiva is a portion of the One. You may perhaps have become conscious for a time of this unity; but that consciousness is not sufficient by itself to transform you or to make you divine.

4) You begin to imagine that you can do without food and sleep and disregard the needs of the body; and you forget my instructions, and mistakenly call these needs a disturbance or the play of hostile material and physical forces. This idea is false: what you feel is only a vital force, not the highest truth, and the body remains what it was; it will suffer and break down if [it] is not given food, rest and sleep.

5) It is the same mistaken vital exaltation that made you feel your body to see if it was of supramental substance. Understand clearly that the body cannot be transformed in that way into something quite unphysical. The physical being and the body, in order to be perfected, have to go through a long preparation and gradual change. This cannot be done, if you do not come out of this mistaken vital exaltation and come down into the ordinary physical consciousness first, with a clear sense of physical realities.

As regards what you say about your wife —

As you are determined to have no such relations with her, all that is needed is to regard her as an ordinary woman and with a quiet indifference. It is a mistake to dwell on the idea of your past relations, or to have shrinking and abhorrence; that only keeps up a struggle in your self which would otherwise disappear of itself.

Finally, if you want the real change and transformation, you must clearly and resolutely recognise that you have made and are still making mistakes, and have entered into a condition

that is unfavourable to your object. You have tried to get rid of the thinking mind, instead of perfecting and enlightening it, and have tried to replace it by artificial "inspirations and intuitions."

You have developed a dislike and shrinking for the body and the physical being and its movements; and therefore you do not want to come down into the normal physical consciousness and do patiently there what is necessary for the change. You have left yourself only with a vital consciousness which feels sometimes a great force and ananda and at others falls into bad depressions, because it is not supported either by the mind above or by the body below.

You must absolutely change all this, if you want the real transformation.

You must not mind losing the vital exaltation; you must not mind coming into a normal physical consciousness, with a clear practical mind, looking at physical conditions and physical realities. You must accept these first, or you will never be able to change and perfect them.

You must recover a quiet mind and intelligence.

If you can once firmly do these things, the Greater Truth and Consciousness can come back in its proper time, in the right way and under the right conditions.

[7]

Pondicherry
March 22. 1926.

My dear Tirupati,

I have received all your letters; I am sorry to find from them that you are still persisting in the same state of vital exaltation, the same ideas, the same forms of speech, the same delusions. You say that you have understood our letter of the 5th. We told you to understand that letter in its plain significance and not to put into it some false imaginary meaning out of your mind. Either you have put some false meaning into it or, if you understood our plain written instructions, you are deliberately refusing to follow them. For you are doing exactly the opposite

of what we told you to do. We shall write more about this in a day or two. At present I write only a few essential things.

1. It is not possible for you to become my "Avatar"; I have told you that the very idea is absurd and meaningless.

2 It is possible for you to manifest the supramental consciousness in this life. But it is not possible by the means you are now trying. It cannot be done by falling at my feet. It cannot be done in a moment. It cannot be done by fasting. It cannot be done by refusing to have anything to do with physical forces and the normal physical life.

3 If you throw away your body, you will not be my "Avatar" either in this life or in any other. On the contrary, you will destroy your chances for a hundred lives to come.

4 The supramental consciousness can only be manifested if you follow exactly my written instructions. These are

(1) *You must eat well and regularly every day, sleep well every night and build up a strong body.* The supermind cannot descend and remain in a weak and starved body.

(2) *You must consent to come down into the ordinary physical consciousness and stay there to transform it slowly.* If you continue to refuse to live in the ordinary consciousness, the supermind cannot get the opportunity to change it; in that case you will always go on as now thinking "now I have got it, today it is made permanent", but it will not remain.

(3) *You must learn to understand and follow in their plain sense my written instructions. You must learn to give them a greater value than to the ideas you get from within by your sadhana.* If you refuse to do this, the supramental consciousness will refuse to remain in you.

(4) You must learn to resume natural relations with people in the physical world — with those around you, with your friends and your people.

5. I have told you that *you are not to come to Pondicherry without my written permission.* If you disobey and follow your own impulses, you will not be received here; you will be sent away like last time.

It is not for you to fix the date of your coming, whether

August 15th or another. It is for me to decide and you must not come till I write and call you.

You cannot come to Pondicherry till you have carried out my written instructions plainly and faithfully for many months together. You cannot come till you have stopped fasting altogether. You cannot come till you have descended into the ordinary physical consciousness and remained there for months together. You cannot see me again at Pondicherry until you are ready to meet me on the physical plane and that can only be when you have accepted the physical consciousness and the physical life. This is definite.

6. If you refuse to do what I tell you, you cannot have the fulfilment you hope for. You can if you like remain as a Bhakta all your life, but even then you must renounce the vital form of Bhakti. You must bring back the psychic Bhakti, the Bhakti which is calm, quiet, deep, the Bhakti which is not noisy, not making demands, the Bhakti which finds its greatest pleasure in obedience. This is the only Bhakti in which I can take delight; I accept no other.

My blessings.

Sri Aurobindo

[8]

March 27-[1926]

Tirupati my child

I am happy to find you back again.

Your letters of March 25. reached this morning and are most welcomed.

All you have written in these two letters is exactly what we wanted you to think and feel.

You have only to keep this state of mind permanently; for this is the true foundation for the careful and patient building of the real Divine Life in you.

If you feel any kind of excitement or demand for immediate divinisation, or any idea of fasting, or impatience of staying there, then read again my letter of March 22 and it will help you

to come back to the right idea and right attitude.

As to eating and sleeping, perhaps it will be best at the beginning to keep a daily record of the number of meals you take and the number of hours you sleep and send it to me when you write. This will help you to keep [steady]¹⁰ in your resolution.

Yes, it will be very good for you to read and translate the Arya. We have not until now been able to get the numbers you wanted from Calcutta, and at present we have not a set of the Arya available. I will send you a copy of the Essays on the Gita, first series; it will be best for you to begin with this and translate it. Accustom yourself to translate only a little every day and do it very carefully. Do not write in haste; go several times through what you have written and see whether it accurately represents the spirit of the original, and whether the language cannot be improved. In all things, in the mental and physical plane, it should be your aim, at present, not to go fast and finish quickly, but to do everything carefully, perfectly, and in the right manner.

We wish you to understand and keep henceforth the right attitude with regard to the physico-vital impulses of which you complain; that is as regards food, money, sexual impulses etc. You have been adopting the moral and ascetic attitude which is entirely wrong and cannot help you to master these powers of the nature.

For food, it is a need of the body and you must use it to keep the body fit and strong. You must replace attachment by the ananda of food. If you have this ananda and the right sense of the taste, etc. and of the right use of food, the attachment, if there is any, will of itself, after a time, disappear.

As regards money, that too is a need for life and work. For instance, before you can come back here, when you have reestablished your hold on physical life, we shall ask you to collect money for certain arrangements which will include the arrangements for your living here. Money represents a great power of life which must be conquered for divine uses. Therefore you

¹⁰ MS study

must have no attachment to it but also no disgust or horror of it.

As to the sexual impulse — For this also you must have no moral horror, or puritanic, or ascetic repulsion. This also is a power of life and while you have to throw away the present form of this power (that is the physical act), the force itself has to be mastered and transformed. It is often strongest in people with a strong vital nature and this strong vital nature can be made a great instrument for the physical realisation of the Divine Life. If the sexual impulse comes, do not be sorry or troubled, but look at it calmly, quiet it down, reject all wrong suggestions connected with it, and wait for the Higher Consciousness to transform it into the true force and ananda.

As regards your friends and family, you must look at them normally as ordinary human beings. Here also have no attachments, no shrinkings; deal with them in a quiet rational manner. Your father-in-law has repeatedly promised me that they would not interfere with your spiritual life. All they want is that you should eat and be in good health, and take their help for your needs and comforts. It was only under my instructions that they pressed you to eat.

All these things we have told you are necessary for your being in the physical consciousness and having the right relations with physical life. In our next letter we will write to you in detail what we mean by being in the physical consciousness and meeting us on the physical plane. But today there is no time and we want this letter to go by today's post.

[9]

March 30.

Dear Tirupati

We are sorry to see that you are not physically well. You must be careful not to tire or overstrain yourself. You are walking too much, especially for a body weakened by fasting and want of regular sleep. You should walk only some two and a half miles a day, in the fresh air, and when you are tired and

not well, you should suspend the walking and rest as much as possible.

Do not eat hot things; it is extremely bad for your intestines. But take plenty of good plain food.

Especially you must sleep regularly. It is most important. You must also bathe and keep your body clean. If you can arrange, bathe in hot water.

If you follow these instructions carefully, good health must come back with the returning strength of the body. You have overstrained yourself in every way and weakened yourself nervously, that is why these things come back.

The true explanation of the vision you saw of dark dancing women is not the one you put upon it. The vaishnava bhajan is one that easily excites the vital being, and if there are people there of a low nature, all sorts of dark and low forces come in to feed upon the excitement. These are the women you saw; they had nothing to do with you or with sexual impulses.

You ought not to attach too much importance to impulses like the one you had about going downstairs to the puja, or think that because you do not obey the impulse you have prevented the spiritual experience of fulfilment. The spiritual fulfilment will come in its time by a steady development of the being and the nature. It does not depend on seizing upon this or that opportunity.

There is another thing which you must learn. If you are interrupted in sadhana, as by the boy coming with the water, you must simply remain inwardly quiet and allow the interruption to pass. If you learn to do this, the inner state or experience will go on afterwards just as if nothing had happened. If you attach undue importance and get upset, on the contrary, you change the interruption into a disturbance and the inner state or experience ceases. Always keep the inner quiet and confidence in every circumstance; allow nothing to disturb it or to excite you. A steady inner calm and quiet will and psychic faith and bhakti are the one true foundation for your sadhana.

[10]

[c. March–April 1926]

Dear Tirupati

We answer first your letter of the 28th.

It is evident that you are suffering from a nervous reaction due to overstrain. You have allowed for a long time an excessive vital energy kept up by a concentration of vital excitement to tyrannise over your body. The body was being weakened all the time, but the vital excitement prevented you from feeling it. Now it is making itself felt. The pains you have seem to be partly rheumatic, partly due to fatigue of the nerves. If you want to recover your strength, you must consent to take plenty of rest. Do not consider long rest and repose tamasic. Sleep long at night, rest much during the day.

Do not do anything in excess. 8 to 10 miles a day walking is far too much; two to three miles is quite sufficient, enough to give you air and exercise.

Also, five or six hours meditation is quite sufficient. Ten hours is too much; it is likely to overstrain the system. Intense meditation is not the only means of sadhana. Especially when one has to deal with the physical, it is not good to be always drawn within in meditation. What you have to learn is to keep at all times the true consciousness, calm, large, full of a quiet strength, looking at all in you and around you with true perception and knowledge, a calm unmoved observation and a quiet will ready to act when necessary. No overstress, no yielding to excitement, nervous sensitiveness or depression.

Learn to occupy your time in a quiet even and harmonious way. Walk a little but not too much. Meditate, but not too much, nor so as to overstrain the body. Read and write, but not so as to tire the brain. Look out a good deal on the physical world and its action and try to see it rightly. When you are stronger, but not now, you can undertake also some kind of physical work and action and learn to do it in the right way and with the right knowledge.

You say that you do not find it so easy to understand the "Arya" as before. But that is mostly because you have made your body weak and the brain is easily tired. With rest and return of physical strength this will disappear. You say too that you cannot do things now that you were easily able to do before. But then you were keeping some kind of harmonious balance between the mind, the vital being and the body, and all were strong. Afterwards you went entirely into the vital and neglected and fatigued the body; you kept yourself up only by an abnormal vital concentration and excitement. Now you are feeling the physical reaction. But this too will disappear with rest, calm of mind and the return of physical strength.

Therefore do not scruple to rest much. It will be good to remain quiet for long periods of time and allow the calm and quiet effect of the higher consciousness to settle unobtrusively into the body.

Your "tamsic" condition and pains are not in the least due to taking food from your people or to their atmosphere. Dismiss this kind of idea from your mind altogether; it is entirely untrue.

The sensations you have when going out into the town, in the streets, in the market, meeting women, seeing people with illnesses are all signs of nervous weakness and []¹¹ an abnormally exaggerated nervous sensitiveness. You must get rid of this weakness and recover control of your nerves. You must become able to see women without any of these reactions; dismiss from your mind the obsession of your fear of the sexual impulse and this will become easier. The fear and abhorrence makes the sexual attraction or suggestion itself come more persistently. Learn to be calm and indifferent. If you observe the atmosphere of people, observe it as something external to you, not affecting you. To be affected is simply due to a weakness of the nervous being. At Pondicherry I am afraid you encouraged this nervous weakness and shrinking with the idea that it was a sign of superior psychic sensitiveness. Get rid of this idea. You may be conscious of things around you and yet calm and strong

¹¹ MS and

to meet them without being affected and overcome.

One other point. It is something else than the truth that gives the forms of your mother and wife to the feminine figures seen by you at the time of sexual suggestions. Do not be constantly thinking of your wife in this connection; regard her like any other woman without attachment and without repulsion or shrinking. I do not believe she has enough force to project herself into your consciousness in the way you think she does: it is your mental association that helps to [create]¹² the image. Repulsion and shrinking (*jugupsa*) are a bad way of getting rid of things; they usually give more force to what you want to throw from you.

Before you go to sleep, do not be satisfied with prayer, but bring down and leave in the body a strong will against any sexual suggestion in sleep or its result. With a little practice the body will learn to take the inhibiting suggestion and these things will cease.

In one of your letters you speak of a voice telling you "Mira will never consent to be your Shakti". What precisely do you mean by this phrase, "my Shakti"? It is a wrong way of putting it which may lead to a confusion of ideas. You mean perhaps that she is to you the Mahashakti and that the force which will descend on you from the supramental plane and support your sadhana and action, will come from her. That is all right; but the Mahashakti is the Ishwara's and nobody can speak of her as "my Shakti".

Lastly, you speak in regard to your experience of coming here to this house of coming here "in the supermind". What happened was that you entered into a supraphysical consciousness and in that state some part of you came over here. You speak too easily of any kind of supraphysical consciousness as if it were necessarily the supermind. But there are many grades of consciousness between the physical and the supermind and you will have hereafter to learn to distinguish rightly between them. Moreover even when the supramental touches or descends into the intermediate grades or into the physical, that is merely

¹² MS creates

a glimpse of what may or will be; it is not the whole or the definite realisation. The realisation must be worked out patiently afterwards. If you understand this carefully, you will no longer be disappointed because a higher condition does not settle down in you at once "permanently".

I think you write your letters too rapidly; it is often very difficult, sometimes impossible to read many of the words. Write carefully so that all may be clear and legible.

[11]

[c. March–April 1926]

Tirupati,

I have received your long, rambling, incoherent, excited letter of the 29th; it is from beginning to end a mass of almost insane nonsense.

I understand from it that you have returned to your former delusions and the lies imposed by some Hostile Force on your mind and your vital being. You are once more determined to revolt against my orders, to disobey my written instructions, to disregard the plain meaning of my letters. You are determined to deceive yourself by reading into them a "hidden" meaning, that is to say to read into them the lies of the Hostile Force which you take for inspirations and intuitions. You have decided to follow again the mad course which led you away from Pondicherry and exiled you from my presence.

You have disowned your letter of the [?] the only letter which was entirely sound, true and sane. In that letter of the [?] we saw the real Tirupati, the only Tirupati we know; with the other who wrote this letter of the 29th we have no connection.

[12]

[6 May 1926]

Tirupati,

Your aspiration to be my manifestation and all the rest of the delusions to which you have surrendered yourself are not Yoga

or Sadhana. They are an illusion of your vital being and your brain. We tried to cure you and for a few days while you were obeying my instructions you were on the point of being cured. But you have called back your illness and made it worse than before. You seem to be no longer capable even of understanding what I write to you; you read your own delusions into my letters. I can do nothing more for you.

All that I can tell you is to go back to Vizianagaram and allow yourself to be taken care of there. I can make no arrangements for you anywhere. I can give only a last advice. Throw away the foolish arrogance and vanity that have been the cause of your illness, consent to become like an ordinary man living in the normal physical mind.

Now that is your only means of being saved from your illness.

To Daulatram Sharma

Pondicherry.
26.3.26.

Dear friend,

I have shown your letter to A.G. and below I give you his answer to it.¹³

Your letter is very interesting, because it shows that you have accurate intuitions which unfortunately your mind does not allow you to follow out. Your mind also interferes by giving your intuitions a mental form and mental consequences or conditions which are not correct.

You are quite right when you say that your sadhana will not open through the mind but through your psychic being. It is from there indeed that these guiding intuitions come.

Your intuition that in your case the effective impulse can best come from Mira (you can call her Mira Devi if you like, but please don't call her Madame!) is also perfectly correct. When

¹³ This letter was drafted by one of Sri Aurobindo's secretaries and completely rewritten by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand.—Ed.

she saw you from the window on the terrace on your last visit, she herself said to A.G., "This is a man I can change. *But he is not yet ready*". But it was your mind that interfered when you thought it was necessary to sit in meditation with her in order to receive what she has to give. There is no such condition for her spiritual or psychic action and influence.

It is true that she was not mixing with the sadhaks at that time, partly because they themselves were not ready to take the right relation and receive her influence, partly because the difficulties of the physical plane made it necessary for her to retire from all direct contact with anyone, as distinct from an indirect contact through A.G. Always however she was acting with him on the psychic and vital levels to do whatever might be possible at the time. All that is needed to receive a direct touch from her is to take the right relation to her, to be open and to enter her atmosphere. The most ordinary meeting or talk with her on the physical plane is quite enough for the purpose. Only the sadhaka must be ready; otherwise he may not receive the impulse or may not be able to fulfil it or bear its pressure.

Also it will be a mistake if you make too rigid a separation between A.G and Mira. Both influences are necessary for the complete development of the sadhana. The work of the two together can alone bring down the supramental Truth into the physical plane. A.G acts directly on the mental and on the vital being through the illumined mind; he represents the Purusha element whose strength is predominantly in illumined (intuitive, supramental or spiritual) knowledge and the power that acts in this knowledge, while the psychic being supports this action and helps to transform the physical and vital plane. Mirra acts directly on the psychic being and on the emotional, vital and physical nature through the illumined psychic consciousness, while the illumined intuitions from the supramental being give her the necessary knowledge to act on the right lines and at the right moment. Her force representing the Shakti element is directly psychic, vital, physical and her spiritual knowledge is predominantly practical in its nature. It is, that is to say, a large and detailed knowledge and experience of the mental, vital and

physical forces at play and with the knowledge the power to handle them for the purposes of life and of Yoga.

In your case what is strong in your nature is especially the dynamic mind, the vital force and the practical physical mind. The thinking mind in you in spite of the interest it has taken in religion and philosophy is not easily open to a true illumination. The other parts mentioned above could more easily accept the light, but they cannot find it for themselves because their whole strength and activity has been turned outwards. It is only the psychic being in you that has from time to time been giving you intuitions and turning you towards the Truth. But it could not come forward and lead your life because you have too much suppressed your emotional nature, dried up your surface mind and choked up with much rubbish the psychic fire. If once it can awaken entirely and come in front, it can transform the dynamic mental, the vital and the physical mind and through them make you an illumined instrument for the physical realisation of the Truth upon earth. This, as you can see from what has been said above about Mira's force, makes your nature one which is specially meant for the kind of work she can best do.

You did not quite understand what A.G. had said about Brahmacharya. He did not mean that you should indulge the sexual impulse freely. On the contrary, if you have the impulse to cease from sexual life you should by all means do it. What he meant to say was that by Brahmacharya is generally understood a mental & moral control, a cessation because of a mental rule. Such a control especially if undertaken from an ascetic or puritan attitude, only keeps chained or even suppresses the vital power behind the sexual impulse and does not really purify or change it. The true motive for overcoming the sexual impulse is the inner psychic and when that rises then comes the real will to an inner purity which makes it an inner necessity for the being to drop the animal sexual play and turn the life-force to greater uses. The vital power behind the sexual impulse is an indispensable force for the perfection of the nature and for the Yoga. Often it is those who because of the strong vital force in them are most capable of the supramental transformation of

the physical nature that have the strongest sexual impulses. All lust, the sexual act and the outward dragging impulse have to be thrown away by the sadhaka, but the power itself has to be kept and transformed into the true force and Ananda. You are right in thinking that a certain fundamental purity in this respect is needed in order to approach Mira and have her help. It is not possible for her to have relations with one who is full of coarse animal or perverted sexual impulses or unable because of them to have the true spiritual or psychic regard on women. But an absence of all sexual impulse is not necessary, still less an ascetic or puritanic turn in this matter. On the contrary. Neither the conventional Puritan nor the coarse animal man can receive anything from her.

This is what A.G said about your letter. Now, since you have these intuitions, why not act on them? Why not try even from a distance to open yourself to receive any influence which may come to you by the mere fact of your having turned towards Mira and her knowing it? If nothing else happens, the necessary psychic preparation (so far your preparation has been only mental) may take place. At least, you could try it. Only do keep your mind quiet — not silent or blank — but put outside you; look at the thoughts if they rise, but wait for a higher truth, for the psychic being to come forward, for the psychic intuition to speak, and when it comes do not let the mind meddle. If there is something not quite clear, wait for more light. Give your soul a chance, that is what is needed.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others, 1922–1928¹

To Barindra Kumar Ghose

[1]

Arya Office
Pondicherry
November 18. 1922.

Dear Barin,

I understand from your letter that you need a written authority from me for the work I have entrusted to you and a statement making your position clear to those whom you may have to approach in connection with it. You may show to anyone you wish this letter as your authority and I hope it will be sufficient to straighten things for you.

I have been till now and shall be for some time longer withdrawn in the practice of a yoga destined to be a basis not for withdrawal from life, but for the transformation of human life. It is a yoga in which vast untried tracts of inner experience and new paths of sadhana had to be opened up and which therefore needed retirement and long time for its completion. But the time is approaching, though it has not yet come, when I shall have to take up a large external work proceeding from the spiritual basis of this yoga.

It is therefore necessary to establish a number of centres, small and few at first but enlarging and increasing in number as I go on, for training in this sadhana, one under my direct supervision, others in immediate connection with me. Those trained there will be hereafter my assistants in the work I shall

¹ All the letters in this subsection, except the first, second and ninth to Barindra Kumar Ghose, are preserved only in the form of handwritten, typed or printed copies. Whenever possible, the editors have collated several copies of each letter in order to produce an accurate text.—Ed.

have to do, but for the present these centres will be not for external work but for spiritual training and tapasya.

The first, which will be transferred to British India when I go there, already exists at Pondicherry, but I need funds both to maintain and to enlarge it. The second I am founding through you in Bengal. I hope to establish another in Guzerat during the ensuing year.

Many more desire and are fit to undertake this sadhana than I can at present admit and it is only by large means being placed at my disposal that I can carry on this work which is necessary as a preparation for my own return to action.

I have empowered you to act for me in the collection of funds and other collateral matters. I have an entire confidence in you and I would request all who wish me well to put in you the same confidence.

I may add that this work of which I have spoken is both personally and in a wider sense my own and it is not being done and cannot be done by any other for me. It is separate and different from any other work that has been or is being carried on by others under my name or with my approval. It can only be done by myself aided closely by those like you who are being or will in future be trained directly under me in my spiritual discipline.

Aurobindo Ghose.

[2]

Pondicherry
December 1. 1922

Dear Barin,

I waited for your letter in order to know precisely what portions Chittaranjan wanted to publish and why.² It turns out to be as I saw, but I wanted confirmation. I must now make clear the reasons why I hesitated to sanction the publication.

I should have had no objection to the publication of the

² Chittaranjan Das proposed publishing portions of Sri Aurobindo's letter to him of 18 November 1922. This letter is published on pages 260–62.—Ed.

portion about the spiritual basis of life or the last paragraph about Swaraj. But that about non-cooperation as it stands without farther explanation and amplification would lead, I think, to a complete misunderstanding of my real position. Some would take it to mean that I accept the Gandhi programme subject to the modifications proposed by the Committee. As you know, I do not believe that the Mahatma's principle can be the true foundation or his programme the true means of bringing about the genuine freedom and greatness of India, her Swarajya and Samrajya. On the other hand others would think that I was sticking to the school of Tilakite Nationalism. That also is not the fact, as I hold that school to be out of date. My own policy, if I were in the field, would be radically different in principle and programme from both, however it might coincide in certain points. But the country is not yet ready to understand its principle or to execute its programme.

Because I know this very well, I am content to work still on the spiritual and psychic plane, preparing there the ideas and forces which may afterwards at the right moment and under the right conditions precipitate themselves into the vital and material field. And I have been careful not to make any public pronouncement as that might prejudice my possibilities of future action. What that will be will depend on developments. The present trend of politics may end in abortive unrest, but it may also stumble with the aid of external circumstances into some kind of simulacrum of self-government. In either case the whole real work will remain to be done. I wish to keep myself free for it in either case.

My interest in Das's actions and utterances, apart from all question of personal friendship, arises first from the fact that the push he is giving, although I do not think it likely to succeed at present, may yet help to break the narrow and rigid cadre of the "constructive" Bardoli programme which seems to me to construct nothing and the fetish-worship of non-cooperation as an end in itself rather than a means, and thereby to create conditions more favourable for the wide and complex action necessary to prepare the true Swarajya. Secondly, it arose from

the rapidity with which he seems to be developing many of the ideas which I have long put down in my mind as essentials of the future. I have no objection to his making use privately of what I have written in the letter. But I hope he will understand why the publication of it does not recommend itself to me.

I see you are having great difficulties over the money question. Remember that money as a general power is still in the hands of the adverse forces, Mammon or Amrita's grand Titan. The favourable force can only come in waves which must be realised at once, otherwise the adverse forces will intervene and create all difficulties. Also it will not do to relax effort or turn it elsewhere when things seem to promise favourably,—the promise is likely to be deceptive because that is just the moment for the hostile intervention. As in the Yoga, so here the will and the force must be kept steadily working on men, forces and circumstances until the possible success is achieved.

Aurobindo

P.S. The answer to Jyotish Ghose's letter will go later.

[3]

Pondicherry
9th December 1922

Dear Barin,

I have read carefully Jyotish Ghose's letter and I think the best thing is first to explain his present condition as he describes it. For he does not seem to me to understand the true causes and the meaning.

The present condition of passivity and indifference is a reaction from a former abnormal state to which he was brought by an internal effort not properly guided from without or from within. The effort brought about a breaking of the veils which divide the physical from the psychic and vital worlds. But his mind was unprepared and unable to understand his experiences and judged them by the light of fancy and imagination and erroneous mental and vital suggestions. His vital being full of rajasic

and egoistic energy rushed up violently to enjoy these new fields and use the force that was working for its own lower ends. This gave an opportunity for a hostile power from the vital world to break in and take partial possession and the result was disorganisation of the nervous and physical system and some of the brain centres. The attack and possession seem to have passed out and left behind the present reaction of passivity with a strong hold of tamas and indifference. The tamas and indifference are not in themselves desirable things but they are temporarily useful as a rest from the past unnatural tension. The passivity is desirable and a good basis for a new and right working of the Shakti.

It is not a true interpretation of his condition that he is dead within and there is only an outside activity. What is true is that the centre of vital egoism that thinks itself the actor has been crushed and he now feels all the thought and activity playing outside him. This is a state of knowledge; for the real truth is that all these thoughts and activities are Nature's and come into us or pass through us as waves from the universal Nature. It is our egoism and our limitation in the body and individual physical mind which prevent us from feeling and experiencing this truth. It is a great step to be able to see and feel the truth as he is now doing. This is not of course the complete knowledge. As the knowledge becomes more complete and the psychic being opens upwards one feels all the activities descending from above and can get at their true source and transform them.

The light playing in his head means that there has been an opening to the higher force and knowledge which is descending as light from above and working on the mind to illumine it. The electrical current is the force descending in order to work in the lower centres and prepare them for the light. The right condition will come when instead of the vital forces trying to push upward the Prana becomes calm and surrendered and waiting with full assent for the light and when instead of the chasm in between there is a constant aspiration of the heart towards the truth above. The light must descend into these lower centres so as to transform the emotional and vital and physical being as well as the mental thought and will.

The utility of psychic experiences and knowledge of the invisible worlds as of other yogic experiences is not to be measured by our narrow human notions of what may be useful for the present physical life of man. In the first place these things are necessary for the fulness of the consciousness and the completeness of the being. In the second place these other worlds are actually working upon us. And if you know and can enter into them then instead of being the victims and puppets of these powers we can consciously deal with, control and use them. Thirdly, in my Yoga, the Yoga of the supramental, the opening of the psychic consciousness to which these experiences belong is quite indispensable. For it is only through the psychic opening that the supramental can fully descend with a strong and concrete grasp and transform the mental, vital and physical being.

This is the present condition and its value. For the future if he wishes to accept my yoga the conditions are a steady resolve and aspiration towards the truth I am bringing down, a calm passivity and an opening upward towards the source from which the light is coming. The Shakti is already working in him and if he takes and keeps this attitude and has a complete confidence in me there is no reason why he should not advance safely in the sadhana in spite of the physical and vital damage that has been done to his system. As for his coming here to see me I am not yet quite ready but we will speak of it after your return to Pondicherry.

Aurobindo

[4]

30th December 1922
Arya Office
Pondicherry

Dear Barin,

First about Krishnashashi. I do not think you are quite right about him at least in the idea that he is responsible for the recent undesirable manifestations at your place. He is evidently what is called a psychic sensitive and one of a very high, though

not perhaps the first order. It is not his fault, I think, that things went wrong recently. These sensitives require a constant protection and guidance from someone who has both power on the psychic and vital plane and knowledge of the science of these planes. There is none such among you. Especially when he is in certain psychic conditions such as those into which he has recently entered, he needs absolutely this protection. He cannot then possibly protect himself because the very nature of these conditions is an absolute passivity and openness to the psychic and psycho-vital influences. It is useless to ask him at that time to exercise his judgment or his power of rejection. For that would immediately make the condition itself impossible. If the psychic and psycho-vital influences are of the right kind, all is well and very remarkable results can be obtained. If they are bad the condition becomes dangerous. The only way to secure the exclusion of the bad influences is for someone else with psychic power to keep a wall of protection round him at the time. The sort of trance in which the breath diminishes, the tongue goes in, the body is curved upward and psycho-physical movements begin in the body is one which I know perfectly well and there is nothing essentially wrong about it. It may be brought about by a very high influence and equally by a bad one, or being brought about by the former, it can be misused or attacked by the latter. If there had been a protection about him exercised by one who had knowledge and confidence in his own psychic and vital force, the untoward influence evidenced by the cries, grimaces, etc. would not have come in to spoil this stage. Let me add that these are not forces of our lower universal but an intervention from a foreign and hostile vital world.

In the present circumstances the proper line for Krishna-shashi is to postpone this kind of psychic development, I mean the later ones—especially those of a physical character. He must understand the character of his higher psychic experiences. These, including the voice, are not direct from the supra-mental but psychic and intuitive on the whole mental plane from the higher mind downwards. That is no reason to belittle them.

Only in the transcription in his mind there is a mixture of his own mental and other suggestions which is almost inevitable at the beginning. He should now without interrupting his higher psychic development give more attention to a self-controlled meditation and mental enlargement. In one letter he speaks of interrupting the reading of "Arya" from the fear of growing too intellectual. This was an erroneous suggestion of his own mind. Let him by all means read and study these things. Of course in this kind of mental enlargement and self-controlled meditation there are dangers and likelihood of mistakes as in all the rest of Yoga. But I think it is what he needs at the present stage. The progress would be slow but it is likely to be more safe, and he can resume the full psychic development when the necessary conditions can be provided. He should also turn his will towards mental and vital purification. There is often much misunderstanding about passivity and self-surrender. It does not mean that there should not remain in the earlier stages any kind of choice, self-control or will towards certain things which are seen to be needed rather than others. Only they must be subject to a confidence and free openness to a higher guidance, which will respond to this choice and will in us if the choice and will are right and sincere.

Next with regard to the hostile manifestations which I observe to be of a very low vital and physico-vital character. I may observe that although there is a real force behind them many of them are not of a real character, that is to say, the faces seen and touches felt were not, in all cases, of real vital beings but only forms suggested and created out of the stuff of your own surrounding vital atmosphere and can easily be dismissed by refusing to accept their reality or to admit their formation. It may be that some particular person in your group opened the way for them but they need not necessarily have had such a personal cause. The real cause may have been the coming together in meditation of so many yet undeveloped people carrying with them a very mixed atmosphere. When that happens or even when there is a general meditation, a *chakra*, hostile forces are attracted and try to break in. There ought to

be someone in the group who during the meditation protects the circle. If the meditation is of a psychic character the protection must be psychic on the vital plane. Mirra's experience is that the protection must take the form of a white light constantly kept round the circle. But even this is not enough as the forces will attack constantly and try to find a gap in the protection; there must therefore be round the white light a covering of dense purple light sufficiently opaque for these beings not to be able to see through it. It is not sufficient to have this light in the mental or psychic levels. It must be brought down into the vital and fill it, because it is in the vital that there is the attack. Further, nobody must go out of his body during the meditation (I mean the vital being must not go out, the mental can always do it) or psychically out of the circle. But there is one thing that must be noticed. That if the manifestations occur in spite of all there must be no fear in the minds of those who become aware of them. It is by creating fear through terrible forms and menaces that the hostile beings prevent the Sadhaka from crossing over the threshold between the physical and vital world and it is also by creating fear and alarm that they are able to break in on the vital being of the body. Courage and unalterable confidence are the first necessity of the Sadhaka.

I observe that in your Calcutta centre the Sadhana seems to have taken a different turn from that in the Krishnagore centre. It seems to be marked by an immediate opening and rapid development of the psychical consciousness and psychical phenomena. This turn has great possibilities but also by itself great dangers. In the complete Sadhana there are two powers necessary, the masculine, *Purusha* or *Ishwara* power coming down in knowledge, light, calm, strength, wide consciousness from above and the feminine, Nature or *Ishwari* power opening in receptivity, passivity, psychic sensibility, the responsiveness on all the planes of the being from below. The first by itself tends to be predominantly mental or mentalised intuitive and afterwards mentalised supramental. It is slow in action but sure and safe, only there is often a difficulty of opening up the separate psychic, vital and physical being to the illumination and change.

The second by itself is rapid, sensitive, full of extraordinary and striking experiences but apt in the absence of psychic or occult powers to be chaotic, uneven and open to many dangers. It is when both are present and act upon each other in the being that the Sadhana is likely to be most perfect.

I think you should insist in your Calcutta centre on attention being given to what I call the Purusha side, that is to say, a basis of deep calm, strength, equality, wide consciousness and purity in the mental being, and as the vital and physical open, also in the vital and physical being. If that is attended to and successfully developed the play of the psychic, vital and physical experiences will be more steady, ordered and safe.

As to the three photographs you have sent I give you Mirra's comments in inverted commas with my additions afterwards.

1. Kanai

"An extremely interesting head, highly psychic personality but he must be careful about the physical as this type is likely to burn up the body in the intensity of its psychic developments."

The basis of calm, strength and purity brought down into the physical consciousness without any hasty trepidations or unhealthy vibrations will secure the physical safety and is here very indispensable.

2. Girin

"An intellectual and philosophic temperament but there is something heavy below."

I think that the heaviness is in the vital being and the physical mind and may cause considerable obstruction but if these two can be cleared and illuminated there may be behind a fund of conservative energy and steadiness which will be useful.

3. Jagat Prasanna

"Very dull. I don't know whether anything can be given to him."

I seem to find behind the eyes a psychic capacity of a very low kind and in the bodily vitality something dark and impure which may be a mediumistic element for the lower psycho-vital forces. If he sat in the circle or meditated in the house that might explain the irruption of undesirable phenomena. This is

my impression about the man. But I am not quite sure. If he is to do any Yoga it should rather be of the old kind and especially a discipline of self-purification. Passivity of any kind in his case would be dangerous.

One or two things I should add suggested by your remarks on Krishnashashi. All should understand that the true direct supramental does not come at the beginning but much later on in the Sadhana. First the opening up and illumination of the mental, vital and physical beings; secondly, the making intuitive of the mind, through will etc. and development of the hidden soul consciousness progressively replacing the surface consciousness; thirdly, the supramentalising of the changed mental, vital and physical beings and finally the descent of the true supramental and the rising into the supramental plane.

This is the natural order of the Yoga. These stages may overlap and intermix, there may be many variations, but the last two can only come in an advanced state of the progress. Of course the Supramental Divine guides this Yoga throughout but it is first through many intermediary planes; and it cannot easily be said of anything that comes in the earlier periods that it is the direct or full supramental. To think so when it is not so may well be a hindrance to progress.

As to what you say about an unhinged and unsound element in Krishnashashi, this is a probable explanation. The nature of this kind of psychic sensitives is complex and is full of many delicate springs easily touched from behind the veil; hence the sensitiveness; but also easily twisted owing to their very delicacy. Something may have been thus twisted in his nature. In that case great care must be taken. It must be found out what it is and the thing be put right without any too rough handling.

I shall write to you separately about Arun's money and Sarojini.

Aurobindo.

[5]

Pondicherry
January 1923

My dear Barin

It is unfortunate that Krishnashashi's Sadhana should have taken this turn. As things stand however a general mess in Calcutta is the worst possible place for him. If no other arrangement can be made it is better that he should go for the present to Chittagong, do his Sadhana there and write to me. It is not possible for me to have him here just now. If his Sadhana rights itself it may be possible hereafter.

As to the development of egoism in him that is a thing which often happens in the first rush of experience and with proper protection and influence may be got over. The serious features are only the psycho-vital, the danger to the body and certain suggestions which are evidently meant to put him off the right way. I still find it difficult to believe that the menacing apparitions are primarily due to him, for there is nothing in the atmosphere of his letters that suggests a medium of this kind. [Is]³ there a photograph of him []⁴ available that you can send or ask him to send it to me?

I see that you say in your letter that all have been frightened by these apparitions. Insist on what I have already said about the necessity of dismissing fear. Sometime or other everybody will have to face things of this kind and how can they do it if they fear. If they are afraid of these things, many of which are merely figures or nervous formations, how can they be spiritual warriors and conquerors, without which there can be no rising towards supermanhood. I presume they would be brave against physical dangers; why not then be brave against all psychical dangers or menace.

If Krishnashashi heeds the instructions I have sent in my former letter to you (they were made after consultation with Mirra) all may yet be well. If not I shall have to try to send my

³ MS (copy) If

⁴ MS (copy) is

mental protection and see what it can do. He is unfortunately too far away for me to put a psycho-vital protection about him. Let me know immediately what has been done and where he goes. I am sending you a letter for him enclosed to you.

As regards Arun's money I understand that it is for the Calcutta centre and I do not understand why you want to send it here. If he can give the first monthly instalment at once that ought to lighten your difficulties there. I shall be able to arrange with Durgadas's help and with the money coming from Madras and Gujerat for one year's expenses here, just sufficient for the two houses. What I want you to do, if you can, is to raise money from Bengal for the next year and for the maintenance of your Bengal centre also for two years, so that there may be no need of hunting for funds for sometime to come.

At present the main difficulty in your attempts to raise money there is that all remains as potentiality and promise and thins away before it can come to material realisation. It is possible that if you can materialise the small amounts this obstacle may break and even the big sums begin to come in afterwards. Always remember that it is a psychic difficulty, a state of forces, that is the thing to be changed, because that is the real obstacle. If another balance of forces can be begun in which there is the actual materialisation even on a small scale that may well be an opening for better conditions.

Aurobindo.

[6]

23rd January 1923.
Arya Office,
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I got your telegram about Krishnashashi this morning. Yesterday I received his photograph and today his last written experiences.⁵ I have been able to form from all these and from

⁵ Sri Aurobindo commented on some of these experiences in a letter to Krishnashashi of January 1923. See pages 370–73.—Ed.

other indications as complete an idea about him and about what has happened to him as is possible at this distance. The photo shows a remarkable soul, an idealistic psychic intelligence and the presence of a high and beautiful internal being but the part of the face showing the emotional and vital being is too delicate to support adequately the upper part and the physical and physico-vital mould is of a poor and inferior character not easily lending itself to the higher movements or to the change demanded by the Yoga. This disparity in the being was the cause of his illness and is the cause also of his present disorder. The immediate cause however is his being hurried by circumstances and the eagerness of his own mind into a development too rapid for the physical consciousness which should have been subjected to a long and steady preparation.

I do not know whether Krishnashashi received Moni's letter written to him at his other address, Raja Brojendra Narayan Roy's Street, which he should have got on the 14th. In this letter I suggested that he should remain in Chittagong or some other quiet place and do the Sadhana by himself turning to me for help and protection and I also insisted that the main object of his Sadhana should be the purification and calming of the mind, the vital being and the body. After returning to Bhowanipore I see that just the contrary has happened,—a feverish psycho-mental activity and a much too eager attempt at rapid progress. Instead of calmly receiving he has been seizing at everything that came and trying to translate it and throw it out into form. He has also been pulling at realisation and trying, as Mirra has put it, to swallow the world in a minute. The result is that there has been an uprush of some undesirable kind from the imperfect vital being and the physical mind unable to bear the strain has been thrown into disorder. It is evident also that the atmosphere of the Bhowanipore centre is not favourable to him. There is there an intense mental and psychic activity and a constant push towards rapid experience and progress which are just the things that are dangerous for him and there is not yet the assured basis of calm, peace, serenity and inner silence which is what he needs above all things.

I hope that it is only a crisis or a passing disorder. I am doing my best from here to mend the breakdown, but you must help me by keeping there a firm quietness and calm concentration. This was the object of my telegram. I am of the opinion that when he recovers his balance, my original instructions (in Moni's letter) should be adhered to and he should go to some quiet place where there will not be any high pressure. He must be instructed to put away every other object except the quieting of his mind, vital being and body and the attainment of a poise of serene calm and peace. Also it is better for him not to pass the whole day in meditation and Sadhana but to take plenty of relaxation for the relief of the physical being and do some kind of physical work (not exhausting) which will keep it occupied and healthy. He must be assured that this change does not mean at all a rejection but that it is necessary to secure the proper condition for his future Sadhana. He must of course keep himself in constant spiritual connection with me and write to me from time to time.

Please keep me constantly informed of his condition until he recovers.

Since the above was written your second telegram came into my hands this morning. It is possible that Krishnagore may be a more suitable place for Krishnashashi than Calcutta. There is a more settled basis there. The place is more deliberate and the surroundings are likely to be quieter, a not unimportant consideration in his case. Besides he needs some one who can impose upon him an atmosphere of calm and influence him directly from the psychic nature and not through the mentality, the latter being always of a doubtful effectiveness in dealing with psychic people, and from what you have told me about Indu, it is possible that she may be able to help him in this way. In that case it would not be necessary for him to return to Chittagong or pursue his Sadhana in isolation. All this of course after he has recovered. His case is not that of insanity in the ordinary sense but, as in Jyotish's case and for rather similar reasons, a psychic disorder. I should of course be kept informed of his condition.

I have many things to write but as this must go without delay I postpone them to another letter.

Aurobindo.

[7]

Arya Office

Pondicherry

January 1923.

My dear Barin,

I have got a fuller idea from your letters about Krishnashashi's collapse. The main cause is what I saw, the vehement and unrestrained pressure and the vital uprush, overstraining and upsetting the defective physical mind. There is no evil in the psychical and mental or even the vital being proper. The seat of the harm is evidently in the physico-vital and the physical being. The physico-vital dazzled by the experiences began to think itself a very interesting and important personage and to histrionise with the experiences and play for that purpose with the body. This is a frequent deviation of Yoga observable even in some who are considered great Sadhakas. It is a kind of charlatanism of the vital being but would not by itself amount to madness, though it may sometimes seem to go very near it. Ordinarily if the physical mind is strong it either rejects or else keeps these demonstrations within certain bounds. But in this case the physical mind also broke down. The coarse kind of violence exhibited is due to the rough and coarse character of the physical being,— so much I see but am not yet able to determine whether the disorder is only psychic or, as was suggested in my last letter, there is some defect in the brain which has come to the surface. I am concentrating daily and those in Krishnagore have to help me by remaining calm and strong and surrounding him with an unagitated atmosphere, also those who can, have to keep a quiet concentration. He must be kept outwardly and inwardly under firm control and check. If the disorder is only psychic the violence will pass away and the other signs abate and less frequently recur. But if there is some brain defect then

as I said, it may be a difficult affair. I can give final instructions only after seeing how the malady goes.

As regards your own sadhana and those of others in Bhowanipore I think it necessary to make two or three observations. First I have for some time the impression that there is a too constant activity and pressure for rapidity of progress and a multitude of experiences. These things are all right in themselves, but there must be certain safeguards. First there should be sufficient periods of rest and silence, even of relaxation, in which there can be a quiet assimilation. Assimilation is very important and periods necessary for it should not be regarded with impatience as stoppages of the Yoga. Care should be taken to make calm and quiet strength and inner silence, the basic condition for all activity. There should be no excessive strain; any fatigue, disturbance, or inordinate sensitiveness of the nervous and physical parts, of which you mention certain symptoms in your letters, should be quieted and removed, as they are often signs of overstrain or too great an activity or rapidity in the Yoga. It must also be remembered that experiences are only valuable as indications and openings and the main thing always is the steady harmonious and increasingly organised opening and change of the different parts of the consciousness and the being.

Among Rati's experiences there is one paper headed "surface consciousness". What is described there is the nervous or physico-vital envelope. This is the thing observed by the mediums and it is by exteriorising it to a less or greater extent that they produce their phenomena. How did Rati come to know of it? Was it by intuition, by vision or by personal experience? If the latter, warn him not to exteriorise this vital envelope for to do so without adequate protection, which must be that of a person acquainted with these things and physically present at the time, may bring about serious psychical dangers and also injuries to the nervous being and the body or even worse.

Next about money matters. The sources you speak of as supplementing the three thousand you propose to raise are almost all uncertainties. As for instance Miss Hodgson's money, which depends first on her staying here and secondly on the life of her

father, an aged and ailing man. I think it necessary to have some six thousand actually in hand for the year after this. Of course you will raise as much as you can in the time at your disposal. I believe if you can once begin to materialise sums and send them here, the rest will come much more easily than seems probable at present. It seems to me as regards the press that the terms made with Amar were hardly precise enough and too unfavourable to you. Still since it is done, let me know what sums are covered by Arun's loan of two thousand and what sums still remain to be raised and paid. When you have some money in hand for the expenses here, can you send the smaller items in Mirra's list, the tooth powder etc.

As to Akhil Choudhury, my intention was that you should meet him and report to me and afterwards I would decide. I was thinking of his remaining at Krishnagore but Krishnashashi's affair has disarranged everything. I understand from Akhil's letter that he has Rs.100/-. I think it would be best for him to come here for a very short time. I shall see him personally and judge what is best to be done. He must be prepared to go to Krishnagore or else, if I find that he can go on by himself after a first touch from here, to return to Chittagong. He should keep enough money to come here and return. Kshitish has written asking to come here for a year and offering to pay all his expenses. I shall decide about this hereafter. Purani will be coming in March and I don't want too many people here. But if Hrishikesh does not come, as I suppose he will not, I may possibly decide to let Kshitish come for some time if not for a whole year.

Aurobindo.

[8]

"Arya" Office,
Pondicherry.
31st January, 1923.

My dear Barin,

I got your letter of the 26th and intended to wire but had not your Krishnagore address. This afternoon I have received your

telegram and sent a reply giving permission for Krishnashashi's removal. In case the telegram should not reach I have also wired to Kanai in Calcutta. Although to cure Krishnashashi by psychic means might not be impossible, the prolonged resistance and the increasing violence make the present condition impossible. The ordinary means of restraint and medical treatment will have to be used and therefore his removal as you suggest is the only thing left open to us.

It appears from your letters that there is a strong play around you of the hostile opposition from beings of the lowest physico-vital and physical ranges. These beings are small and without intelligence but full of power to do various kinds of harm and mischief. They are similar to those that did the stone-throwing in the other house. To produce brain-incoherence, freaks, absurdities, sexual disorders, nervous agitations, and disequilibrium, coarse violence of various kinds is their sphere in the physical domain and in the physical to bring about accidents, illnesses, injuries, physical impediments and on a smaller scale little mischiefs, inconveniences and hindrances of all kinds. It is these that have taken possession of Krishnashashi's brain and nervous centres and impel his speech and movements. It is these also that pursue with accidents those who are trying to collect money. I have for some time been aware of their activities and suggestions and they are now almost the only positively hostile forces of which I am aware in the Yoga, the rest being merely the normal obstructions of nature. In my own atmosphere I am able to make their suggestions abortive and minimise their play pending their elimination. But in your case they seem to be moved by some more powerful force which not being able to act directly on you is using them as agents. Probably you have in your Sadhana touched and awakened the plane on which they work, but are not yet able to conquer and protect as you can in the higher fields. Those entirely within your spiritual influence may resist or escape but others are exposed to their attack.

I think in these circumstances it is best to limit your creation of a centre there to those who have already begun and

even with them, I mean the newcomers, you should be careful. Probably the best course is to keep the centre at Krishnagore as you suggest and have only a small establishment at Calcutta. The atmosphere of Calcutta cannot be a good environment for a Sadhana centre. As to money affairs you must see whether the resistance can be overcome during February and in any case I hope you will not return empty-handed or with a nominal sum, for that would mean a victory for the hostile force which will make things more difficult in the future. I understand from your last letter that Satkari has already realised 500/-. If so get that sum and send it at once, also get in hand and send the Benares money. That will mean so much materialised and to that extent the opposing force defeated. Afterwards see whether the rest does not come in with less difficulty. If you can prevail, that means the way made clear for better success in the future. It is enough that these forces should have destroyed such fine psychic possibilities as Krishnashashi's. I do not like their being successful in other directions also.

As to Sarojini it is out of the question that she should come here. Make it plain to her that the Yoga I am doing now is much too difficult for her. Her coming here would be a waste of time and money. If she is in earnest about Sadhana she must begin with something much more easy. The first thing for her is to study these things, understand, get her mind prepared and begin with turning herself Godward, elimination of egoistic movements and perhaps doing works in the spirit of Karma Yoga; a meditation active and not passive with these things as the object is all she can safely try at the beginning. I have of course no objection to her turning to Theosophy if she is drawn that way. But for her to come into the concentrated atmosphere here just now would not be good for her and it would be disturbing to us. Please stop her coming here by whatever means you can.

I learn from your post card today that Kanai and the others are at Krishnagore. Please let me know your address there so that I may be sure, whenever necessary, of making a direct communication. Manmohan is writing today to Jogesh at Chittagong to take charge of Krishnashashi. He has already cared for and

almost cured another in the same condition. Let us hope he will equally be successful here.

Aurobindo.

[9]

14th February 1923.

“Arya” office

Pondicherry

My dear Barin,

I have received the Benares money and am sending an acknowledgement with this letter, which you can transmit to Das. Rajani's 50 has not yet reached me.

I had already written to you about Akhil and on the 10th Manmohan telegraphed and wrote to Chittagong instructing him not to go to Bhowanipore but to collect the money and as soon as he had done this and sufficiently recovered from fever, to write and he would receive a call from here. It appears from your telegram today that he started before receiving Manmohan's telegram. I can give no other instructions than those I have already given. Akhil must collect the money sufficient for his journey here and back either to Krishnagore or Chittagong and he must not come without the sum in his hand. I have arranged things here so as to have just sufficient to meet one year's expenses under each head, just that and no more. Until I am assured of the next year's expenses and more, I cannot meet unexpected charges or enlarge my expenditure. Therefore it will not do for him to come and then have to wait here indefinitely for the means of his return journey. An arrangement agreed upon ought to be observed, otherwise there is unnecessary inconvenience and confusion.

I infer from your letter and telegram taken together that Mohini is starting for Krishnagore in order to take back Krishnashashi. Of course in that case there is no need to wait further as was suggested in Moni's letter. I have received no news about Krishnashashi for the last three days. This kind of disregard of instructions is not at all right. It puts me in considerable

difficulty in trying to help Krishnashashi. Please ask Mohini to let me know often from Chittagong about Krishnashashi and his condition. Boroda Babu's letter is very interesting but does not solve the difficulty I had as it gives me no fresh information of any importance. It had already been seen that the immediate cause of the collapse was partly sexual; for that was included in what I meant by the uprush from the vital being. Nor does it make much difference that the physico-vital force possessing him took the form or assumed the *Pranic* body of some dead friend. The situation remains as before. If the disorder is only psychic it will disappear in time. If there is some brain defect that has come up, the issue is more doubtful. The suggestion about the medicine may possibly be useful hereafter. Mohini had better be informed about it.

As to Rajani's difficulties you might ask him to write to me himself stating them and the precise cause of his doubts. As far as I know about his *Sadhana* he was progressing in a steady and sound fashion, but for long I have no farther news of it. There is no reason why he should not succeed in the *yoga* if he keeps the right attitude and faith and perseverance. He will necessarily have difficulties with his vital nature and his physical mind which have a strong earth element, but that is the case also with several others. His development, if he perseveres, is likely to be rather through knowledge and will than any great richness of psychic experience; but he must not take the absence or paucity of the latter for an inability to develop the *yoga*.

The paragraph in one of your letters about the debts is very confused and I can make nothing precise out of it. What I want is to know first what were the heads and the exact sums actually met by the loan of two thousand, especially as this will give me some idea of what has fallen upon us on account of the press; secondly, the heads and exact sums still outstanding apart from this loan of two thousand. What, for instance, is the amount still due to the Kabirajas and what the amount of the small loans. It is very necessary for me, whether in determining what to write to Amar with regard to money matters or in trying to help you, to have an exact and clear idea of the whole transaction. Where

there is only a confused, vague or general idea, the force I put out loses itself very largely in the void. Especially I shall have in future to try and act more and more from the Supramental and less and less from the mind. Now the first condition of the Supramental is exactness, clearness and order both in the total and the details and their relations. Therefore it is a great advantage if there are these elements in the data upon which I have to work and a great disadvantage if they are absent.

I shall await your report about Mohini. I gather from his letter that he wanted to remain some time with you for sadhana. My own idea is that already written by Manmohan to Chittagong, that it is better for most to practise first in its elements at least the synthetic Yoga of jnana, bhakti and karma and establish a basis of mental peace and samata before taking up the Yoga of complete and direct self-surrender. There will always be exceptions, but this is for most the safest course.

Aurobindo

[10]

2nd April, 1923.
“Arya” Office,
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

First about the photographs. The mounted photograph man is fully unfit for the Yoga. The face is empty except for a great deal of pretension, not warranted by any substance behind. He had better be put off or left aside. It is no use just now bringing in people who have not a definite possibility and even among those who have the best only should be chosen.

As to the unmounted photograph, this is a much worse case. I cannot at all find what you say you see in his eyes. They seem to me rather the eyes of madness or at least mono-mania. The whole face is a nightmare. It seems to me a clear case either of possession or, even, of the incarnation of some vital being. Please do not meddle with him at all. It is only when we have obtained mastery over the physico-vital world and all the physical planes

that it will be at all safe to deal with such cases and certainly even then it will not be to begin by taking them into the Yoga.

I note from this case and from what you say in connection with Rathin that you have just now what seems to me a rather dangerous attraction (because likely to create hindrances or misdirect the energy) towards these vital cases. What you say about the different vital worlds is no doubt interesting and has a certain truth, but you must remember that these worlds, which are different from the true or divine vital, are full of enchantments and illusions and they present appearances of beauty which allure only to mislead or destroy. They are worlds of "Rakshashimaya" and their heavens are more dangerous than their hells. They have to be known and their powers met when need be but not accepted; our business is with the Supramental and with the vital only when it is supramentalised and until then we have always to be on our guard against any lures from that other quarter. I think the worlds of which you speak are those which have a special attraction and a special danger for poets, imaginative people and some artists. There is, especially, a strain of aestheticised vital susceptibility or sentiment or even sentimentalism through which they affect the being and it is one of the things that has to be purified before one can rise to the highest poetry, art and imaginative creation. In the case of Krishnashashi some influences from these worlds certainly entered into the cause of his collapse. I shall write about Rathin directly to his father for I don't know how long you are staying in Gauhati.⁶ I shall only say just now that it will not be good for the boy if he merely changes the control of one kind of vital world for that of another. He must become healthily normal first and all else can only come afterwards.

As to money matters, I think you should go on trying for some time longer. I believe the obstacle is bound to break before long if we do not get tired out by the obstinacy of the resistance. I am just now very much concentrated in the effort to bring down the Supramental into the physical plane which demands

⁶ See the letter to Rajani Palit on pages 373–77.—Ed.

a very constant and sustained effort and it is for this reason that I have not been able to answer letters. I shall decide about Kshitish when the time for your return draws near.

Aurobindo.

[11]

16th April 1923.
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I answer first your letter of the 6th April. I have already let you know that I approve both the people whose photographs you have sent to me. As to Bibhuti Bhushan Datta you are right in thinking that he is a born Yogn. His face shows the type of the Sufi or Arab mystic and he must certainly have been that in a former life and brought much of his then personality into the present existence. There are defects and limitations in his being. The narrowness of the physical mind of which you speak is indicated in the photograph, though it has not come out in the expression, and it might push him in the direction of a rather poverty-stricken asceticism instead of his expanding and opening himself richly to the opulences of the Divine. It might also lead him in other circumstances to some kind of fanaticism. But on the other hand if he gets the right direction and opens himself to the right powers these things may be turned into valuable elements, the ascetic capacity into a force useful against the physico-vital dangers and what might have been fanaticism into an intense devotion to the Truth revealed to him. There is also likely to be some trouble in the physico-vital being. But I cannot yet say of what nature. This is not a case of an entirely safe development, which can be assured only where there is a strong vital and physical basis and a certain natural balance in the different parts of the being. This balance has here to be created and its creation is quite possible. Whatever risk there is must be taken; for the nature here is born for the Yoga and ought not to be denied its opportunity. He must be made to understand

fully the character and demands of the integral Yoga.

Next for Kumar Krishna Mitter. He is no doubt what you say, a type of the rich and successful man, but the best kind of that type and cast on sound and generous lines. There is besides indicated in his face and expression a refinement and capacity of idealism which is not too common. Certainly we are not to take people into the Yoga for the sake of their riches, but on the other hand we must not have the disposition to reject anyone on account of his riches. If wealth is a great obstacle, it is also a great opportunity, and part of the aim of our work is, not to reject, but to conquer for the divine self-expression the vital and material powers, including that of wealth, which are now in the possession of other influences. If there a man like this [who]⁷ is prepared with an earnest and real will to bring himself and his power over from the other camp to ours, there is no reason to refuse him. This of course is not the case of a man born to the Yoga like Bibhuti Bhushan, but of one who has an opening in him to a spiritual awakening and I think of a nature which might possibly fail from certain negative deficiencies but not because of any adverse element in the being. The one necessity is that he should understand and accept what the Yoga demands of him — first the seeking of a greater Truth, secondly the consecration of himself and his powers and wealth to its service and finally the transformation of all his life into the terms of the Truth and that he should have not merely the enthusiastic turning of his idealism but a firm and deliberate will towards it. It is especially necessary in the case of these rich men for them to realise that it is not enough in this Yoga to have a spiritual endeavour on one side and on the other the rest of the energies given to the ordinary motives, but that the whole life and being must be consecrated to the Yoga. It is probably from this reason of a divided life [that]⁸ men like Arunsingh fail to progress in spite of a natural capacity. If this is understood and accepted, the consecration of which he speaks is obviously in his circumstances the first step

⁷ MS (*copy*) and

⁸ MS (*copy*) these

in the path. If he enters it, it will probably be advisable for him to come after a short time and see me in Pondicherry. But this of course has to be decided afterwards.

About Kanai I have no objection to his coming as he wants for a short visit here. But I think it would be best after you come.

I may say a word in passing about Nalineswar. I have read through his experiences and they confirm what I have said about the deficient capacity of his *adhar*. The mental, vital and physical beings are full of weakness and Tamas and the debility and torpor which he constantly experiences are the result of this deficient *adhar* trying to bear the pressure of the Sadhana. At the same time he has one thing which can carry him through if he keeps it steadily,—the persistent faith and self-surrender. If the physical lightness, which he experienced for the last four or five days before he wrote, can be made permanent then probably the worst part of the difficulty is over. In any case that permanence whenever it comes will be the sign of a certain fundamental safety and the other deficiencies can be gradually rectified by the coming in of the light and the power into the mind and the vital being.

As regards Jyotish Mukherjee, the most notable thing in his photograph is the strong symmetry between the two sides of his face centred in the dissimilarity of the two eyes. This is always a sign of two sides in the nature which have not been harmonised and unified, one side perhaps of faith and devotion and another of a critical and negative mind or one side drawn to higher things and the other held down by the earth nature. This is likely to create a great disadvantage and difficulties in the earlier part of the Sadhana, for it remains even though the disparity may be suppressed by the mental effort but once the balance or the unification can be created there is a compensating advantage by the combination of two strong elements both necessary to completeness. The Sadhana he has been doing seems to have been mainly that of a preliminary mental and vital (psychological) purification and preparation of a very sound character but what is still lacking is a positive spiritual side of the Sadhana. However the clearing of the system seems to have gone far enough for him

to have had at least glimpses of psycho-spiritual experiences and a promise even of the supramental awaiting its time for manifestation. I shall, if I can make time, write separately my comments on his experiences and if he understands and follows he may proceed more rapidly in his Sadhana.

As regards the press debts, I have, as I have already let you know, asked Amar to cut off from it the two hundred rupees which he wanted to send after being paid. The debt to him is marked in your list as rupees two hundred and ninety one odd. If he does as I ask him you will only then have this 91 odd to pay and it is better to do it than to leave the debt running and pay interest. As to Arun's pro-note I suppose it must be signed, but as soon as we have sufficient money for other purposes we should have to turn our attention to paying it. These debts are a very heavy burden as they are likely to swallow up any large sum you may be able to realise. I am thinking over the matter and I shall write to you in detail as soon as I see my way clearer.

What you say about your Sadhana is probably the right interpretation of your experiences. The two things of which you speak are really two sides of one movement. The opening and clearing of the lower strata can only be effectively done in proportion as this relative or mentalised supramental can lay hold on the consciousness and open to and bring down the higher or intermediate supramental from above, and this in its turn can only settle it into the being in proportion as the physico-vital and physical open and clear and change. The interaction must go on until a certain balance between the two movements is created which will enable the higher to hold the being without interruption, and open it more and more to the true supramental activities. The action into which you have been cast was probably necessary because it is the dynamic part of your being in which the defects of the lower nature have the greatest hold and are most prominent.

Aurobindo

P.S. After this letter was finished I got your last of the 12th. What you say about Kumar Krishna there is what I could already

gather about him, only made precise. I do not think that these things very much matter. All strong natures have the rajasik active outgoing force in them and if that were sufficient to unfit for the Yoga, very few of us would have had a chance. As for the doubt of the physical mind as to whether the thing is possible, who has not had it? In my own case it pursued me years and years and it is only in the last two years that the last shadow of doubt, not latterly of its theoretical feasibility, but of the practical certainty of its achievement in the present state of the world and of the human nature, entirely left me. The same can be said of the egoistic poise,—that almost all strong men have the strong egoistic poise. But I do not think judging from the photograph that it is the same half bull and half bulldog nature as in P. Mitter. These things can only go with spiritual development and experience and then the strength behind them becomes an asset. It is also evident from what you say about his past experience of the voice and the vastness that there is, as I thought, a psychic something in him waiting for and on the verge of spiritual awakening. I understand that he is waiting for intellectual conviction and, to bring it, some kind of assurance from an inner experience. To that also there is nothing to say. But the question is, and it seems to me the one question in his case, whether he will be ready to bring to the Yoga the firm, entire and absolute will and consecration that will be needed to tide him through all the struggles and crises of Sadhana. The disparity between his mental poise and action is natural enough, precisely because it is a mental poise. It has to become a spiritual poise before the life and the ideal can become one. Have the spoiling by luxury of which you speak and the worldly life sapped in him the possibility of developing an entire Godward will? If not, then he may be given his chance. I cannot positively say that he is or will be the Adhikari. I can only say that there is the capacity in the best part of his nature. I cannot also say that he is among the "best". But he seems to me to have more original capacity than some at least who have been accepted. When I wrote about the "best" I did not mean an Adhara without defects and dangers; for I do not think such a one is to be found. My impression is

of course founded on a general favourable effect produced by the physiognomy and the appearance, on certain definite observations upon the same and on psychic indications which were mixed but in the balance favourable. I have not seen the man as you have. Take the sum he offers, do not press him for more at present and for the rest, let him understand clearly not only what the Yoga is, but the great demands it makes on the nature. See how he turns and whether he cannot be given his chance.

Your fuller account of your Sadhana shows that you are seeing in the nature and power of the supramental but you are seeing it probably through the revelatory light descending into the mind. It can only fulfil itself on the conditions I have named, first, the opening to the actual descent of the supermind itself which you will find something still more concrete and full of the truth-power and truth-substance and its penetration of the physical consciousness in all its layers.

Lastly, I may add to what I have said about the press debts that what has been troubling me is the necessity of applying money given for the spiritual work and the maintenance of the Sadhana centres to this object. This is likely to create falsehood or equivoke in the physical atmosphere and I think the mixture of the two things is one obstacle to the movement of the incoming resources. I am trying to find separate means of meeting the debt. About this I will write to you in future. I have written in the body of the letter that Kanai might come after your return, it is just possible I may call him before. Kshitish is always asking for a word about his Sadhana, but it is proceeding very well and he seems to understand it so clearly himself that there is no need for comment.

Your last letter came insured for Rs. 25/- but there was no money or mention of the sum inside. Was it forgotten or was there some other reason for insurance?

Aurobindo

[12]

30th May 1923.
‘Arya Office’
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I have been obliged for some time, partly owing to the many-sided storm of which you speak, to concentrate on other things and perhaps that is one reason why this stream of money collection has run dry. I shall see whether we can set it flowing again. I do not ask you to come back as yet because it is much better if possible to get this thing finished in such a way that you may not have to go running back after a time to complete it. The arrangements I thought of with regard to the debts have not taken shape or rather have postponed themselves to an indefinite future. If I remember right what you have immediately to pay is some 250 more to Kamala Palit and 600 to Arun. Besides this and the other 2000 to Arun, which if necessary can wait, there are the sums due, 1500 altogether, to the Kaviraj and Pulin Mitter. I believe there is nothing else. Can the last two wait and if so, how long? What is still necessary is to raise 1500 more for next year's expenses here. Next, to pay off the more pressing debts and if there is any large opening all the debts. I would have no objection to your applying any money you raise from the Marwaries to the latter purpose. If Basanta Lal Murarka can really raise 5000 from them, the problem will be solved. I shall then be able to keep Das' money separate and if he also keeps his promise that with some help from elsewhere will prevent all necessity of thinking of these things for another two years.

As regards Kanai the experiences of which he is afraid do not seem to me dangerous in themselves. They are such as come to all people whose Yoga runs strongly on psychic lines and those you mention and similar ones of still stronger character have been experienced by Mirra at least a thousand times during her Sadhana. The only danger, apart from any hostile interference, comes from the disturbances of the physical mind and the fear and apprehensions of the nervous and physical being.

I have already written once before that fearlessness is the first necessary condition for going through this Yoga. These fears and apprehensions and the sense of weakness and insecurity come from the attachment of the physical and nervous being to its ordinary basis of consciousness and usual habits of living and its alarm at anything abnormal which forces it out of its own grooves. As for the need of immediate protection, that is only when the vital being goes out of the body. The psychic being can go out without any danger if the physical consciousness does not disturb and itself create the danger. But unfortunately Kanai's physical and nervous being seems to be weak and not on a level with the powers of his mind and psychic nature. It may be better for him to concentrate first on the preparation of his physical consciousness. I have already said that what he must do is to bring down the basis of calm, light and strength into the physical mind, nerves and body. Once this is thoroughly done all attacks can be met. There will be no disturbing vibrations and all kinds of psychic and vital experiences such as those now pressing upon [him] will be welcomed as an expansion and fulfilment of the integral nature and a cause not of apprehension but of knowledge and Ananda. As to his coming here, I was not calling him because just now I am still in the concentration on the complete mastery of the physical and that prevents me from putting myself out very much at present. I could not give him the constant attention which will be needed according to your suggestion and besides, as his physical being is the weakest part of him, it might not be altogether advisable for him to be here until I have established a sufficient general security against any attack which might touch on that plane. Still I shall see whether I can call him after a little time.

I have no objection to Rajani's proposal of a visit here in case of his confirmation. It might be helpful to him in the present stage of his sadhana.

I had forgotten that Peary Mohan Das and the Chittagong aspirant were one and the same person. You will have to take together what was said about each in Nalini's letter. The chaotic nature of his experiences about which I spoke are probably due

to some kind of difficulty or exaggeration in his vital being. It is best for him to start with getting a sure foundation of calm and a quiet opening up on all the planes of his consciousness, especially the emotional and the vital, so that a sound and orderly development of the Yoga may be possible.

Aurobindo.

P.S. If Kanai really gets anything of the nature of psychic trance the one thing he will have to be careful about is to meditate under such conditions that it will not be roughly broken from outside.

A.G.

[13]

Arya Office, Pondicherry
16th June 1923.

I have read the record of Jyotish Mukherjee's experiences.⁹ It appears from it that he has made the right start to a certain extent and has been able to establish the beginning of mental calm and some kind of psychic opening but neither of these has yet been able to go very far. The reason probably is that he has done everything by a strong mental control and forcible stilling of the mind and emotional and vital movements, but has not yet established the true spiritual calm which can only come by experience of or surrender to the higher being above the mind. It is this that he has to get in order to make a foundation for a more substantial progress.

1. He is right in thinking that an inner calm and silence must be the foundation, not only of external work but of all inner and outer activities. But the quieting of the mind in a mental silence or inactivity although often useful as a first step is not sufficient. The mental calm must be changed first into the deeper spiritual peace, Shanti, and then into the supramental calm and silence full of the higher light and strength and Ananda. Moreover, the

⁹ This letter, which as preserved has no salutation, was apparently written to Barindra Kumar Ghose. The typescript is headed "To Jyotish Mukherjee"—apparently indicating that Sri Aurobindo's answer was to be transmitted to Jyotish by Barin.—Ed.

quieting of the mind only is not enough. The vital and physical consciousness have to be opened up and the same foundation established there. Also the spirit of devotion of which he speaks must be not merely a mental feeling but an aspiration of the deeper heart and will to the truth above, that the being may rise up into it and that it may descend and govern all the activities.

2. The void he feels in the mind is often a necessary condition for the clearing of it from its ordinary movements so that it may open to a higher consciousness and a new experience, but in itself it is merely negative, a mental calm without anything positive in it and if one stops there, then the dullness and inertia of which he complains must come. What he needs is, in the void and silence of the mind, to open himself to, to wait or to call for the action of the higher power, light and peace from above the mind.

3. The survival of the evil habits in sleep is easily explained and is a thing of common experience. It is a known psychological law that whatever is suppressed in the conscious mind remains in the subconscious being and recurs either in the waking state when the control is removed or else in sleep. Mental control by itself cannot eradicate anything entirely out of the being. The subconscious in the ordinary man includes the larger part of the vital being and the physical mind and also the secret body-consciousness. In order to make a true and complete change, one has to make all these conscious, to see clearly what is still there and to reject them from one layer after another till they have been entirely thrown out from the personal experience. Even then, they may remain and come back on the being from the surrounding universal forces and it is only when no part of the consciousness makes any response to these forces of the lower plane that the victory and transformation are absolutely complete.

4. His experience that whenever he gains a conquest in the mental plane the forces of past Karma,—that is to say, really of the old nature,—come back upon him with a double vigour is again a common experience. The psychological explanation is to be found in the preceding paragraph. All attempt at transformation of the being is a fight with universal forces which have long been in possession and it is vain to expect that they will give up

the struggle at the first defeat. As long as they can, they seek to retain possession and even when they are cast out they will, as long as there is any chance of response in the conscious or subconscious being, try to recur and regain their hold. It is no use being discouraged by these attacks. What has to be done is to see that they are made more and more external and all assent refused until they weaken and fade away. Not only the Chitta and Buddhi must refuse consent but also the lower parts of the being, the vital and physico-vital, the physical mind and the body consciousness.

5. The defects of the receiving mind and the discriminating Buddhi spoken of are general defects of the intellect and cannot be entirely got rid of so long as the intellectual action is not replaced by a higher supra-intellectual action and finally by the harmonising light of the supramental knowledge.

Next as regards the psychic experiences. The region of glory felt in the crown of [the] head is simply the touch or reflection of the supramental sunlight on the higher part of the mind. The whole mind and being must open to this light and it must descend and fill the whole system. The lightning and the electric currents are the (*vaidyuta*) Agni force of the supramental sun touching and trying to pour into the body. The other signs are promises of the future psychic and other experiences. But none of these things can establish themselves until the opening to the higher force has been made. The mental Yoga can only be a preparation for this truer starting point.

What I have said is merely an explanation of these experiences but it seems to me that he has advanced far enough to make a foundation for the beginning of the higher Yoga. If he wishes to do that he must replace his mental control by a belief in and a surrender to the Supreme Presence and Force above the mind, an aspiration in the heart and a will in the higher mind to the supreme truth and the transformation of the whole conscious being by its descent and power. He must, in his meditation, open himself silently to it and call down first a deeper calm and silence, next the strength from []¹⁰ above

¹⁰ MS (copy) the

working in the whole system and last the higher []¹¹ glory of which he had a glimpse pouring through his whole being and illuminating it with the divine truth-movement.

A.G.

[14]

[7 June 1928]

The idea that comes to you to go away and try a severe asceticism, “to go *my way* to fight *my* battle alone and in *my own way*”, as you express it, is an error and the suggestion of an adverse force, and at the same time it points directly to the real difficulty in you that has stood blocking your progress. If you went, you would go very far not only from us but from the Yoga and be lost to the Path, and you would fare no better than now. The difficulties would be always with you or sleep for a time only to rise again in your nature. However hard the fight, the only thing is to fight it out now and here to the end.

The trouble is that you have never fully faced and conquered the real obstacle. There is in a very fundamental part of your nature a strong formation of ego-individuality which has mixed in your spiritual aspiration a clinging element of pride and spiritual ambition and is supported by a long-formed habit of leadership, self-confident activity and self-reliance. This formation has never consented to be broken up in order to give place to something more true and divine. Therefore, when the Mother has put her force upon you or when you yourself have pulled the force upon you, this in you has always prevented it from doing its work in its own way. It has begun itself building according to the ideas of the mind or some demand, trying to make its own creation in its “own way”, by its own strength, its own Sadhana, its own Tapasya. There has never been any real surrender, any giving up of yourself freely and simply into the hands of the Divine Mother. And yet that is the only way to succeed in the Supramental Yoga. To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The

¹¹ MS (copy) and

object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done by a force infinitely greater than your own, it can only be done by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.

The difficulties that shake you would be of no importance, if this central obstacle were removed. They come from the weakness of the external being which was always intense and eager, but built in too narrow a mould for the fulfilment of the inner urge and which has in addition been badly worn down by life. This could be mended; what it needs is to be at peace, to remain quiet and at rest, to open itself confidently without strain and harassing struggle to the Force and allow it to rebuild and strengthen and widen till a sufficient physical foundation is made. At present, under the pressure of the Force, it either falls into Tamas or, if the vital forces touch it, responds by a rajasic movement and is driven helplessly in these rajasic gusts. All this would easily change (naturally, not in a moment but steadily and surely) if the central difficulty is removed. It is for this that you ought to use your retirement, first of all, to face, see in its complete extent and conquer.

A complete will to surrender in the mind is the first condition, but not by itself sufficient. The trouble lies deeper than the surface mind and you have to find it out where it is and extirpate it. It is only when this has been done, that the help given you (and it was always there till now) can bear fruit in the true spiritual and psychic (not an ascetic) change of the recalcitrant parts of your nature.

Sri Aurobindo

To Hrishikesh Kanjilal

[c. 1922]

To Hrishikesh

It appears from your present letter and attitude that you propose to give God a seat on your right hand and R— another on the left and to sit in meditation between oscillating sweetly from one to the other. If this is what you want to do please

do it in the Cherry Press and not at Pondicherry. If you want to come here, you must do it with a firm determination to get rid of this attachment and make a complete and unconditional consecration and self-surrender.

You seem not to have understood the principle of this Yoga. The old Yoga demanded a complete renunciation extending to the giving up of the worldly life itself. This Yoga aims instead at a new and transformed life. But it insists as inexorably on a complete throwing away of desire and attachment in the mind, life and body. Its aim is to refound life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transfer the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. That means that in the new life all the connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections. One must be prepared to renounce at the higher call what are called the natural affections. Even if they are kept at all, it can only be with a change which transforms them altogether. But whether they are to be renounced or kept and changed must be decided not by the personal desires but by the truth above. All must be given up to the Supreme Master of the Yoga.

If you cling to the desires of the mental, vital and physical beings, this transference and transformation cannot happen. Your attachment to your son is a thing of the vital parts in you, and if you are not prepared to give it up, it will inevitably clash with the demands of the Yoga and stop your progress.

When you came here, your psychical being was opened up, and the mental, vital and physical obstacles sufficiently worked upon to admit of this opening. This came first, because that was the strongest part of you for the purposes of the Yoga. Afterwards there was an attempt to open up the mind and other parts. But owing to certain influences their resistance became strong enough to bring things to a standstill. Doubt and non-understanding in the mind and the vital attachments of which this one to your son is the strongest, were the main instruments of this resistance. It is no use coming back with any of these things still cherished and supported by your mind and will.

Either you will make no progress at all here or if the power works on you it will work to break the resistance of the vital being and if you still support that resistance the nature of this struggle and the consequences may be of a serious and undesirable character. The power that works in this Yoga is of a thorough-going character and tolerates in the end nothing great or small that is an obstacle to the truth and its realisation. To come here will be to invite its working in the strongest and most insistent form.

Aurobindo Ghose

To Krishnashashi

Pondicherry,
January 1923.

My dear Krishnashashi,

I have seen all the experiences that you have written down, and sent to me and received yours and Barin's letter.¹² It is no doubt true as you say that your sadhana has gone on different lines from that of the others. But it does not follow that you are entirely right in insisting on your own ideas about it. I shall tell you briefly what I have observed about your experiences.

The first things you sent were very interesting and valuable psycho-spiritual and psycho-mental experiences and messages. Later ones lean more to the psychic-emotional and have in them a certain one-sidedness and mixture and there are also psycho-vital and psycho-physical developments of a double nature. I do not mean that all is false in them but that there are many strong partial truths which need to be corrected by others which they seem to ignore and even to exclude. Besides there are suggestions from the intellect and the vital being and also suggestions from external sources which you ought not to accept so easily as you seem to do. This mixture is inevitable in the earlier stages and there is no need to be disheartened about it. But if you insist on

¹² Sri Aurobindo's letters to Barindra Kumar Ghose on Krishnashashi's case are published on pages 337–54. — Ed.

preserving it, it may deflect you from your true path and injure your Sadhana.

As yet you have no sufficient experience of the nature of the psychic being and the psychic worlds. Therefore it is not possible for you to put the true value on all that comes to you. When the psychic consciousness opens, especially so freely and rapidly as it has done in your case, it opens to all kinds of things and to suggestions, and messages from all sorts of planes and worlds and forces and beings. There is the true psychic which is always good and there is the psychic opening to mental, vital and other worlds which contain all kinds of things good, bad and indifferent, true, false and half truths, thought-suggestions which are of all kinds, and messages [which] are also of all kinds. What is needed is not to give yourself impartially to all of them but to develop both a sufficient knowledge and experience and a sufficient discrimination to be able to keep your balance and eliminate falsehood, half-truths and mixtures. It will not do to dismiss impatiently the necessity for discrimination on the ground that that is mere intellectualism. The discrimination need not be intellectual,—although that also is a thing not to be despised. But it may be a psychic discrimination or one that comes from the higher super-intellectual mind and from the higher being. If you have not this, then you have need of constant protection and guidance from those who have it, and who have also long psychic experience, and it may be disastrous for you to rely entirely on yourself and to reject such guidance.

In the meantime there are three rules of the Sadhana which are very necessary in an earlier stage and which you should remember, *first*, open yourself to experience but do not seek to take the *bhoga* of the experiences. Do not attach yourself to any particular kind of experience. Do not take all ideas and suggestions as true and do not take any knowledge, voice or thought-message as absolutely final and definitive. Truth itself is only true when complete and it changes its meaning as one rises and sees it from a higher level.

I must put you on your guard against the suggestions of hostile influences which attack all *Sadhakas* in this Yoga. The

vision you had of the European, is itself an intimation to you that these forces have their eye on you and are prepared to act if they are not already acting against you. It is their subtler suggestions, which take the figure of truth, and not their more open attacks, that are the most dangerous. I will mention some of the most usual of them.

Be on your guard against any suggestions that try to raise up your egoism, as for instance, that you are a greater Sadhaka than others or that your Sadhana is unique or of an exceptionally high kind. There seems to be some suggestion of this kind to you already. You had a rich and rapid development of psychic experiences, but so precisely have some others who have meditated here and none of yours are unique in their kind or degree or unknown to our experience. Even if it were otherwise, egoism is the greatest danger of the Sadhana and is never spiritually justifiable. All greatness is God's; it belongs to no other.

Be on your guard against anything that suggests to you to keep or cling to any impurity or imperfection, confusion in the mind, attachment in the heart, desire and passion in the *Prana* or disease in the body. To keep up these things by ingenuous justifications and coverings, is one of the usual devices of the hostile forces.

Be on your guard against any idea which will make you admit these hostile forces on the same terms as the divine forces. I understand you have said that you must admit all because all is a manifestation of God. All is a manifestation of God in a certain sense but if misunderstood as it often is, this Vedantic truth can be turned to the purposes of falsehood. There are many things which are partial manifestations and have to be replaced by fuller truer manifestations. There are others which belong to the ignorance and fall away when we move to the knowledge. There are others which are of the darkness and have to be combated and destroyed or exiled. This manifestation is one which has been freely used by the force represented by the European you saw in your vision and it has ruined the Yoga of many. You yourself wished to reject the intellect and yet the intellect is a manifestation of God as well as the other things you have accepted.

If you really accept and give yourself to me, you must accept my truth. My truth is one that rejects ignorance and falsehoods and moves to the knowledge, rejects darkness and moves to the light, rejects egoism and moves to the Divine Self; rejects imperfections and moves to perfection. My truth is not only the truth of Bhakti or of psychic development but also of knowledge, purity, divine strength and calm and of the raising of all these things from their mental, emotional and vital forms to their Supramental reality.

I say all these things not to undervalue your Sadhana but to turn your mind towards the way of its increasing completion and perfection.

It is not possible for me to have you here just now. First because the necessary conditions are not there and secondly because you must be fully prepared to accept my guidance before you come here.

If, as I suppose you must under the present circumstances, you have to go home, meditate there, turning yourself to me and try to prepare yourself so that you may come here hereafter. What you need now is not so much psychic development, which you will always be able to have (I do not ask you to stop it altogether) but an inner calm and quiet as the true basis and atmosphere of your future development and experience, calm in the mind, the purified vital being and in the physical consciousness. A psycho-vital or psycho-physical Yoga will not be safe for you until you have this calm and an assured purity of being and a complete and always present vital and physical protection.

Aurobindo.

To Rajani Palit

6th April, 1923.

"Arya Office"

Pondicherry.

My dear Rajani,

I am writing today about your son Rathin and his illness if it can be called by that name. I shall state first in general terms

the nature of the malady and its usual developments, that is to say, the normal course it takes when no psychic or spiritual force is brought in to remove it. Afterwards I shall indicate the two possible means of cure.

I think it is best for me to state the case in its worst and not only in its best possible terms because it is necessary that you should know the full truth and have the courage to face it. These cases are not those of a truly physical malady but of an attempt at possession from the vital world; and the fits and other physical symptoms are signs, not of the malady itself, but of the struggle of the natural being against the pressure of the hostile influence. Such a case in a child of this age indicates some kind of accumulation in the physical heredity creating an opportunity or a predisposition of which the vital invasion takes advantage. It is especially the physical consciousness and the physico-vital which contain the germs or materials of this predisposition. The physical being is always changing its constituents and in each period of seven years a complete change is effected. If the symptoms of this predisposition in the nature are detected and a wise influence and training used by the parents to eradicate them and this is done so effectively that in the first seven years no seeds of the malady appear, then usually there is no further danger. If on the contrary they manifest by the seventh year, then the next period of seven years is the critical period and, ordinarily, the case would be decided one way or the other by or before the fourteenth year.

There are normally three possible eventualities. The difficulty in dealing with the case of so young a child is that the mind is not developed and can give no help towards the cure. But as the mind develops in the second seven years it will, if it is not abnormally weak which I think is not the case here, react more and more against the influence. Aided by a good control and influence it may very well succeed in casting out the hostile intrusion and its pressure altogether. In that case the fits and other signs of the physical struggle pass away, the strange moral and vital tendencies fade out of the habits and the child becomes mentally, morally and physically a healthy normal being.

The second possibility is that the struggle between the natural being and the intruding being may not be decisive in the psychic sense, that is to say, the intruder cannot take full possession but also he cannot be thrown out entirely. In that case anything may happen, a shattered mind and health, the death of the body or a disturbed, divided and permanently abnormal nature.

The third and worst possibility is that the intruding being may succeed and take entire possession. In that case the fits and other violent symptoms will disappear, the child may seem to be physically cured and healthy, but he will be an abnormal and most dangerous being incarnating an evil vital force with all its terrible propensities and gifted with abnormal powers to satisfy them.

In Rathin's case there is not as yet possession in the full sense of the word, but a strong pressure and influence indicated by the strange habits of which you have written. These are suggested and dictated by the intruding being and not proper to the boy himself. The fearlessness and security with which he does these things is inspired from the same source. But the fits prove that there is as yet no possession. There is a struggle indicated by them and a temporary hold which passes out again. He is evidently in the earlier part of the critical period. I have indicated the course normally taken by the illness, but it is not necessary to pass through it and take its risks. There are other means which can come to his help and effect a complete cure.

The first and easiest is to cure by hypnotic suggestion. This if properly applied is an absolutely sure remedy. But in the first place, it must be applied by someone who is not himself under the influence of evil powers, as some hypnotists are. For that obviously will make matters worse. Moreover, it must be done by someone who has the proper training and knows thoroughly what he is about, for a mistake might be disastrous. The best conditions would be if someone like yourself who has a natural relation and already an influence over the child could do it with the necessary training and knowledge.

The other means of cure is the use of spiritual power and influence. If certain psycho-spiritual means could be used, this

would be as sure and effectual as the other. But this is not possible because there is no one there who has the right knowledge. The spiritual influence by itself can do it but the working is likely to be slow. It must ordinarily be conveyed through someone on the spot and you yourself are obviously the right instrument. What you have to do is to keep the idea that I am sending to you power for this object, to make yourself receptive to it and at the same time make your own will and natural influence on the child a direct channel for it. The will must be a quiet will, calm and confident and intent on its object, but without attachment and unshaken by any amount of resistance and unalarmed and undiscouraged by the manifestations of the illness. Your attitude to the child must be that of a calm and firm protecting affection free from emotional weakness and disturbance. The first thing is to acquire such an influence as to be able to repel the attack when it comes and if it takes any hold to diminish steadily its force and the violence of its manifestation. I understand from your letter that you have already been able to establish the beginning of such an influence. But it must be able to work at a distance as well as in his presence. Further you must acquire the power of leaving a protection around him when you are absent. Secondly, you must be able to convey to him a constant suggestion which will gradually inhibit the strange undesirable habits of which you speak in your letter. This, I may say, cannot be effectively done by any kind of external coercion. For that is likely to make these impulses more violent. It must be a will and suggestion and silent influence. If you find the control increasing and these habits diminishing, you can understand that the work of cure has begun. Its completion may take some time because these vital beings are very sticky and persistent and are always returning to the attack. The one thing which can make the cure rapid is if the boy himself develops a will in his mind to change, for that will take away the ground of the hostile influence. It is because something in him is amused and takes pleasure in the force which comes with the influence that these things are able to recur and continue. This element in him calls the invading presence back even when it has been centrally rejected. I shall of course try to act directly on him

as well as through you, but the instrumentality of one on the spot greatly enforces and is sometimes indispensable to the action.

A word about your Sadhana. It seems to me that the key of your future development is contained in the experience which you say you often attained for a few days at Krishnagore (your letter of the 9th February) "A state which was full of knowledge, calm serenity, strength and wide consciousness — all questions automatically solved — a continuous stream of power passed into the body through the forehead centre — extremely powerful, having undisturbed samata, calm conviction, keen sight and knowledge." This was the consciousness of the true Purusha in you aware of his own supramental being and it is this which must become your normal consciousness and the basis of the supramental development. In order that it may so become, the mind has to be made calm and strong, the emotional and vital being purified and the physical consciousness so opened that the body can hold and retain the consciousness and power. I notice that at the time you had it the body also expressed it. This is a sign that the capacity is already there in your physical being. The calm and strength will descend from above, what you have to do is to open yourself and receive it and at the same time reject all the movements of the lower nature which prevent it from remaining and which are ruled by desires and habits inconsistent with the true being, the true power and the true knowledge. Of course the superior power will itself reveal to you and remove all the obstacles in your nature. But the condition is that not only your mental but your vital and physical being must open and surrender to it and refuse to surrender themselves to other powers and forces. As you yourself experienced at that time, this greater consciousness will of itself bring the development of the higher will and knowledge. Psychic experiences of a proper kind are of course a great help but in your case it may be that any rich development of the psychic will only come after or in proportion as this consciousness with its calm, knowledge, will and samata takes possession of the different parts of the being.

Aurobindo Ghose

Draft Letters to and about Kumud Bandhu Bagchi

[1]

There are certain things that it is absolutely necessary for Kumud to realise in a sincere and straight-forward spirit, without veils and self-justifications if his sadhana is not to turn about in a constant circle to the end or else fail and fall into pieces.

First, it is necessary for him to have a truer understanding of the Yoga than he seems to have had either in the past or now. This Yoga is not turned towards renunciation of the world or an outward asceticism, but neither is its aim Bhoga, nor what the Chandernagore people call "Life-realisation" which means nothing but the satisfaction of one's own magnified vital ego. The aim is an opening to a higher Divine Truth beyond mind, life or body and the transformation of these three things into its image. But that transformation cannot take place and the Truth itself cannot be known in its own unmistakable spirit, perfect light and real body until the whole of the *adbara* has been fundamentally and patiently purified, and made plastic and capable of receiving what is beyond the constructions of the mind, the desires of the body and the habits of the physical consciousness and physical being.

His most obvious obstacle, one of which he has not in the least got rid of up to now, is a strongly Rajasic vital ego for which his mind finds justifications and covers. There is nothing more congenial to the vital ego than to put on the cloak of Yoga and imagine itself free, divinised, spiritualised, siddha, and all the rest of it, or advancing towards that end, when it is really doing nothing of the kind, but [is] just its old self in new forms. If one does not look at oneself with a constant sincerity and an eye of severe self-criticism, it is impossible to get out of this circle.

Along with the exclusion of self-deceiving vital ego, there must go that which accompanies it usually in the mental parts, mental arrogance, a false sense of superiority and an ostentation of knowledge. All pretence and all pretensions must be given up, all pretence to oneself or others of being what one is not,

of knowing what one does not know and all vain idea of being higher than one's own actual spiritual stature.

Over against the vital rajasic ego there is a great coarseness and heaviness of tamas in the physical being and an absence of psychic and spiritual refinement. That must be eliminated or else it will stand always in the way of a true and complete change in the vital being and the mind.

Unless these things are radically changed, merely having experiences or establishing a temporary and precarious calmness in the mental and vital parts will not help in the end. There will be no fundamental change; only a constant going from one state to another, sometimes a quieting and sometimes a return of the disturbances, and always the same defect persisting to the end of the chapter.

The one condition for getting rid of these things is an absolute central sincerity in all the parts of the being, and that means an absolute insistence on the Truth and nothing but the Truth. There will then be a readiness for unsparing self-criticism and vigilant openness to the Light, an uneasiness when falsehood comes in, which will finally purify the whole being.

The defects mentioned are more or less common in various degrees in almost every sadhaka, though there are some who are not touched by them. They can be got rid of if the requisite sincerity is there. But if they occupy the central parts of the being and vitiate the attitude, then the sadhaka will give a constant open or covert support to them, his mind will always be ready to give disguises and justifications and try to elude the search-light of the self-critical faculty and the protest of the psychic being. That means failure of the Yoga at least for this existence.

6 February 1926

[2]

When the psychic being awakens you grow conscious of your own soul; you know your Self. And you no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or with the vital being. You do not mistake them for the soul.

When awakened, the psychic being gives true Bhakti for God or for the Guru. That Bhakti is quite different from mental or vital Bhakti.

In the mind one may have a strong admiration or appreciation for the intellectual or spiritual greatness of the Guru,—follow him and mentally accept his dictates. But if it is merely mental, that does not carry you very far. Of course, there is no harm in having that also. But by itself it does not open the whole of the inner being; it only establishes a mental contact.

The vital Bhakti demands and demands. It imposes its own conditions. It surrenders itself to God, but conditionally. It says to God, "You are so great," "I worship you," — "and now you must satisfy this desire of mine or that ambition"; "make me great; make me a great sadhaka, a great yogin" etc.

The unilluminated mind also surrenders to the Truth, but makes its own conditions. It says to the Truth, "Satisfy my judgment, and my opinion"; it demands the Truth to cast itself in the mind's own forms.

The vital being also insists on the Truth throwing itself into its own vital movement of force. The vital being pulls at the Higher Power and pulls and pulls at the vital being of the Guru.

Both of them (the mental and the vital) have got an *arrière pensée* (mental reservation) in their surrender.

Psychic Bhakti is not like that. Because it is in communication with the Divinity behind, it is capable of true Bhakti. Psychic Bhakti does not make any demand, it makes no reservations. It is satisfied with its own existence. The psychic being knows how to obey the Truth in the right way. It gives itself up truly to God or the Guru, and because it can give itself up truly, therefore it can also receive truly.

When the psychic being comes to the surface it feels sad if it sees that the mental or the vital being is making a fool of itself. That sadness is purity offended.

When the mind is playing its own game, or when the vital being is carried away by its impulses, it is the psychic being which says, "I don't want these things." "What am I here for after all?" "I am here for the Truth; I am not here for these things."

The psychic sadness is a quite different thing from mental dissatisfaction or vital sadness or physical depression.

If the psychic being is strong, it makes itself felt on the mental or the vital being, and forces them to change. But if it is weak, the other parts take advantage of it and use the psychic for their own advantage.

In some cases it comes up to the surface and upsets the mental and the vital being and throws all their settled arrangements and habits into disorder, pressing for a new and divine order. But if the mind or the vital being is stronger than the psychic then it casts only an occasional influence and gradually retires behind. All its cry is in the wilderness; and the mental or the vital being goes on in its own round.

Lastly, the psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be oppressed by falsehood—nor does it exaggerate the Truth. For example, even if everything around says, “There is no God”, the psychic being refuses to believe in it. It says,—“I know” and “I know because I feel.”

And because it knows the thing behind, it is not deceived by appearances. It immediately feels the force.

Also, when the psychic being is awakened, it throws out all the dross from the emotional being and makes it free from sentimentalism or the lower play of emotionalism.

But it does not carry in it the dryness of the mind or the exaggeration of the vital feelings. It gives the just touch to each emotion.

23 March 1926

To People in America, 1926–1927

To Mr. and Mrs. Sharman

[c. January 1926]

Dear M^r and M^{rs} Sharman,

I received a little while ago your Christmas card and greetings and it reminded me of a letter written long ago which I had hoped personally to answer, but could never do it, the time not having come. I have ever since I came to Pondicherry been obliged to withdraw more and more first from public life and then from all outer activities and absorb myself in a long and arduous inner endeavour. I had to discontinue the “Arya” for this purpose and for a long time I wrote nothing, not even any letters. Now although the needed intensity of the inner concentration is not over, it is becoming more possible for me to turn my face towards action on the physical plane. I take the opportunity of your card to do what I then failed to do, even after so long a lapse of time.

I understand from your letter that there are around you a number of seekers after the spiritual life who have received some help from my works. I should be glad to hear more of this group and of what they and you are now doing. Perhaps it would now be possible to open a regular correspondence; for, even when I am not able to write myself, my brother and one or two others who are practising Yoga here with me, often now write under my instructions or dictation the necessary answer. If you feel that such a correspondence would be of help to you,¹

In a letter of the year 1924 you asked whether I had prepared any more intimate instructions in Yoga (other than my published works) and asked to be allowed to share them with those I am guiding in Pondicherry. The “Yoga and its Objects”

¹ Sentence left incomplete.—Ed.

and "Synthesis [of]² Yoga", although founded on my personal knowledge and experience were not intended for that purpose, but merely meant to indicate the general lines on which Yoga might proceed, the main principles, the broad ways of spiritual progress. I have not written or prepared anything new of the kind. All intimate guidance must necessarily in so inner and delicate a thing as the spiritual life []³ be personal, suited to the recipient and the instruction given can only be effective if it is the channel for a spiritual contact and a guiding or helpful influence. In that way if you need my help, I shall be glad to give it. That indeed is one of the objects which the correspondence I propose could serve.

To the Advance Distributing Company

[1]

Arya Office. Pondicherry

9 March. 1926

Advance Distributing Company
Pittsburgh. Pa.

Your letter of the 8th January to the Arya Publishing House has just been forwarded to me.

The publishing house restricted by the Government is not the A.P.H, but the Prabartak Publishing House which has no longer any connection with my work. My books were originally published by various agencies, but an arrangement has recently been made by which the preference for future editions or new publications will usually be given under fixed conditions to the A.P.H. It is from there that all my books already in print can be most readily secured. This arrangement however applies only to India and I have reserved rights of separate or sole publication in Europe, America and elsewhere.

² MS on

³ MS must

I have suggested to the A.P.H to supply you with my works as requested by you, but I am told they have rules in the matter which may come in the way of an immediate compliance. The firm is still a small one and it is not likely that it will be able to supply you rapidly or on any large scale. If any pressing or considerable demand is created in America, it will be more convenient to publish there than to rely on India.

I am quite willing therefore that you should yourselves publish "parts of this literature" according to your proposal. I may observe that all proceeds of my books are set aside for farthering of the work for which the "Arya" appeared.

Vol II. No. 8 is no longer separately available; but a friend is willing to send you his copy of the number temporarily for immediate use. I shall despatch it by this post. Please return it here as soon as it has served your purpose.

There is one full set of the "Arya" in Pondicherry, partly bound, which the owner wishes to devote to the work if he can get his price; but as full sets are no longer available in India, he estimates the value at Rs 500. If this offer is acceptable, the set will be sent on remittance of the amount to the Arya Office.

I have received recently letters from different parts of the United States which seem to indicate the beginning of a demand for my writings and, for other reasons also, I have been for some time desirous to bring out my works in America including those not yet published in book form. I do not know if it will enter into your views to take up this work. If so, please inform me of the conditions. All communications and remittances in connection with my works (other than for orders for supply of my books from the A.P.H.) should be sent to me to the following address.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose
Arya Office
Pondicherry
French India

I shall be well-pleased to enter into touch with the student of my thought mentioned in your letter, if he will write to me personally at the above address.

[2]

The ARYA Office
Pondicherry French India

July 2. 26

To
The ADVANCE DISTRIBUTING Co.
Pittsburgh. Pa.

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 2^d 1926 and the sum of Rs 500 and over sent by you for the complete set of the "ARYA". The complete set will be kept here in the office according to your suggestion; if needed at any time, it will be at your disposal. As to the missing numbers of Vol. VII—Nos 3 and 6—as I understand,—I am writing to the A.P.H. where I have kept all the unsold numbers, and if these two are with them, as is most probable, they will be sent to you. I shall inform you if I find anyone here who needs the two superfluous numbers.

Next, as [to] the conditions of publication in America. I shall be glad to entrust the work to you and I leave it to you whether to keep your present name or take that of the Arya Publishing Company, if you so desire. I do not know whether a rigorous self-limitation to the "Arya" material would be the best course; perhaps it would be better to make it the nucleus while other literature could be added which would be supplementary or consonant with the general idea and purpose.

I believe you are right in your suggestion regarding standardisation; conditions in India are different and the system here would not be advantageous or suitable, but I can understand that in America this system would be the best. I agree also that a limited edition in first-class style would be the best from the point of view of the financial return. In India we are obliged to suit the form and price of our publications to the purse of the average educated middle class who are the mass of the still very limited reading public.

The conditions I have made with the A.P.H. are of a special character and cannot be repeated in your case. I understand from

what you have written that in America any profit from the sale of literature like the "Arya" publications is not at all probable unless and until a larger demand has been created than is likely for some time to come. A percentage on the sales would bring in only small sums while it might hamper the development of the work. Now small returns would be of very little use to me except for financing petty incidents and details of my work which can be otherwise met. The method and scope I have fixed for the future work to be done is of the large-scale kind and would need even from the beginning sums more like those raised by Swami Yogananda as described by you in your letter. I would prefer therefore that you should concentrate at present on the development of the publications and on getting them known as soon as possible and use the proceeds of the sale of the books for that purpose. If at any time a great demand arose and resulted in considerable profits, the question of a percentage of the sales to be remitted to me or any other arrangement in the matter could then be brought up again for consideration.

In regard to the order of issue I think you are right in selecting "War and Self-Determination" as a preliminary publication. The "Essays on the Gita" seems to me preeminently fitted to take the lead in a standardised series, but it would be necessary to await the publication of the "Second Series" by the A.P.H. The "First Series" covering the first six chapters of the Gita is being reprinted with only one necessary correction and should be out in a few days. But I have had to make extensive additions, alterations and corrections and to remould to some extent the language of the Second Series now to be published in book form for the first time. I have sent the M.S. to the A.P.H and I hope that it will be out in two or three months at the outside, when it will be sent to you. At present I am preparing a revised edition of the "Ideal of Human Unity", already published in Madras but now out of print, and the "Psychology of Social Development", not yet published in book form, which I propose to bring out under another title, "The Human Cycle". The "Synthesis of Yoga" is too large a work to be included in a single book; I propose to publish it in India in four parts, each devoted to one

of the four Yogas,— Works, Knowledge, Devotion and Self-Perfection,— but this would involve a slight recasting here and there so as to make each volume in itself sufficiently complete. There remain, apart from some uncompleted works, the “Life Divine” and “The Future Poetry” which could be published, subject to the writing of a Preface, almost as they are and the smaller books or booklets already published some of which might be put together as you suggest so as to form part of the standardised volumes. That is the situation as regards the “Arya” writings. I gather that, having view to the conditions in America you propose to print “War and Self-Determination” first as a booklet, to start the standardised series with “Essays on the Gita” and to follow with the “Life Divine”. I would have no objection to such an order of issue.

I have received the copy of the “East-West” magazine and the gift-book. It is not at all surprising that Swami Yogananda should have been so successful in America. His propaganda is admirably suited to the practical mentality of a western and especially of an American public and his statement of ideas on subjects like Karma to its present capacity of understanding in these matters. I cannot gather from the magazine what is the nature of the practice or discipline which he calls Yogoda. The name “Satsanga” is that of a religious sect with a special kind of Bhakti Yoga which is now achieving considerable success in Bengal, but the practice here if one can judge from the style and manner of its announcement seems to be very different. I do not think it would have much success in India where there is a long tradition and in spite of much imperfection and error the standards of spiritual life are of a subtler kind. The difficulties we experience here are due rather to a wide-spread inability to go freely beyond ancient ideas and forms. Plenty of money can be had in India for orthodox religious purposes and also, although not on the American scale, for Asramas or other spiritual institutions which take the ascetic form or repeat established and well-understood formulas. But the general mind has not yet advanced far enough from the old moorings to form even an inadequate conception of what I am doing here and it is easily disconcerted by the

departure from old forms, a willed absence of the customary paraphernalia and the breaking of traditional barriers and limits.

That is one considerable advantage of America; there is evidently a sufficiently widespread eagerness and openness of mind to new things. We have to see whether this will be sufficient to open the mind also to deep and true things. The spiritual future of America is not yet decided; it is in the balance. There is a great possibility before her, but it depends on Americans themselves whether she will make good and realise it. Otherwise she will follow the disastrous curve of other western peoples. India and America stand prominent at the two poles that have to meet and become one, the spiritual and the material life; one has shown a preeminent capacity of realisation on the spiritual, the other on the material plane. America must be able to receive freely India's riches and to give freely in return from her own for the material organisation of a higher life on the physical plane; this is at once a condition and her chance. At present it is only a possibility; let us see whether it can be made an achieved and perfected symbol.

The book "Some I.L.O.F. Correspondence" has reached me: I await the promised letter of the writer.

Draft of a Letter to C. E. Lefebvre

[c. July 1926]

I have taken a long time to consider the answer [to] your letter or rather to allow the answer to ripen and take form. It is not easy to reply to the request implied in what you have written; for the distance between India and America is great and, even if it were not so, guidance in Yoga by correspondence and without personal contact is a very hampered and not usually in my experience a satisfactory method. Ideas can be exchanged on paper, but a spiritual influence, a psychic interchange, a vigilant control — and all this is implied in this kind of guidance — are not so easily communicated. However, I will try to comply with your request as best I can under these circumstances.

First, let me say, that the absorption of ideas and the remoulding of the mental aims and attitude is one thing and the

remoulding of the inner life and consciousness and eventually also of the outer life, which is the aim of Yoga, is quite another. The first can be done to some extent by the method of dissemination you indicate. But as you rightly see, instructions in Yoga cannot be fruitfully given on the same lines. That can only be given successfully to a few, to each separately as an intimately personal thing which he must assimilate and make living and true in himself according to his own capacity and nature. That is why I am led to believe that the work of Swami Yogananda is not only elementary but can hardly be the true thing — Yoga cannot be taught in schools and classes. It has to be received personally, it has to be lived, the seeker, *sadhaka*, has to change by a difficult aspiration and endeavour his whole consciousness and nature, his mind, heart, life, every principle of his being and all their movements into a greater Truth than anything the normal life of man can imagine. Those who can do this are not yet many, but some are to be found everywhere, and I see no reason why those in America should be condemned to only an elementary "instruction". The true Truth, the great Path has to be opened to them; how far they will go in it depends on their own personal capacity and the help they receive.

To and about Anna Bogenholm Sloane

[1]

The ARYA Office
Pondicherry French India

August 3, 1926

To
Anna Bogenholm Sloane
Ashirvada.

I have read your letter with great interest and I have no hesitation after the perusal in acceding to your request and asking you to come over to India and see me; certain of the experiences

you relate seem to me very clear and decisive. I presume that, as you suggest in your letter, you will come prepared to live here for a few years. For, although the first openings to a higher and larger consciousness — the experiences called by you initiations — can be very rapid and luminous and decisive, they have to be followed by a long process of firm and stable foundation, fuller development, progressive transformation of the nature and a complete organisation of the new consciousness which involves years of persistent and vigilant discipline and endeavour.

Please write to me before you start and inform me of the date of your arrival.

[2]

[August–September 1927]

It is not my intention to reply to your questions regarding myself or the Mother.⁴ They are indeed of a kind that I make it a rule not to answer, but even if it were otherwise, a reply would not be fitting in the present stage of your progress.

The important point that comes out in your letter is that you consider that the Mother can be of no help to you, as she does not understand your experiences and has never had anything like them. Under these conditions I can only ask her not to spend farther time in a work that is by your own assertion useless.

On the other hand I can give no assent to your demand that I should replace her. If you cannot profit by her help, you would find still less profit in mine. But in any case I have no intention of altering the arrangement I have made for all the disciples without exception that they should receive the light and force from her and not directly from me and be guided by her in their spiritual progress. I have made the arrangement not for any temporary purpose but because it is the one way (considering what she is and her power — provided always the disciple is open and receives) that is true and effective.

⁴ This and the next two items are draft-letters from Sri Aurobindo's notebooks. There is no indication that any of them was sent as drafted or in any other form.—Ed.

[3]

[August–September 1927]

I do not think it necessary to answer the personal question you put me or announce who I am on the spiritual plane. If I am what your question suggests, it is not for me to declare it but for others to discover.

I prefer also to make no reply to the question about the Mother, at least in the form in which you put it. All I care to say, and it is all that is needed, is that she is doing the work for which she took birth and has prepared herself uninterruptedly from her childhood. The Power is in her that can bring down a true supramental creation, open the whole nature of the disciple to the supramental Light and Force and guide its transformation into a divine nature. It is because there is this Power in her that she has been entrusted with the work.

But all are free in their inner being, free to accept or refuse, free to receive or not to receive, to follow this way or another. What the Mother can do for the disciple depends on his willingness or capacity to open himself to her help and influence and on the completeness of his consent and confidence. If they are complete, the work done will be perfect and true; if they are imperfect, the work will be marred by the distortions brought in by his mind and his vital failings, if they are denied, then nothing can be done. Or, rather, nothing will be done; for the attempt in such circumstances might lead to a breaking rather than a divine building of the nature, or even there might be a reception of hostile forces instead of the true light and power. This is the law of the relation on the spiritual plane: the consent of the disciple must be at every moment free, but his confidence, if given, must be complete and the submission to the guidance absolute.

This is the one real issue that your recent development has raised between us. The rising of some doubts would in itself have been of little importance; doubt is the very nature of the ignorant physical mind. But yours have very evidently risen because you have taken a turn away from the path to the

supramental realisation along which the Mother was helping you and admitted another occult influence. This is shown by the nature of your doubts where you question her knowledge of certain common experiences of Yoga and by your conclusion that she can no longer help you. I pass by your pretensions to gauge her knowledge and experience; her dealings with you and others proceed from a consciousness to which the mental understanding and judgment have not the key. But when the doubt and questioning go so far, it is because something in the vital nature begins to be unwilling to accept any longer the guidance; for the guidance is likely to interfere with its going on its own way.

I could not accede under any circumstances to your request to me to substitute my instruction and guidance for the Mother's. If you cannot receive help from her any longer, it is evident that you cannot receive it either from me; for the same Power and the same Knowledge act through both of us. I have no intention of taking a step which would bring down the work to the personal human level and would be a direct contradiction of its divine origin and nature.

[4]

[August–September 1927]

When you wrote to me from America some of the experiences you narrated in your letter []⁵ indicated a very clear call to the new supramental life. And we understood also that a Power from the higher planes that had a place in our work was trying to manifest through your personality. But a call is only the beginning; it is after many ordeals that it matures into a definite and irrevocable choice. Moreover whenever a Power of this kind tries to manifest, always in the exterior human personality the opposite movements have a strong place. It is as if for each divine power the conquest of its opposite in its own

⁵ MS from America

chosen vessel was a condition for its perfect manifestation on the earth plane.

When you came here the Mother perceived that you must at first be left alone to your own movement and the discipline imposed on other sadhakas was not laid upon you. All she did was to bring down supramental light and power in you and to open to them the different centres. This was rapidly and on the whole successfully done.

But to open the centres is only a beginning, for then comes one of the most difficult periods for the disciple. The consciousness opens not only to the true Light and Power, but to all kinds of experiences and all sorts of influences from all the planes and from all sources and quarters. There is a period of intense and overpowering internal activity of formation, vision and movements of new consciousness and new power. If then the disciple is carried away []⁶ by the brilliance and splendour and delight of his experiences, he can easily wander far from the highest way. But the Forces and Beings that are behind them are sometimes adverse Forces, sometimes the lesser Gods of the mental and vital planes. In either case they try to occupy and use the instrument, but for their own purpose, for the play of the Ideas and Forces they represent, not the highest Truth. There are only three safeguards for the disciple. One is to call down first the eternal peace, calm and silence of the Divine into the mind and the vital and physical being. In that peace and silence there is a true possibility that the mental and vital formations will fall to rest and the supramental creation can have free space. The second safeguard is to remain entirely detached even from the most absorbing experiences and observe them without being carried away by their brilliance. The power of discernment and discrimination will slowly form from above and he will be able to distinguish between the higher truth and the lower truth as between truth and falsehood. The third safeguard is to follow implicitly the instructions of the spiritual guides who have already trod the path and to follow their guidance.

⁶ MS during these experiences

This is the ordeal into which you have entered; but unhappily you seem to have departed from the guidance of the Mother in the crucial point. You seem to have deliberately rejected the peace and silence of the vital being in the fear that it would bring stagnation. As a result the strong habit [of] vital formation came into play and you began to call down lights and powers and build things in [yourself]⁷ in your own way. In this condition, when the disciple is not accustomed to complete trust in his masters the one thing that can be done is to stand aside and let the disciple take his own way, for to insist is likely to raise in him doubt and revolt and decide him in the opposite way. According to whatever may be the supreme decision in his case, he will feel the need of guidance and return to the straight way or he will depart on his own path wherever his inner destiny calls him.

If you have not an entire confidence in us, are not prepared to submit absolutely to our guidance, if the supramental Truth is not your one aim, if you are not prepared to go through the slow, difficult and often painful process of self-emptying new creation by which alone it can form in you, putting away all pride, self-will and excessive self-confidence, or if you think that with you is the Truth and not with us, then obviously you can draw no benefit from staying here. It is for you to choose.

One thing I would say in ending is that you seem to have formed very erroneous ideas about the work I have undertaken, as for instance when you imagine that I am working by spiritual means to bring about a worldwide conflagration and war between the white and the coloured races. This is a sheer error. The Mother has indeed told you that I do not believe in crude and violent external means for a spiritual work. As for the division of the human race according to their colour, it is in my view the play of an obscure ignorance and I would never dream of admitting it as a basis for my action. If any such world catastrophe happened it would be the result of Karmic forces and far from helping would be a serious hindrance to my work. My work is one of

⁷ MS yourselves

spiritual creation not of physical destruction. If anything has to disappear or change, it will do so by the turning on it of the supramental light and Force and what has to change must be decided by that omniscient Light and omnipotent Force and not by the human mind and its narrow ideas and false desires.

[5]

[13 October 1927]

Mrs Sloane wrote to me from America asking if she could come here to stay and practise Yoga. She was recommended by Mr Ralph [deBit]⁸, her spiritual guide, the head of a movement in America called the School of Sacred Science, who had written one or two letters to me in connection with his work and my books. I wrote giving her permission to come.

She delayed her coming because she had quarrelled with Mr [deBit]⁹ and was busy trying to destroy his work and publishing charges against him which on enquiry evidently were not substantiated as the proceedings against him came to nothing. This is the same manoeuvre that she has repeated here.

When she arrived, I had already decided to retire into seclusion and could not see her. She has seen me only once on August 15th and has never had any talk with me. She was not at any time admitted as a member of the Asram, is acquainted only with the Mother and one English disciple (Datta) — except for two visits to Madame Potel and knows nothing personally about the Asram. Throughout she has been kept apart on probation. But it was found that she was a woman who took her desires and imaginations and the forms she gave to them for truth and fact and finally she developed such violent delusions that it became necessary to give her up for good. When she realised by my silence that she had been rejected, she entered into an almost insane fury and sent word that she was staying here in order to crush me and destroy my work, that with the help of the

⁸ MS De Bit

⁹ MS De Bit

British consul she would get me sent to prison etc. Her present campaign is her way of realising this programme.

Her other allegations, mostly sheer inventions or grotesque distortions mixed with her own fancies, hardly need an answer. As to the charge that I am carrying on politics under the cover of Yoga, it seems to be the development of certain visions and imaginations of the future in which she began to indulge some time ago—visions of a world war and troops entraining at Baghdad, prophecies of a war between England and the Islamic peoples, etc; she had even fixed the date for next year. She had been told at the beginning that my work had no connection with politics and that I did not approve of the catastrophic and childish violences to which her mind seemed very ready to turn when it meddled with politics and the future of peoples. At first therefore she took these visions on her own account and did not mix me with them; but after the Mother had ceased to receive her, she suddenly wrote among her other experiences (e.g. of having a God glowing and tingling inside her) that she had seen that I was an incarnation of Shiva and discovered by intuition that I was working *by my spiritual forces* to bring about a war between the white and the coloured races next spring. This is all the foundation she has for her statement.

There is no connection between my spiritual work and politics. Not only so but those like Anilbaran Ray who were political workers or leaders outside, had to give up politics before they were taken into the Asram. There is not a single fact or act of mine, that can support any statement to the contrary. If Sloane or anyone else wants any evidence better than her intuitions to establish her charge, they will first have to invent it.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Draft Letters, 1926–1928

To an Unknown Person

Now you have seen practically all that needed to be seen with an entire sincerity and a true unsparing vision. The root was there in the lower vital; it was that one among your formations of personality on the vital level which brought in a persistent element of insincerity and vitiated precisely in the way you have described your nature and, consequently, your aspiration and sadhana.

This part of the work has been well done. Now it only remains for you to cast out this thing finally with all its effects from your mind and life and physical being so that there may be clear room for the true Person to descend and occupy all the place. Do your part and the full Power and Grace will be upon you.

To and about Marie Potel

[1]

Your experiences in themselves are good and free from the old mixture; but the workings of your mind upon them are not yet correct or clear. In the last page you have tried to generalise and to philosophise your experience; immediately your old mind has come between the truth and you and the thought and expression are wrong and confused and quite full of errors. It is better to wait, to gather inner experience, to allow the sense of the truth to grow in you—in that way, the time will sooner come when a true supramental revelation (and not the mental attempt at the thing) can find its exact thought and word. When you try now, the old mind begins to play and blunder.

Why “*pourtant*”?

The “essence” is always more easily seized by the heart and the internal sense than by the mind — for the heart is in touch with the psychic and the internal sense is the essential action of mind as opposed to its external and formal action. Both of these are nearer to a knowledge by identity or by direct communion than the active mind, and the “essence” can only be seized by identity or by direct communion. The active mind cannot do it except by falling silent and leaning on the psychic and on the internal sense.

The universal Mental is not the “stuff and body of the Father-Mother”. No doubt what you mean is that the universal mental like the universal vital and physical is one form of the expressive substance of the Divine, but behind is another and a spiritual substance which is the true essence. If you want an image, it would be nearer the truth to say that this spiritual substance is the very stuff and body of the Divine and mind, life and matter are lesser sheaths, coverings or outer folds.

To describe the “essence” as “l’immaterielle matière” is neither very clear nor very helpful. If you mean by matter substance, in one sense or in one line of experience all is substance — spirit, being, consciousness, ananda are substance; mind, life and matter are substance. Not only so, but all are one substance in its different powers and various degrees. All these except Matter can be described as immaterial substance.

Do you mean that this essence or spiritual substance is the true Material from which all is constituted? It is substance of the Self and Brahman; it is within everything, above everything and when it descends upon one as true being, as consciousness, as Ananda, it enables the soul to separate itself from mind, life and matter, to face them instead of being involved in them and to act upon them and change them. If this is what you have felt and seen, it is true; but your language does not make it clear.

But mark that much depends on the power on which it is manifested. If it is only the spiritual substance within the

universal Mental, it can raise the mental to its own highest powers, but it cannot do more. Only if it manifests as the spiritual substance in its supramental power, can the consciousness, power, Ananda it brings effect the transformation which is the object of our Yoga.

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Afterwards you mix up many different aspects of the Divine and make a great confusion. No doubt all are the One and all are the Mother, but to mix them up confuses rather than clarifies the oneness. In any case the “essence” is not the Mother uniting the Father to the human sons! It is *through* the spiritual substance that the Jiva feels his oneness with the Ishwara and with the Mother from whom he came and it is the Mother who shows him the oneness; but that is quite another matter. The Mother is more than the essence; Self and spirit manifest the Supreme, manifest the Mother, are their first embodying substance if you like; but they are more than self and spirit.

Then what is it that is spirit of spirit and substance of substance? [Is it the “essence”?] ¹ But all this seems rather too much to say of any however exalted “essence”! Either you are extending your experience beyond its proper limits or you are deforming it in your language.

It is the one and dual Supreme who is Spirit of the spirit — the supreme Spirit, supreme Brahman, supreme Ishwara, supreme Shakti, supreme Purusha with supreme Prakriti. The Supreme is the one Being; it would be absurd to describe him as an essence within the universal Mental. The clumsy abstract language of the dry intellect soon gets out of place when you are trying to go beyond a spiritualised mental experience of these things. You must find a more intimate and living language.

=

Again who is the Father here and who the Mother and what are the human sons doing in the affair?

The one and dual Supreme manifests as the Supreme Shakti. She is the transcendent Mother who stands above and behind

¹ Sentence cancelled without substitution in MS. — Ed.

all the creation and supports it and stands too above and behind each plane of the creation. She is contained in the Supreme and supported in all she does and creates by the Supreme; but she carries too the Supreme within her.

Here in the creation she manifests the dual Supreme whom she carries within her as the Ishwara and the Mahashakti and also as the dual power of Purusha-Prakriti. The Mahashakti comes out of the Ishwara and does the work of the creation, supported by the Ishwara.²

Man, the ignorant embodied mental being, begins to get free from his ignorance when he draws back from half-conscious substance of mind to conscious substance of Spirit. This is an overwhelming and absorbing experience to him and he cannot get beyond it. He speaks of it as his Self and gets in it some experience of his oneness with That which is beyond him, the Supreme. Yet what the Supreme is he does not really know and, so long as he is man, he cannot know. He tries to describe it or its aspects by abstract mental terms. He regards this experience of Self or Spirit as if it were the ultimate experience. Most absurdly, he tries to get through self to the Supreme by denying or getting rid of the Mother. Or else he regards her only as a convenience for getting united to the "Father", ie an exclusive Purusha side of the supreme. All this is reflected in your language which is a confused repetition of the language of the more ignorant schools of Vedanta.

The Supreme is not exclusively the Purusha. One has to go through both aspects in union to reach him. The Mother herself is not merely Prakriti; she is the supreme and universal Shakti and contains in herself Purusha as well as Prakriti. And, secondly, the self or "essence" as experienced by man, that is to say, by the spiritualised mind, is not the ultimate experience. As that which uses the body is more than the body, so more than the Self is That of which the self is the spiritual substance.

² Sri Aurobindo struck through this and the two preceding paragraphs. Later he took up the ideas and some of the language of the second paragraph in Part 6 of *The Mother*. — Ed.

Universal Mind is not “the stuff and body” of the Father-Mother. At most it is like life and matter, one form of expressive substance, a sheath or covering. It is rather the spiritual substance that could be imaged as the stuff and body of the Divine.³

I presume that by your “essence” you mean the self or spiritual substance of things. But why do you call it immaterial Matter? Life and mind could as well be described in that language — they can be felt or seen as immaterial substances.

Again what is this “own being” of yours to which you are united by your heart-centre and which unites you to the universal Mind? Is it the mental or the psychic being or what is it? All this is confused and vague in the last degree. “Thy own being” is an expression which would usually mean the Jiva who is soul and spirit and has no more special connection with the universal Mental than with universal life or Matter.

If the “essence” is the spiritual substance in which the Divine manifests and which is the true substance of all things, the one substance of which mind, life and body are lesser degrees, then no doubt that when it pours down as true being, as consciousness, as Ananda enables not only to face the universal mental as also the universal vital and physical but to work upon them and transform them. But is this what you have seen or is it something else?

In any case the “essence” cannot be the Mother uniting the Divine Father to the human sons. It is through the spiritual substance that the unity with the Father and Mother is felt, because out of her spiritual substance the Mother has manifested her children. But the Divine and the Mother are surely something more than a spiritual substance.

³ This paragraph and the four that follow are reworkings of earlier paragraphs of this draft letter. — Ed.

[2]

Mira has shown me your letter. You seem to yield periodically to an attack of suggestions from an adverse force always of the same kind; yet each time, instead of seeing the source of the suggestions and rejecting them, you accept and are chiefly busy in justifying your wrong movements, always with the same morbid ideas and language about "m fiance" and being "misunderstood" etc. When will you discover finally that these movements and expressions of this kind are not and cannot be part of the true consciousness, that they are and can only be the expression of something small, morbid, vitally weak and petty and obscure that was in your past nature, still clings and is used by the adverse Powers to pull you back from your progress?

There can be no question of "confidence" or want of confidence in these matters. We have only to see for ourselves what progress you make and where you stumble and deal with your Yoga according to the truth of what we see. You surely do not expect us to accept without examination your own estimate of yourself and of where you are.

The questions you asked Mira had no true connection with the vital-physical weakness of which you complain, nor can that kind of practice help you to transmit to the physical the exact light of Truth from the higher consciousness. It was the ignorant Mind in you which was attaching an undue importance to this "practical occultism" and it is the same mind which tries to connect two unconnected things. This mind in you makes the most fanciful mistakes and likes to cling to them even when they are pointed out to you. Thus it erected a sheer imagination about an "interior circle" from which you were excluded in the arrangement of places, took it as a true and "profound" impression and seems to want still to cling to its own falsehood after the plain and simple practical reason of the arrangement had been clearly told to you. It is because of this continued false activity of the mind that you were told to silence the mentality and keep yourself open to the Light alone. What is the use of answering

that you are centred in the supermind and living in the Light and that [it] is only the vital physical that is weak in you? You were nearer the supramental when you discovered your mind's entire ignorance and accepted that salutary knowledge. That humility of the mental being and the clear perception of its own incompetence is the first step towards a sound approach to the supramental Truth. Otherwise you will always live in messages, approximations and suggestions, some from the Truth, some from the many regions of half Truth, some from the Twilight and Error and have no sure power to distinguish between them.

Nobody doubts the sincerity of your efforts or the reality of the progress you have made. But you have been warned that the way is long and the progress made is nothing in comparison to what has still to be done. If you get discouraged at each [pace]⁴ because your demands are not satisfied or all your sentiments respected or all your perceptions valued as definitive truth, if you admit always the egoistic demand how do you expect to make a swift or a sure advance? Each step reveals an imperfection, each stage gained makes the experience left behind seem incomplete and inadequate.⁵

Active surrender, by the way, does not mean to follow your own ideas or your own guidance; it means to fight against your imperfections and weaknesses and follow only the way of the Truth shown to you.

[3]

The conditions have greatly changed since she went away and are not at present such as would make her return at all useful to her or otherwise advisable. I remain in my retirement and have no intention of coming out from it at any early date. On her side the Mother is also retiring more and more. There is no longer a daily meditation and she does not now give a regular day to the sadhakas, but sees them only from time to time. This movement of retirement is likely to remain and increase until what has to

⁴ MS paces

⁵ Sri Aurobindo wrote this sentence in the margin of the page. He apparently intended it to be inserted here.—Ed.

be achieved on the material plane has been definitely conquered and made sure. Under these conditions her return here would be of no use to her; she must remain in Europe until we write from here that things are changed and her return advisable.

Section Three
Other Letters of Historical Interest
on Yoga and Practical Life
1921–1938

On Yoga and Fund-raising for the Ashram, 1921–1938

To and about Durgadas Shett

[1]

Pondicherry
May 12. 1921

Dear Durgadas

I received day before yesterday your letter and the Rs 400 you sent me. I accept the money and shall use it for the house for those who come to me for the Yoga. The house is taken and will be ready on the 15th.

There is no reason, no just reason for your indulging the state of mind which is expressed in your letter. You write as if you were not accepted and there was no hope for you. That is not so. Those who sincerely give themselves to me, cannot be rejected. All that was intended in what Barin and Satyen have told you, is that you should come with a complete self-giving and a readiness to renounce everything in you that may be an obstacle to the completeness. The main obstacles in you are an emotional self-indulgence and the ahankara of work etc to which you seem to give a greater importance than to the greater and deeper object of the Yoga. Our Yoga is solely for the development of the divine consciousness in man and all the rest is secondary, work only valuable as the expression of the Divine in the individual and it is to be done by the Divine, not with the ego, not as a work that is *yours* or to be done by you for the satisfaction of the sense of the অং কর্তা in you. Equally an emotional self-indulgence will stand in the way of the true calm and Ananda which belong to the divine consciousness. If you are ready from the beginning to recognise the difficulties in your own nature, they can be easily removed; otherwise you will have to face much internal trouble and suffering in the

first stages of the sadhana. The Sangha of our Yoga must be of men who give up the lower consciousness and the lower nature in order to assume the higher and divine. The formation of a commune for the sake of a particular "work" is not at all the true ideal. It is only as we all grow into the Divine that the true sangha can be created. This you ought to understand clearly and try to fix in yourself before you come here. This also you must understand that I cannot reject yourself and take your money. Money is nothing; it is a mere means and convenience which God will give me whenever and to whatever degree he wills for his purpose. It is yourself, your soul that matters.

Try to understand these things in their true light so that you may be ready, when [you come], to receive completely what I have to give you. Meanwhile put yourself in spiritual relation with me, try to receive me with a passive and unobstructing mind and wait for the call to come here. As soon as I am ready, I shall call you.

As for the others of whom you write, you may speak to them of me hereafter, but you must leave it to me to decide about their fitness and what is best for them. All cannot come to me immediately and each case must be decided according to the truth of the being of each and the will of the Divine with regard to him.

Aurobindo

[2]

[29 December 1927]

Answer¹

The "Sadhak-Bhav" is Anilbaran's translation of one of several pieces that are being put together and published by Rameshwar under the title "The Mother". There seems to be no great utility in publishing a separate translation of it and the English of it is out of question since that has been given to Rameshwar.

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote what follows to indicate how he wanted his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta, to answer a letter from Durgadas. Nolini's reply was apparently written in Bengali.—Ed.

Anilbaran says his translations cannot be published in book form without serious revision and he is no doubt right. If it is published at all it will have to be given to R, who wants all the things from here that can be given to him.

Some four months ago Durgadas wrote a letter about a friend of his; the letter passed out of my memory and no answer was given. The photograph sent shows nothing. As for the illness, it is evidently a disease of the physical nerves—these diseases attack at various places and create or simulate different illnesses. Probably it is an after result of the ravage on the organism created by the Kalazar. In most cases it indicates a weakness in the vital being which opens it to pressure from hostile influences belonging to the lower vital worlds.

[3]

I had given Barin an answer to your former letter, but it may either not have been sent or else delayed or lost owing to the railway strike.

A paper of the kind you are undertaking is not part of my work. My only work is that which is centralised at Pondicherry under the control of the Mother. What she gives to the sadhaks to do elsewhere or accepts as helpful for the present or the future is part of the work. All else belongs to the old movements or to the outside world. So long as one has the old mentality and is still living the old life, he can always undertake anything of the kind and according to his fortune and capacity succeed or fail. I may give some help if there is any good reason for it, but I can undertake no responsibility for the work or its results.

Suresh is not at present “one of us”, on the contrary he has left and taken a hostile attitude. Your request to Nalini and others []² to go over there as editor is made without any knowledge of the present condition of the Sadhana and the present mentality of the Sadhakas here. You write as if all were

² MS seems

as it was seven or eight years ago, but everything is changed since then and such things are no longer possible.

You write about your pres[ent] [*incomplete*]³

[4]

It is difficult to understand anything precise from Durgadas' letter. I gather that his personal and his financial condition are not very good and that his inner condition, if not too bad, is not famous, finally that he is empty of vital force and the joy of life. All that, however, is exceedingly imprecise and does not help me to help him. The source of his difficulty is in his mind; it is too full of uncertainties, useless complexities and twistings upon itself and hesitations and খটকা generally, to give his inner heart and life-force and spiritual force a real chance. If he wants effective help, he ought to lay himself open entirely to us and receive without hesitation our influence.

As regards this paper, I cannot say that it has any very particular connection with my work; but under present conditions there is no reason why he should not take part in it.

Finally about Moni whom he proposes to call, write to him that Moni has left us and is no longer "one of us". On the contrary, he has become hostile to us and is campaigning against my work so that there can be no question of inviting him there.

[5]

[June–July 1929]

Nalini

Write to Durgadas (in Bengali) a letter to the following purpose.

It is hardly practicable to send anyone from here so far as Bhubaneshwar to bring him. We had wired to Jyotish Mukherji to stop there and bring him, but Jyotish had started before

³ This is Sri Aurobindo's draft answer to a letter from Durgadas dated 16 July 1928. Sri Aurobindo did not complete the letter. Instead he wrote a note to Nolini Kanta Gupta in which he gave his thoughts on the points in Durgadas's letter, presumably for communication to Durgadas in Bengali. See the next item.—Ed.

receiving the wire. The next person expected from Bengal is Hrishikesh Kanjilal and we can ask him to do it; but this will take some time. If Durgadas is anxious to come *at once*, it will be better for him to make his own arrangements in the matter.

As to the money he needs, if he absolutely cannot get from home or his friends, we will see about it. But it will be better if he can arrange, for the expenses of the Asram are heavy and always increasing, and at present money is not coming in freely.

Next, about his stay. In his former letter he spoke of coming for a few days to settle certain matters, but in this letter he speaks casually of not returning; but there is no clear statement that he wants to settle down in Pondicherry for good. The conditions here internal and external have very much changed from what they were when he was here before. The conditions are in many respects much more rigorous and there is a strong pressure in the atmosphere for concentration in the sadhana and for change of the nature. It will have to be seen if he can accommodate himself to the conditions or bear the pressure. If he can, then there can be no objection to his staying here. But those who stay here for the Yoga find usually that other interests that do not come within its scope fall away from them or recede to a distance. If it is decided that he stays, he must be prepared for that change.

He writes in his letter as if he wanted to see me and talk about his paper and other enterprise. But that is impossible. I see no one except on three days in the year, and even then I speak with no one. All that people have to say to me, they communicate orally to the Mother or in writing and, afterwards if there is a decision to be made, it is made by her in consultation with me. There can be no exception to this rule.

As to his health, there is no reason why in itself the subjection to fever, weakness or intestinal illness should be incurable. Only, he must be able to open himself altogether to the Power. When people practising Yoga suffer in this way, it is more often than not because there is a disharmony between the Force that is working in them and some parts of the mind and the vital and physical nature, some resistance or some unwillingness or inability to open up to it. Part of the nature opens, but part shuts itself

up and follows its own impulses and ideas; a disequilibrium, disturbance or illness is the result. Moreover, if he wants to recover, he must have the faith and the will to do so. He must not always be thinking of death or see it as the inevitable result; he must make up his mind to cure.

Finally, he wrote in his first letter about making a will. What his meaning is, is not clear—in this matter, his ideas and mine differ. But all that can best be settled, when he is here. The best thing for him will be not to make farther hesitations and difficulties, but anyhow arrange or manage to come—once here, there can be, in Chandernagore language, a general “clearance”.

[6]

9, Rue de la Marine
Pondicherry

—
July 5, 1929.

To
Durgadas Shett

Hrishikesh has wired on the 2nd from Sherpur (Mymensingh) that he will start in a week and bring you to Pondicherry with him. I do not know if he has written or wired to you, so I write to inform you. Please arrange to come with him, if you are not in a condition to come alone. To bring someone else would be very inconvenient and might lead to awkwardness; for it has been for a long time the rule of the Asram to admit for residence only sadhaks of the Asram itself, disciples who come for a visit or short stay, people who come with special permission for initiation in Yoga, and, in some cases, those who come,—again with special permission,—for *darshan* on the days in the year on which Sri Aurobindo comes out. Outsiders who do not fall within these classes are not allowed to stay in the Asram, but are supposed to make their own arrangements elsewhere.

There is one thing which I should mention and of which I omitted to write in my last letter. You have written of the

work in which you have been recently engaged as if it were part of Sri Aurobindo's work and of those who are with you in it as if they were among his spiritual followers or disciples. But in matter of fact Sri Aurobindo knows practically nothing about what you are doing and nothing at all about those who are helping you. When you wrote to him about the "Swadeshi Bazaar" you yourself expressed a doubt as to the possibility of this enterprise having any connection with his work and his reply was that there was none. But as he understood that it was to be a weekly review with a special interest in economics and Swadeshi industry and trade, he could make no objection to your taking it up if that took your fancy. He does not interfere as a rule with the external activities of those who are not members of the Asram and therefore self-bound to its spiritual aim and discipline or who have not made a complete surrender of their inner and outer life to his direction and control. Recently, however, since your last letters to him, Sri Aurobindo has been informed that those who are now with you are political workers of a particular school. If that is so, it is rather surprising that you should still think it possible to connect this work of yours with Sri Aurobindo's. You must surely be aware that he has cut off all connection with politics and that his work is purely spiritual and he does not support or have any kind of connection with any political school or group or party. It is also a rule of the Asram that any one entering it as a member must give up all political connections and cease from any activities of that kind. I write this in order that any misunderstanding there may be should be cleared up, first in your own mind and afterwards here in a complete explanation of all matters when you come.

[7]

Pondicherry
26 November 1930.

My dear Durgadas,

I reply today to your letter; I think my answer will reach you by the 29th instant.

Of the three proposals you put before me, it is the first, that of a lump sum of Rs 50,000, which recommends itself to me.

The third is hardly possible since it would be extremely difficult and inconvenient, not to say impracticable, for me to realise the rent of a house in Calcutta.

The second proposal seems to me to be a little wanting in definiteness and, at any rate, I would prefer something speedy and final to a temporary arrangement for a number of years. I would not recommend to anyone the acceptance of the Government promissory note at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, if he had a better choice; those of the kind we have had to deal with were worth in the market less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of their face value. Moreover, this is a kind of investment for which I never had any liking. I gather from your letter that you are yourself not at all certain what will be realised from the property coming to you under this arrangement.

There remains the question about the Bank. The simplest way would be to deposit the money in the Imperial Bank, Calcutta, which is in relation with the Banque d'Indo-Chine, Pondicherry, and to send a cheque signed by the Imperial Bank in the name of the Mother (Madame M. Alfassa) which we could easily get cashed here. If the cheque were in my name, it would not be so easy, as my signature is not known to the Bank in Calcutta and I have no account with the bank here nor any transactions with it in my own name. We can however consider this matter hereafter when the time comes and decide on this or any other alternative. I mention it at once because it is the simplest and most convenient and we have employed it already, so that it seems to me superfluous to seek for any other way.

Sri Aurobindo

[8]

Pondicherry. 9.12.30

My dear Durgadas,

Your letter of the 3^d instant reached me only on the 8th afternoon, owing to the breakdown of railway communications between Madras and Pondicherry. You must have received the

telegram dated the next morning in answer. I perfectly understand the financial advantages of your second and third proposal, especially the last; but my experience is that clear cash transactions turn out usually to be the best. In these long term or transactional arrangements I have found most often that circumstances independent of the giver or receiver have interfered and upset the calculated advantages. I therefore stick to my original preference.

The usual charge made by the Bank is 2 as [*annas*] per cent, which would amount for a sum of Rs 50,000 to Rs 62.8,⁴ and if the cheque is in the Mother's name (it must be in the form given to you in my last letter, Madame M. Alfassa), they would probably make a reduction in the charges. A cheque from the National Bank would, I suppose, serve also; only there would be more delay in converting it because there are no direct relations of that Bank with the Banque d'Indo-Chine.

Sri Aurobindo

[9]

24.4.33.

Durgadas

The Mother's protection is always with you. Trust in her always and call down her peace and strength and light in you to still the restlessness and fill the vacancy with calm and force and joy and ease.

Sri Aurobindo

[10]

Pondicherry

30.4.34

Durgadas,

I have received your letter of the 26th. It is not necessary to make any arrangements for the interest—we shall be able

⁴ That is, 62 rupees and 8 annas (one half-rupee). — Ed.

to manage. What is more important is the way of sending. On no account must you cut the papers in half. It was publicly proclaimed by the Government some years ago—I do not know how it is that so many people are still ignorant of it—that they would not be responsible for cut notes. We have had much difficulty with cut bank notes, and Government paper cut like this will not at all be recognised and accepted. I must ask you therefore to make some other secure arrangement for sending the papers.

You have written nothing about yourself and how you are getting on. I hope you will let us know in a future letter.

Sri Aurobindo

[11]

14.5.34

Durgadas

As regards the sending of the Government paper there is a perfectly simple method which will involve no trouble. It is to endorse the Notes in favour of Duraiswami's bank in Madras and give them to its branch in Calcutta which will forward them to Madras. Duraiswami has often negotiated for us large sums in Govt promissory notes and in bank notes through his bank, so there will be no difficulty. I have asked Duraiswami to draw up a letter of instructions so that you will know exactly what to do and I am enclosing it with this. You have only to follow the instructions in his letter.

Sri Aurobindo

[12]

Durgadas,

I had intended to write to you as soon as I had received your offering, but as you told us not to send any letters before knowing your new address I could not do so. I decided to realise the Government Notes as I was informed that they would lose in value and I have placed Rs 50,000, the sum originally agreed

upon in the Asram account from which money cannot again be diverted for other uses, and kept the rest (Rs 25000 about) free for use.

I gather from your letter that your health has not improved and is sometimes very bad leading to occasional crises. But from what you describe and from what I know, I believe that this ill-health is due to the weakness of the nervous system—the vital physical and the nervous envelope and not to any specific illness. If so, it can be got rid of by strengthening that part. You should determine on that and dismiss in future any depressing suggestions and certainly never think for this or any other reason of leaving the body. I understand from what you write that inwardly you have progressed and received much help. Since that is so, you have every reason to be confident since you will certainly receive more and not less help now and be able to make the progress which is still needed.

You have not given any indication of what you are doing. You had written before that you had certain things to clear up from the past before you came here. How far has that been done? I see from your letter that you are in difficulties for money,—but why then did you not write? I have no idea of what you stand in need of, but I am sending you a sum of Rs 100 to go on with and you will let me know at an early date what you need. But I must be sure of your address before sending letter and money so I despatch a telegram tomorrow reply paid to make sure of that.

Do not hesitate to write or to ask or tell openly what you need to ask or tell. I wish to have letters regularly from you keeping me informed of all that concerns you. I may not be able to answer always, at least personally, for I am overpressed with work and it is only on Sundays that I am a little free, but whenever necessary I will write and you will get besides whatever invisible help you need from me.

Sri Aurobindo

30.9.34.

[13]

28.10.34

Durgadas

It is unfortunately impossible for me to write letters with punctuality and at length—for most letters written outside I have to rely on Nolini who writes them from my directions and even so nine out of ten have to go unanswered; yet I have not sufficient time for my work. There are only three people outside the Asram besides yourself to whom I make it a point of writing personally, but the result of the conditions is that I can write to them only when I find a little time, usually on Sunday. For the same reason I have to write briefly. But you know by experience that help can come silently and letters, though necessary under the existing conditions, are only a minor help.

As to the past, you have written that your difficulties have been solved. I need not therefore return to that, except to say that I consider you took the right attitude and the right course as regards your share in the family property. I think that includes everything and I need say no more.

I am sorry to hear of your continued bad health. There is evidently a weakness in your aura or nervous envelope which allows these invasions of the forces of illness. That can only be set right by a strengthening of this nervous envelope. That can be done partly by a healthy climate and a life without anxieties, but the only radical cure is to bring down the strength of the higher consciousness into the nervous being and the body and refortify the nervous envelope. This depends on the progress of your sadhana. Meanwhile report to me from time to time the state of your health and I will see what can be done.

I have read carefully what you have written about your sadhana but I should like to know more precisely and specifically the exact stage you have reached and how the Force is working in the different planes of your being.

I would also like to know whether you would care to receive the letters on Yoga (usually called messages) circulated in the Asram? Not many go out nowadays, but sometimes I write still

and one here or there may be useful to you. If so, I will ask Nolini to send to you. However, most of those recently written are being published shortly in a book to be called "Lights on Yoga".

Finally about your idea of marriage. On this I should like to have more precise information about the girl and, if possible, a photograph of her. It is evidently a step of great consequence that you propose. Is it the life of a householder you propose to lead or is the marriage solely with the idea of sadhana in life together?

Sri Aurobindo

[14]

[January 1935]

Durgadas

I had intended to write about your sadhana, but, as recently there have been many difficulties in the work that I had to overcome, I could make no time.

In answer to your last letter I would say that when you have had the experiences and realisation you have described, nothing ought to discourage you. It is true that even after one has the consciousness in the inner being, it is still difficult to bring out it or its results in the outer being and the life. But that is a difficulty which all have and it can be overcome by patient sadhana and time.

One thing these realisations ought to remove from you—the idea of giving up the body. Once there is the inner consciousness established, the possibility of realisation in the outer life []⁵ is established also and, whatever the obstacles and difficulties, the disappointments from people or circumstances, the idea of giving up the body ought not to arise.

Two things especially are needed for the life-realisation to take form, an entire faith and equality of mind—not disturbed by anything that may happen, knowing that all happens for the best by the inscrutable Will—and the instrumentation of the Divine Force in the adhara. These must be established in the

⁵ MS also

inner being, but also as much as possible in the outer nature. Men and circumstances may not come up to your expectation or to your demand on them — they seldom or never do, but it is not on them but on the Divine and on the Divine Force acting in you that must be your dependence.

Your letter about the sadhana made everything clear and precise as to inner things — but there is not the same clearness and precision about your outer life. What are your present circumstances — what you wish and intend to do, that is what I would like to know more clearly. Especially one thing, what I should do for you on the material plane. When you sent not only the Rs 50,000 first promised for the Asram, but the rest of your share of the estate, you wrote that you had kept something for your needs and would write whenever you needed anything more. I have also arranged on that basis. But I know nothing of what are your needs or how you would like me to meet them. I gathered, I do not know whether rightly, from something you wrote that my sending an insured letter raised comments. I would very [much] like to know what precisely I should send, at what intervals and in what way. It would set my mind at rest if I knew this, for it is difficult to act in material things without such precisions. I hope therefore you will not mind my asking.

Sri Aurobindo

[15]

27.1.35

Durgadas

I have written to you in my last letter about sending money — I would have sent at once on receiving your letter of the 14th, but you have asked me not to do so till you write to me — you indicate also an uncertainty about your address. I hope you will write at once and let me know what you need. There is no reason why you should have to rely on others. But I am in ignorance about your needs and had therefore to depend on your writing to me about it. If a clear and precise arrangement can be made

so that you may not be in embarrassment at any time, that will be the best. Otherwise you ought not to hesitate to write to me each time as soon as it is necessary.

I do not know also very precisely what kind of work you envisage. Your letters have not given me any definite idea. Here in the Asram all is confined to the preparation for the spiritual change which is the object of the Yoga and work is only a field of practice for that change of the nature. It is a hard thing to achieve, our difficulties internal and external have been many, but until it is accomplished we have denied ourselves any other definite work, except some publication of books,— because the base must be there before there can be any structure. Apart from that, any work in the outside world can be taken in the same way as a field of exercise for perfection, for the harmonising of the inner growth and the outer action. But this is the general principle—the other question is that of the precise field and direction you want to choose.

As to your ill-health, what do you wish me to tell you? Treatment (if it is good) and change of climate when necessary suggest themselves; but at bottom the difficulty is a difficulty experienced by us all—the disharmony between the light and power that is coming down and the obscure body consciousness which is accustomed to respond to disharmonious forces. It is precisely this point at which we are labouring here—and, as always happens, the difficulties to be met become immediately acute. Take treatment if you find it helps you and change climate; but the inner victory here is the means of the final solution.

Sri Aurobindo

[16]

Pondicherry
24.2.35.

Durgadas

I was unable to write all these days as it was round about the 21st of February and at that time we are overflowed with

people and letters and work of all kinds. I am still unable to write more than a few lines.

I am sending you Rs 100 by money order and I shall send the same sum from time to time. I now understand clearly the conditions of the past and what happened—those of the present are not quite as precise to me. I hope that if the money is exhausted before you receive the next instalment or if you need some special sum for a special purpose you will without hesitation write to me.

About other matters I hope to write more at length when I find a little breathing space.

Sri Aurobindo

[17]

Durgadas

I received your letter from Dehradun later than the day you had fixed for your departure, so I had to wire to ascertain if by any chance you were still there. Your frequent changes of address have stood in the way of any correspondence from here. It is impossible for me to write promptly and by the time I have written, you have generally moved away with no precise indication of the new address. I had sent you a money order for Rs 100 and a letter to Benares, but they were crossed by your letter announcing your departure and came back to me.

I had always wished to send you money for your expenses, but I did not know what you needed and it is difficult for me to fix anything,—that was why I had asked you. I have sent Rs 100. I do not know if Rs 50 a month would be sufficient; if it is not, you must not hesitate to tell me. You can also let me know the amount you owe to your friends so that I may remit the sum to you. All that is simply a matter of clear understanding and arrangement.

I am less clear as to the place where you should stay. If the atmosphere of the Asram were less troubled and there was less illness and attacks of turbulent forces, I would ask you to

come and stay here. But considering your bad health and the sensitiveness and delicacy of your vital nature, I hesitate to do so, because I do not know whether you would be able vitally and physically to be at ease amidst this fierce struggle of forces on the physical and lower vital plane. On the other hand I am not fixed as to what climate or surroundings would suit you elsewhere or of any place where you could have what is necessary for me. If you could let me have some information as to possible places and their circumstances, it would be easier for me to decide.

You need not think that I am likely to abandon you or withdraw my spiritual and practical support for any reason or that I find any fault with you. You may be sure of my help and blessings always. In the inner being you know that I am with you, in the outer life I hope that developments will soon take place which will make it possible for the nearness to be externally realisable.

1.12.35

Sri Aurobindo

[18]

Durgadas

I am afraid I have delayed too long in sending you money. I hope you have not been put to inconvenience. In the heavy pressure of work I had not realised that so long a time had gone. I am sending a money order.

I have been unable to make a satisfactory arrangement anywhere for your staying. The only one that looks possible is an offer of Srish Goswami (formerly of Howrah, now in Jalpaiguri) to take a house for you near his in Jalpaiguri and look after you. He had not at that time room in his own house, which would have been the best arrangement. I do not know how Jalpaiguri would suit you. If you think it feasible, I can ask him to make the necessary arrangements and you can join him there as soon as things are ready.

I write this briefly only, so that the post may not be delayed.

I shall answer your last letter before the 21st as I hope to have a little more time now.

Sri Aurobindo

12.2.36.

[19]

Pondicherry

8.6.36

Durgadas

I am glad you have informed me of your new address, but regret to see that the condition of your mind is so depressed and hopeless. Suicide is no solution of any spiritual problem or difficulty—it does not liberate from suffering after death, for the suffering in the vital continues; nor does it prepare better conditions hereafter, for the conditions created for the next life are worse and the same difficulties present then for solution. All suggestions of suicide come from a hostile force which wants to break the life and the sadhana. I hope that you will put away this thought from you altogether and for good. There is only one way [for]⁶ the sadhak and that is to maintain his trust in the Divine through all difficulties and sufferings, try to gather more and more fortitude and equality and freedom from all attachments till there is that strength and calm within on which the realisation can be securely founded.

As to the question you put me it is in the affirmative. Whatever help I can give you, I will give.

I do not write any more now than what is necessary as an answer to what you have written in your letter, so that this may not be delayed in posting.

I send my blessing. There is a Power of which you have at times been conscious which can carry you through. May it restore your faith and reliance and lead you to the conquest of yourself and Nature.

Sri Aurobindo

P.S I send you a money order for Rs 100. I hope it will find you.

⁶ MS from

[20]

Pondicherry
29.6.36*Durgadas*

I got your letter late and could not telegraph on Saturday, but as you mentioned Monday morning, I sent an urgent wire the first thing on Monday (this morning). I am writing you a letter (referring back for the purpose to your past letters so as to understand better if I can what you say on certain matters here), but as this takes long, I could not finish the reply—so I am writing this in the meanwhile. If you cannot wait (you speak of going away on Thursday) as I have asked in the wire, at least let me know that you have gone and give me your new address so that I may send it there.

Meanwhile very briefly I may say that I have failed to grasp clearly and distinctly what is the offence you consider yourself to have committed against the Truth (your Truth) which demands a punishment, no less than death. You are nowhere explicit in this matter so as to say to me "This or this is the offence and this the Truth against which I have offended." You touch on several points, your own offence, the evil men have done you, the evil I myself have done you (of which I was myself perfectly unconscious and certainly had no intention to do any,) the proposed marriage and my withholding of sanction, but on no point are there any precisions. I have therefore to answer in a general way and that cannot be very satisfactory to you.

Nevertheless let me say at once that suicide or letting oneself die—it comes to the same thing—can never be in my eyes a step in consonance with the Truth of things—it seems to me to be in itself an offence against Truth. If a punishment is to be inflicted on oneself for anything, it should be in the nature of an atonement—but the only atonement for a fall from Truth (supposing that there is one) is to persevere, to correct, to attempt again resolutely to embody the Truth in one's life till it is done.

Then again, for your marriage, if you firmly feel that to be

the Truth for you or an indispensable part of it, I would be the last person to dissuade you from it. I have not done so and have left it to the Truth in you to work out your course as it did formerly in other matters. For the rest I shall explain what I mean in the longer letter. I write this only to make it clear that there is no opposition on my part, if your being demands this as a step to be taken in pursuit of its inner need. There is no reason, if that is a main point where you feel yourself unfulfilled, to despair and seek an issue out which is no issue.

Try to calm and control the agitation in you and do not allow yourself to be swept towards decisions which merely mean failure and disaster.

Sri Aurobindo

[21]

21.7.36

Durgadas

I have received your letter today and am sending the money, Rs 100 for July and August and Rs 150 for extra expenses, 250 in all. This is only to announce the despatch; as I do not want to delay it I do not write a letter.

I trust that the despair of the future will go and give place to renewed hope and strength to face life and journey towards the divine realisation.

Sri Aurobindo

[22]

25.6.37

Durgadas

I received your letter and take the opportunity of the first leisure I have had since to write just a line in answer.

I am glad to know that all is right and there is no such trouble or difficulty as you apprehended. I shall certainly do what I can spiritually for her welfare in the future.

Convey my blessing and the Mother's to all your friends who have helped you. With yourself our love and blessings.

Sri Aurobindo

[23]

Pondicherry
24.5.38

Durgadas

I was glad to receive your letter and have news of you after so long a time. In your letter at the end you express your wish to live independently in a solitary place if you can get the help you need for that. I shall willingly give you all help for that. Will you let me know at once more in detail where or to what kind of solitary place you wish to go and what help you need (special and standing monthly expenses included) and I will see immediately to provide you.

If you wish at any time to come over here to the Asram for a period or permanently, you have only to let us know. It is not a solitary place — there are now some 170 people living a collective existence though each has his separate room and can, if he likes, live a retired life there; but it is not an independent and solitary life such as one can have when living apart in one's own individual way. Whenever you feel inclined, you might come here and see what it is and whether, in its present form, it will at all suit you. Later on, when we have the means, I hope to have a more elastic organisation when different ways of living, separate or close, may be possible.

As for what I wish about you, it had always been my intention as soon as I could do so in a way satisfactory to you and suitable, to ask you to join the life and work that I am preparing. I have not asked you so far because there is only this Asram where people are being prepared and nothing but the small internal work of the Asram itself — I did not want to start anything larger before everything was spiritually and otherwise ready. But if at any time you feel inclined and able to fit yourself

into things as they are here, I shall be very glad to call you here at once. That would be altogether for you to decide in full freedom according to the needs of your nature.

Sri Aurobindo

To and about Punamchand M. Shah

[1]

To
Punamchand

I. Separation of Purusha and Prakriti to establish tranquility of heart and mind.

- (a) Separated Purusha, calm, observing Prakriti.
- (b) Prakriti in the heart and mind attending calmness.

II. Offering of all the actions, all that is done in your life as a sacrifice to the Lord.

III. Realisation of the Higher Divine Shakti doing all the works.

- (a) Living with the constant idea that it is the Shakti which does the work.
- (b) Feeling of the Divine Shakti descending from above the mind and moving the whole being.

1921

[2]

Pondicherry
August 15th 1923

The bearer Punamchand Mohanlal Shah is my disciple and is now with me practising Yoga in Pondicherry. He is trustworthy and faithful in all matters and enjoys my entire confidence.

Aurobindo Ghose

[3]

Punamchand

The ornaments offered by Chandulal's mother.

Certainly, you can accept and send them. I do not know why you felt any scruple in this matter. Whatever is given with Bhakti can and ought to be received and not rejected whether it is money, things of value or useful things. There may be exceptions, as for instance where the gift is of a quite unsuitable or cumbrous kind, but this is obviously not the case here.

(2) The talk with Haribhai

Think no more about it except to retain the lesson. Your mistake was to interfere with your ignorant mind in a matter which had been decided by the Mother, as if it could know better than she did. As usually happens when the physical mind acts in this way, it made wrong reasoning and foolish blunder. It was as if you gave Haribhai a choice between giving money or giving the clothes and other articles. He was to give both and there was no question of a choice between them; nor could this kind of balancing and reduction on one side or the other be good for his spiritual progress. The fact that other clothes were coming from a Mill could make no difference: that was quite another list and did not meet the same needs. As for the other possibilities you speak of, they have nothing to do with previous arrangements and present requirements; they are only a possibility of the future. I write this much only to show you how mistaken these mental movements are; but you need not worry about it any longer.

(3) The "Four Aspects" is half written and will be finished in a few days. It has been decided to publish these four writings with the February message in Calcutta. Motilal Mehta can use them instead of the August 15th utterances.

October 3, 1927

[4]

Pondicherry
1st January 1928

To

Punamchand. M. Shah.

I have received your letter and am sending this answer with Haribhai. I do not consider it necessary or advisable to make a public appeal for the sum of money I have asked you to raise for me in Gujerat. If a public appeal is to be made, it can only be when the time comes for my work to be laid on larger foundations and I can create the model form or outward material organisation of the new life which will be multiplied throughout India and, with India as a spiritual nucleus and centre, in other countries. Then large sums of money will be indispensable and a public appeal may become advisable.

At present I am making a smaller preliminary foundation, a spiritual training-ground and the first form of a community of spiritual workers. Here they will practise and grow in the Yoga and learn to act from the true consciousness and with the true knowledge and power. Here too some first work will be undertaken and institutions founded on a small scale which will prepare for the larger and more definite work of the future. I need money to buy land and houses, to get equipment for these first institutions and to accommodate and maintain an increasing number of sadhakas and workers. A public appeal is not necessary to raise the sums that are at present indispensable. I prefer to make it only when I have already created a sufficient external form that all can see. It will be easy for you to raise privately the money I now want if you are inspired to get into touch with the right and chosen people.

As you can judge, even this preliminary work will be a matter not of one but several lakhs, but I have named one lakh as the minimum immediately needed in order that we may start solidly and go on without being hampered at each step for want of funds. If you can raise more than the initial minimum, so much the better. The work will proceed more easily and quickly and with a surer immediate prospect. Preserve the right

consciousness and attitude, keep yourself open to the Divine Shakti and let her will be done through you.

[5]

Punamchand

I am surprised to see from your letter that you have received from Vithaldas an offer of Rs 500 a month towards the expenses of the Asram and that you have not immediately accepted it. In fact the language of the letter would almost mean that it was rejected almost with impolite disdain; but I suppose this could be a wrong impression. It is precisely help of this kind that we are feeling the most need of just now. For so long as this monthly deficit is not filled, we are obliged to spend on our monthly upkeep sums that ought to go for capital outlay and under such circumstances the very foundation of the Asram from the pecuniary point of view remains insecure. If the monthly expenses are secured, the Asram will be put on a safe foundation and the work for bringing the lakh and other large sums can go forward on a much sounder basis. Besides the forces will not be diverted from their proper work by the harassment of daily needs. Therefore, recently, it is just contributions of this kind that we have been pressing for as the first necessity. Vithaldas seems to have received an inspiration from this pressure and made a magnificent answer. And you do not immediately seize on this response! This is an example of what I meant when I warned you to keep yourself open to the Mother's force and not to follow merely your own ideas and plans. Now the only thing to do is to speak to Vithaldas at once and see whether he keeps to his offer. If so, you should accept it at once. The sooner we get the money the better. Our deficit is really more than Rs 800, for the number of disciples is constantly increasing and the expenses also. If Vithaldas can be relied upon to give *regularly* Rs 500 a month, the gap will be almost filled and once that is done, the obstruction we have felt hitherto in this matter is likely to disappear and the rest to come in with greater ease. If you have not already accepted his offer and made arrangements for

the regular transmission of the money, then act at once.

The Mother does not want to buy saris for herself with the money raised; in the present state of the finances the idea is altogether out of the question. The income and expenses must be balanced; money must be found for the work of building up the Asram. All the rest comes after.

Sri Aurobindo

Pondicherry

June 2. 1928

[6]

Punamchand

As regards the amount of Rs 500/- monthly from Vithaldas and your note in the account, I presume it is clearly understood that this sum has nothing to do with the account. It must be kept quite separate and remitted here every month as soon as it is received; it must on no account and in no circumstances be detained or used for any other purpose whatsoever.

As to the expenses shown in the account, you asked originally for Rs 70/- a month in Bombay or Rs 30/- in Patan; but the actual expenditure has been for months above Rs 200/-. This is an enormous amount and, as I have already pointed out, it is swallowing up all you collect. I do not see how you expect to be able to maintain this rate of expenditure for an indefinite period or what purpose it serves.

[7]

Champaklal

Write to Punamchand that now that Vithaldas has seen the Mother, he should communicate his experience or his difficulties direct to her. It is not desirable that in matters of the Sadhana Punamchand or anybody else should come in between, even as a channel of communication. The Mother's force must go direct undisturbed by any other influence.

December 1928

[8]

Champaklal

As regards the Vedic "Dictionary" write to Punamchand that I do not want anything of this kind to be made out of my unfinished work. If it is to be done, it will be in the future and must be only under my express directions and supervision.

December 1928

[9]

Write to Punamchand asking what are the Rs 500 that reached us today. Whenever he sends money, he should inform us at the same time what it is and who has given it.

Write to him also with regard to the letter he wrote about the detective's visit and his proposals. He has only to send regular accounts with details of sums, names etc to me, and he is on safe ground. He can simply answer that all moneys given are accounted for and full details sent to me. If on the other hand he is loose in his accounts and dealings with the money, he gives room for this kind of rumour and creates a wrong atmosphere. Nor in the absence of accounts can I myself have any ground to go upon if I am questioned whether I received or not the sums paid to him for me. In this connection note that he has not sent, as promised, the accounts for the last few months. Since his visit and return we have received nothing.

16 April 1929

[10]

Punamchand

If you wish to take your monthly expenses from the money of Vithaldas, you ought first to try to persuade him to assign separately a sum of Rs 150 for the purpose without diminishing his contribution to Pondicherry. If he is not willing, then you may take from him the sum of Rs 150 and send Rs 550 to Pondicherry, but on the following conditions.

-
- (1) You will take this money from Vithaldas' contribution only and you will draw on no other sum.
 - (2) All other sums of money contributed through you must be sent without fail and without delay to Pondicherry.
 - (3) There must be no expenditure for yourself beyond the amount fixed and no borrowing of money for which you will make us responsible or draw for its return on money contributed for the Asram.
 - (4) The Mother will enter into her accounts Rs 550 only as Vithaldas's contribution. The Rs 150 must be considered as his help to you directly.

As regards Narangi, it was evident that he had no enthusiasm for helping you in the way you propose. He must have his own reasons for that and the Mother did not care to press him to do it. He is already doing wholeheartedly as much as can be reasonably asked from him; it is no use exacting from him what he has no heart for. It seems to me that if you can make yourself a true channel for the force, you ought to be able to succeed without his assistance.

In this connection I feel it necessary to say one thing once for all, which I have refrained from writing before because I did not think it would be of much use. The difficulties you have experienced in the work you undertook arose partly from the general opposition of the money-power to the divine call, but also and very largely from your own vital being and its desires and self-regarding attitude. This vital nature of yours was always full of demands and desires and it came to regard their satisfaction as perfectly legitimate and even the right thing to do. As respects money, it had the habit of spending loosely and freely whatever came into your hand; it had the habit too of borrowing and lending freely without regard to your capacity either to give or to repay; and, as always results from this kind of looseness, it treated whatever money came into your hands as it would have treated your own—I may give as a slight but significant example your lending to your personal friends out of the Mother's money which was never intended for such a purpose. These habits might pass in a man freely supplied by

Fortune with resources; but they were bound to have undesirable effects in your position and especially in one entrusted with your task and practising Yoga.

At first you had some, though not a large success; but, with money flowing through your hands, you could not refrain from a free and increasing expenditure on yourself, Champa and Dikshit. Instead of the Rs 70 allowed to you by the Mother, you began to spend more and more, the amount of your total expenses rising in the end to well above Rs 200 in a single month. This need created by you for yourself—of course, with all sorts of plausible reasons to back it—affected your whole attitude. The right attitude would have been to put the Mother's work first and yourself last. Your whole and sole desire should have been to send as much money as possible to the Asram and spend as little as possible on yourself, only your actual needs and the collection expenses. If that had remained your attitude, circumstances moulded by the Divine Force would have arranged themselves accordingly and you would have had enough and to spare for your personal expenses. But in practice the position became quite the opposite. Your first care was to draw money for your expenses there; if anything remained, it could be sent to the Mother. Only express contributions marked for the Asram like Vithaldas' and Kanta's escaped this law—up till now. As a matter of fact except these sums and some two or three thousand rupees at the beginning, you have, acting on these lines, been unable to send money or to do anything except to meet with the sums given to you your Bombay expenses. For the consequences of this attitude were inevitable. Circumstances shaped themselves accordingly; money came in for your personal expenditure, but for the Asram it dwindled and grew less and less; only Vithaldas' money saved it from becoming a zero. Next, the money for your expenses became more and more difficult to get and for that too you are compelled now to fall back on the contribution of Vithaldas. That was the first result; the second was that people in Bombay lost all confidence in you and in the collection for the Asram and began even to suspect your *bona fides*. And the last result was that your attitude came

between the people you approached and us, keeping them tied to you but cut off from our influence. It was only as a result of our putting a strong force out that some change has become possible and even now the resistance is very great in the Bombay atmosphere.

I am perfectly aware that you can advance many explanations justifying your action as against what I have written. All that makes no difference. It is always the habit of the vital being to find out things by which it persuades the mind and justifies its desires; and circumstances usually shape themselves to justify it still farther. For what we have within us creates the circumstances outside us. What matters is that you should take inwardly a different position in the future. If nothing happens to prevent this arrangement of Vithaldas's money, you must see to it that henceforward you confine yourself to the arrangement, keeping to it strictly, put all preoccupation with yourself behind and think only of the work you went for which is to get support for the Asram — that and nothing else. You have no other work in Gujerat — as you have sometimes vainly imagined. You may be right in thinking that the only thing you can do now is to get people with means interested in the Asram, but in that case you must see that they are put into direct touch without which the interest cannot be real and effective. Their money must come here and not stop in Bombay and when they are ready, they themselves must come and receive what they can of the influence.

The vision of which you give a description is the indication of a vital attack or of a vital danger throwing itself upon you. The form you saw was evidently a strong Power of the hostile vital world — a red hot copper-like bust can mean nothing else. If you thought it was your being, it must have been because something in your vital nature responded to the force which this form embodied. The serpent was the indication of the evil force contained in him. The nature of the bust would seem to indicate that the force was that of vital greed (*lobha* of all kinds) and desire. The fact that the blow given was on the mouth would confirm this interpretation — but that would also be consistent with the force being that of falsehood, (*moha, mithyâ*). The

grace and protection have always been with you in spite of everything, but for it to work fully you must get rid of all in you that responds to the power that threatens you. The blow and the smashing of the face or hood and drawing out and upward of the serpent are an indication that now you have a chance of getting free from this force and throwing away from your vital nature greed, egoism and desire. It is for you to fulfil the favourable end of the vision by taking the chance.

Sri Aurobindo

Pondicherry

14 September 1930

[11]

Re Punamchand.

- (1) To give up his Bombay work and stay here.
 - (2) To return to Bombay. If so, for what work and in what conditions?
-

For (1)—

I doubt whether he will be able, after the very different conditions to which he has been accustomed in Bombay, to settle down to the discipline of the Asram which itself is very different from what it was when he was last here. And where to put them, if they stay?

For (2)

On the other hand, if he goes back, how is he to live? It is out of the question for us to send him money and he must not even think of it. In future also we cannot make ourselves responsible for any loans he may contract; that too must be understood clearly.

If he collects money and spends all or most of what he gets on his own expenses, that is about the worst thing that can be done. It discredits him in people's eyes and discredits the collection and the Asram. As soon as it is known people cease

to give money. Moreover, what is the meaning of a collection in which all the money realised goes to collection expenses and nothing goes to the fund for which the collection is made.

There is therefore only one possible solution, for him to fix a maximum amount for his expenses and find someone (now that Vithaldas is no more) who will give him that sum monthly. All other amounts must be strictly sent here. And on no account must his expenses exceed the sum fixed. This seems to me the only solution if he goes back to Bombay.

For the work —

It seems no longer possible for him to collect money in the way he and Dixit first did — approaching anybody and everybody for contributions. The one thing he might possibly do is what he has done with Narainji and Ramnarayan, — to make the acquaintance of people, get them interested in the Asram and its work, and prepare them for coming over here for us to see what can be done with them; if he can get them meanwhile to contribute, so much the better. But they must be men who can give assistance, either in a large sum or as a substantial assistance to the monthly expenses.

—
[12]

Pondicherry, September 1931

He (Punamchand) can let Narainji have Veda translations, but I do not want them widely circulated because they are a first draft, not final. Messages and letters he may have. But the evening talks must not get about. I have not seen these reports and therefore they are not authorised, and there must be any number of things in them which either ought not to be published or for which in the form they have there, I cannot accept responsibility.

[13]

Punamchand

No use doing the Vocabulary of the Atri Hymns till the new translation is ready. The old translation is too free for this purpose.

Atri hymns not yet ready.

Not much use to collect words from the Secret of the Veda.

The Vocabulary of the Bharadwaja hymns is very well done; perhaps it is best to do all like that and they could be put together afterwards.

No. The Vocabularies of the Revised Hymns have to be kept separate from the others. I shall look through the others when I have time and see what is to be done.

The comma is a mistake; it has to be omitted.

To and about Public Figures 1930–1937

Draft of a Letter to Maharani Chimnabai II

To H.H the Maharani of Baroda

It is true that I have by the practice of Yoga attained to the higher spiritual consciousness which comes by Yoga, and this carries with it a certain power. Especially there is the power to communicate to those who are ready or to help them towards that spiritual state which, in its perfection is a condition of unalterable inner calm, strength and felicity. But this spiritual peace and joy is something quite different from mental peace and happiness. And it cannot be reached without a spiritual discipline.

I do not know whether this has been rightly explained to Your Highness. I may say briefly that there are two states of consciousness in either of which one can live. One is a higher consciousness which stands above the play of life and governs it; this is variously called the Self, the Spirit or the Divine. The other is the normal consciousness in which men live; it is something quite superficial, an instrument of the Spirit for the play of life. Those who live and act in the normal consciousness are governed entirely by the common movements of the mind and are naturally subject to grief and joy and anxiety and desire or to everything else that makes up the ordinary stuff of life. Mental quiet and happiness they can get, but it can never be permanent or secure. But the spiritual consciousness is all light, peace, power and bliss. If one can live entirely in it, there is no question; these things become naturally and securely his. But even if he can live partly in it or keep himself constantly open to it, he receives enough of this spiritual light and peace and strength and happiness to carry him securely through all the shocks of life. What one gains by opening to this spiritual consciousness, depends on what one seeks from it; if it is peace,

one gets peace; if it is light or knowledge, one lives in a great light and receives a knowledge deeper and truer than any the normal mind of man can acquire; if it [is] strength or power, one gets a spiritual strength for the inner life or Yogic power to govern the outer work and action; if it is happiness, one enters into a beatitude far greater than any joy or happiness that the ordinary human life can give.

There are many ways of opening to this Divine consciousness or entering into it. My way which I show to others is by a constant practice to go inward into oneself, to open by aspiration to the Divine and once one is conscious of it and its action to give oneself to It entirely. This self-giving means not to ask for anything but the constant contact or union with the Divine Consciousness, to aspire for its peace, power, light and felicity, but to ask nothing else and in life and action to be its instrument only for whatever work it gives one to do in the world. If one can once open and feel the Divine Force, the Power of the Spirit working in the mind and heart and body, the rest is a matter of remaining faithful to It, calling for it always, allowing it to do its work when it comes and rejecting every other and inferior Force that belongs to the lower consciousness and the lower nature.

I have written so much in order to explain my position and the nature of my Yogic power. I do not usually ask anyone to practise this Yoga, because it is possible only for those who have from the beginning or who develop a strong call to it; others cannot go through it []¹ to the end. Nor [do I]² often go out of my way to help those who are merely in need of some kind of quietude of [the] external nature as many Yogins do — though I do not refuse to do it in certain cases. My aim is to create a centre of spiritual life which shall serve as a means of bringing down the higher consciousness and making it a power not merely for “salvation” but for a divine life upon earth. It is with this object that I have withdrawn from public life and founded this Asram in Pondicherry (so-called for want of a better word, for it is not

¹ MS with

² MS I do

an Asram of Sannyasins, but of those who want to leave all else and prepare for this work). But at the same time I have a small number of disciples all over India who live in their families and receive spiritual help from me even at a distance.

This is all I can answer to Your Highness at present. It is for Your Highness to decide³ whether what you seek has anything to do with what I have explained in this letter. 1930

On a Proposed Visit by Mahatma Gandhi

[1]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: Here is a postcard from Gandhi. If you think he can receive something from you, please grant him permission to meet you.

You will have to write that I am unable to see him because for a long time past I have made it an absolute rule not to have any interview with anyone — that I do not even speak with my disciples and only give a silent blessing to them three times a year. All requests for an interview from others I have been obliged to refuse. This rule has been imposed on me by the necessity of my sadhana and is not at all a matter of convenience or anything else. The time has not come when I can depart from it.

28 December 1933

[2]

M. K. GANDHI: . . . Perhaps you know that ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face. Not being able to do that, I sent my son to you. Now that it is almost certain that I am to be in Pondicherry, will you spare me a few minutes & see me! I know how reluctant you are to see anybody. But if you are under no positive vow of abstinence, I hope you will give me a few minutes of your time. . . .

2 January 1934

³ Alternative: see for yourself

7.1.34

Dear Mahatmaji

It is true that I have made no vow, for I never make one, but my retirement is not less binding on me so long as it—and the reason for it—lasts. I think you will understand that it is not a personal or mental choice but something impersonal from a deeper source for the inner necessity of work and sadhana. It prevents me from receiving you but I cannot do otherwise than keep to the rule I have adhered to for some years past.

Sri Aurobindo

[3]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: I hear that you have already sent him the answer. Has he really written anything? [Rest of letter missing.]

In the absence of the letter I cannot say. In his letter he simply expressed the desire he had long had to meet me and asked me to see him if my retirement was not a vow. I have written that I cannot depart from the rule so long as the reason for it lasts.

9 January 1934

[4]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: Gandhi writes that he has not yet received Sri Aurobindo's answer.

I hear that he asked at least a line in Sri Aurobindo's hand; and that Sri Aurobindo has written a full letter in his own hand—which he does not usually do. Is this a fact?

Yes. I wrote to him a short letter explaining the nature of my retirement and regretting that I could not break my rule so long as the reason for it existed. It was addressed to Bangalore I believe and ought to have reached him, unless it has been pocketed by the C.I.D. I suppose even if he had left Bangalore it would have been forwarded to him. You can write and inform him of the fact.

12 January 1934

[5]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: I am sure he will prolong his stay to see the Mother. And the Mother is Mother after all, let him have Her touch. I am sure he is not going to bother Mother by political topics. If he talks at all, he will talk about his search after Truth.

With his programme it is impossible. Also I do not see any utility. You must on no account ask him to delay his departure, that is quite contrary to what we wish. His search for Truth is on fixed lines of his own and the Mother can say nothing to help him there — nor has he said that he wants any help — and the Asram would hardly please him since it is run on quite unascetic lines contrary to his ideal.

24 January 1934

[6]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: As he has written to me to inform you, shall I answer that the Mother cannot see him or shall I remain silent? If he enquires about seeing Mother, shall I say that she will not be able to see him?

You can tell him that just now the circumstances are such that it is impossible for the Mother to receive his visit.⁴

16 February 1934

To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

2.10.34

My dear Professor Radhakrishnan,

I regret that you should have had to wait for the publication of your book on account of the contribution I could not write. I had intimated to Dilip that it would be practically impossible for me and I could not make a promise I would most likely be

⁴ The “circumstances” to which Sri Aurobindo refers were those created by an inquiry instituted by the government of French India into the status and finances of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo learned about this inquiry on or shortly before 16 February 1934. See Letters on Himself and the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. — Ed.

unable to fulfil. I think he hoped I would still find time somehow to write.

I am entirely taken up by my present work which is exceedingly heavy and pressing and from which I cannot take my hands for a moment or spare the necessary energy or time for anything else. I have been obliged to put aside all mental or literary work and even to suspend sine die the revision for publication of the unpublished works in the "Arya" which I had undertaken. There is no chance of any alteration in this state of affairs in any near future. It is not a matter of choice but of necessity for me. I hope therefore you will excuse me for not being able to comply with your request. I regret very much that I have to disappoint you, but it is not possible for me to avoid it.

Sri Aurobindo

To and about Morarji Desai

[1]

A. B. PURANI: This is a telegram from Dr. Chandulal Manilal Desai. . . . The other gentleman about whom he writes is Mr. Morarji Desai, originally a district deputy collector who resigned his post in the Non-cooperation movement and has been in public life since. I heard that he had spiritual inclinations.

In case they are permitted [for darshan], they would naturally remain outside. The wire can be sent even tomorrow, on the 16th — and they would have time to reach in time.

It is better if they have no time. Why should prominent politicians come trooping down here like this? I don't understand.
Better wire that it is too late.

15 February 1935

[2]

MORARJI DESAI: Since 1930 I have been making an effort to put the Yoga preached by the Gita in practice as I understand it. . . . I cannot however say that I am on the right path and every day I realise how immensely difficult it is to give

up attachment in every form & still live the ordinary life.

I have come here as a humble seeker for guidance in this quest of mine & request you to give me a guidance as to whether I should continue on the path I am treading at present or whether I am on a wrong track & should follow another path. If you consider that I should continue in the path followed by me at present I request you to guide me as to what I should do to give up all attachment and if you advise me to change the path, the new path may kindly be indicated and explained to me.

[17 August 1935]

Shri Morarji Desai,

I do not know that it is possible for me to give you any guidance on the path you have chosen — it is at any rate difficult for me to say anything definite without more precise data than those contained in your letter.

There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (*svabhava*) or dictated to you by your inner being, or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper *dharma*. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not think there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the Yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. Thus, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one's work and doing it, one acts according to one's nature; afterwards it is that Power which determines what is to be done or not done.

The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long *sadhana*, unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita's teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit or attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, the dropping of the ego, which are necessary for the loss of all attachments, can come completely only when

all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being (*sarvabhavena*), not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita's way of Yoga; for in the ascetic life one obtains the same objects differently by cutting away from all the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse.

Sri Aurobindo

On a Proposed Visit by Jawaharlal Nehru

DILIP KUMAR ROY: Nehru may be here about the 17th of this month. What do you think of my asking him to spend the day (or two) at my flat? Then surely he would want to ask the Mother for an interview. Your force will do the chief thing, of course.

I am afraid what you propose is impossible. Jawaharlal is coming on a political mission and as president of the Congress, while we have to steer clear not only of politics but of the shadow of politics. If he put up in a house of the Asram, we would be in for it! A flaming report from the British Consul to Delhi to be forwarded to London and from London to Paris. Just now we have to be specially careful, as the friendly Governor is going away — perhaps to return in March, perhaps not. If the Colonial Minister there questions him about us, he must be able to give a spotless report in our favour. The future also may possibly be turbulent and the wash of the turmoil may reach Pondicherry — we have to be on our guard from now onwards. So *don't* make Jawaharlal pray for an interview — it is not possible. Let us be patient and let things develop. If Jawaharlal is to be at all led forwards, it is more likely to happen when he is less occupied with outer stress and turmoil.

Of course I will seem to do it on my own, so that it will look like I have invited him out of courtesy more or less as a friend to a friend.

That won't go down with the Br. Consul and other watchers. He will neigh "Ah ha! Ah ha! Ahh! that's their little game, is it?" Besides Nehru won't come alone—he will have his retinue or his staff with him, I suppose. At least all Congress Presidents used to go about in that way in my time. Pondicherry besides is an unimportant place—they are not likely to let him tarry and dally here.

5 October 1936

To Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury

21.2.37

Birendra Kishore

I have made it a rule not to write anything about politics. Also the question of what to do in a body like the Assembly depends on circumstances, on the practical needs of the situation which can change rapidly. In such a body the work is not of a spiritual character. All kinds of work can be done with the spiritual consciousness behind, but unless one has advanced very far, one must in the front be guided by the necessities of the work itself and its characteristic nature. Since you have joined this party, its programme must be yours and what you have to do is to bring to it all the consciousness, ability and selflessness which you can command. You are right in not taking office, as you have made the promise. In any case a sadhak entering politics should work not for himself but for the country. If he takes office, it should be only when he can do something for the country by it and not until he has proved his character and ability and fitness for position. You should walk by a high standard which will bring you the respect even of opponents and justify the choice of the electors.

Sri Aurobindo

Part Three

Public Statements and
Other Communications on
Indian and World Events
1940–1950

Section One

Public Statements, Messages,
Letters and Telegrams on
Indian and World Events

1940–1950

On the Second World War 1940–1943

Contributions to Allied War Funds

We are placing herewith at the disposal of H.E. the Governor of Madras a sum of Rs. 500 as our joint contribution to the Madras War Fund. This donation, which is in continuation of previous sums given by us for the cause of the Allies (10,000 francs to the French Caisse de Défense Nationale before the unhappy collapse of France and Rs. 1000 to the Viceroy's War Fund immediately after the Armistice) is sent as an expression of our entire support for the British people and the Empire in their struggle against the aggressions of the Nazi Reich and our complete sympathy with the cause for which they are fighting.

We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world-domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and of the whole future of humanity. To this cause our support and sympathy will be unswerving whatever may happen; we look forward to the victory of Britain and, as the eventual result, an era of peace and union among the nations and a better and more secure world-order. 19 September 1940

Notes about the War Fund Contributions

[1]

As to your suggestion about a note on the subject of the contribution to the War Fund Sri Aurobindo does not feel very much inclined to enter into any public explanation of his action or any controversy on the subject. In his letter he made it very clear that it was on the War issue that he gave his full support and he indicated the reason for it. Hitler and Nazism and its

push towards world domination are in his view an assault by a formidable reactionary Force, a purely Asuric force, on the highest values of civilisation and their success would mean the destruction of individual liberty, national freedom, liberty of thought, liberty of life, religious and spiritual freedom in at least three continents. In Europe already these things have gone down for the time being except, precariously, in a few small countries; if Britain were defeated, that result would be made permanent and in Asia also all the recent development such as the rise of new or renovated Asiatic peoples would be miserably undone, and India's hope of liberty would become a dead dream of the past or a struggling dream of a far-off future. The abject position to which the Nazi theory relegates the coloured races is well known and that would be the fate of India if it conquered and dominated the world. Mankind itself as a whole would be flung back into a relapse towards barbarism, a social condition and an ethics which would admit only the brute force of the master and the docile submission of the slave. It is only by Britain's victory in the struggle to which she has challenged this destructive Force that the danger can be nullified, since she alone has shown at once the courage and power to resist and survive. This is Sri Aurobindo's view and, holding it, he could do nothing else than what he has done. There is no just reason here for any misunderstanding. This is what you can explain to anybody who questions, if it is necessary.

[2]

This letter should not be sent.¹ This is a time to remain quiet. I did not intend by my contribution and letter to the Madras Governor to start any political action or political controversy. Let them stand for themselves. If anything farther is necessary at any time about it, I shall myself see to it.

22 October 1940

¹ The letter referred to was written by Anilbaran Roy, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's, in answer to questions raised by an acquaintance. —Ed.

On the War: An Unreleased Statement

Sri Aurobindo's decision to give his moral support to the struggle against Hitler, which was made at the very beginning of the war, was based like all his actions on his inner view of things and on intimations from within.² It was founded on his consciousness of the forces at work, of their significance in the Divine's leading of the world, of the necessary outer conditions for the spiritual development in which he sees the real hope of humanity. It would not serve any purpose to speak here of this view of things: but some outer considerations of a most material kind easily understandable by everyone can be put forward which might help to explain his action to the general mind, although they do not give the whole meaning of it; it is only these that are developed here.

The struggle that is going on is not fundamentally a conflict between two imperialisms — German and English, — one attacking, the other defending itself. That is only an outward aspect, and not the whole even of the outward aspect. For the Germans and Italians believe that they are establishing a new civilisation and a new world-order. The English believe that they are defending not only their empire but their very existence as a free nation and the freedom also of other nations conquered by Germany or threatened by the push to empire of the Axis powers; they have made it a condition for making peace that the nations conquered shall be liberated and the others guaranteed against farther aggression. They believe also that they are standing up for the principles of civilisation which a Nazi victory would destroy. These beliefs have to be taken into consideration in assessing the significance of the struggle.

It is in fact a clash between two world-forces which are contending for the control of the whole future of humanity. One

² The textual basis of this statement was an essay written by Anilbaran Roy and submitted to Sri Aurobindo for approval. Sri Aurobindo thoroughly revised and enlarged the first four paragraphs and added seven new ones, transforming Anilbaran's essay into an entirely new piece that may be considered his own writing. In revising, he retained Anilbaran's third-person "Sri Aurobindo". — Ed.

force seeks to destroy the past civilisation and substitute a new one; but this new civilisation is in substance a reversion to the old principles of dominant Force and a rigid external order and denies the established values, social, political, ethical, spiritual, altogether. Among these values are those which were hitherto held to be the most precious, the liberty of the individual, the right to national liberty, freedom of thought; even religious liberty is to be crushed and replaced by the subjection of religion to State control. The new ethics condemn and reject all the principles that can be summed up in the word "humanitarianism"; all that is to it a falsehood and a weakness. The only ethical values admitted are those of dominant Force on the one side and, on the other, of blind obedience and submission, self-effacement and labour in the service of the State. Wherever this new idea conquers or can make its power felt, it is this order of things that it seeks to establish; it is not satisfied with setting itself up in one country or another, it is pushing for world conquest, for the enforcement of the new order everywhere, securing it,—this at least Germany, its principal agent, conceives to be the right method and carries it out with a scientific thoroughness by a ruthless repression of all opposition and a single iron rule.

The other Force is that of the evolutionary tendencies which have been directing the course of humanity for some time past and, till recently, seemed destined to shape its future. Its workings had their good and bad sides, but among the greater values it had developed stood the very things against which the new Force is most aggressive, the liberty of the individual, national liberty, freedom of thought, political and social freedom with an increasing bent towards equality, complete religious liberty, the humanitarian principle with all its consequences and, latterly, a seeking after a more complete social order, which will organise the life of the community, but will respect the liberty of the individual while perfecting his means of life and helping in every way possible his development. This evolutionary world-force has not been perfect in its action, its working is still partial and incomplete: it contains many strong survivals from the past which have to disappear; it has, on the other hand, lost

or diminished some spiritual elements of a past human culture which ought to recover or survive. There are still many denials of national freedom and of the other principles which are yet admitted as the ideal to be put in practice. In the working of that force as represented by Britain and other democracies there may not be anywhere full individual freedom or full national liberty. But the movement has been more and more towards a greater development of these things and, if this evolutionary force still remains dominant, their complete development is inevitable.

Neither of these forces are altogether what we need for the future. There are ideas and elements in the first which may have their separate value in a total human movement; but on the whole, in system and in practice, its gospel is a worship of Force and its effect is the rule of a brutal and pitiless violence, the repression of the individual, not only a fierce repression but a savage extinction of all that opposes or differs from it, the suppression of all freedom of thought, an interference with religious belief and freedom of spiritual life and, in an extreme tendency, the deliberate will to "liquidate" all forms of religion and spirituality. On the side of the other more progressive force there are, often, a limited view, grievous defects of practice, an undue clinging to the past, a frequent violation of the ideal; but at the same time the necessary elements and many of the necessary conditions of progress are there, a tendency towards an enlargement of the human mind and spirit, towards an increasing idealism in the relation of men with men and of nation with nation and a tolerant and humane mentality. Both are, at present, or have been largely materialistic in their thought, but the difference is between a materialism that suppresses the spirit and a materialism that tolerates it and leaves room for its growth if it can affirm its strength to survive and conquer.

At present the balance in the development of human thought and action has been turning for some time against the larger evolutionary force and in favour of a revolutionary reaction against it. This reaction is now represented by totalitarian governments and societies, the other tendency by the democracies;

but democracy is on the wane everywhere in Europe, the totalitarian idea was gaining ground on all sides even before the war. Now with Hitler as its chief representative, this Force has thrown itself out for world-domination. Everywhere the results are the same, the disappearance of individual and national liberty, a rigid "New Order", the total suppression of free thought and speech, a systematic cruelty and intolerance, the persecution of all opposition, and, wherever the Nazi idea spreads, a violent racialism denying the human idea; outside Europe what is promised is the degradation of the coloured peoples to helotry as an inferior, even a subhuman race. Hitler, carrying with him everywhere the new idea and the new order, is now master of almost all Europe minus Great Britain and Russia. [Faced with the stubborn opposition of Britain he is turning southwards and if the plan attributed to him of taking Gibraltar and the Suez Canal and forcing the British fleet out of the Mediterranean and its coasts were to succeed, he would be able with his Italian]³ ally to dominate Africa also and to turn towards Asia, through Syria and Palestine. There []⁴ would be then nothing that could stand in his way except Russia; but Russia has helped his projects by her attitude and seems in no mood to oppose him. The independence of the peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia would disappear as the independence of so many European nations has disappeared and a deadly and imminent peril would stand at the gates of India.

These are patent facts of the situation, its dangerous possibilities and menacing consequences. What is there that can prevent them from coming into realisation? The only material force that now stands between is the obstinate and heroic resistance of Great Britain and her fixed determination to fight the battle to the end. It is the British Navy alone that keeps the war from our gates and confines it to European lands and seas and a strip of North Africa. If there were defeat and the strength of Britain and her colonies were to go down before the totalitarian nations,

³ Sri Aurobindo cancelled the bracketed passage during revision but did not write anything to replace it.—Ed.

⁴ MS there

all Europe, Africa and Asia would be doomed to domination by three or four Powers all anti-democratic and all pushing for expansion, powers with regimes and theories of life which take no account of liberty of any kind; the surviving democracies would perish, nor would any free government with free institutions be any longer possible anywhere. It is not likely that India poor and ill-armed would be able to resist forces which had brought down the great nations of Europe; her chance of gaining the liberty which is now so close to her would disappear for a long time to come. On the contrary, if the victory goes to Britain, the situation will be reversed, the progressive evolutionary forces will triumph and the field will lie open for the fulfilment of the tendencies which were making India's full control of her own life a certainty of the near future.

It is hardly possible that after the war the old order of things can survive unchanged; if that happened, there would again be a repetition of unrest, chaos, economic disorder and armed strife till the necessary change is made. The reason is that the life of mankind has become in fact a large though loosely complex unit and a world-order recognising this fact is inevitable. It is ceasing to be possible for national egoisms to entrench themselves in their isolated independence and be sufficient for themselves, for all are now dependent on the whole. The professed separate self-sufficiency of Germany ended in a push for life-room which threatens all other peoples; nations which tried to isolate themselves in a self-regarding neutrality have paid the penalty of their blindness and the others who still maintain that attitude are likely sooner or later to share the same fate; either they must become the slaves or subservient vassals of three or four greater Powers, or a world-order must be found in which all can be safe in their freedom and yet united for the common good. It will be well for India, if in spite of the absorption of her pressing need, she recognises that national egoism is no longer sufficient. She must claim freedom and equality for herself in whatever new order is to come or any post-war arrangement, but recognise also that the international idea and its realisation are something that is becoming equally insistent, necessary and

inevitable. If the totalitarian Powers win, there will indeed be a new world-order,—it may be in the end, a unification; but it will be a new order of naked brute Force, repression and exploitation, and for the people of Asia and Africa a subjection worse than anything they had experienced before. This has been recognised even by the Arabs who were fighting England in Palestine before the war; they have turned to her side. Not only Europe, Asia and Africa, but distant America with all her power and resources is no longer safe, and she has shown that she knows it; she has felt the peril and is arming herself in haste to meet it. In the other contingency, there will be not only the necessity for a freer new order, but every possibility of its formation; for the idea is growing; it is already recognised as an actual programme by advanced progressive forces in England and elsewhere. It may not be likely that it will materialise at once or that it will be perfect when it comes, but it is bound to take some kind of initial shape as an eventual result in the not distant future.

These are some of the more obvious external considerations which have taken form in Sri Aurobindo's contribution to the War Fund accompanied by his letter. It is a simple recognition of the fact that the victory of Great Britain in this war is not only to the interest of the whole of humanity including India, but necessary for the safeguarding of its future. If that is so, the obligation of at least a complete moral support follows as a necessary consequence.

It is objected that Britain has refused freedom to India and that therefore no Indian should support her in the War. The answer arises inevitably from the considerations stated above. The dominant need for India and the World is to survive the tremendous attack of Asuric Force which is now sweeping over the earth. The freedom of India, in whatever form, will be a consequence of that victory. The working towards freedom was clear already in the world and in the British Empire itself before the War; Eire, Egypt had gained their independence, Iraq had been granted hers; many free nationalities had arisen in Europe and Asia; India herself was drawing nearer to her goal and the

attainment of it was coming to be recognised as inevitable. If the totalitarian new order extends over Asia, all that will disappear; the whole work done will be undone. If there is the opposite result, nothing can prevent India attaining to the object of her aspirations; even if restrictions are put upon the national self-government that is bound to come, they cannot last for long. In any case, there is no moral incompatibility between India's claim to freedom and support to Britain in the struggle against Hitler, since it would be a support given for the preservation of her own chance of complete liberty and the preservation also of three continents or even of the whole earth from a heavy yoke of servitude.

There remains the objection that all War is evil and no war can be supported; soul-force or some kind of spiritual or ethical force is the only force that should be used; the only resistance permissible is passive resistance, non-cooperation or Satyagraha. But this kind of resistance though it has been used in the past with some effect by individuals or on a limited scale, cannot stop the invasion of a foreign army, least of all, a Nazi army, or expel it, once it is inside and in possession; it can at most be used as a means of opposition to an already established oppressive rule. The question then arises whether a nation can be asked to undergo voluntarily the menace of a foreign invasion or the scourge of a foreign occupation without using whatever material means of resistance are available. It is also a question whether any nation in the world is capable of this kind of resistance long-enduring and wholesale or is sufficiently developed ethically and spiritually to satisfy the conditions which would make it successful, especially against an organised and ruthless military oppression such as the Nazi rule; at any rate it is permissible not to wish to risk the adventure so long as there is another choice. War is physically an evil, a calamity; morally it has been like most human institutions a mixture, in most but not all cases a mixture of some good and much evil: but it is sometimes necessary to face it rather than invite or undergo a worse evil, a greater calamity. One can hold that, so long as life and mankind are what they are, there can be such a thing as a righteous war,—*dharma*ya

yuddha. No doubt, in a spiritualised life of humanity or in a perfect civilisation there would be no room for war or violence, — it is clear that this is the highest ideal state. But mankind is psychologically and materially still far from this ideal state. To bring it to that state needs either an immediate spiritual change of which there is no present evidence or a change of mentality and habits which the victory of the totalitarian idea and its system would render impossible; for it would impose quite the opposite mentality, the mentality and habits on one side of a dominant brute force and violence and on the other a servile and prostrate non-resistance.

1940

India and the War

[1]

Calcutta is now in the danger zone. But the Mother does not wish that anyone should leave his post because of the danger. Those who are very eager to remove their children can do so, but no one should be under the illusion that there is any safe place anywhere.

6 April 1942

[2]

It appears that there are some who think of Pondicherry as a safe place and this is one of their reasons for remaining. This may turn out to be a serious error. Pondicherry can be a safe place only if the Japanese think it not worth their attention because it has no military objectives and no importance as a port or an industrial centre. Even then bombs might fall by accident or mistake, as the town is well in the war-area. But there are local circumstances which might lead them to think it a place of capital importance from the military point of view and in that case it would be exposed to all the dangers and horrors of modern warfare, a place under military occupation and a field of battle. Those who elect to remain here, must dismiss all idea of an assured personal security. Either they should be

those who prefer to die here rather than live elsewhere or, at the least, they must be prepared to face any eventuality, any risk, discomfort or suffering. These are not times when there can be a guarantee of safety or ease. It is a time of great ordeals, an hour for calm, patience and the highest courage. Reliance on the Divine Will should be there, but not the lower vital's bargain for a guaranteed or comfortably guarded existence.

On the War: Private Letters That Were Made Public

[1]

You have said that you have begun to doubt whether it was the Mother's war and ask me to make you feel again that it is. I affirm again to you most strongly that this is the Mother's war. You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India; it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. It is no use concentrating on the defects or mistakes of nations; all have defects and commit serious mistakes; but what matters is on what side they have ranged themselves in the struggle. It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act according to the light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the Spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have

been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.

July 29th, 1942.

Sri Aurobindo

[2]

What we say is not that the Allies have not done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces.⁵ I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have been that in their dealings with each other,—at least all who had the strength and got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? But there is the other side also. You are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; looked at like that all have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England—the present Allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and spread too the institutions which try to embody them. Whatever the relative worth of these things—they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage of the forward evolution. (What about the others? Hitler, for example, says it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples, they must be kept as serfs and labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be

⁵ The paragraphs that follow were extracted from a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple in answer to questions raised by him. The complete letter is reproduced in Letters on Himself and the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The extracted passages were revised by Sri Aurobindo and published in 1944 in The Advent, an Ashram-related journal, and in a booklet issued by the Ashram.—Ed.

free without seeking any personal gain; she has also conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, to Iraq without a struggle. She has been moving away steadily, if slowly, from imperialism towards co-operation; the British Commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction: she is moving in idea towards a world-union of some kind in which aggression is to be made impossible; her new generation has no longer the old firm belief in mission and empire; she has offered India Dominion independence—or even sheer isolated independence, if she wants that,—after the war, with an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves. . . . All that is what I call evolution in the right direction—however slow and imperfect and hesitating it may still be. As for America she has forsaken her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, she has conceded independence to Cuba and the Philippines. . . . Is there a similar trend on the side of the Axis? One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once again, it is the forces working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface details. The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated. . . .

* * *

For us the question does not arise. We made it plain in a letter which has been made public that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions which are common to human nature and all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces: the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly

and might lead even, at the worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least have stood for human values, though they may often act against their own best ideals (human beings always do that); Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (e.g. the virtues of the Herrenvolk, the master race). That does not make the English or Americans nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a primary importance. . . .

* * *

The Kurukshetra example is not to be taken as an exact parallel but rather as a traditional instance of the war between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because the leaders made themselves His instruments.⁶ It is not to be envisaged as a battle between virtue and wickedness, the good and the evil men. After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, quite unselfish and without passions? . . .

Were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests — just and right, no doubt, but still personal claims and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharma-yuddha*, but it was for right and justice in their own case. And if imperialism, empire-building by armed force, is under all circumstances a wickedness, then the Pandavas are tainted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire, continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter that they might become supreme rulers over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India?

⁶ Sri Aurobindo's correspondent had objected to a paragraph in an essay written by Nolini Kanta Gupta and published by the Ashram, in which Nolini compared the Allies to the Pandavas and the Axis powers to the Kauravas. — Ed.

That would be the result of weighing old happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact such an empire was a step in the right direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now,—in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter. . . .

We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or mediaeval or quite recent times, but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was envisaged but nothing more—exploitation was not excluded. The modern ideas on the subject, the right of all to liberty, both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement; this is a new Dharma which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice,—an infant Dharma which would have been throttled for good if Hitler succeeded in his “Avataric” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject nations naturally accept the new Dharma and severely criticise the old imperialisms; it is to be hoped that they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world-order evolves, even if at first stumblingly or incompletely, which will make the old things impossible—a difficult task, but not absolutely impossible.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities opened to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove

the peril of black servitude and revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important tragic issue before us.

Sri Aurobindo

3. 9. 1943

On Indian Independence 1942–1947

On the Cripps Proposal

[1]

Sir Stafford Cripps
New Delhi

I have heard your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India's independence though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself and organise in all liberty of choice her freedom and unity and take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be accepted and the right use made of it putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that a friendly relation between Britain and India replacing past struggles will be a step towards a greater world union in which as a free nation her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light I offer my public adhesion in case it can be of any help in your work.¹

Sri Aurobindo
The Asram
Pondicherry
31 March 1942

¹ Sir Stafford Cripps's telegram in reply, dated 1 April 1942:

I AM MOST TOUCHED AND GRATIFIED BY YOUR KIND MESSAGE ALLOWING ME TO INFORM INDIA THAT YOU WHO OCCUPY UNIQUE POSITION IN IMAGINATION OF INDIAN YOUTH ARE CONVINCED THAT DECLARATION OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT SUBSTANTIALLY CONFERS THAT FREEDOM FOR WHICH INDIAN NATIONALISM HAS SO LONG STRUGGLED.

STAFFORD CRIPPS

[2]

In view of the urgency of the situation I am sending Mr Durai-swami Iyer to convey my views on the present negotiations and my reasons for pressing on Indian leaders the need of a settlement. He is accredited to speak for me.²

Sri Aurobindo

April 1. 1942

[3]

[Telegram to Dr. B. S. Moonje]

DR MOONJE HINDU MAHASABHA NEW DELHI

SETTLEMENT INDIA BRITAIN URGENT, FACE APPROACH GRAVE PERIL MENACING FUTURE INDIA. IS THERE NO WAY WHILE RESERVING RIGHT REPUDIATE RESIST PARTITION MOTHERLAND TO ACCEPT COOPERATION PURPOSE WAR INDIA UNION. CANNOT COMBINATION MAHASABHA CONGRESS NATIONALIST AND ANTI-JINNAH MUSLIMS DEFEAT LEAGUE IN ELECTIONS BENGAL PUNJAB SIND. HAVE SENT ADVOCATE DURAISWAMI IYER TO MEET YOU.

SRI AUROBINDO

2 April 1942

[4]

[Telegram to C. Rajagopalachari]

RAJAGOPALACHARI BIRLA HOUSE NEW DELHI

IS NOT COMPROMISE DEFENCE QUESTION BETTER THAN RUPTURE. SOME IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT URGENT FACE GRAVE PERIL. HAVE SENT DURAISWAMI INSIST URGENCY. APPEAL TO YOU TO SAVE INDIA FORMIDABLE DANGER NEW FOREIGN DOMINATION WHEN OLD ON WAY TO SELF-ELIMINATION.

SRI AUROBINDO

2 April 1942

² Sri Aurobindo gave this note to his disciple Duraiswami Iyer, an advocate of Madras, whom he sent to Delhi to speak with members of the Congress Working Committee about the Cripps Proposal.—Ed.

[5]

[Telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee]

AMARENDRA CHATTERJEE M.L.A.
DELHI

UNABLE LEAVE PONDICHERRY. AWAITING CONGRESS DECISION
NECESSARY FOR TOTAL NATIONAL ACTION. HAVE APPEALED PRI-
VATELY CONGRESS LEADERS FOR UNDERSTANDING WITH BRITAIN
AND FIGHT DEFENCE INDIA.

Sri Aurobindo
April 9, 1942

[6]

[Second telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee]

MY BLESSINGS ON YOUR EFFORTS TO SERVE AND DEFEND MOTHER-
LAND NOW IN DANGER.

Sri Aurobindo

On the Wavell Plan

[1]

Sri Aurobindo Asram
Pondicherry
June 15, 1945

We heard the Viceroy's broadcast yesterday.³ Sri Aurobindo says the proposals are decent enough and seem to be even better than Cripps' in certain respects. An Indian will be in charge of foreign affairs and India will have her own representative in foreign countries. This and other circumstances are an approach practically towards Dominion Status. Of course, there are a few features which personally Sri Aurobindo would not advocate, e.g. the apparent foundation of the Ministry on a communal

³ This press release was dictated by Sri Aurobindo and issued over the signature of his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta.—Ed.

basis instead of a coalition of parties. Still these should not be a reason for the rejection of the proposals. A fair trial should be given and the scheme tested in its actual working out.

[2]

[Telegram to Dr. Syed Mahmood]

PROPOSALS BETTER THAN CRIPPS' OFFER ACCEPTANCE ADVISABLE.

15 June 1945

On the Cabinet Mission Proposals

[1]

Sri Aurobindo thinks it unnecessary to volunteer a personal pronouncement, though he would give his views if officially approached for them.⁴ His position is known. He has always stood for India's complete independence which he was the first to advocate publicly and without compromise as the only ideal worthy of a self-respecting nation. In 1910 he authorised the publication of his prediction that after a long period of wars, world-wide upheavals and revolutions beginning after four years, India would achieve her freedom. Lately he has said that freedom was coming soon and nothing could prevent it. He has always foreseen that eventually Britain would approach India for an amicable agreement conceding her freedom. What he had foreseen is now coming to pass and the British Cabinet Mission is the sign. It remains for the nation's leaders to make a right and full use of the opportunity. In any case, whatever the immediate outcome, the Power that has been working out this event will not be denied, the final result, India's liberation, is sure.

24.3.1946

⁴ This press release was written by Sri Aurobindo and issued over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta.—Ed.

[2]

Dec. 16, 1946

Dear Surendra Mohan

I have shown your letter to Sri Aurobindo. It raises some serious misgivings.⁵

What do you mean by saying that the Congress may have to accept the group system? Do you mean to say that the Moslem League majority on both sides of India are to be allowed to have their way and dictate the constitution for all the provinces in the two groups and also a general constitution for each of the two groups overriding the autonomy of the provinces? That would mean that the Sikhs, the Frontier Province and Assam are to be thrown to the wolves, offered as an appeasing sacrifice to Jinnah. It would mean the establishment of a divided Pakistan of which the two portions, Eastern and Western, would ultimately and indeed very soon unite and secede from any All-India Union that might be established; for that is the policy of the League. Will the Sikhs consent to be thus placed under Mussulman domination? They have declared emphatically that they will not, they will follow the Congress only so long as the Congress keeps to its promise not to support any constitution disapproved by the Sikhs. As for Assam, will the Assamese consent to commit suicide? For that is what the grouping means if it is a majority vote that decides in the group. The Hindus of Bengal and Assam joining together in the section of the Assembly will not have a majority. This opens a prospect that the League in this group may dictate a constitution which will mean the end of the Assamese people and of Hinduism in Assam. They may so arrange that the tribes of Assam are constituted into a separate element not participating in the Assam Provincial Assembly but parked off

⁵ This letter was sent over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The recipient was Surendramohan Ghosh, a Bengal Congress leader who was then serving as a member of the Constituent Assembly in Delhi. Surendramohan had written to Nolini explaining some of the provisions of the Cabinet Mission proposals. Sri Aurobindo's dictated reply was written down by his amanuensis, Nirodbaran. In transcribing this, Nolini made some necessary changes to the opening, putting for instance "what do you mean by" where Sri Aurobindo had said "He might be asked what is meant by". — Ed.

from it. The constituencies of the province could then be so arranged as to give the Mussulmans an automatic majority. Assam could then be flooded with Mahomedan colonies from Bengal and Assam be made safe for Pakistan; after that the obliteration of Hinduism in the province could be carried out either by an immediate and violent or a gradual process once the separation of India into Pakistan and Hindusthan had been effected.

We hope your leaders are alive to the dangers of the situation. I am eagerly awaiting an answer from you.

The Fifteenth of August 1947

[1]

[Long Version]⁶

August 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coincidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but

⁶ Sri Aurobindo wrote this message at the request of All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, for broadcast on the eve of the day when India achieved independence, 15 August 1947. The text submitted was found to be too long for the allotted time-slot. Sri Aurobindo revised it, and the shorter version (pages 478–80) was broadcast on 14 August 1947.

I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped

that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go,—it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action, even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

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

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe

hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

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

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

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

[2]

[*Short Version*]

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

August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Also, the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must

not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form — the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

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

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot

stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

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

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

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

On the Integration of the French Settlements in India 1947–1950

The Future Union
(A Programme)

In this period of epoch-making changes when India is achieving at this very moment a first form of freedom and the power to determine her own destiny, it behoves us in French India to consider our situation and make decisions for our own future which will enable us to live in harmony with the new India and the new world around us. At this juncture, we of the Socialist Party wish to define our own policy and the future prospects of the French Settlements as we envisage them.¹

For a long time past we in these Settlements have watched with an eager sympathy the struggle that has been going on in British India for self-government and independence and, though we could not take part, have felt it as if it were part of our own destiny since the achievement of these things could not but herald or accompany our own passage from the state of dependence as a colony to the freedom and autonomy which all peoples must desire. India has achieved her freedom but as yet with limitations and under circumstances which it did not desire and which do not admit of a complete rejoicing at the victory; for it is not the united India for which we had hoped that has emerged, but an India parcelled out and divided and threatened with perils and difficulties and disadvantages which would not

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote (rather, dictated) this “programme” for the use of the French India Socialist Party, whose position on the issue of the integration of the French Settlements in India corresponded with his in some respects. It should not be taken as a definitive statement of his own opinion on the matter. The text was published in a manifesto issued by the party in June 1947.—Ed.

have been there but for the disunion and the internal quarrels which brought about this unhappy result. Among the leaders of the country who have reluctantly consented to the settlement made there is no enthusiasm over it but only a regretful acceptance and a firm determination to make the most of what has been won, overcome the difficulties and dangers and achieve for the country as great a position in the world and as much power and prosperity as is possible for a divided India. For our part we have received a promise of an autonomy which will make us a free people within the French Union, but this is as yet only a promise, or a declared policy and the steps have not yet been taken which would make it a practical reality. We have been demanding a fulfilment of this policy as rapid as possible and there is no real reason why it should not be carried out with something of the same speed that is marking developments in British India. There there have been complexities and differences which stood in the way of an easy and early solution, but there are none such here; we have been and are united in our demand and the change already decided can be and ought to be carried out at once.

But one complexity has begun to arise and threatens to increase if there is further delay in satisfying the aspirations of our people. The life of French India has had, since its inception, a dual character which points to two different possibilities for its future destiny if a third solution does not intervene which reconciles the two possibilities. On one side, we in French India are not in the essentials of our existence a separate people: we and those on the other side of the borders of the five Settlements are brothers, we are kith and kin, we have the same nationality, the same way and habits of life, the same religions, the same general culture and outlook, the same languages and literatures, the same traditions; we are Indians, belong to the same society, we do not feel separate, we have the same feeling of patriotism for our common country; our land is an intimate part of India. All this would push us naturally to desire to unite together and become parts of a single India. That feeling has not been absent in the past, but now it is becoming vocal and is the declared

policy and demand of a number among us while others stand on the line between the two possibilities before us and have a natural inclination to prefer this solution; for it is difficult for any Indian not to look forward towards such a unification in the future. On the other hand, the history of the past two centuries has developed a certain individuality of the people of French India and made them a common entity amid the rest. French India has developed different institutions of its own, political, administrative, judicial, educational, it has its own industries, its own labour legislation and other differentiating characteristics. There is also the impress of the French language and French culture. All Asiatic countries have been developing a mixed intellectuality, public life and social ideas; our life is Asiatic in its basis with a structure at the top adopted from Europe. In British India this superstructure has been formed by the use of English as a common language of the educated classes and by the study of English political ideas and institutions and English literature: in French India the superstructure is French, it is the French language through which there has been communication and a common public life between the Bengalees, Tamils, Andhras and Malayalees who constitute the people of French India; we have been looking at the world outside through a study of the French language and French institutions and French literature. All this has made a difference; it has made it possible and natural for us to accept the offer made that we should become a free people within the French Union. But this solution can be durable only if there is some kind of close connection and even union with the rest of India industrial, economic and other, for we depend on the rest of India for our very food and the necessities of our life and our general prosperity and, if cut off from it, we could not even live. Apart from all feelings and sentiments this stark necessity demands an intimate co-operation between the new India and French India.

Under the push of a common Indian patriotism and the feeling of oneness with the rest of India some are putting forward the claim that we should join immediately whatever Indian Union emerges from the present embroilments without any other

consideration of any kind. This is a rash and one-sided view of things which we cannot accept. In our political decisions we must take into account the developments in British India, but it would be erroneous to hold that in all political affairs we should imitate her. This would show on our part a lack of understanding of local conditions as well as an utter failure of creative thought so needed at a most critical and constructive period of the history of India. Some go so far as to propose a kind of self-extinction of each French territory by their merging in a suicidal way into the Indian Union. This would mean that our towns would become mostly small and unimportant mofussil towns in the mass of what has been British India and would lose their present status and dignity and vigour of their life and distinctive institutions and much loss and damage to existing popular interests might ensue. A drastic change and obliteration of this kind seems to us most undesirable; it would bring no enrichment of life or advantage to the rest of India and no advantage but rather impoverishment of life to French India. If French India is to enter the Indian Union, it should not be in this way but as an autonomous unit preserving its individual body and character. All should be done with due regard to its particular position and all decisions should be made according to the will of her elected representatives: we should also ascertain exactly our economic, social and administrative position so that any change should not affect adversely any section of the people. Moreover without having any precision about the future States of India and our place among them it would be utter folly to break our social, cultural, administrative and judicial structure without any concrete scheme to replace it. The existence of autonomous units with a vivid life and individuality of their own has always been a characteristic of our country, part of its polity and civilisation and one of the causes of its greatness and the variety and opulence of Indian culture. The unity of India is desirable but not a mechanical unification and that is indeed no part of the scheme envisaged by the leaders of India; they envisage a union of autonomous units with a strong centre. In seeking political unity and independence we must not go on

thinking and working under subjection to imported Western and British notions of political and economic structure. It is patent through recent developments that a political and purely outward unity with a mechanical uniformity and centralisation would prove a failure. Whatever we decide let us preserve the principle peculiarly suited to the unique psychological and physical conditions of this great land and the life of its people which was to develop through numerous autonomous centres of culture and power.

But there are also other considerations which militate against any such hasty action as has been proposed; we must consider carefully the actual position and possibilities in India under the peculiar and very unsatisfactory arrangement that has been made. This arrangement has not been freely chosen by the people and their leaders and does not create a free and united nation; it is a British plan accepted under the duress of circumstances as unavoidable in order to find a way out of the present state of indecision and drift and put an end to internal disorder and strife. It is not a definite solution; it seems rather like an opening of a new stage, a further period of trial and effort towards the true goal. What immediately emerges is not independence but the establishment of two British Dominions independent of each other and without any arrangement for harmonisation or common action; it is expected that within a year or so two independent Indias will be the result with different constitutions of their own animated by different and, it may well be, opposing principles and motives. It is hoped also that this division will be accepted by all as a final solution, both Indias settling down separately into a peaceful internal development, and that the fierce dissensions, violent and ruinous disturbances and sanguinary conflicts of recent times will finally disappear. But this is not certain; the solution has not been satisfactory to any party to the internal struggle and if the new States continue to be divided within themselves into communal camps led by communal bodies one of which will look outside the State to the other for inspiration and guidance and for the protection of the community, then tension will continue and the latent

struggle may break out in disturbances, bloodshed and perhaps finally in open war. Into such a condition of things French India would not care to enter; among us communal dissensions have not been rife, all communities have lived amicably together and participated peacefully in a common public life; but if we entered into such a state of tension and continued conflict, the infection would inevitably seize us and there would be the same communal formations and the same undesirable features. We should be careful therefore not to make any such rash and hasty decisions as some propose but stand apart in our own separate status and wait for more certain developments. A closer relation with the new India is desirable and necessary, since we are Indians and French India a part of India intimately connected and dependent on the rest for her prosperity and for her very existence. But this need not take the form suggested or involve the obliteration of our separate status, a destruction of our past and its results and the loss of our individual existence. A reconciliation between the two elements of our existence and its historical development is desirable and possible.

It seems to be supposed by some that we have only to ask the new Indian Union for inclusion within it and this would automatically accomplish itself without any further difficulty; but things are not so simple as that. Undoubtedly the sentiment of the Indian people had in the past envisaged an India one and indivisible and the abolition of the small enclaves of foreign rule such as Portuguese and French India as imperative and inevitable. But circumstances have shaped differently; India one and indivisible has not emerged and the Indian Union which is nearest to it and with which alone a fusion would be possible, is not yet established, has still to affirm itself and find and confirm its strength in very difficult circumstances. In that process it is seeking to establish amicable relations with all foreign powers and is already in such relations with France. It will desire no doubt either union or a closer relation with French India but it is not likely to be in a hurry to achieve it through a dispute or conflict with France. It could indeed use means of pressure without the use of military force which would make the existence

of a separate French India not only difficult and painful but impossible, but it would be likely to prefer a settlement and a *modus vivendi* which would respect the wishes of the people of French India, create the necessary co-ordination of economic and other interests and would be consistent with agreement and friendly relations with the Government and people of France. If, using the right of self-determination, we in French India freely decided to remain as an autonomous people within the French Union, the Government of the Indian Union would certainly respect such a choice and might welcome an arrangement which would make French India not a thorn of irritation but a cultural link and a field of union and co-operation, and perhaps even a base for a standing friendship and alliance between France and India. In consideration of all these circumstances we are led to conclude that our best immediate course is to keep our individuality and concentrate on the development of our freedom as an autonomous people accepting the offer of France to concede to us that status within the French Union and on the basis of that formula to establish that closer relation and co-operation with the new India which would satisfy our sentiments and is imperative for our prosperity and even for our existence.

After due examination of all these considerations the Socialist Party puts forward the following programme and asks for the adhesion of all citizens of French India to implement it.

(1) French India to form an autonomous territory within the French Union.

(2) For this the present colonial system and its bureaucratic government must cease to exist, and this should be done as soon as possible. Neither the people nor any party are willing to remain subjected to the old system, only a few whose professional interests are bound up with the old state of things are in its favour, and any long continuance of it would be a severe strain on the feelings of the population and would encourage increasing adhesion to the party that favours immediate and complete severance of all ties with France and the precipitate merging of French India without any further consideration into whatever new India may emerge from the present situation.

(3) There should be an immediate transfer of powers to the French India Representative Assembly which should have the general direction of the country's affairs and the sole power of local legislation. The power of the Governor to govern by decrees should disappear.

(4) The administration to be responsible to the Assembly. A Governor should be appointed by the French Government in consultation with the Assembly who will be the link between France and French India and who will preside over the administration with the assistance of an executive council of ministers.

(5) The status of the population of French India should be that of a free self-governing people freely consenting to remain in the French Union and freely accepting such relations as are necessary for that Union.

In this free French India the present recognised institutions commercial, industrial and others will remain in vigour except in so far as they are legally modified by the Representative Assembly. The French language will continue as a means of communication between the different parts of French India and of discussion in the Assembly and of general administration. The educational system, the new University and the Colleges will be linked with the University and educational system in France. The links with French culture will be retained and enlarged but also, inevitably a much larger place will be given to our own Indian culture. It is to be hoped this autonomous French India will become a powerful centre of intellectual development and interchange and meeting place of European and Asiatic culture and [a] spiritual factor of the world unification which is making its tentative beginning as the most important tendency of the present day. Thus French India will retain its individuality and historical development but will at the same time proceed towards a larger future.

On the other side we propose as an important part of our programme the development of a closer unity with the rest of India. Already we have the standing arrangements by which the Indian Government has the control and bears the burden

of Posts and Railways and we have also the Customs Union by which Customs barriers between British and French India were removed; the advantages and even the necessity of such a unification of the system of communications in view of the small size and geographical separation of the French Settlements are obvious. In the Customs Union some modifications might be desirable from our point of view, but the principle of it removing the handicap and the previous irritation and conflict caused by the existence of the Customs barriers must remain acceptable. But there is also needed for our economic future a co-ordination of the industry and commerce of the country and for that purpose an agreement and a machinery for consultation and co-ordination should be created.

We further propose that the artificial barriers separating us into two mutually exclusive nationalities should be laid open and an understanding arrived at by which the nationals of free India resident in French India should automatically have civic rights and the same should obtain for nationals of French India resident in the new free India. There should be facilities for any French Indian to occupy Government posts and join Indian armed forces and to get admission to educational institutions and have access to the opportunities for research and scientific training and knowledge available in India, while these things should be also available to all Indian nationals in French India. Thus the advantages of the University which it is proposed to establish in French India should be available to students belonging to the other parts of the country. Possibly even other arrangements might be made by which there should be closer participation in the political life of the country as a whole.

The final logical outcome of the dual situation of the French Indian people would be a dual citizenship under certain conditions through which French India could be in the French Union and participate without artificial barriers in the life of India as a whole. The present state of International Law is opposed to such a dual citizenship but it would be the natural expression of the two sides of our life situated as we are in India and having the same fundamental nationality, culture and religion

and social and economic life but also united for a long time by cultural influences and a historical connection with France. It may well be that such arrangements might become a natural part of the development and turn towards greater unity between peoples and the breaking down of old barriers which began at San Francisco and a not unimportant step in the movement towards the removal of the old separatism, oppositions and incompatibilities which are the undesirable side of nationalism and towards international unity and the growth of a new world and one world which is the future of humanity.

We are of the opinion that if this programme is properly carried out with the approval of public opinion, it will assure our future evolution and progress without violence or strife. We would be able to take a fuller part in the total life of the Indian nation and be at the same time an instrument for the closer drawing together of nations and play a part in the international life of mankind.

We appeal to all progressive forces in France to favour this line of development so that the actual relation between ourselves which is now that of suzerainty and vassalage should be transformed into one of brotherhood and mutual understanding so that France and India should stand before the world as closely united.

We fervently appeal to all our brothers and sisters of Chandernagore, Yanon, Mahe, Karikal and Pondicherry, to the Tamilians, Malayalees, Andhras and Bengalees who for centuries past have lived together irrespective of caste and creed without any internal strife—which is our greatest achievement—not to sever our mutual connection but to show an example of unity transcending all compartmentalism or provincialism. Let us be united as before. When decisive steps have to be taken for the welfare of the country it is of no avail to be led by hasty moves and to propose rapid solutions from purely egoistic motives or idleness of thought.

We pray our brothers and sisters not to be led by the fallacies of those who want the continuance of French imperialistic administration or of those who under whatever specious pretences

look forward to the prevalence of chaos and disorder.

Let us rise to the task that awaits us and build a strong front of the people to implement our scheme and with an upsurge transgressing all petty differences let us play our part and create a free and united people in a free India and help at the same time towards the creation of a united human world.

published June 1947

On the Disturbances of 15 August 1947 in Pondicherry

To

The Editor

The Statesman, Calcutta

Dated, Pondicherry, the 20th August 1947.

Dear Sir,

There is no foundation [in]² fact for the rumour which we understand has been published in your columns that Satyagraha has been offered before Sri Aurobindo Ashram.³ There was no Satyagraha of any kind. There was an attack on the Ashram in which one member was stabbed to death and others injured and Ashram buildings stoned. This would surely be a curious and unprecedented form of Satyagraha. The attack took place on August the 15th some hours after the Darshan, which was very successful and attended by thousands of people, was over. The attackers were mostly professional goondas of the town hired and organised for the purpose. We consider it as the result or culmination of a long campaign by a political party which has been making speeches and publishing articles and pamphlets against the Ashram and trying in all ways to damage it in the eyes of the public for the last two years. This was not on political grounds and the attack had nothing to do with the political question. The Ashram is a non-political body. But there are three sections of the people here who are violently opposed to the existence

² MS or

³ This letter was dictated by Sri Aurobindo to his amanuensis, Nirodbaran, and sent over the signature of his secretary.—Ed.

of the Ashram, the advocates of Dravidisthan, extreme Indian Catholics and the Communists. Everybody in Pondicherry without exception supports the right of self-determination for the people of French India and Sri Aurobindo has always been a firm supporter of that right for all peoples everywhere. Nobody here is for the "continuation of French rule", but the people were prepared to accept the French proposal of a free and completely autonomous French India within the French Union. It was only when it appeared that the reforms offered by the French Government would fall short of what was promised that the cry arose for the immediate transfer of power and the merging of French India in the Indian Union. Sri Aurobindo, not being a citizen of French India, made no public declaration of his views, but privately supported the views set forth in a manifesto of the French India Socialist party demanding the end of colonial rule and a complete autonomy within the French Union accompanied by a dual citizenship and a close association with the Indian Union which should control Customs, Communications and a common system of Industry and Commerce.⁴ There was therefore no ground or cause for any Satyagraha. I am writing this as an official contradiction on behalf of the Ashram under the instructions and with the full authority of Sri Aurobindo.

Your most sincerely
The Secretary

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

Letters to Surendra Mohan Ghosh

[1]

I had wired that I would write a letter of explanation, but I have been unable to do so because we could get no definite information on the points I have mentioned, not even the

⁴ The reference is to "The Future Union" (pages 481–91), which was written by Sri Aurobindo.—Ed.

question of the alleged refusal to send the money order. It is now suggested that it may have been only a doubt due possibly to a mistaken impression that French territory in India was like France and other French territories a hard currency area subject to restrictions in this matter because of the difficulties created by the dollar exchange. But French India has been declared a soft currency area where the exchange is in rupees and in pounds; so this difficulty cannot arise. Up to now money orders are still coming in.

As to the food question, it is now stated that vegetables and fruit from Bangalore will be allowed to come in without hindrance and other food commodities which come under the mischief of the Customs will also be allowed subject to the taking out of a permit by the merchants. The rumour of prohibition was due to a panic among the merchants both of the Union and Pondicherry caused by the creation of the Customs line which comes into operation from today and the additional rumour of drastic measures to be taken to bring pressure on French India to join the Union. If things go well, there may be a difficulty of high prices but nothing worse.

At the same time there are signs of tension and we do not know what may develop from these. For instance, it is said that booking of goods of Pondicherry has been stopped on the Railway except for newspaper packages and perishable goods; equally it has been stated that the French authorities are forbidden a transit of local goods out of French India into the Union and have created a post to prevent their passage. That is all for the present. I suppose we shall get some clearer indications once the Customs are in vigour.

I shall write afterwards about our own threatened difficulties in French India itself, if they develop. But we badly need some reliable information as to what is likely to be the fate of French India. On the one side the French India municipalities have fixed December for the proposed referendum. If there is a referendum, the voting will go by the usual methods and the result will be whatever the local Government here dictates and not a genuine plebiscite; there would be no chance of an accession

to the Indian Union or a merger unless Goubert and Co would make, as they once tried, a bargain with the Government in Madras or in Delhi. On the other hand, it has been broadly hinted that there will be no plebiscite and the fate of French India will be determined by direct negotiations between the Governments in Paris and in Delhi. But when? We were once informed that it would be in April or June after the return of Baron as High Commissioner but the politicians here are resolute not to allow the return of Baron because he will [be] under the influence of the Ashram — just as Saravane, Counouma, André etc. are to be kept out of all positions of authority for the same reason and because they are supposed to be in favour of accession to the Indian Union.

1 April 1949

[2]

I am sending you a statement made regarding our food situation and prospects by Dyuman who is in charge of that department. This is a new situation; formerly, the fruit was stopped, vegetables were passing through the Customs and the Customs officers were very favourable to the Ashram and made no difficulties. All that is now finished; it appears that very strict orders have been given and nothing can pass. Personal supplies in small quantities sent as offerings from Madras no longer arrive. Even the Calcutta merchants who supplied us with food and other goods say that they cannot get permits any longer. We are told that the Railway is no longer booking goods to Pondicherry. A certain number of vegetables of a very high quality are grown in our vegetable gardens; it is not quite certain that the supply of seeds which necessarily comes from outside will not fail us and in that case that resource will go. There are other statements that have been made by responsible people in Madras which indicate a sort of blockade of goods against the French Settlements. The one good thing is that the Railway people here have withdrawn their statement that our books were prohibited and have begun to send by Railway large parcels of our magazines (Advent, Bombay Annual, Path Mandir Annual,

Aditi etc.), so that there is no fear of loss or stoppage there. I may add that we can no longer get our full supply of milk here as the milkmen have no sufficient supply of fodder and Nestlé which helped us is cut off with the rest.

At present we have no final or definite news about the things for which we were to rely on Kamraj Nadar. He has only recently returned from Ceylon after which he was to deal with our affairs. Our representatives in Madras were told by him, we hear, that some of these affairs were the province of Madras Government and some could only [be decided]⁵ at Delhi; he would find out exactly which was which and do what he could [for]⁶ us; each case will have to be dealt with on its merits. It is now the 6th May and as yet we have heard nothing. So for the moment that is all.

6 May 1949

Note on a *Projet de loi*

NOTE

I do not know that it is necessary for me to say much about the details of this *projet*, except that it seems to me to need to be elaborated and elucidated so as to give a more complete and exact idea of the constitution meant for the new territory, the powers reserved for it and those reserved for the central authority and the scope and limits of the rights to be conceded by the India Government to France and French nationals under the agreement.

Incidentally, what exactly is meant by the “droits de douanes” to be exercised by the local Government? I presume that the old Customs will be reestablished at the Port and there will be none between the Territory and the rest of India: only, certain limited rights will be given for the introduction of goods from France to be carefully restricted to the amount necessary for local use; if so, there can be no scope for any levy of Customs by the local authority. As to the U.N.O., I presume

⁵ MS (*dictated*) decide

⁶ MS (*dictated*) from

that as between the India Government and the Government of people of a Territory subordinate to it there could not be, as things now stand, any intervention on any matter between them but only as between the India Government and the Government of France.

There is one point on which I would like to make an observation which I consider of primary importance. The French Government would naturally want the democratic rights it has conceded to the local Assembly and local bodies to continue in full and the India Government would also, no doubt, like this new Territory of its own to have a constitution as democratic as that of the other parts of India. But if nothing is changed in local conditions and freedom is left for a certain type of politicians and party leaders to make use of their opportunities to pervert everything to their own profit, how are they to be prevented from prolonging the old state of things, in which case the Territory would easily be turned into a sink of misgovernment and corruption and things will become worse even than in the past. Only a strong control, a thorough purification of the administration and a period of political discipline in which the population could develop public spirit, the use and the right use of the powers and the democratic institutions placed at their disposal, could ensure a change for the better and even that only after a long lapse of time. It cannot be ensured by a paper constitution; the right type of men in the right place could alone ensure it.

I would myself have thought it safer if the principle of the agreement between the two Governments and its main features [had] at first been agreed upon and the rest worked out afterwards by careful consideration and discussion. Otherwise there is a risk of disagreements and discord in the points of view arising and holding up or even endangering the successful working out of the agreement. But I understand that their position in this matter has obliged the Government in Paris to prefer the method actually taken. I hope that the advice you will give will help the India Government to make the best of things as they are.

Messages on Indian and World Events 1948–1950

On the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

[1]

REMAIN FIRM THROUGH THE DARKNESS THE LIGHT IS THERE AND
WILL CONQUER.¹

4 February 1948

[2]

I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples. The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom, it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people.²

Sri Aurobindo

February 5, 1948

¹ *Telegram sent to Mr. Kumbi of Gadag, in reply to his telegram “DARKNESS SORROW SPREADS FAST INDIA BAPUJI DEATH CHILDREN PRAY MESSAGE.” Sri Aurobindo’s telegram was later released to the newspapers.—Ed.*

² *This piece was sent to All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, in response to a request for a message. It later was published by the Ashram in the form of a leaflet.—Ed.*

On the World Situation (July 1948)

I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort for the present at least to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things *are* bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible—and anything however paradoxical seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of if a new and better world was at all to come into being; it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is as in Yoga where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern and that it must come by other means, from within and not from without—so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world whatever form it may take.

July 18, 1948

Sri Aurobindo

**On Linguistic Provinces
(Message to Andhra University)**

You have asked me for a message and anything I write, since it is to the Andhra University that I am addressing my message, if it can be called by that name, should be pertinent to your University, its function, its character and the work it has to do. But it is difficult for me at this juncture when momentous decisions are being taken which are likely to determine not only the form and pattern of this country's Government and administration but the pattern of its destiny, the build and make-up of the

nation's character, its position in the world with regard to other nations, its choice of what itself shall be, not to turn my eyes in that direction. There is one problem facing the country which concerns us nearly and to this I shall now turn and deal with it, however inadequately,—the demand for the reconstruction of the artificial British-made Presidencies and Provinces into natural divisions forming a new system, new and yet founded on the principle of diversity in unity attempted by ancient India. India, shut into a separate existence by the Himalayas and the ocean, has always been the home of a peculiar people with characteristics of its own recognisably distinct from all others, with its own distinct civilisation, way of life, way of the spirit, a separate culture, arts, building of society. It has absorbed all that has entered into it, put upon all the Indian stamp, welded the most diverse elements into its fundamental unity. But it has also been throughout a congeries of diverse peoples, lands, kingdoms and, in earlier times, republics also, diverse races, sub-nations with a marked character of their own, developing different brands or forms of civilisation and culture, many schools of art and architecture which yet succeeded in fitting into the general Indian type of civilisation and culture. India's history throughout has been marked by a tendency, a constant effort to unite all this diversity of elements into a single political whole under a central imperial rule so that India might be politically as well as culturally one. Even after a rift had been created by the irruption of the Mohammedan peoples with their very different religion and social structure, there continued a constant effort of political unification and there was a tendency towards a mingling of cultures and their mutual influence on each other; even some heroic attempts were made to discover or create a common religion built out of these two apparently irreconcilable faiths and here too there were mutual influences. But throughout India's history the political unity was never entirely attained and for this there were several causes,—first, vastness of space and insufficiency of communications preventing the drawing close of all these different peoples; secondly, the method used which was the military domination by one people or one imperial dynasty over the rest

of the country which led to a succession of empires, none of them permanent; lastly, the absence of any will to crush out of existence all these different kingdoms and fuse together these different peoples and force them into a single substance and a single shape. Then came the British Empire in India which recast the whole country into artificial provinces made for its own convenience, disregarding the principle of division into regional peoples but not abolishing that division. For there had grown up out of the original elements a natural system of subnations with different languages, literatures and other traditions of their own, the four Dravidian peoples, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Sind, Assam, Orissa, Nepal, the Hindi-speaking peoples of the North, Rajputana and Behar. British rule with its provincial administration did not unite these peoples but it did impose upon them the habit of a common type of administration, a closer intercommunication through the English language and by the education it gave there was created a more diffused and more militant form of patriotism, the desire for liberation and the need of unity in the struggle to achieve that liberation. A sufficient fighting unity was brought about to win freedom, but freedom obtained did not carry with it a complete union of the country. On the contrary, India was deliberately split on the basis of the two-nation theory into Pakistan and Hindustan with the deadly consequences which we know.

In taking over the administration from Britain we had inevitably to follow the line of least resistance and proceed on the basis of the artificial British-made provinces, at least for the time; this provisional arrangement now threatens to become permanent, at least in the main and some see an advantage in this permanence. For they think it will help the unification of the country and save us from the necessity of preserving regional subnations which in the past kept a country from an entire and thoroughgoing unification and uniformity. In a rigorous unification they see the only true union, a single nation with a standardised and uniform administration, language, literature, culture, art, education,—all carried on through the agency of one national tongue. How far such a conception can be

carried out in the future one cannot forecast, but at present it is obviously impracticable, and it is doubtful if it is for India truly desirable. The ancient diversities of the country carried in them great advantages as well as drawbacks. By these differences the country was made the home of many living and pulsating centres of life, art, culture, a richly and brilliantly coloured diversity in unity; all was not drawn up into a few provincial capitals or an imperial metropolis, other towns and regions remaining subordinated and indistinctive or even culturally asleep; the whole nation lived with a full life in its many parts and this increased enormously the creative energy of the whole. There is no possibility any longer that this diversity will endanger or diminish the unity of India. Those vast spaces which kept her people from closeness and a full interplay have been abolished in their separating effect by the march of Science and the swiftness of the means of communication. The idea of federation and a complete machinery for its perfect working have been discovered and will be at full work. Above all, the spirit of patriotic unity has been too firmly established in the people to be easily effaced or diminished, and it would be more endangered by refusing to allow the natural play of life of the subnations than by satisfying their legitimate aspirations. The Congress itself in the days before liberation came had pledged itself to the formation of linguistic provinces, and to follow it out, if not immediately, yet as early as may conveniently be, might well be considered the wisest course. India's national life will then be founded on her natural strengths and the principle of unity in diversity which has always been normal to her and its fulfilment the fundamental course of her being and its very nature, the Many in the One, would place her on the sure foundation of her *Swabhava* and *Swadharma*.

This development might well be regarded as the inevitable trend of her future. For the Dravidian regional peoples are demanding their separate right to a self-governing existence; Maharashtra expects a similar concession and this would mean a similar development in Gujarat and then the British-made Presidencies of Madras and Bombay would have disappeared. The old Bengal Presidency had already been split up and Orissa,

Bihar and Assam are now self-governing regional peoples. A merger of the Hindi-speaking part of the Central Provinces and the U.P. would complete the process. An annulment of the partition of India might modify but would not materially alter this result of the general tendency. A union of States and regional peoples would again be the form of a united India.

In this new regime your University will find its function and fulfilment. Its origin has been different from that of other Indian Universities; they were established by the initiative of a foreign Government as a means of introducing their own civilisation into India, situated in the capital towns of the Presidencies and formed as teaching and examining bodies with purely academic aims: Benares and Aligarh had a different origin but were all-India institutions serving the two chief religious communities of the country. Andhra University has been created by a patriotic Andhra initiative, situated not in a Presidency capital but in an Andhra town and serving consciously the life of a regional people. The home of a robust and virile and energetic race, great by the part it had played in the past in the political life of India, great by its achievements in art, architecture, sculpture, music, Andhra looks back upon imperial memories, a place in the succession of empires and imperial dynasties which reigned over a large part of the country; it looks back on the more recent memory of the glories of the last Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar, — a magnificent record for any people. Your University can take its high position as a centre of light and learning, knowledge and culture which can train the youth of Andhra to be worthy of their forefathers: the great past should lead to a future as great or even greater. Not only Science but Art, not only book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character are parts of a true education; to help the individual to develop his capacities, to help in the forming of thinkers and creators and men of vision and action of the future, this is a part of its work. Moreover, the life of the regional people must not be shut up in itself; its youths have also to contact the life of the other similar peoples of India interacting with them in industry and commerce and the other practical fields of life but also in the things of the mind and spirit.

Also, they have to learn not only to be citizens of Andhra but to be citizens of India; the life of the nation is their life. An elite has to be formed which has an adequate understanding of all great national affairs or problems and be able to represent Andhra in the councils of the nation and in every activity and undertaking of national interest calling for the support and participation of her peoples. There is still a wider field in which India will need the services of men of ability and character from all parts of the country, the international field. For she stands already as a considerable international figure and this will grow as time goes on into vast proportions; she is likely in time to take her place as one of the preponderant States whose voices will be strongest and their lead and their action determinative of the world's future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and force of character is of the first order. In all these fields your University can be of supreme service and do a work of immeasurable importance.

In this hour, in the second year of its liberation the nation has to awaken to many more very considerable problems, to vast possibilities opening before her but also to dangers and difficulties that may, if not wisely dealt with, become formidable. There is a disordered world-situation left by the war, full of risks and sufferings and shortages and threatening another catastrophe which can only be solved by the united effort of the peoples and can only be truly met by an effort at world-union such as was conceived at San Francisco but has not till now been very successful in the practice; still the effort has to be continued and new devices found which will make easier the difficult transition from the perilous divisions of the past and present to a harmonious world-order; for otherwise there can be no escape from continuous calamity and collapse. There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even

a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there. There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny.

December 1948

Letters Related to the Andhra University Award

[1]

SRI AUROBINDO ASRAM.
PONDICHERRY.

—
July 15, 1948

To
 Sir C. R. Reddy
 Vice-Chancellor
 Andhra University — Waltair

I have been unable to give an early answer to your letter of the 28th June, 1948 which reached me rather late owing to accidental causes. This was due to some hesitation arising from my position as head of the Ashram at Pondicherry. I am not a Sannyasi and my Yoga does not turn away from life; but still I

have always followed the rule of not accepting titles, honours or distinctions from any Government or public institution and have rejected or stood back from even the highest when offered to me. But after long consideration I have felt that the distinction which the Andhra University proposes to confer upon me is not of the same character and need not fall within this rule. In any case I do not feel that I can disregard the choice made by the Andhra University in selecting my name for this distinction, and even if things were otherwise, I would have felt that I must accept this as an exceptional case and I could not disregard the choice by an institution like yours of my name for this prize. I authorise you therefore to consider my name for this award and if the University confirms its choice of me, my acceptance of your National Prize. One difficulty remains; you know perhaps that I have been living in entire retirement, appearing in public only on the occasion of the four Darshans on which I receive the inmates of my Ashram and visitors from all parts of India. Otherwise I do not go out of the rooms in which I live and still less ever leave the Ashram or Pondicherry. This makes it impossible for me to go to Waltair to receive the distinction conferred upon me. I would have therefore to ask for an exception to be made in this matter in my case.

Sri Aurobindo

[2]

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

[6 November 1948]

To

H.E. The Governor of Madras
Chancellor of the Andhra University

I am in receipt of your letter of 30th October informing me that the Syndicate of the Andhra University has resolved to present to me the "Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy National Prize" for this year. I have received with much gratification your

offer of this distinction bestowed on me by your University and I am glad to intimate to you my acceptance. I understand from what you say about Darshan that you will personally come to Pondicherry for this purpose and I look forward with much pleasure to seeing and meeting you.

[3]

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Dec 5, 1948

To
Shree C. R. Reddy
Vice-chancellor, Andhra University

I am sending herewith the message. But it has developed to an excessive length nearer to half-an-hour's reading than to the minimum five minutes. I hope that the theme which, I am told, is still somewhat controversial, will not be thought for that reason ill-suited to the occasion and that the length of time required will not be found unmanageable. I have felt some scruples on these two points and would be glad to be reassured that it is otherwise.

Sri Aurobindo

The Present Darkness (April 1950)

You have expressed in one of your letters your sense of the present darkness in the world round us and this must have been one of the things that contributed to your being so badly upset and unable immediately to repel the attack. For myself, the dark conditions do not discourage me or convince me of the vanity of my will to "help the world", for I knew they had to come; they were there in the world nature and had to rise up so that they might be exhausted or expelled so that a better world freed from them might be there. After all, something has been done in the outer field and that may help or prepare for getting something done in the inner field also. For instance, India is free and her freedom was necessary if the divine work was to be done. The

difficulties that surround her now and may increase for a time, especially with regard to the Pakistan imbroglio, were also things that had to come and to be cleared out. Nehru's efforts to prevent the inevitable clash are not likely to succeed for more than a short time and so it is not necessary to give him the slap you wanted to go to Delhi and administer to him. Here too there is sure to be a full clearance, though unfortunately a considerable amount of human suffering in the process is inevitable. Afterwards the work for the Divine will become more possible and it may well be that the dream, if it is a dream, of leading the world towards the spiritual Light, may even become a reality. So I am not disposed even now in these dark conditions to consider my will to help the world as condemned to failure.

4 April 1950

On the Korean Conflict

I do not know why you want a line of thought to be indicated to you for your guidance in the affair of Korea. There is nothing to hesitate about there, the whole affair is as plain as a "pikestaff". It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to dominate and take possession first of these northern parts and then of South East Asia as a preliminary to their manoeuvres with regard to the rest of the continent—in passing, Tibet as a gate opening to India. If they succeed, there is no reason why domination of the whole world should not follow by steps until they are ready to deal with America. That is provided the war can be staved off with America until Stalin can choose his time. Truman seems to have understood the situation if we can judge from his moves in Korea; but it is to be seen whether he is strong enough and determined enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be incomplete and unsuccessful, since they do not include any actual military intervention except on sea and in the air. That seems to be the situation, we have to see how it develops. One thing is certain that if there is too much shilly-shallying and if America gives up now her defence of Korea, she may be driven to yield position after position until it is too late; at one point or another she will have to stand and

face the necessity of drastic action even if it leads to war. Stalin also seems not to be ready to face at once the risk of a world war and, if so, Truman can turn the tables on him by constantly facing him with the onus of either taking that risk or yielding position after position to America. I think that is all that I can see at present; for the moment the situation is as grave as it can be.

28.6.1950.

Sri Aurobindo

Section Two

Private Letters to Public Figures
and to the Editor of *Mother India*
1948–1950

Private Letters to Public Figures 1948–1950

To Surendra Mohan Ghosh

I have strong objections to your giving up your position as President of the B.P.C.C. But I recognise that there are good reasons for your not wishing to disappoint Jawaharlal, also the great importance of this other work at Dacca. If you finally decide after seeing the full development of the new situation in Bengal that your relinquishing the presidentship will not frustrate or injure the work in West Bengal, then I am ready to withdraw my objection.

12.6.48

To Kailas Nath Katju

Owing to heavy pressure during the last month I am only now able to answer your letter of August 20th forwarding [a] full report of your address on the occasion of the Mahotsav. I had already heard your talk on the radio in connection with [the] Jayanti and I found that it was very much appreciated by those who were trying to do my work in Bengal and they had drawn much encouragement from it and felt heartened by it in their endeavours. I write this to convey to you my blessings for all you have done on the occasion of the Jayanti and the great push it has given to the work and to the workers in Bengal.

I have long been acquainted with your name and what you have done for our country as one of its leaders in the struggle for freedom and after Independence was gained, in the heavy and difficult work that had to be done under trying and arduous circumstances to organise its independence and contend with the growing difficulties of the task.

The difficulties you speak of which beset all who are working for the world's peace and welfare are indeed very great; the

strength to meet them and to support those who are doing the work is less widespread than it ought to be and there is too much fear and demoralisation everywhere in the world and the will to co-operate for the best is deficient and often absent. I am afraid the hour in which one can be confident that these difficulties would be soon overcome is not yet near and men of goodwill will have to persevere with great courage before they can say, "It is done." But I believe that as the labour is arduous so will the outcome be sure and satisfying. It has been a great good fortune for Bengal that you have been sent there as Governor and you may be confident that my blessings will attend you in your work.

3.9.49

To K. M. Munshi

[1]

K. M. MUNSHI: In the Constituent Assembly there is debate about the use of international numerals with the Hindi language. The whole of South India will not accept Hindi as the national language unless international numerals are used. The non-Hindi provinces are supporting South India. The organised Hindi group is fighting against the international numeral on the ground of Aryan Culture.

Sri Aurobindo has no decided opinion on the question. But if the South Indians and other non-Hindi Provinces insist on this arrangement, it seems to him that for the sake of unity in this matter and a unified practice and also for international convenience the Hindi-speaking people might make a concession to the others.¹

3 September 1949

[2]

K. M. MUNSHI: I would like to have your guidance as regards the future of Sanatan Dharma. Starting from your Uttarpura

¹ Reply dictated by Sri Aurobindo to A. B. Purani for sending to Munshi over Purani's signature. — Ed.

Speech, which has been a sort of beacon to me for years, I have been working for the reintegration of Hindu culture . . . But I am neither learned nor a profound thinker. I can contribute only my faith and the little energy which has been vouchsafed to me. I only pray that strength may be given to me to carry forward the message of the Seers of whom, in my opinion, you are the only surviving Apostle. What shall I do now?

My dear Kanubhai

In reply to your letter to him of July 30th 1950 Sri Aurobindo has asked me to write to you the following: —²

“Your feeling that there should be reintegration of Indian Culture under modern conditions is quite right. It is *the* work that has to be done. And as far as Sri Aurobindo can see at present Indian Spiritual Culture has a great and bright future before it. It is the future power that might dominate the world.

So, your efforts in carrying out that work are quite in the right direction and in carrying out that work you would have his full support and blessings.”

3 August 1950

² *The paragraphs that follow were dictated by Sri Aurobindo to A. B. Purani and sent to Munshi over Purani's signature. — Ed.*

Notes and Letters
to the Editor of *Mother India*
on Indian and World Events
1949–1950

On Pakistan

I don't want Pakistan to endure, made perfectly clear. Division must go — does not mean that division must be allowed to last in some form or other. Continued partition of India into two Federations one Hindu and one Muslim even if somehow connected together is no part of my idea of the Union of India.

March 1949

On the Commonwealth and Secularism

India can't remain in Dominion. It had decided to be a free republic and that can't be changed. On that basis it can have relations with Commonwealth if it wants.

Spirituality cannot be affirmed in a political constitution. You can add spirituality in a matter of the Spirit and not of constitutional politics.

April 1949

On the Unity Party

Amal

The Unity Party, Sri Aurobindo says, cannot be said to represent Sri Aurobindo's views [nor can it be said]¹ that its political programme is backed up by him. But perhaps without committing yourself you can say there is a Party, especially in Bengal, which is working for Indian Unity — apart from the

¹ MS (*dictated*) or

well-known Forward Block which has the same end in view though working on a different line.

25.4.1949

On French India and on Pakistan

June 27 1949

Amal,

I sent you a telegram asking you to withhold the spokesman's statement.² It was not to be republished. The statement does not adequately represent Sri Aurobindo's views. It over-stresses one point and leaves out others which are as important, but I see that you have already featured it in Mother India. Anyway Sri Aurobindo doesn't want anything further to be written about his view on the French India question; what is done is done but in future he wishes to remain silent unless an imperative need arises for a statement. Just now Sri Aurobindo does not want strong attacks to be made on the policy of the Congress Government as by their action they have removed many of the difficulties of the Asram and all that it needs for its institutions are coming in freely as a result of special orders given by the Madras Government so he does not want to figure as their enemy or opponent. Certain things in their attitude may seem doubtful but he does not want them too much stressed at present unless it becomes very necessary to do so.

About your Franco-India article, the main objection is that Mother does not want herself to be represented in that way (or in any way) and she objects to figuring in any special way as a representative of France or French culture. The article is inopportune at this moment. It contains many statements that would have to be modified or not put forward at all.

As for the contravention article Sri Aurobindo thought that

² This letter, dictated by Sri Aurobindo, was sent over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The "spokesman's statement" was an interview that Nolini gave to a press agency on 14 June that was published in Mother India on 25 June. See Note on the Texts, pages 604–5, for details.—Ed.

one could wait to see what was the further action or attitude or inaction of the Government and whether what was meant was a complete prohibition of any dealing with the Pakistan issue before you determined the paper's own attitude towards all that and any extreme action. That does not mean that you will have to postpone indefinitely any necessary decision. If you think it necessary to take advantage of Nehru's speech that can be done while avoiding committing ourselves to any conflict for the moment.

On Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholicism and Communism

As to your proposed article on [Wyszynski]³, it seems to me that it is better to drop the subject. It had and has no value except as a stick with which to beat the Soviets and their allies. The sole question is in that case whether the man was justified in his stand for liberty even in that restricted area of religious freedom and the freedom especially of the Catholic religion to be itself, as every religion has a right to be in all civilised countries and whether it was worth while fighting out that question when the real question is how to get rid, if now it is at all possible, of the Bolshevik monstrosity and the tyranny with which it threatens the world. That can't be done by subtly philosophical and even metaphysical articles balancing the rights and wrongs on each side and the relative wickedness of the Soviets and the Western nations. Many readers might even take it as a justification or at least a partial condemnation of the prosecuting Government and the martyrdom it has chosen to inflict on the rebellious Cardinal. And what is the pertinence of the past history of the Roman Catholic Church, especially at a time when we have one of the most liberal minded Popes or even the most liberal minded Pope in Roman Catholic history? Even if it is only a fight between the Holy See of Rome and the unholy See of the Kremlin the fight is between one centre of religious intolerance and another centre of a still more damnable and intolerant religion,—for that is

³ MS (*dictated*) Midsentzy

what Bolshevism is,— still why give any latitude to what is by far the worse of the two?

3 August 1949

On the Kashmir Problem

Now let us come to your article. All you have written up to the X mark against the beginning of a para is very good and needed to be said; but after that there are certain things to which I have to take objection. For instance, why suggest a slur on the whole Mohammedan population of Kashmir by speaking of “fanatic spell of the name of Allah”? This cannot apply to the Kashmiris who follow Abdullah and who are in a large majority, they are for his idea of a secular state. The others in Gilgit and elsewhere are not actuated by religious fanaticism but by political motives. The rest of the sentence should be modified accordingly; the people in the districts who have been rescued from the grip of the rebels have shown strong gratitude for their release and it would be quite impolitic to ignore by such doubts the sincerity of this gratitude. I am not enamoured of your idea of an understanding between Pakistan and India, it is not likely that the Pakistan Government will consent to any understanding except one which will help to perpetuate the partition and be to their advantage. It would be most dangerous to forget Jinnah’s motive and policy in establishing Pakistan which is still the motive and policy of the Pakistan leaders,— although it would not be politic to say anything about it just now. If you keep what you have written it should be with the proviso, if there is a change of heart and if Pakistan becomes willing to effect some kind of junction with India or some overarching Council of cooperation between the two federations. But the most amazing thing is your disastrous suggestion of a coalition Government between the loyalists and the rebels in Kashmir. That would give a position and influence and control over all the affairs of the State to the supporters of Pakistan which they can never hope to have under the present circumstances. They would be able to appoint their own men in the administration, use intimidation and trickery in order to press people to vote against their will and generally falsify

the plebiscite, and they certainly would not hesitate to do all that they could for that end. It might very well knock all the good cards out of Abdullah's hands and smash up his present predominant chances of a favourable issue of the plebiscite.

There is a passage in your article containing a trenchant suggestion which has puzzled me. You seem to say that India has been beaten on the military ground in Kashmir and there is no hope of her keeping it or clearing out the invaders; her last chance is the plebiscite and that is the reason why she is insisting on the plebiscite. Is that at all true? It would mean that Indian military strength is unable to cope with that of Pakistan and then, if she cannot cope with it in Kashmir in spite of her initial advantage, can she do it anywhere? If she gives up Kashmir because of her military weakness that encourages Pakistan to carry through Jinnah's plan with regard to the establishment of Muslim rule in Northern India and they will try it out. I don't think this is really the case. It was for political motives, I take it, and not from a consciousness of military weakness that India did not push her initial advantage, and she insisted on the plebiscite, not because it was her last or only chance but because it gave her the best chance. In a plebiscite on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India she was and is quite confident of an overwhelming majority in her favour. Moreover, she does not cling to the plebiscite from motives of ideological purity and will even refuse it if it is to be held on any conditions other than those she has herself clearly and insistently laid down. She is quite prepared to withdraw the case from the cognizance of the U.N.O and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by fight to the finish, if that is unavoidable. That Patel has made quite clear and uncompromisingly positive and Nehru has not been less positive. Both of them are determined to resist to the bitter end any attempt to force a solution which is not consistent with the democratic will of the Kashmir people and their right of self-determination of their own destiny. At the same time they are trying to avoid a clash if it is at all possible.

One thing which both Abdullah and the India Government want to avoid and have decided to resist by all possible means

is a partition of Kashmir, especially with Gilgit and Northern Kashmir going to Pakistan. This is the greatest danger but the details and the reasons for the possibility of its materialising, though they are plain enough, have to be kept confidential or, at any rate, not to be discussed in public. But if you take account of it, it will be easier to understand the situation and the whole policy of the India Government. That at least is the stand taken by them and the spirit of the terms they have laid down for the conditions of the plebiscite. These conditions have been just at this moment published in the newspapers and the whole course of negotiations with the U.N.O. Kashmir Commission has been laid bare in a public statement. Practically, the Commission representative has conceded on its part almost all the essential demands and conditions laid down by Nehru. All, however, remains fluid until and unless the Security Council acquiesces in the arrangements proposed by their own Commission or else take a different decision and until the plebiscite Administrator is appointed and makes the final arrangements. What will finally transpire from all this lies as the Greeks used to say on the knees of the Gods, *theōn en gounasi keitai*. It lies also with the reactions of the Pakistan leaders which are more easily calculable, but may not show themselves until a possibly much later date.

In any case, it seems to me that our only course is to support the India Government in the stand they are taking in regard to Kashmir and the terms and conditions they have made, so long as they do not weaken and deviate from their position. Nothing should be said which would discourage the public mind or call away the support which the Government needs in maintaining the right course. What I have written on Kashmir is only my personal view at present based on the information I have and must be kept quite private. But it may perhaps be of some help to you in determining what you may say or not say about Kashmir.

Since the above was written there has appeared Pakistan's interpretation of the Commission's arrangement for the plebiscite. It looks as if Lozano had made his statements as smooth as possible to either party so that they got very different impressions of what was meant to be done. However

there is only one important point and that is about the Azad armies. If these are allowed to remain in arms in the places they now occupy the plebiscite will become a farce. But the India authorities seem to have received a definite promise from Lozano that it will be otherwise. We shall have to wait and see what will be the definite arrangements and how the Commission will get out of this imbroglio. But Pakistan in this matter is showing a mentality that makes one wonder whether it is worth while your suggesting the possibility of an amicable rapprochement between the two parts of partitioned India such as you have gone out of your way to elaborate in your article.

c. September 1949

On “New Year Thoughts”

Some of the statements in your article⁴ do not seem to me quite convincing, as for instance, the suggestion that one cannot be highly ethical or exaltedly ethical without being religious or highly religious or even a mystic without knowing it. The article is tremendously manysided and some readers might find it difficult to fit all the sides together; but I put this remark forward as an observation and not as an objection. Manysidedness is a merit and cannot be regarded as objectionable. Finally I want my “face” in the last sentence to be left out of the picture. I feel its appearance as an unexpected intrusion there; it had better retire into privacy. As for Nehru, I suppose the fling at him cannot be regarded as offensive, but I would rather like it, for reasons of my own, if there came upon you a temporary amnesia about his existence.

1 January 1950

Rishis as Leaders

The article can go as the editorial as you propose and the other arrangements are all right. But I must insist that the last words

⁴ “New Year Thoughts on Pacifism”, by K. D. Sethna. This article was published in Mother India on 7 January 1951. The printed version incorporated changes suggested by Sri Aurobindo in this letter.—Ed.

"till we put ourselves in the care of some Rishis among leaders" shall go out. I do not know of course who may be acclaimed as the Rishi in question, — the only one with a recognised claim to the title is not likely to be called from Tiruvannamalai to Delhi and would certainly refuse his consent to the transfer. But it is evident that the eyes of your readers will turn at once towards Pondicherry and consider that it is a claim for my appointment either to the place filled so worthily by C. R. or the kindred place admirably occupied by Nehru. I am a candidate for neither office and any suggestion of my promotion to these high offices should be left to other announcers and the last place in which it should occur is Mother India. So out with the "Rishi". You may say if you like "till the eyes of India's leaders see more clearly and we can take our place at your side" or any other equally innocent phrase.

January 1950

On Military Action

Amal,

Sri Aurobindo's information is that the India Government cannot be justly taxed with unwillingness to take even the strongest action demanded by the situation. But there are difficulties in the way hinging on the [attitude]⁵ of the U.N.O. and the possibility of taking action which could from the military point of view disable a successful prosecution of the necessary action involved in the step we want them to take. Certain means are necessary for military success and we can have them only from America. So it is better not to write in haste or to get the facts of the situation and base what you write upon that. This does not mean that the action has not to be taken but that it cannot be lightly done; if by a little delay and some secrecy and caution the difficulty can be overcome or avoided, that may be necessary however unpalatable.

6.3.50

⁵ MS (*dictated*) altitude

The Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After

Amal

I am writing to explain the indications I had given of my view that a change has taken place in the situation owing to the Nehru-Liaquat Pact making the position I took in the letter to Dilip⁶ no longer quite valid and necessitating a halt for a reconsideration and decision of policy. I gather from what you have written that you are rather surprised by my view of things and think that there is no change in the situation; you seem to regard the Pact as a futile affair not likely to succeed or to make any change in the situation and foredoomed to speedy failure. I would like to know what are the grounds for this view if you really hold it. I am quite prepared to learn that the situation is quite different from what it seems to be but that must be based on facts and the facts published in the newspapers or claimed as true by the Congress leaders point in a different direction. There seems to be something, initially at least, like a radical change in the situation and I have to face it, look at the possible and probable consequences and decide what has to be done.

What was the situation when the Dilip letter was written and what is it today? At that time everything had been pushed to a point at which war still seemed inevitable. The tension between Pakistan and India had grown more and more intolerable in every aspect, the massacres in East Bengal still seemed to make war inevitable and the India Government had just before Nehru's attempt to patch up a compromise made ready to march its army over the East Bengal borders once a few preliminaries had been arranged and war in Kashmir would have inevitably followed. America and Britain would not have been able to support Pakistan and, if our information is correct, had already intimated their inability to prevent India Government from taking the only possible course open to it in face of the massacres. In the circumstances the end of Pakistan would have been the certain consequence of war. The object we

⁶ See the letter of 4 April 1950, published on pages 506–7.—Ed.

had in view would have been within sight of achievement.

Now all this is changed. After the conclusion of the Pact, after its acceptance by the Congress Party and the Assembly and its initial success of organisation and implementation, its acceptance also in both Western and Eastern Pakistan, no outbreak of war can take place at least for some time to come and, unless the Pact fails, it may not take place. That may mean in certain contingencies the indefinite perpetuation of the existence of Pakistan and disappearance of the prospect of any unification of India. I regard the Pact as an exceedingly clever move of Liaquat Ali to fish his "nation" out of the desperate situation into which it had run itself and to secure its safe survival. I will not go elaborately into the reasons for my view and I am quite prepared for events breaking out which will alter the situation once more in an opposite sense. But I had to take things as they are or seem to be, weigh everything and estimate the position and make my decisions. I will not say more in this letter, though I may have much to say hereafter: you should be able to understand from what I have written why I have reversed my course. Our central object and the real policy of the paper stands, but what steps have to be taken or can be taken in the new circumstances can only be seen in the light of future developments.

Meanwhile I await your answer with regard to the question I have put you. Afterwards I shall write again especially about the stand to be taken by Mother India.

3.5.50

On the Communist Movement

September 19, 1950

Naturally I am in agreement with the views expressed about Communism in the Manifesto,⁷ but before associating myself fully with Masani's organisation and his movement I will have to wait and see how it develops in the field of practical politics.

⁷ "Manifesto for the Defence of Democracy and Independence in Asia", by Swatantra Party leader Mino Masani.—Ed.

For similar reasons I might expect you as editor of M.I. to wait and see and in that case it would be logical to withhold your signature while expressing your sympathy with the movement. Whatever is done must be something strong and effective, a blow that can tell; otherwise, the Communist movement has become so powerful that it can feed upon the shocks one tries to give it as one can see in the tussle that is going on in the UNO. As to Desai's objections, it seems to me that if any movement of the kind is made it would be worth while to make it as widely representative as possible and in that case the Socialists like Jai Prakash who distrust and are opposed to Communism would have to be included. There is such a thing as social democracy which need not be confused with Communism as it has its own more manageable standpoints: of course I agree with Desai as regards our standing on the side of Western democracies.

Part Four
Public Statements and Notices
concerning
Sri Aurobindo's Ashram and Yoga
1927–1949

Section One
Public Statements and Notices
concerning the Ashram
1927–1937

Public Statements about the Ashram 1927 and 1934

On the Ashram's Finances (1927)

Many would like to know how the Ashrama here is maintained.¹ As a matter of fact there is as yet no regular source of income; it has been carried on in the past by the contributions of a few who are in sympathy with the work and can afford to give some help. But these means are not likely to be sufficient for the future. I understand that Sri Aurobindo's work has to pass through three stages, the first when he was finding out the spiritual path and laying the foundations of his sadhana, a second, now begun, for creating a nucleus of spiritual workers and a number of institutions as the basis for his work, and last, the full work in India and abroad which will be very wide. For Sri Aurobindo's Sadhana is not merely for himself or a few disciples; it is a foundation for a great spiritual work for India and for all the world. In the first stage, the personal wants of Sri Aurobindo and the few disciples who lived with him being few and simple, much help was not needed; for there were no other expenses. But now in the second stage of his work this is no longer the case. The Ashrama will have to buy the houses it is now renting in order to prevent any possibility of dispersion. Numbers of disciples are beginning to stream in and, however economical the style of living, the cost of maintenance is greatly increasing and will go on increasing; the institutions to be started will need equipment and funds for maintenance. All this means large financial means which must come in from now onward and go on growing in the future. The members of the Ashrama expect that if the means are forthcoming, the second stage of the work will be not only carried on but thoroughly consolidated in the next two or three

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph for insertion in an article written by Jatindranath Sen Gupta and published in the Hindu (Madras) on 6 May 1927. This explains Sri Aurobindo's use of the third person.—Ed.

years and the third started. There ought surely to be no difficulty about satisfying this condition. In India Sri Aurobindo's is still a name to conjure with and, when the need is known I think those who have the power among the thousands who have faith in him and revere him, will not fail to send in their assistance. 1927

On the Ashram (1934)

Sri Aurobindo's Asram

In order to remove many misunderstandings which seem to have grown up about his Asram in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo considers it necessary to issue the following explicit statement.²

An Asram means the house or houses of a Teacher or Master of spiritual philosophy in which he receives and lodges those who come to him for the teaching and practice. An Asram is not an association or a religious body or a monastery—it is only what has been indicated above and nothing more.

Everything in the Asram belongs to the Teacher; the sadhaks (those who practise under him) have no claim, right or voice in any matter. They remain or go according to his will. Whatever money he receives is his property and not that of a public body. It is not a trust or a fund, for there is no public institution. Such Asrams have existed in India since many centuries before Christ and still exist in large numbers. All depends on the Teacher and ends with his life-time, unless there is another Teacher who can take his place.

The Asram in Pondicherry came into being in this way. Sri Aurobindo at first lived in Pondicherry with a few inmates in his house; afterwards a few more joined him. Later on after the Mother joined him, in 1920, the numbers began so much to increase that it was thought necessary to make an arrangement for lodging those who came and houses were bought and rented according to need for the purpose. Arrangements had also to be

² This statement was published anonymously in the *Hindu* of Madras on 20 February 1934 and in pamphlets entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" in March and August 1934. In every case it was followed by "Sri Aurobindo's Teaching" (see pages 547–50). It is reproduced here for its historical interest.—Ed.

made for the maintenance, repair, rebuilding of houses, for the service of food and for decent living and hygiene. All those were private rules made by the Mother and entirely at her discretion to increase, modify or alter — there is nothing in them of a public character.

All houses of the Asram are owned either by Sri Aurobindo or by the Mother. All the money spent belongs either to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Money is given by many to help in Sri Aurobindo's work. Some who are here give their earnings, but it is given to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother and not to the Asram as a public body, for there is no such body.

The Asram is not an association; there is no constituted body, no officials, no common property owned by an association, no governing council or committee, no activity undertaken of a public character.

The Asram is not a political institution; all association with political activities is renounced by those who live here. All propaganda, religious, political or social, has to be eschewed by the inmates.

The Asram is not a religious association. Those who are here come from all religions and some are of no religion. There is no creed or set of dogmas, no governing religious body; there are only the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and certain psychological practices of concentration and meditation, etc., for the enlarging of the consciousness, receptivity to the Truth, mastery over the desires, the discovery of the divine self and consciousness concealed within each human being, a higher evolution of the nature.

February 1934

Notices for Members of the Ashram 1928–1937

Notices of May 1928

[1]

It has been found necessary to change some of the forms and methods hitherto used to help by external means the individual and collective sadhana. This has to be done especially in regard to the consecration of food, the collective meditation and the individual contact of the sadhaka with the Mother. The existing forms were originally arranged in order to make possible a spiritual and psychic communion on the most physical and external planes by which there would be an interchange of forces, a continuous increase of the higher consciousness on the physical plane, a more and more rapid change of the external nature of the sadhakas and afterwards an increasing descent of the supramental light and power into Matter. But for this to be done there was needed a true and harmonious interchange, the Mother leading, the sadhakas following her realisation and progress. The Mother would raise all by a free self-giving of her forces, the sadhakas would realise in themselves her realisations and would by the force of an unfaltering aspiration and a surrender free from narrow personal demand and self-regarding littleness, consecrated wholly to the divine work, return her forces for a new progress. At first partly realised, this rhythm of interchange has existed less and less. The whole burden of the progress has fallen physically on the body of the Mother; for the forces it gives it receives little or nothing in exchange; the more its consciousness advances in the light, the more it is pulled back towards the unchanged obscurity of an unprogressive external nature. These conditions create an intolerable and useless strain and make the forms used at once unprofitable and unsafe. Other means will have to be found hereafter for the purpose.

Meanwhile modifications of form will have to be made in several details and others suppressed altogether.

26 May 1928

[2]

Meditation on all days of the week except Wednesday and Friday.

Flower offering on Tuesday and Thursday; none on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

May 1928

[3]

Meditation at 7.0 a.m. as before.

All fixed or daily times for sadhakas seeing the Mother are cancelled. Every day the Mother will call those whom she wants to see. Any others who need to see her will inform Nalini early in the morning or the night before and write the reason for their request which will be acceded to or otherwise dealt with according to circumstances and possibilities.

The soup will be distributed in the evening in the down-stairs verandah of Sri Aurobindo's house. All who take it must be present at 8.30 and remain seated in silence till the Mother comes. Before the distribution there will be a few minutes concentration all together.

The night meditations are cancelled for a time.

—
On the 1st of each month the distribution from the stores will be made in the store-room in the presence of the Mother at 8 P.M.

—
May 1928

Notices of 1929–1937

[These notices were written by Sri Aurobindo, typed by his secretary and posted on the Ashram notice-board.]

[1]

NOTICE

All who wish to be present at the drawing of the lottery, must come to the verandah downstairs in Sri Aurobindo's house after soup on Saturday, the 7th. Tickets will be distributed to them there.

September 5, 1929

[2]

NOTICE

It is not advisable that all should give up milk immediately. If it is to be done, it can only be when arrangements have been made for a substitute.

The only objection to the milk was that two cows were sick and their unhealthy milk was being mixed with the rest. But these two have now been sent away and there is no farther danger.

September 17, 1929

[3]

Notice

There have been several instances recently in which members of the Asram have been rude and overbearing in their behaviour to the French police when they come to the Asram in connection with the registration of new arrivals. There can be no possible excuse for this kind of conduct, especially as the police authorities have agreed to our own proposals in the matter and we have undertaken to help them with all necessary information. Sri Aurobindo has already given a warning against

making trouble for the Asram with the authorities; it ought not to be necessary to repeat it.

Especial care must be taken during these days when many are arriving from outside. If the police come for information, they must not be sent rudely away; they should be asked to wait and information must immediately be given to Purani who will deal with the matter.

1 August 1929

[4]

This Asram, maintaining almost a hundred people, has to be run at a heavy expense; it is therefore the understanding that while those who have nothing (the majority) are admitted free and nothing is asked from them, the few who have something are expected to give what they have. If they wish to have the charge of their whole spiritual and material future taken over by us, it is at least fair that they should make the offering of all their possessions.

December 1, 1929

Sri Aurobindo

[5]

An unique opportunity presents itself for the acquisition of a land of great value, specially prepared and large enough to supply all that the Asram needs of rice, of vegetables and more and also to maintain cows and a dairy so that the Asram can consume its own milk. The land is offered at an extraordinarily favourable rate. Originally offered at 66,000, it is now to be had at Rs 25,000.

The Mother wants to know if there is anyone in the Asram or connected with it or sympathetic with it who can get or procure the sum needed so that we may not lose the opportunity for this purchase.

3.3.33

Sri Aurobindo

[6]

In view of the approaching intended visit of Mahatma Gandhi the sadhaks are reminded that it is contrary to the rule of the Asram to join in any public demonstration such as meetings, lectures, receptions or departures. It is expected that they will observe strictly this rule.

3-2-34

Sri Aurobindo

[7]

Notice

As the Mother needs complete rest, there will be no pronam or evening darshan. All interviews are countermanded until farther notice and no books or letters are to be sent to her.

Sri Aurobindo

For today also it will be better if the sadhaks send no work to me.

14.6.34

[8]

Notice.

There will be no pronam or interviews today. No books or correspondence are to be sent.

The answers to yesterday's correspondence to which Sri Aurobindo had no time to attend last night, will be sent today or tomorrow as soon as he has time.

Sri Aurobindo

Tuesday. 17 July. [1934]

[9]

NOTICE

1. All letters in the evening should henceforth be sent in by 8.30 and all books by 9.30. After these times only communications on urgent matters such as illness etc can be received. Those who send in books and letters after the fixed hours cannot be sure of their communications being dealt with and must not expect an answer.

2. From now to the 15th August and afterwards sadhaks are asked to limit their letters as much as possible to what is necessary and important.

3. Those who send books daily to the Mother (apart from departmental reports) are asked to send them only twice a week or at most thrice on fixed days.

These recommendations have to be made because at present there is an excess of work for the Mother which prevents both sufficient rest and the concentration necessary for more important things that have to be done. The correspondence has come to engross all the time not given to Pranam and interviews and interferes with or entirely prevents more important sides of the work. It is necessary to impose a more reasonable proportion and set right the balance. It is to be hoped that the sadhaks will themselves cooperate willingly in getting this done.

July 17, 1934.

Sri Aurobindo

[10]

Notice about the Rosary terrace¹

Those who are not inmates of this compound cannot come on the Rosary terrace without special permission from the Mother.

4 August 1934

¹ *The heading of this notice was written by the Mother.—Ed.*

[11]

NOTICE

1. Those who are waiting for the Pranam before the Mother comes down, should remain quiet and silent so that all who wish to prepare themselves by concentration may be able to do so and the right atmosphere may be created for the Meditation.
2. No one should come out or go in from the time the Meditation has begun up to its ending.
3. Laughing, whispering or talk should not be indulged in in the Pranam hall while the Pranam is going on.
4. No one should look upon the Pranam either as a formal routine or an obligatory ceremony or think himself under any compulsion to come there. The object of the Pranam is not that sadhaks should offer a formal or a ritual daily homage to the Mother, but that the sadhaks may receive along with the Mother's blessing whatever spiritual help or influence they are in a condition to receive and assimilate. It is important to maintain a quiet and collected atmosphere favourable for that purpose.

11 August, 1934

Sri Aurobindo

[12]

NOTICE

From today onward till a week after the 24th the sending of books and correspondence is suspended. Only urgent communications (e.g. medical reports), necessary information and things of importance that cannot wait should be sent during this time.

16 November 1934

Sri Aurobindo

[13]

NOTICE

Correspondence can be resumed from Monday the 3^d December. At the same time I am obliged to remind the sadhaks of what I had written in my notice before the 15th August last. Since then the situation is no better. On the contrary the volume of correspondence, books and reports had considerably increased and the Mother had often less than four hours rest out of the twenty-four. This is a strain that cannot be allowed to continue. I must therefore again ask the sadhaks to use more discretion in this matter so that it may not be necessary to multiply the non-correspondence days or make restrictive rules so as to limit the amount of correspondence.

1.12.1934

Sri Aurobindo

[14]

Until farther notice sadhaks are requested not to go to the Dispensary for medicines or treatment without special permission or order from the Mother.
late 1934

[15]

Notice

When the Ashram is shown to visitors, the Dispensary must be omitted from the parts shown hereafter.
late 1934

[16]

NOTICE

As usual in view of the coming Darshan, books and regular correspondence have to be suspended until after the 21st. Notice will be given when they can be resumed.

Medical reports are not to be discontinued. Letters giving

urgent or necessary information or communications of importance that cannot be delayed can be sent. But all such correspondence should as a rule be as brief as possible.²

7.2.35

Sri Aurobindo

[17]

NOTICE

The withdrawal of the previous notice about correspondence does not mean that books, letters etc. can be sent as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

20-3-35

Sri Aurobindo

[18]

NOTICE

In view of the approach of the darshan day books and correspondence are suspended from Saturday the 27th July until farther notice. This notice is necessary because correspondence for 2 or 3 months had become as heavy as before.

Are excepted medical reports and such departmental reports as the Mother may direct to continue; also communications on matters of urgent importance.

Those who are accustomed to write regularly about their sadhana may continue to write once a week during this period if they find it necessary.

July 26, 1935

Sri Aurobindo

² When this notice was taken down, Sri Aurobindo wrote to his secretary on the bottom of the typed copy:

Nolini

Tajdar has taken off this notice — but I do not want all the floods of books and correspondence back again. You should put up a notice that the withdrawal does not mean that all the books and correspondence can come as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

In response to this Nolini drafted the notice of 20 March 1935.—Ed.

[19]

NOTICE

As at this time the number of those taking meals increases greatly, all are requested to keep regularly to the fixed hours. The arrangement for late comers can be allowed only for those who are detained by the Mother's work and for no one else.

7.8.1935

[20]

NOTICE

In view of the coming Darshan correspondence is suspended for the rest of the month except for urgent or indispensable communications. Medical reports to be sent as usual and any other departmental reports the continuance of which the Mother may think necessary.

Sri Aurobindo

November 10, 1935

[21]

NOTICE

The withdrawal of the previous notice about correspondence does not mean that books, letters etc. can be sent as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

In future letters and personal books should be sent in by 7 P.M. and not later.

It may be necessary, as there is no longer sufficient time in the afternoon, to discontinue the afternoon mail except for urgent answers.³

December 2, 1935

Sri Aurobindo

³ This is an enlarged version of the notice of 20 March 1935 (see notice 17 above). Sri Aurobindo added the last two paragraphs by hand.—Ed.

[22]

The attention of the sadhaks is called to the terms of the Notice of the 2^d December.

It is quite impossible for us at the present time to go on again dealing with masses of correspondence which keep the Mother after her day's work still occupied up to the small hours of the morning and myself answering letters all the night. Under such conditions the really important work we have to do cannot be done.

The sadhaks are asked to restrict their correspondence to what is necessary only, to a minimum.

The rule that no letters should be sent after 7 pm must also be observed. We cannot have personal books and letters pouring in till late at night.

It is also necessary to recall the fact that Sunday is a complete non-correspondence day. Latterly this rule seems to have been too much ignored, often forgotten altogether.

Sri Aurobindo

[23]

NOTICE

In view of the coming darshan correspondence is suspended till farther notice. Departmental and medical reports as usual.

July 31, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[24]

It has become necessary to remind the sadhaks of two of the rules about correspondence which are now being disregarded—

(1) that Sunday is a non-correspondence day.

(2) that letters have to be given in by 7 pm or at the latest before 8 pm. Only departmental books and reports can be sent in later, but these also not too late.

If letters continue to come in at all hours, it will become impossible to deal with the correspondence.

August 31, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[25]

NOTICE

In view of the coming darshan correspondence is suspended; subject to the usual exceptions (medical reports etc), throughout the month of November.

November 1, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[26]

NOTICE

It has been found necessary to extend the non-correspondence period; it will continue until further orders.

28.2.37

Sri Aurobindo

[27]

NOTICE

During the Darshan time from today correspondence should be suspended.

August 1, 1937

Sri Aurobindo

Section Two

Public Statements about
Sri Aurobindo's Path of Yoga
1934 and 1949

Sri Aurobindo's Teaching¹

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

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

But while the former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will in the plant and animal life, in man Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. It is not however by the mental will in man that this can be

¹ This statement was published along with "Sri Aurobindo's Asram" (see pages 530–31) in the Hindu of Madras on 20 February 1934 and in pamphlets entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" in March and August 1934. It has been reproduced many times since then.—Ed.

wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. In the past it has been attempted by a drawing away from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or Spirit. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not merely release the spiritual Self out of the world, but release it in the world, replace the mind's ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental truth-consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race. The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the descent and working of the higher still concealed supramental principle.

This however cannot be done at once or in a short time or by any rapid or miraculous transformation. Many steps have to be taken by the seeker before the supramental descent is possible. Man lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body but there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake—for it is only a very restricted influence from it that he receives now and that pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of this inner being and to live from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force. In doing so he discovers in himself his true soul which is not this outer mixture of mental, vital and physical elements but something of the Reality behind them, a spark from the one Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in his soul and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. But even then it is not at once the full supramental Light and Force. For there are several ranges of consciousness

between the ordinary human mind and the supramental Truth-consciousness. These intervening ranges have to be opened up and their power brought down into the mind, life and body. Only afterwards can the full power of the Truth-consciousness work in the nature. The process of this self-discipline or sadhana is therefore long and difficult, but even a little of it is so much gained because it makes the ultimate release and perfection more possible.

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

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

This is Sri Aurobindo's teaching and method of practice. It is not his object to develop any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion, for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose. The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each

one who follows it can in time discover the one Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.

February 1934

A Message to America

I have been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but, for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.

But what shall be that ideal and that goal? That depends on our conception of the realities of life and the supreme Reality.

Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure inconscient beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit; it has, even in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other, the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

The Science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness: even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing or successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must

be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscious and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND OTHER WRITINGS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST consists of notes, letters, telegrams and public statements written by Sri Aurobindo at various times that are of special interest to students of his life. The volume does not, as a rule, include letters written between 1927 and 1950. Most letters of biographical or historical interest from that period are included in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

The contents of the present volume have been arranged by the editors in four parts, each of which is divided into two or three sections.

PART ONE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sri Aurobindo never wrote, of his own volition, anything autobiographical in the ordinary sense of the word. He wrote most of the notes in this part to correct statements made by others.

Section One Life Sketches and Other Autobiographical Notes

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch. Sri Aurobindo wrote this piece in June 1930 for publication in *Among the Great*, a book written by his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy. He used the third person because he wished the piece to appear as an impersonal statement from an anonymous “authoritative source”. *Among the Great* consists of accounts of Dilip’s meetings and excerpts from his correspondence with five eminent contemporaries — Romain Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Dilip began working on his manuscript sometime during the late 1920s. Around September 1928, he sent portions of it, including a life sketch written by him, to Sri

Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's remarks on this life sketch are published as item [1] of the Appendix (see page 11). In November 1928, Dilip became a member of the Ashram. A year and a half later, in March 1930, he learned that a publisher in New York was interested in his book. On the fifteenth of that month, he wrote giving this information to Sri Aurobindo and submitting some material he wished to have included in the book. Sri Aurobindo's response is reproduced as item [2] of the Appendix (page 11). Dilip was unwilling to accept Sri Aurobindo's suggestion to "omit all account or narrative". He sent another draft of a life sketch, which Sri Aurobindo commented on in a letter of 25 March (pages 11–12). Finally Sri Aurobindo agreed to write a brief life sketch himself. On 1 June, in the course of a letter on another subject, he noted: "I shall see whether I can get the thing done (the facts of the life) in these ten days." The work was completed before 27 June, the date of the letter published on pages 12–13.

Among the Great was not accepted by the New York publisher. It was first brought out in India in 1945 (Bombay: Nalanda Publications). The "Life Sketch" appeared as an appendix to this edition, below the following note by Dilip: "*For the benefit of Western readers I append here a brief statement of the principal facts of Sri Aurobindo's public and merely outward life from an authoritative source.*" But the text of the "Life Sketch" had already been in print for several years. On 15 August 1934 the Calcutta fortnightly journal *Onward* reproduced an abridged version. (Other newspapers subsequently printed the complete text.) In 1937 Radhakanta Nag of the Arya Publishing House proposed bringing it out as a pamphlet. This idea was put before Sri Aurobindo on 23 February 1937. He gave his consent with a luke-warm "Very well." The booklet was published later the same year. In 1948 the text was reproduced, with a few editorial additions, in a booklet entitled "Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram" (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). In subsequent editions of this booklet, the text of the "Life Sketch" underwent further editorial modifications. In 1975 a modified text appeared in Volume 30, *Index and Glossary*, of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. In April 1985 the original text was reproduced in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*. This was the first time that the "Life Sketch" was published as a text written by Sri Aurobindo. The editors of *Archives and Research* added two letters

from Sri Aurobindo's correspondence with Dilip, which explain the circumstances of the text's composition and make it clear why he did not want it to be published as his. The same letters, along with three others, are published in the Appendix that follows the "Life Sketch" in the present volume.

Appendix: Letters on "Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch". [1] Circa September–October 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote these sentences in the margin of a letter written by Dilip Kumar Roy shortly before he joined the Ashram in November 1928. [2] This paragraph is part of a letter from Sri Aurobindo to Dilip dated 16 March 1930. The balance of the letter deals with various writings by Sri Aurobindo that Dilip wanted to include in *Among the Great*. [3] 25 March 1930. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after reading a "biography" (that is, a life sketch) written by Dilip for *Among the Great*. [4] The manuscript of this letter is not dated, but it apparently was written in June 1930. [5] 27 June 1930. This letter deals with the draft of a proposed note on Sri Aurobindo's "occidental education" (see the last sentence of letter [4]), which Dilip intended to add to Sri Aurobindo's "Life Sketch". In the printed text of the "Life Sketch" the paragraph that Sri Aurobindo placed here between inverted commas was printed as a footnote. The sentence about Sri Aurobindo's prizes and examinations, which he wanted to have omitted, was tacked on rather awkwardly as a closing parenthesis. In a typescript of the text that was submitted to him, Sri Aurobindo emended "to study Goethe and Dante" to "to read Goethe and Dante".

Incomplete Life Sketches. These pieces are from Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts of the 1920s. The circumstances of their writing are not known.

Incomplete Life Sketch in Outline Form, c. 1922. Sri Aurobindo wrote this outline of his life up to 1914 sometime during the early 1920s. (The non-cooperation movement, mentioned in the text, began in August 1920 and ended in February 1922.)

Fragmentary Life Sketch, c. 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote this isolated passage in 1928 or 1929 in a notebook used otherwise for notes on philosophy and yoga.

Autobiographical Notes. Two of these unrelated pieces are from the year 1903. The third (a revision of the second) is from 1928.

A Day in Srinagar. 1903, probably 30 May. Sri Aurobindo was in Kashmir from late May to mid September 1903. During this time he served as the private secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda. Letters that he wrote for the Maharaja while in Kashmir show that the royal party was in Srinagar at least three times: from 28 May (or slightly before) to 6 or 7 June, for a few days around 23 June, and again for ten days or more after 5 September. References in these diary notations make it seem likely that they were written during the first of the visits to the Kashmiri capital, that is, between 28 May and 6 June. The only Saturday during this period (omitting 6 June itself, which must have been spent making preparations to go to Icchabal, or “Archibal”, as Sri Aurobindo spelled it) was 30 May 1903. This then is the likely date of these notes. The longer and shorter pieces separated here by an asterisk were written by Sri Aurobindo on separate pages of his notebook. The Sardesai mentioned in the first piece is no doubt Govind Sakharam Sardesai, the Marathi historian, who was an officer in the Maharaja’s service. The Maharaja was often referred to as His Highness (H.H.). His chief Baroda residence was Lakshmi Vilas Palace, an imposing building that unsuccessfully tries to combine Italian, Indian and other architectural elements.

Information Supplied to the King’s College Register. [1] 16 September 1903. While in Srinagar, Sri Aurobindo received a form from the editors of the *Register of Admissions* of his Cambridge college, asking him for information about his university and subsequent career. He filled out the form on 16 September and returned it. The text is reproduced here from the original form, which is preserved in the King’s College Library. [2] 31 August 1928. A short biographical entry based on the information Sri Aurobindo submitted in 1903 was published in *A Register of Admissions to King’s College Cambridge 1850–1900*, compiled by John J. Withers (London, 1903). In 1928 the editors of the second edition of this work sent a copy of the 1903 entry to Sri Aurobindo, asking him to correct and update it in the spaces provided. In the present text, the old entry is printed as it was submitted to Sri Aurobindo. Passages cancelled by him are set in “strike-out” mode, his additions in regular type. The text is reproduced from the original form, which is preserved in the King’s College Library. The revised entry was published in *A Register of Admissions to King’s College*

Cambridge 1797–1928, compiled by John J. Withers (London, 1929).

Section Two
Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies
and Other Publications

Sri Aurobindo wrote these notes between 1943 and 1947 to correct erroneous or misleading statements about his life made in biographies, other books or newspaper articles that were submitted to him by the authors before publication or brought to his attention by others after publication. For the convenience of readers, the editors of the present volume have arranged the notes according to the dates of the events dealt with. In the paragraphs that follow, however, the editors discuss the notes in the approximate order in which Sri Aurobindo wrote them, treating notes occasioned by a given biography or article as a group.

(1) Notes on *Sri Aurobindo*, by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. In February 1943, Dr. Iyengar, then Professor of English at Basaveshvar College, Bagalkot, brought to the Ashram the 133-page manuscript of a biography of Sri Aurobindo that he had written, in the hope that Sri Aurobindo would read and comment on it. Sri Aurobindo agreed, and made numerous corrections directly on Iyengar's manuscript. Around 35 of these corrections were typed, further corrected by Sri Aurobindo, retyped and corrected again. A copy of the final typed pages, consisting now of 39 notes, was given to Iyengar for incorporation in his book. Over the next ten months, Iyengar enlarged his manuscript to more than 300 pages. In November 1943 he brought it to the Ashram and left it with Sri Aurobindo for further correction. Sri Aurobindo did some work directly on the manuscript but wrote longer corrections on small note pads. Twenty-eight of these notes were typed and further revised. He finished this work before May 1944. A copy of his corrections was given to Iyengar, who incorporated them in the final manuscript of his book, which was published by the Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, in 1945. Most of the 67 notes that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1943 and 1944 for Iyengar's use were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953. They were reprinted in *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* in 1972. All the published notes, along with a few smaller ones, are included in the present volume.

(2) Notes on *Yogi Arvind*, by V.D. Kulkarni. This book, written in Marathi, was published in 1935. Eight years later, in March 1943, a copy of it was shown to Sri Aurobindo, who wrote eight comments in the margins. These comments were first published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953.

(3) Notes on material gathered by A.B. Purani, author of *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*. A disciple of Sri Aurobindo from 1918 and a member of the Ashram from 1923, Purani collected biographical material about Sri Aurobindo for a number of years, and published a biography of him in 1957. Sometime around 1943–45, Purani obtained three typed accounts of Sri Aurobindo's service in Baroda State, which he presented to Sri Aurobindo for correction. Sri Aurobindo wrote nine notes in the margins or between the lines of two of the sheets. He corrected the other account, entitled "Sri Aurobindo — An Officer in the Baroda State", by writing ten notes on separate sheets. All these notes were published for the first time in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* in 1978.

(4) Notes on *Sri Aurobindo o Banglay Swadeshi Jug*, by Girijashankar Raychaudhuri. This work appeared serially in the Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* during the 1940s and was published as a book by Navabharat Publishing, Calcutta, in 1956. Around 1943–45, A.B. Purani typed translations or paraphrases of passages from two *Udbodhan* instalments and gave them to Sri Aurobindo. In response, Sri Aurobindo wrote seven notes of various lengths. Around the same time he made the following comment about Girijashankar's biographical work:

Girija Sankar's statements about Sri Aurobindo cannot be taken as they are; they are often based on false or twisted information, tend towards misrepresentation or are only inferences or guesses.

In one of the chapters of *Sri Aurobindo o Banglay Swadeshi Jug*, Girijashankar cited a letter written to him by Swami Sundarananda of the *Udbodhan* office, in which Sundarananda claimed that Sri Aurobindo visited Saradamani Devi, the widow of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, on his way to Chandernagore in 1910. This and other parts of Girijashankar's articles were shown to Sri Aurobindo, who on 15

December 1944 replied in the form of a letter to Charu Chandra Dutt, the substance of which was published in the *Udbodhan* (*Phalgun* 1351). The story about Sri Aurobindo's visit to Saradamani Devi was repeated by a certain K. Ghosh in a letter published in the *Hindusthan Standard* of 6 June 1945. In response, Sri Aurobindo dictated another letter, which was published in the *Sunday Times* of Madras on 24 June. Around the same time, Sri Aurobindo's disciple Sureshchandra Chakravarty, who was with him on his trip from Calcutta to Chandernagore, published an article dealing with that event in the *Baishakh* 1352 issue of *Prabasi*. In reply to this, Ramchandra Majumdar, who was with Sri Aurobindo and Sureshchandra for part of that night, published an article (*Prabasi*, *Sraban* 1352) questioning Sureshchandra's account. When this was brought to Sri Aurobindo's attention, he dictated a final statement in which he tried to set the record straight. This was not published during his lifetime, but it was used by his disciple Nolini Kanta Gupta in writing an article that was published in *Prabasi* in *Phalgun* 1352. The first two letters by Sri Aurobindo referred to above were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953. The third was published in *On Himself* in 1972.

(5) Notes on *Nivedita: Fille de l'Inde*, by Lizelle Reymond. This biography of Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) was published by Éditions Victor Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel, in 1945. In 1946, passages of Reymond's manuscript dealing with Sri Aurobindo were read out to him, and on 13 September of that year he dictated a reply in the form of a letter to his disciple Pavitra (P. B. Saint Hilaire). The letter to Pavitra was first published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953.

(6) Notes on *Shri Aurobindo*, by Gabriel E. Monod-Herzen. A scientist and professor, Monod-Herzen lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the 1940s. In or around 1946, he submitted a manuscript of a biography he had written to Sri Aurobindo, who dictated 38 corrections to his amanuensis. These were typed and given to Monod-Herzen for use in his biography, written in French and published in 1954. Most of these notes were included in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother* in 1953.

While correcting Monod-Herzen's manuscript, Sri Aurobindo decided to write a separate note on his political life. This eventually

became the twenty-page “General Note on Sri Aurobindo’s Political Life” reproduced on pages 47–66. The typescript of this note is dated “Nov 7 1946”. It was later revised and enlarged and in 1948 published anonymously in the booklet “Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram” (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). It has appeared in all subsequent editions of that work, and also was included in *On Himself* (1972).

(7) The other notes in this section are corrections of statements made in various publications. The note dealing with Sri Aurobindo’s learning of English (p. 25) was written in reply to a review of Sri Aurobindo’s *Collected Poems and Plays* published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) on 8 July 1944. The note was incorporated in a letter by R. Vaidyanathaswamy, editor of the *Advent* (Madras), that was published in the *TLS* on 6 January 1945. The note on Sri Aurobindo’s education and religious background in England (p. 26) and on his “first turn towards spiritual seeking” (p. 106) are from his manuscripts. The circumstances of their writing are not known. The first was written around 1940, the second around 1942. The notes referred to in this paragraph were first published in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* in December 1977.

The origin of the notes in the Appendix is not known. Unlike the other notes, which have been preserved in the form of handwritten or dictated manuscripts, these survive only in printed form. They may be transcriptions of oral remarks by Sri Aurobindo. Some of them were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953), the others in *On Himself* (1972).

Table 1
Emendations of Matters of Fact (Simple Cases)

This table lists editorial emendations of matters of fact in pieces reproduced in Part One. (Similar emendations in pieces in other Parts are dealt with in the note to the piece in question.) Emendations of matters of fact have been made only in cases of slips involving (1) dates, (2) place names, (3) names of events and offices, and (4) bibliographical details. In every case these slips could be rectified by reference to contemporary documents and reliable secondary sources that are clear and unambiguous. The documents and publications consulted are listed in column four. (Full bibliographical details on printed and internet sources are given on page 569.) More complex problems are listed in Table 2.

Pg.	MS or first ed. reading	Emended reading	Observations (with documents consulted)
5	1885	1884	Sri Aurobindo entered St. Paul's School in September 1884 (Gardiner, ed., <i>Admissions Registers</i> , p. 121; personal communication from the Librarian, St. Paul's School, London).
5	February	January	The steamship <i>Carthage</i> , by which Aurobindo travelled to India, left London on 12 January 1893 and arrived in Bombay on 6 February (Board of Trade <i>Passenger Lists</i> [BT 27/135], Public Records Office, London; personal communications from National Maritime Museum, London, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, London, and Lloyds, London).
20	1903	1893	Sri Aurobindo began his service in Baroda on 8 February 1893 (Baroda Service List, and other documents, Baroda Record Office, Vadodara; Sri Aurobindo corrected this slip himself in item [2] on p. 21 of the present volume).
20	June	April	Sri Aurobindo's marriage took place in April 1901, probably on the 29th of the month (handwritten statement by Bhupal Chandra Bose; printed poem written for the occasion dated 16 Baishakh 1308 [29 April 1901]; Baroda State Huzur Order dated 17 April 1901 mentioning a gift of money from the Maharaja to Sri Aurobindo "on the occasion of his marriage" [Baroda Record Office, Vadodara]).
51	seven	nine	Nine instalments of <i>New Lamps for Old</i> were published in the <i>Indu Prakash</i> between 7 August 1893 and 6 March 1894 (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram: Political Writings and Speeches 1890–1908</i> , pp. 11–62).
56	Karachi	Lahore	A resolution affirming complete independence as the goal of the Indian National Congress was first passed at the Lahore session in December 1929. A resolution passed at the Karachi session in March 1931 noted in passing that complete independence was still the goal of the Congress (Zaidi, et al., eds., vol. 9, pp. 670–71, vol. 10, p. 145).
59	Bengal Provincial	district	The conference held in Midnapore in December 1907, which Sri Aurobindo attended, was a district conference. In contemporary newspaper accounts it is referred to as the "Midnapore District Conference" or simply the "Midnapore Conference" (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram</i> , pp. 788–89, 790–94; <i>Bande Mataram</i> weekly edition, 15 December 1907, pp. 7–10). The 1907 Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Berhampur at the end of March (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram</i> , pp. 224–27).

- 61 Barisal Hooghly For the Hooghly Conference, see Sri Aurobindo: *Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910*, pp. 209–35. See also p. 59 of the present volume, where the events of the Hooghly Conference (September 1909) are discussed between events of late 1907–early 1908 and events of May 1908). The Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Barisal in April 1906. Note that Sri Aurobindo spoke at the Bakarganj District Conference on 19 June 1909 (Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 33–42). Bakarganj District was sometimes referred to as Barisal District.
- 61 Hooghly Pabna For the compromise at the Hooghly Conference of September 1909, see p. 59 of the present volume. An earlier compromise had been reached at the provincial conference held in Pabna, East Bengal, in February 1908 (Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, pp. 871–76, 902, 918 [where Sri Aurobindo specifically mentions “the compromise arrived at at Pabna”], 919, etc.; *Bande Mataram*, weekly edition, 16 February 1908, pp. 12–17; 25 February 1908, pp. 8–9).
- 62 Benares Lahore The negotiations for a united Congress in Bengal were held in December 1909 (Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 340–42, 363–71). This was before the third Lahore session of the Indian National Congress (December 1909). The Benares session of Congress was held in December 1905, two years before Sri Aurobindo emerged as a political leader.
- 76 Bengal district See above, emendation to statement on p. 59.
- 76 Provincial
- 79 Serpen- tine Mott's The illness to which Sri Aurobindo refers in this note occurred in November–December 1906. At that time he stayed in the house of his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose, in Mott's Lane, Calcutta (Sri Aurobindo's statement in the *Bande Mataram* Case [September 1907]; testimony of Subodh Chandra Mullick in the same case; deposition of Sukumar Sen in the Alipore Bomb Case; a signed document put in as evidence in the same case [Exhibit 77/2] giving Sri Aurobindo's address on 17 October 1906 as 25/5/1 Mott's Lane). Several other sources mention that Bhupal Chandra Bose lived in Serpentine Lane after 1906.

Table 2

Other Questions regarding Matters of Fact (Complex Cases)

This table lists statements of matters of fact that are not in accord with contemporary documents and reliable secondary sources, but which cannot be set right by means of simple verbal emendation. Relevant observations are provided in column three along with the documents and publications consulted. (Full bibliographical details on printed and internet sources are given on page 569.)

Pg.	Text reading	Observations (with documents consulted)
26	a Senior Classic at Oxford	William H. Drewett (1842/3–1909) is not listed in <i>Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886</i> , the authoritative register of members of the University of Oxford. He attended Didsbury College, Manchester, in 1860 and 1861, and began work as a probationary minister in 1861 (personal communications from Wesley College, Bristol, and Wesley Historical Society, London). In 1859 and 1860 he was a schoolmaster at Burton on Trent Grammar School, Staffordshire (Lichfield Record Office BD110/114; personal communication from Ferguson Memorial Library, Sydney). Presumably (non-preservation of records makes it impossible to confirm this) he studied Latin at the same school, which in the nineteenth century had a “strong emphasis on classics”, that is, Latin and Greek (“Burton-on-Trent Grammar School”). As the son of a Methodist minister who was planning to become a Methodist minister, Drewett would not have attended Oxford, which did not grant degrees to non-Anglicans before 1866.
28	Lieutenant Governor of Bengal	Sir Henry Cotton never served as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. He held various posts in the Bengal administrative and judicial services, including Chief Secretary in the Bengal secretariat, and in 1896 became Chief Commissioner of Assam, a position he held till his resignation in 1902 (Moulton; Ghosh, p. 321; Buckland, p. 96; “Provinces of British India”).
29	Austen Leigh was not the name of the Provost;	Austen Leigh was Provost of King’s College during the years Sri Aurobindo attended (1890–92). During the same period G. W. Prothero held the post of Praelector (<i>Cambridge University Calendar</i> , 1890, 1891, 1892–93; personal communications from the Provost and the Librarian, King’s College, Cambridge, 1975–77). Prothero took some interest in Sri Aurobindo, writing at least one letter on his behalf (Purani, pp. 327–28).

- 40 I went on in it uninterrupted . . . until, in fact, I left Baroda.
- 40– If I was in the Revenue Department . . . what was I doing there?
- 59 He led the party again . . . at Hooghly.
- 76 in the first row
- 84 No. Tied with a rope;
- Numerous documents in the Baroda State and Baroda College archives make it clear that Sri Aurobindo ceased to teach at Baroda College in April 1901, and resumed teaching in September 1904 (see for example letter of 28 September 1904 reproduced on p. 163 of the present volume). Numerous documents from various Baroda State departments, including the Baroda Service List, show that Sri Aurobindo drew his salary from the Revenue Department from May 1901 to September 1904. During most of this period he worked directly under the Maharaja, in the beginning without an official appointment. Between May and September 1903, he had the title Acting Secretary. Between the end of 1903 and September 1904, he had the title assistant Huzur Kamdar. In September 1904 he rejoined Baroda College as Vice-Principal and Professor of English (Baroda State Records, multiple items; Baroda College Records, multiple items).
- The first four sentences in this paragraph refer to events that took place late in 1907 and early in 1908. The rest of the paragraph refers to occurrences at the Hooghly session of the Bengal Provincial Conference, which took place in September 1909 (see Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 209–35). Sri Aurobindo discusses events at the Hooghly Conference again on pp. 61–62 of the present volume. He places this second discussion in its proper place in the chronological sequence, but calls the conference the “Provincial Conference at Barisal” (see also Table 1 above, emendations to statements on p. 61).
- Contemporary newspaper accounts agree that the first row of delegates at the Barisal Conference consisted of Surendranath Banerjea, Bhupendranath Bose and Motilal Ghose. These accounts, as well as official reports, note that the police allowed many delegates to pass, not just the first three, before attacking the younger men (*Bengalee*, April 17–18; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, April 16, 19; Government of India, HPA June 1906, 152–68). Sri Aurobindo, then new to politics, is not mentioned in any of these accounts.
- In *Karakahini* (Sri Aurobindo, *Bangla Rachana*, p. 8), Sri Aurobindo writes of his arrest: “I was handcuffed and a rope was tied around my waist” (*āmār hāte hātkādi, komare dādi deoa hoilo*). This agrees with contemporary reports in Calcutta newspapers.

Printed and Internet Sources for Data in Tables

[Archival sources are listed in full in the last column of the Tables.]

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PART TWO LETTERS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Most of Sri Aurobindo’s published letters were written to members of his Ashram and outside disciples between 1927 and 1950. Such letters are published in the following works: *Letters on Yoga*, *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, and *Letters on Poetry and Art*. Most of the letters included in Part Two of the present volume were written before 1927. Those that were written after that date are parts of sequences that began earlier, or deal with special subjects, such as Indian politics.

The material in this part has been arranged by the editors in three sections: (1) Letters on Personal, Practical and Political Matters, 1890–1926; (2) Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life, 1911–1928; and (3) Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life, 1921–1938.

Section One**Letters on Personal, Practical and Political Matters, 1890–1926**

The letters in this part have been arranged by the editors in five subsections: (1) Family Letters, 1890–1919; (2) Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892; (3) Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda, 1895–1906; (4) Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates, 1906–1926; (5) Open Letters and Messages Published in Newspapers, 1909–1925.

Family Letters, 1890–1919. Sri Aurobindo passed most of his youth, from 1877 to 1893, in England. Only part of one letter survives from this period. He wrote the next five letters in this subsection while living in Baroda between 1893 and 1906. The two letters to his father-in-law were written from Calcutta in 1906 and Pondicherry in 1919.

Extract from a Letter to His Father. 1890. This passage is from a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote to his father Dr. K. D. Ghose (1844–1892) shortly after his arrival in Cambridge in October 1890. His father copied out the passage in a letter written to his brother-in-law Jogindranath Bose in December 1890.

To His Grandfather. 11 January 1894. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his grandfather Raj Narain Bose (1826–1899), a well-known writer and leader of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, while posted in Gujaria, a town in northern Gujarat, which then was part of the princely state of Baroda.

To His Sister. 25 August 1894. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his younger sister Sarojini (1877–1956) shortly after his first visit to his home province after his return from England. Sarojini had been an infant when he went to England. The letter was published by their brother Barindra Kumar in *Jugantar* (Puja number 1364 B.S.).

Extract from a Letter to His Brother. 1899–1900. Sri Aurobindo made a typed copy of these pages from a letter written to his second brother Manmohan (1869–1924). His intention was to use them as an introduction to his poem *Love and Death*, written in 1899. At the top of the transcript he typed “To my Brother”. This apparently was meant to be the dedication of the poem and not the salutation of the letter. When he was preparing *Love and Death* for publication

in 1920, he dropped both the dedication and the introduction. The first of the two Latin quotations, from Virgil's *Georgics* (3.8–9), may be translated: "A path . . . by which I too may lift me from the dust, and float triumphant through the mouths of men". The second, from Horace's *Satires* (2.7.21, with a change in the mood of the verb), means "whither does such wretched stuff tend".

To His Uncle. 15 August 1902. Jogindranath Bose, the recipient of this letter, was Sri Aurobindo's eldest maternal uncle (*bāda māmā*).

To His Wife. 20 August 1902. Sri Aurobindo was married to Mrinalini Bose (1887–1918) in 1901. He generally corresponded with her in Bengali. Several letters from him to her in that language are reproduced in *Writings in Bengali and Sanskrit*, volume 9 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The present item is the only surviving letter from him to her that was written in English.

To His Father-in-Law. [1] 8 June 1906. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose (1861–1937) towards the beginning of his active political career. [2] 19 February 1919. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after Mrinalini's death from influenza in December 1918.

Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892. Sri Aurobindo passed the open examination for the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) in 1890. He completed his course work successfully, but was rejected in 1892 after failing to take advantage of the last chance offered him to pass the mandatory test in horse-riding. According to his own retrospective account, he had developed a distaste for Civil Service work and was delighted to be rejected on these trivial grounds.

To Lord Kimberley. [1] 21 November 1892. After he was rejected from the I.C.S., Sri Aurobindo was advised that his only hope, if he wished to remain in the service, was to write directly to the Secretary of State for India. The holder of this cabinet-level post was John Wodehouse, the first Earl of Kimberley (1826–1902). It is probable that Sri Aurobindo wrote to Kimberley at the insistence of James S. Cotton, who at this time was trying to pull strings to get the rejection overturned (see A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* [1978], pp. 326–33). [2] 12 December 1892. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after Lord Kimberley refused his request to grant him another chance to

take the riding test. As a candidate who had successfully completed all the requirements but riding, he was due the last instalment of the allowance given to probationers. This and the previous letter are reproduced here from the originals preserved in the Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.

Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda, 1895–1906. Sri Aurobindo wrote the letters reproduced in this section while working as an administrative officer and professor in the erstwhile princely state of Baroda. Then known as Arvind or Aravind or Aurobindo Ghose, he began work in the state in February 1893, just after his return from England, and continued until March 1906, when he joined the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. During the first part of this period he worked in various administrative departments. From 1898 to 1901 he was a professor of English and of French in the Baroda College. There followed a stint of three years (1901–4) when he worked in a secretarial capacity under Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda. (In many of the documents the Maharaja is referred to as “the Gaekwar” or “H.H.” [His Highness].) Finally, in 1905, he returned to the College as vice-principal and professor of English. These documents are a representative selection from the scores that have survived. They are arranged in chronological order.

To the Sar Suba, Baroda State. 1 June 1895. In May 1895 Sri Aurobindo was summoned by the Maharaja to Ootacamund, a hill station in South India, in order to prepare a précis of a complex legal case. He wrote this letter to his superior shortly after his arrival in “Ootie”.

To Bhuban Babu. June 1901. This letter (actually a postcard) is the only non-official item in this subsection. It was written by Sri Aurobindo to a friend or acquaintance about whom nothing is known. Sri Aurobindo went to Naini Tal, a resort in what is now Uttaranchal, after his marriage to Mrinalini Bose in April 1901. The Banerji mentioned in the last paragraph was probably Jatindranath Banerji (c. 1877–1930), a young Bengali who had come to Baroda to obtain military training. In 1902 Sri Aurobindo sent Banerji to Calcutta to begin revolutionary work in Bengal.

To an Officer of the Baroda State. 14 February 1903. The “letter

to the Residency” mentioned in this note is the one published next in sequence. Sri Aurobindo was anxious to leave Baroda at this time because he had to go to Bengal to settle a quarrel among members of the revolutionary society he and others had founded the year before.

Draft of Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular. 1903. In 1900 Lord Curzon, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, issued a circular letter requiring the rulers of princely states to obtain the permission of the government before leaving the country. Although worded in general terms, the circular was directed specifically against the Maharaja of Baroda, who had refused to return from Europe to meet the Viceroy that year. Two years later the Maharaja informed Baroda’s Resident—the name given to British political agents in the larger states—that he intended to revisit Europe. He was told that the Government of India would not grant him the necessary permission. A protest was submitted to “the Residency” (that is, the office of the Resident). The Resident replied in February. The present document is a draft of a reply to the Resident’s letter. The final version would have been sent over the signature of the Naib Dewan or Dewan.

To the Dewan, on the Government’s Reply to the Letter on the Curzon Circular. 14 August 1903. Unable to go to Europe, the Maharaja passed the summer of 1903 in Kashmir. Sri Aurobindo accompanied him there as his private secretary. The present document, addressed to R. V. Dhamnaskar, the Dewan or prime minister of the state, contains the Maharaja’s first reactions to the Government’s reply to the final version of the previous document.

To the Naib Dewan, on the Infant Marriage Bill. 8 July 1903. Written by Sri Aurobindo during the Kashmir tour of 1903 to an officer working under the Dewan.

A Letter of Condolence. 10 July 1903. Another letter written by Sri Aurobindo as secretary to the Maharaja during the Kashmir tour.

To R. C. Dutt. 30 July 1904. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848–1909) was an officer in the Indian Civil Service from 1871 to 1897. He rose to the position of Divisional Commissioner of Orissa, the highest post in the British administration yet held by an Indian. A few years after Dutt retired from the I.C.S., the Maharaja of Baroda offered him the position of Councillor (virtually the same as Dewan, a fact that would later cause some difficulties). The correspondence between the Gaekwar and

Dutt was handled by Sri Aurobindo, who had met Dutt earlier.

To the Principal, Baroda College. 18 September 1904. During part of 1904 Sri Aurobindo held the post of assistant Huzur Kamdar (Crown Secretary). This is one of many letters he wrote on behalf of the Maharaja during this period.

To the Dewan, on Rejoining the College. 28 September 1904. In September 1904 Sri Aurobindo was allowed to leave the state administration and to return to Baroda College, where he had served as professor between 1898 and 1901. He was given the post of vice-principal.

To the Maharaja. 29 March 1905. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his employer, Sayajirao Gaekwar (1863–1939), Maharaja of Baroda from 1875 to 1939, on behalf of his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose, who then was living with him in Baroda. Barin had just returned from Bengal, where for two or three years he had been helping to organise the revolutionary secret society that Sri Aurobindo, Jatin Banerji and others had set up. The Maharaja agreed to give Barin a job, but Barin went back to Bengal before he could begin work.

A Letter of Recommendation. 28 February 1906. Written just before Sri Aurobindo left Baroda to take part in the Swadeshi Movement. The Vividh Kala Mandir was a photographic studio and metal engraving shop founded by former students of Baroda's Kalabhavan, an art school associated with Baroda College.

Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates, 1906–1926. In August 1906 Sri Aurobindo began work as principal of the Bengal National College and as an editorial writer for the daily newspaper *Bande Mataram*. In May 1908 he was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. A year later he was released. In 1910 he settled in Pondicherry and cut off all direct connection with the freedom movement, though he continued to be regarded by the British government as a dangerous revolutionary. For a while he remained in indirect contact with the movement through Motilal Roy of Chandernagore.

To Bipin Chandra Pal. 1906. Bipin (also spelled "Bepin") Chandra Pal (1858–1932) was a nationalist speaker and writer. Sri Aurobindo apparently wrote this note to him in September or October 1906. At

this time, Pal was editor-in-chief of the nationalist newspaper *Bande Mataram* and Sri Aurobindo was its chief writer. This note was put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial (1908–9). The original has been lost. The text is reproduced here from a “paperbook” or printed transcript of the documentary evidence.

A Letter of Acknowledgment. 9 March 1907. Sri Aurobindo was in Deoghar (a hill-resort in what is now Jharkhand) from mid January to early April 1907. He had gone to Deoghar for rest and recuperation after the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress (December 1906). While there he took care of some pending office work, such as writing this acknowledgement of a small donation to the National College Fund. Sri Aurobindo’s note was put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial (1908–9). The original has been lost. It was reproduced in a British government report on the trial, which was later reprinted in the collection *Terrorism in Bengal*, volume 4 (Calcutta, 1995), p. 682.

To Hemendra Prasad Ghose. 19 April 1907. Hemendra Prasad Ghose (1876–1962) was one of the principal writers for the *Bande Mataram*. Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to him at a moment when there was much internal conflict in the office of the newspaper. Hemendra Prasad copied the note out in his diary, from which it is reproduced.

To Aswinicoomar Banerji. Sri Aurobindo wrote these letters to Aswinicoomar Banerji (1866–1945), a barrister, labour leader and nationalist politician, shortly before Sri Aurobindo was arrested for sedition in August 1907. [1] This letter is dated 26 June 1907. The biography of Garibaldi mentioned is J. Theodore Bent’s *The Life of Giuseppe Garibaldi* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882). [2] On 7 June 1907 the editors of the newspapers *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* and *Bande Mataram* were warned by the Government of Bengal that they would be prosecuted if they continued to publish inflammatory articles. On 5 July police arrested Bhupendranath Bose, whom they believed to be editor of *Jugantar*. He was tried and sentenced on 24 July. Six days later, the police searched the office of the *Bande Mataram*. It was evidently around this time that Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to Aswinicoomar. The originals of these two letters are in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi (Banerji papers).

To Dr. S. K. Mullick. 8 February 1908. Dr. Sharat Kumar Mullick (1869/70–1923/4), a physician with an interest in nationalist politics

and national education, was a lecturer in the National Medical College in 1908. Sri Aurobindo was principal of the Bengal National College in 1906 and 1907, and kept some connection with it until May 1908. From the end of 1906, however, his main occupation was the editing of the newspaper *Bande Mataram*. He dated this letter Calcutta, 8 February 1907. The year is certainly wrong. He is known to have been in Deoghar without a break between January and April 1907, and is known to have been in Calcutta on 8 February 1908. On that day he attended a meeting of the *Bande Mataram* company in the office of the newspaper. It may be this meeting to which Sri Aurobindo alludes in his letter.

Telegrams about a Planned Political Reception. 6 March 1908. In September 1907 Bipin Chandra Pal was sentenced to six months imprisonment for refusing to testify in the *Bande Mataram* Sedition Case. He was released in March 1908. On 6 March Sri Aurobindo and some of his colleagues sent telegrams to fifteen nationalist leaders in different parts of the country asking them to organise celebrations and make donations to a purse that would be offered to Pal. Sri Aurobindo varied the wording of his telegrams according to the recipient. A total of seven different versions were sent, all of which are reproduced here. These telegrams were put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial.

Extract of a Letter to Parthasarathi Aiyangar. 13 July 1911. Parthasarathi (1880–1929) was a friend and associate of Sri Aurobindo's from 1910, when the two met in Calcutta. He was the younger brother of Mandayam Srinivasachari, who was one of Sri Aurobindo's closest friends in Pondicherry.

Note on a Forged Document. April 1912. Early in 1912 a Pondicherry resident named Mayuresan, who was acting as an informer to the British Government, planted some forged documents in the well of the house of V.V.S. Aiyar, a Tamil revolutionary who was living in the French colony. Mayuresan intended the documents to be discovered by the French police, providing support for his claims against Aiyar, Srinivasachari, Sri Aurobindo and others. Unluckily for him, the jar containing the forgeries was discovered by Aiyar's maid-servant. Some of the documents were shown to Sri Aurobindo, who wrote out this detailed refutation of one of them.

To Anandrao. Sri Aurobindo mentioned Anandrao Jadhav, the eldest son of his friend Khaserao Jadhav, in his letter to Jogindranath

Bose of 15 August 1902 (see pp. 138–44). He presumably was the recipient of this letter. It is possible that the present letter, undated but apparently written in June 1912, is the “letter to our Marathi friend” mentioned in the second paragraph of the letter to Motilal Roy of 3 July 1912 (but see the note to that letter). The “Baroda friend” mentioned in the first sentence of the letter to Anandrao is probably Keshavrao Ganesh Deshpande, who was a close friend of Sri Aurobindo’s in England and in Baroda.

To Motilal Roy. In February 1910, Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta and took temporary refuge in Chandernagore, a small French enclave on the river Hooghly about thirty kilometres north of Calcutta. There he was looked after by Motilal Roy (1882–1959), a young member of a revolutionary secret society. After leaving Chandernagore for Pondicherry in April, Sri Aurobindo kept in touch with Motilal by letter. It was primarily to Motilal that he was referring when he wrote in the “General Note on Sri Aurobindo’s Political Life” (p. 64 of this volume): “For some years he kept up some private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led through one or two individuals.” In these letters, which were subject to interception by the police, he could not of course write openly about revolutionary matters. He developed a code in which “tantra” meant revolutionary activities, and things connected with tantra (*yogini chakras*, tantric books, etc.) referred to revolutionary implements like guns (see Arun Chandra Dutt, ed., *Light to Superlight* [Calcutta: Prabartak Publishers, 1972], pp. 27–30). The code sometimes got rather complicated (see the note to letter [3] below). Sri Aurobindo did not use his normal signature or initials in the first 22 letters. Instead he signed as Kali, K., A. K. or G. He often referred to other people by initials or pseudonyms. Parthasarathi Aiyangar, for example, became “P. S.” or “the Psalmist”. [1] 3 June 1912. The “letter to our Marathi friend” referred to in the second paragraph may be the letter to Anandrao (see above). Note however that according to Arun Chandra Dutt (*Light to Superlight*, pp. 4–5), the Marathi friend was a merchant named Madgodkar, apparently the same as the Madgaokar mentioned in letter [9] below. The “case” mentioned in the penultimate paragraph is the one that Mayuresan tried to set up; see “Note on a Forged Document” above. [2] August 1912 or after. (In April 1914, Sri Aurobindo wrote of “the

Parabrahma darshana”, apparently the experience mentioned in this letter, as happening “two years ago”; see *Record of Yoga*, volume 10 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 447.) [3] Circa January 1913. According to Arun Chandra Dutt (*Light to Superlight*, pp. 50–51), the “experiment in the smashâna” mentioned in this letter was the attempt to assassinate the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi on 23 December 1912. *Śmaśānas* or graveyards are believed to be good places for tantric sadhana. The term applies also to Delhi, the graveyard of vanished empires. Other terms in the letter make use of the same “tantric” metaphor. [4] February 1913. [5] June–July 1913. The “tantric books” referred to are almost certainly revolvers sent from Pondicherry to Chandernagore (see *Light to Superlight*, pp. 27–28). The explanations in cypher concerning these “books” have not survived. [6] June–July 1913. [7] August 1913. The manuscripts (“MSS”) referred to are Sri Aurobindo’s translation of Chittaranjan Das’s Bengali poem cycle *Sagar Sangit*, for which Das agreed to pay him Rs. 1000. [8] Circa 1913. [9] 1913 (between April and October 1913, Sri Aurobindo lived in a house on Mission Street, Pondicherry, for which the rent was Rs. 15). [10] March 1914. Rashbehari Bose was a revolutionary of Chandernagore who orchestrated the bomb-attack against Lord Hardinge in Delhi in December 1912. On 8 March 1914, British police officers, armed with an extradition warrant of arrest, raided Rashbehari’s house in Chandernagore. They were unable to arrest him, as he had slipped out some time before. News of the raid appeared in the newspapers on 12 March or before. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to Motilal a short while after he read the news. He was interested not only in Rashbehari’s fate, but also in the legal precedent that might be set by the issuance of an extradition warrant against a French subject for a crime committed in British India. [11] April 1914. For Paul Richard, see the note to “Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard” in Section Two below. Every four years an election was held in Pondicherry to choose a Deputy to represent the colony in the French Chamber. [12] 17 April 1914. This letter was written shortly after the results of the election were announced. According to the *Journal Officiel*, Bluysen received 33,154 votes, Lemaire 5624, La Porte 368 and Richard 231. [13] 5 May 1914. [14] June 1914. The “New Idea” was officially sanctioned by the government of French

India in June 1914. [15] July 1914. [16] July–August 1914. [17] 29 August 1914. [18] After October 1914. Bijoy Nag, a member of Sri Aurobindo's household, was imprisoned in October 1914 under the Defence of India Act after he entered British India. He remained in jail for the duration of the war. V. V. S. Aiyar was a revolutionary from the Madras Presidency who had taken refuge in Pondicherry. (Despite the “a certain”, Sri Aurobindo knew Aiyar well.) [19] Undated, but after the launch of the *Arya* in August 1914. [20] After September 1915, the month in which Motilal began to publish the Bengali journal *Prabartak*. [21] Undated, but apparently shortly after the armistice in November 1918. Haradhan Bakshi (1897–1962), a young man of Chandernagore, served in Mesopotamia during the war. [22] Apparently towards the end of 1919; certainly earlier than the next letter, which refers to the *Standard Bearer* by name. [23] 2 January 1920. A short time before this letter was written, M. K. Gandhi sent his son Devdas to speak to Sri Aurobindo on his behalf (see Gandhi's letter to Sri Aurobindo on page 442). [24] May 1920. Barindra Kumar Ghose (Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, see Section Two below) was released from the penal colony of the Andaman Islands in January 1920. Paul and Mirra Richard returned to Pondicherry from Japan on 24 April 1920. [25] 2 September 1920. For information on the “marriage idea”, see *Light to Superlight*, pp. 93–96. [26] 11 November 1920. The portion of this letter placed by Sri Aurobindo within inverted commas was reproduced in the *Standard Bearer* on 21 November 1920. See pages 278–79. [27] In 1922, Motilal's relationship with Sri Aurobindo soured. In May 1925 Motilal wrote asking for permission to visit Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. This telegram of 13 May was Sri Aurobindo's reply. It is reproduced from a notebook in which A. B. Purani wrote down Sri Aurobindo's conversations and bits of household news. [28] 8 May 1930. When Motilal wrote to Sri Aurobindo in April or May 1930, Sri Aurobindo wrote this draft and asked Nolini Kanta Gupta to reply in Bengali in his own name. This explains Sri Aurobindo's use of the third person.

Draft of Letter to Saurin Bose. June 1914. Saurin Bose, brother of Sri Aurobindo's wife Mrinalini, was a member of Sri Aurobindo's household in Pondicherry between 1911 and 1919. At the time this letter was written, he was on a visit to Bengal. On 30 May 1914, Sri

Aurobindo noted in his diary (*Record of Yoga*) that he had received a letter from Saurin that day. The present draft-letter was evidently written in reply to Saurin's letter. It may be dated, through references to known events, to 1 or 2 June 1914. (Paul and Mirra Richard were planning on 1 June to occupy the house mentioned in the letter "in one or two days". The prospectus that is mentioned in the draft as being due out "later this month" was issued in mid June. Note also that the sum of Rs. 400, mentioned in this letter and in letter [14] to Motilal Roy, is also mentioned in the *Record* of 29 May.) This draft was not sent to Saurin; presumably a fair copy was written and sent in its place.

To K. R. Appadurai. 13 April 1916. Appadurai was the brother-in-law of the poet Subramania Bharati. Bharati was living as a refugee in French Pondicherry at the time this letter was written. The "Mr. K. V. R" to whom Sri Aurobindo refers was K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, who sometimes helped him out financially.

Fragmentary Draft Letter. 1916–1920. The surviving portion of this draft (its beginning is not available) was written on one side of a sheet of paper that on the other side was used for part of a relatively early draft of the poem *Savitri*. It is not possible to assign an exact date to the *Savitri* draft, but it must have been written between 1916, when Sri Aurobindo began work on the poem, and 1921, when he temporarily stopped all forms of writing. The "volume of poems" mentioned was probably *Ahana and Other Poems* (1915). The intended recipient of the letter is not known for sure, but it is likely that it was Chittaranjan Das (see below).

To a Would-be Contributor to the *Arya*. 3 September 1919. A letter to an unknown person who had sent a poetry manuscript to Sri Aurobindo for publication in the *Arya*.

To Joseph Baptista. 5 January 1920. Joseph Baptista (1864–1930) was a barrister and nationalist politician who was associated with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In 1919 a group of nationalists of Bombay who took their inspiration from Tilak decided to form a party and to bring out an English daily newspaper. They deputed Baptista to write to Sri Aurobindo and offer him the editorship of the paper. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter in reply.

To Balkrishna Shivaram Moonje. B.S. Moonje (1872–1948) was a medical practitioner and political activist of Nagpur. When Sri

Aurobindo knew him in 1907–8, Moonje was one of the leaders of the Nationalist or Extremist Party. (Later he helped to found the Hindu Mahasabha; see Sri Aurobindo's telegram to Moonje in Part Three, under “On the Cripps Proposal”.) Sri Aurobindo stayed with Moonje when he visited Nagpur in January 1908. Twelve years later, Moonje and others invited Sri Aurobindo to preside over the forthcoming Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress. In letter [1], dated 30 August 1920, Sri Aurobindo set forth his reasons for declining this honour. [2] In this telegram, date-stamped on arrival 19 September 1920, he reiterated his decision.

To Chittaranjan Das. 18 November 1922. A barrister of Calcutta who became famous for successfully defending Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case (1908–9), Chittaranjan Das (1870–1925) later entered politics and became the leader of the Swarajya Party, which advocated entering the government's legislative assemblies in order to “wreck them from within”. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to Das on the same day that he wrote another to his brother Barin (see the first letter under “To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others” in Section Two below).

To Shyamsundar Chakravarty. 12 March 1926. Shyamsundar Chakravarty (sometimes spelled Chakrabarti or Chakraborty) (1869–1932) was a nationalist writer and orator. When Sri Aurobindo was editor-in-chief of the nationalist newspaper *Bande Mataram*, Chakravarty was one of its main writers. Eighteen years later he became editor of the *Bengalee*, a moderate nationalist newspaper of Calcutta. At that time he wrote to Sri Aurobindo inviting him to send contributions. This letter is Sri Aurobindo's reply. The original manuscript is not available. The text is reproduced from an old typed copy.

Open Letters Published in Newspapers, 1909–1925. In this subsection are included all known letters written by Sri Aurobindo for publication in newspapers, with the exception of the two open letters he published in his own journal *Karmayogin* in 1909 and 1910, and his reply to the writer of a review of his *Secret of the Veda*. (These letters are reproduced in *Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910* and *The Secret of the Veda*, volumes 8 and 15 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.)

To the Editor of the *Bengalee*. 14 May 1909. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter eight days after his acquittal from the charges brought against him in the Alipore Bomb Case. It was published in the *Bengalee* on 18 May 1909. The “defence fund” mentioned was set up by his uncle Krishna Kumar Mitra in the name of Sri Aurobindo’s sister Sarojini.

To the Editor of the *Hindu*. [1] 7 November 1910. Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Pondicherry on 1 April 1910. Shortly thereafter the Government of Bengal issued a warrant for his arrest on the charge of sedition for an open letter that had been published in the weekly newspaper *Karmayogin* on 25 December 1909. Sri Aurobindo remained incognito in Pondicherry until 7 November 1910, when he wrote this letter announcing his presence in the French enclave and his retirement from politics. He deferred “all explanation or justification of [his] action” until the Calcutta High Court had ruled on the appeal of the conviction of the printer in the *Karmayogin* sedition case. Coincidentally, that same day the Calcutta High Court threw out the printer’s conviction, thus nullifying the charges against Sri Aurobindo. His letter was published in the *Hindu* on 8 November. [2] 23 February 1911. This letter was published in the *Hindu* on 24 February 1911, the day after Sri Aurobindo wrote it. [3] July 1911. On 10 July 1911, the *Madras Times* published a short editorial (“leaderette”) entitled “Anarchism in the French Settlements”, which dealt with “political suspects” who had taken refuge in Pondicherry and were carrying out anti-British activities there. The writer cited a letter “from a correspondent in Pondicherry” that had been “published recently” in its columns, adding “if our correspondent is correctly informed, there is an organised Party in French India which supports Mr. Arabindo Ghosh and his friends”. The next week the same newspaper published an article that spoke openly of Sri Aurobindo as “a criminal and an assassin”, thus connecting him with the assassination of the British Collector Robert Ashe, which had taken place on 17 June 1911. Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to the editor of the *Madras Times* denying these charges, but was not given “the opportunity of reply”. He therefore wrote this letter to the editor of the *Hindu*. Published in that newspaper on 20 July 1911, it probably was written the previous day. [4] July 1911. This letter, a continuation of the previous one, was published in the *Hindu* on 21 July 1911. It probably was written the previous day. The “exposition” of the

author's views promised in the last sentence has not been found. It does not appear to have been published in the *Hindu*, and possibly was never written.

To the Editor of the *New India*. [1] April 1918. Sri Aurobindo wrote this message on national education at the request of Annie Besant (1847–1933), president of the Theosophical Society, leader of the Indian Home Rule League, and editor of *New India*, a newspaper of Madras. She published it in *New India* on 8 April 1918, under the heading: "MESSAGES FROM SONS OF THE MOTHERLAND TO THEIR BROTHERS". Sri Aurobindo's was the longest of nine messages contributed by India's "leading patriots". This item is also published in *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. [2] July 1918. Besant wrote to Sri Aurobindo again in July 1918, asking him for his opinion of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, which had been announced earlier that month. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter in reply. After receiving it, Besant wrote asking whether she could "use it (with or without your name) as a valuable opinion on the 'Reforms' ". Sri Aurobindo consented, and the letter was published in *New India* on 10 August 1918.

To the Editor of the *Hindustan*. 1918. The Hindu Marriages (Validity) Bill was introduced by Vithalbhai Patel (1873–1933) in the Imperial Council on 5 September 1918. Its purpose was to provide legal sanction to marriages between Hindus of different castes. (At that time Hindu Law, as interpreted in the courts, considered inter-caste marriages to be invalid unless sanctioned by custom.) Patel's bill was condemned by the orthodox and considered inadequate by reformers. But certain eminent Indians, among them Rabindranath Tagore and Lala Lajpat Rai, believed that it was a step in the right direction. Sri Aurobindo was asked his opinion of the bill by Lotewalla, Managing Director of *Hindustan*. His reply, undated, but apparently written in the last quarter of 1918, is reproduced here from Gordhanbhai I. Patel's *Vithalbhai Patel: Life and Times*, Book One (Bombay: Shree Laxmi Narayan Press, 1950), p. 305.

To the Editor of the *Independent*. August 1920. This obituary article was written at the request of Bipin Chandra Pal, editor of the *Independent*, after the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on 1 August 1920. The piece was published in the *Independent* on 5 August 1920. The

present text has been compared both against the version published in the newspaper and against a draft found among Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts. The same piece is published under the title "A Great Mind, a Great Will" in *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

To the Editor of the *Standard Bearer*. On 11 November 1920, Sri Aurobindo wrote to Motilal Roy, editor of the *Standard Bearer*, in regard to certain claims that had been made about his political opinions in the Calcutta press. His letter is published on pages 248–49 of the present volume. In it he wrote, within inverted commas, a statement that he wanted Motilal to publish. Motilal did so on 21 November 1920. The text is reproduced here as it was printed in the *Standard Bearer*.

To the Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. June 1925. This message was written at the request of the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* a day or two after the passing of Chittaranjan Das on 16 June 1925. The message was published in the newspaper on 22 June 1925.

Section Two Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life, 1911–1928

Sri Aurobindo began the practice of yoga in 1905. Between then and 1911 he made few references to yoga in his letters. The first people to whom he wrote about spiritual things were Motilal Roy (see Section One above) and Paul and Mirra Richard. Around 1920, he began to reply to letters written to him by people in India and abroad who were interested in practising his system of yoga. At the end of 1926, he stopped seeing even the members of his household (which soon became known as an ashram), but he continued to answer some of the letters written to him by people living outside. Gradually, he began to write to members of the ashram as well. His letters on yoga of 1927–1950 have a different character from those written between 1911 and 1926. All surviving letters on yoga from the early period, along with a few from the late period that are parts of series that began earlier, are included in the present section. All significant letters from the 1927–1950 period are reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*, volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, 1911–c. 1922.

Paul Richard (1874–1967) was a French lawyer and writer. He came to Pondicherry in 1910 seeking election to the French Chamber of Deputies, but found that the ticket he had been promised had been given to someone else. Before returning to France, he asked to be introduced to a yogi, and friends arranged a meeting between him and Sri Aurobindo. During the next four years, he and Sri Aurobindo remained in touch by letter. In 1914, Richard returned to Pondicherry to stand for election. This time he was accompanied by his wife Mirra (1878–1973), who later became known as the Mother. Richard was defeated, but he and Mirra remained in India until February 1915, when Paul was ordered to join his regiment. The Richards remained in France until March 1916, when they departed for Japan. After a four-year stay in that country, they returned to Pondicherry in April 1920.

To Paul Richard. Sri Aurobindo wrote these letters to Richard after their meeting in 1910 and before Richard returned to India in 1914.

To the Mother and Paul Richard. These letters presumably were addressed both to Mirra and Paul. The one dated 31 December 1915 deals with an experience of the Mother's which is recorded in her *Prayers and Meditations* under the date 26 November 1915.

Draft of a Letter. 1920s. The circumstances referred to in this letter suggest that it was written during the early 1920s, when Sri Aurobindo was partly retired. The reference to *Le seigneur des nations* ("The Lord of the Nations"), a book by Paul Richard, suggests that Richard was the intended recipient. Sri Aurobindo's reply was meant to be sent over the signature of a secretary. This explains his use of the third person.

To People in India, 1914–1926. Only thirteen of the twenty-three items included in this subsection exist in the form of letters or drafts in Sri Aurobindo's hand. Some of the others were dictated or (in one or two cases) written by someone else following Sri Aurobindo's instructions. Such letters generally were revised by Sri Aurobindo, sometimes extensively, before they were sent.

To N. K. Gogte. Nothing is known about the recipient of these letters, except that he wrote to Sri Aurobindo after the appearance of the first issue of the *Arya* asking some questions about meditation. Gogte was perhaps hoping that his question would be answered in

“The Question of the Month”, a feature in early issues of the journal. Sri Aurobindo in fact wrote an answer to the question “What exactly is meant by meditation in Yoga? And what should be its objects?” in the October 1914 issue (published in *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 445–47). This essay bears some resemblance to the answer he sent directly to Gogte. [1] 9 September 1914. This is a postcard sent by Sri Aurobindo to Gogte explaining that he was unable to answer his letter immediately. [2] 21 September 1914. This reply of Sri Aurobindo to Gogte was the first of thousands of “letters on yoga” he would eventually write. Towards the end of the letter, Sri Aurobindo referred to a section at the end of the third instalment of *Isha Upanishad*, which was published in the *Arya* in October 1914. He wrote that the heading of this section was “The Vision of the All”. In fact the section is headed “The Vision of the Brahman” both in the *Arya* and in the book edition of *Isha Upanishad* (see *Isha Upanishad*, volume 17 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 30). A section that appeared in the November instalment of the *Arya* is headed “The Vision of the All” (*Isha Upanishad*, p. 35). A partial copy of Sri Aurobindo’s letter to Gogte was published in the *Standard Bearer* on 13 March 1921. Another partial text was included in Sri Aurobindo’s *Letters on Yoga*.

Draft of a Letter to Nolini Kanta Gupta. A young member of Barindra Kumar Ghose’s revolutionary secret society, Nolini Kanta Gupta (1889–1984) was arrested and tried for conspiracy in the Alipore Bomb Case. Acquitted, he worked with Sri Aurobindo on the Bengali weekly *Dharma* in 1909 and 1910. In October or November 1910, he joined Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. After remaining there for most of the next nine years, he returned to Bengal, where he got married in December 1919. Sri Aurobindo drafted this letter to him a little before that time. The Latin phrase seems to be a variant of the quotation from Horace found on page 137. It would mean “whither does this uncertainty lead”.

To A.B. Purani. 21 February 1920. Ambalal Balkrishna Purani (1894–1965) met Sri Aurobindo in 1918, when he came to Pondicherry to report on the progress of a revolutionary secret society that had been set up in Gujarat under Sri Aurobindo’s inspiration. Sri Aurobindo advised the young man to give his attention to sadhana.

Purani corresponded with members of Sri Aurobindo's household, and with Sri Aurobindo himself, until 1923, when he settled in Pondicherry.

To V. Chandrasekharam. Veluri Chandrasekharam (1896–1964) took his B.A. from Madras University, standing first in his class in philosophy. He often visited Pondicherry during the early 1920s, reading the Veda and practising yoga under Sri Aurobindo's guidance. In 1928 he returned to his village in Andhra Pradesh, where he passed the remainder of his life.

To K. N. Dixit. 30 March 1924. Kesarlal Nanalal Dixit or Dikshit (1891–1988) was from Baroda. He visited Pondicherry five times during the 1920s, and settled in the Ashram in 1929. Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph in his own hand at the end of a letter written on his instructions by A. B. Purani. This explains his use of the third person.

To Ramchandran. 30 September 1925. Nothing is known about the recipient of this letter.

To and about V. Tirupati. An enthusiastic sadhak, Tirupati practised an extreme form of bhakti yoga, as a result of which he lost his mental balance. Sri Aurobindo advised him to go back to his home in Vizianagaram, coastal Andhra, to recuperate. From there Tirupati wrote a number of letters to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri Aurobindo wrote these twelve replies at this time. [1] 21 February 1926. The manuscript of this letter was written by the Mother but was apparently a transcript of something written or dictated by Sri Aurobindo. [2] 24 February 1926. This telegram was sent by Sri Aurobindo to S. Duraiswami, an advocate of Madras, to whom Tirupati had gone while on his way to Pondicherry. [3] 26 February 1926. Written in reply to a letter from Dasari Narayana Swamy Chetty, Tirupati's father-in-law, explaining Tirupati's condition. [4] February 1926. An incomplete draft of a letter. [5] 4 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [6] 5 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [7] 22 March 1926. [8] 27 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [9] 30 March 1926. Manuscript partly in the Mother's and partly in Sri Aurobindo's hand. [10] Circa March–April 1926. This letter was written in reply to one written by Tirupati on "the 28th", presumably 28 March 1926. [11] Circa March–April 1926. This draft-letter was written in reply to a letter written by Tirupati on "the 29th", presumably 29 March 1926. [12] 6 May 1926. Tirupati

came to Pondicherry on 6 May 1926. Sri Aurobindo refused to see him. He gave him this letter instead. It is reproduced here from one of the notebooks of A. B. Purani.

To Daulatram Sharma. 26 March 1926. Little is known about the recipient of this letter. He entered into correspondence with Barindra Kumar Ghose in 1923. After a visit to Pondicherry early in 1926, he wrote to Barin about his sadhana on 17 March. Barin drafted a reply following Sri Aurobindo's instructions. This was so completely revised by Sri Aurobindo that it may be considered his own letter.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others, 1922–1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote or dictated the letters in this section to his brother Barindra Kumar and to some others who were connected with a yoga centre that Barin had opened in Bhawanipore, Calcutta, in 1922. Several of the letters deal with prospective members of the centre, about whom Barin had written. (Many such candidates were asked to submit a photograph for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to evaluate.) Barin also wrote about the progress and setbacks of those who were staying at the centre. Sri Aurobindo wrote at least two of his replies by hand, but appears to have dictated most of them. Multiple handwritten and typed copies of his replies were made after they were written. Sixteen of the eighteen letters exist only in the form of these copies. The texts published here have been established by collating three or more copies of each letter. The copies were widely circulated during the 1920s. Sri Aurobindo later remarked that he did not want this "out of date stuff" to remain in circulation; but in another letter he stated that it was "not necessary to withdraw anything", though the pre-1927 letters were not to be circulated as freely as later letters.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose. Sri Aurobindo's youngest brother Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880–1959) was born in England and raised in Bengal. He first got to know Sri Aurobindo after the latter's return from England in 1893. Around 1902 Barin became involved in a nascent revolutionary society that Sri Aurobindo and others had set up in Calcutta. In 1906 Barin and other members of this society began to plan to assassinate British officials. An unsuccessful attempt to kill a British judge in May 1908 led to the arrest of Barin, Sri Aurobindo and two dozen others. The prisoners were tried for conspiring to wage war

against the king. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted, Barin and several others convicted. The death-sentence against Barin was later commuted to life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands penal colony. In 1920, as part of the amnesty declared at the end of the First World War, Barin and the other prisoners were released. Barin visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry that year and again in 1921. In 1922 he set up a yoga centre in Bhawanipore, Calcutta. [1] 18 November 1922. This letter was written on the same day as the letter to Chittaranjan Das reproduced on pages 260–62. Both letters were concerned with fundraising. [2] 1 December 1922. When Das received Sri Aurobindo's letter of 18 November, he wrote for permission to quote certain passages from it. Sri Aurobindo gave his reactions to this proposal in the present letter. [3] 9 December 1922. Written to Barin in response to a letter from Jyotish Ghose, a Bhawanipore sadhak. [4] 30 December 1922. Krishnashashi, a young man from Chittagong, became a member of the Bhawanipore centre, but soon began to experience serious difficulties. This is the first of several letters written by Sri Aurobindo in connection with his case. (There is also a letter written directly to Krishnashashi. See below.) In the present letter he also transmitted to Barin the evaluations of Mirra (the Mother) of three candidates whose photographs had been submitted. [5] January 1923. Another letter about Krishnashashi. [6] 23 January 1923. Another letter about Krishnashashi. [7] January 1923. Apparently written after the letter of the 23rd and before the letter of the 31st. [8] 31 January 1923. About Krishnashashi and other matters. [9] 14 February 1923. About Krishnashashi and other matters. [10] 2 April 1923. About various candidates and also about Rathin, a son of Rajani Palit. (See also the letter to Rajani Palit below.) [11] 16 April 1923. About various candidates. [12] 30 May 1923. [13] 16 June 1923. About Jyotish Mukherjee, a Bhawanipore candidate.

Barindra Kumar returned to Pondicherry from Calcutta in August 1923. The Bhawanipore centre went on for some time, but was closed at Sri Aurobindo's suggestion in September 1925. Barin remained in Pondicherry until December 1929, when he left the Ashram and returned to Bengal. Letter [14], dated 7 June 1928, was written to him a year and a half before his departure. Part of it was included in the collection *Bases of Yoga* in 1936.

To Hrishikesh Kanjilal. Circa 1922. A member of Barin Ghose's revolutionary group, Hrishikesh Kanjilal (born 1879) was one of the defendants in the Alipore Bomb Trial. Convicted, he spent ten years in the Andamans. After his release he visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. In Calcutta he was associated with Barin in his various enterprises, one of which was the Cherry Press.

To Krishnashashi. January 1923. A young sadhak from Chittagong, East Bengal, Krishnashashi went insane while practising yoga at Barin's centre in Bhawanipore. See also letters [4]–[9] to Barindra-kumar Ghose above.

To Rajani Palit. 6 April 1923. A government servant, Rajani Palit (born 1891) lived in Calcutta and attended meetings at Barin's Bhawanipore centre. Later he was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. This letter is about the occult illness of his son Rathin.

Draft Letters to and about Kumud Bandhu Bagchi. Born in 1901, Kumud Bandhu Bagchi was the head of the Bhawanipore centre from 1923, when Barin Ghose settled in Pondicherry, till it was closed in 1925. [1] 6 February 1926. A letter on Kumud's sadhana dictated by Sri Aurobindo. [2] 23 March 1926. A note on the psychic being, dictated by Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before being sent.

To People in America, 1926–1927. These letters were written to people in the United States of America who had read the *Arya* and written to Sri Aurobindo. Most of them are preserved only in the form of drafts found among his manuscripts.

To Mr. and Mrs. Sharman. Early 1926. Maude Ralston Sharman was an American woman of Detroit who was married to a Punjabi.

To the Advance Distributing Company. [1] 9 March 1926. Draft of a letter written in reply to one dated 18 January 1926 from the Advance Distributing Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (a small firm about which nothing is known) to the Arya Publishing House (the principal publisher of Sri Aurobindo's books in India). The manager of the Advance Distributing Company wished to purchase some issues of the *Arya* and also proposed bringing out a selection of Sri Aurobindo's works in the United States. [2] 2 July 1926. Reply to a letter from the same company dated 2 May 1926, in which the writer spoke of practical matters relating to the publication of Sri Aurobindo's books

in the United States, and the nature of spiritual seeking in that country. The book *Some I-L-O-F Letters* had been sent to Sri Aurobindo by Mr. C. E. Lefebvre of Glenfield, Pennsylvania, earlier in the year.

Draft of a Letter to C. E. Lefebvre. Undated draft, written in reply to a letter from C. E. Lefebvre dated 13 June 1926. In his letter Lefebvre identified himself as the “student” mentioned in the letter from the Advance Distributing Company dated 18 January 1926. Various internal and external references in the letters make it clear that Lefebvre also was the writer of both letters from the Advance Distributing Company. In his letter of 13 June 1926, Lefebvre spoke about the nature of spiritual seeking in the United States, concluding: “It would seem that America is only ready for elementary instruction.”

To and about Anna Bogenholm Sloane. According to a printed curriculum vitae enclosed in one of her letters to Sri Aurobindo, Anna Bogenholm Sloane, B.A., M.A., was a native of Sweden who settled in the United States sometime before 1907. She was active in various educational institutions, and wrote pedagogical stories for children. Interested in spirituality, she became a student of Ralph Morarity deBit (an American guru later known as Vitvan, 1883–1964). DeBit, then head of the School of the Sacred Science in Los Angeles, introduced Sloane to Sri Aurobindo in a letter of 30 June 1926. Sloane arrived in Pondicherry early in 1927, a few months after Sri Aurobindo had retired. [1] 3 August 1926. Written in reply to a letter from Sloane dated 5 June 1926, in which she enumerated certain inner experiences, which she called “initiations”. [2–4] August–September 1927. Undated drafts, written in reply to a letter from Sloane in which she asked Sri Aurobindo if he was “the Krishna, the Supreme God of the Planet Earth”, and expressed doubts about the ability of the Mother to guide her. She asked to be guided by Sri Aurobindo instead. There is some evidence that Sri Aurobindo never sent a fair copy of these drafts to Sloane. [5] 13 October 1927. This is a report written by Sri Aurobindo after Sloane made certain allegations against him, the Mother and the Ashram to the British Consul in Pondicherry. The date appears on a copy of a French translation of the letter, which presumably was sent to the French authorities in Pondicherry.

Draft Letters, 1926–1928. These four draft letters were found in two

note pads used by Sri Aurobindo around 1926–28. Internal references make it clear that the last three were written to Marie Potel, who lived in the Ashram during this period. The intended recipient of the first letter is not known.

To an Unknown Person. Circa 1927–28.

To Marie Potel. Marie Léon Potel (1874–c. 1962) met the Mother in France in 1911 or 1912. She was perhaps the first person to regard the Mother as her master and spiritual Mother. Potel came to the Ashram in March 1926 and remained until March 1928. [1] Draft of a letter found among Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts of 1926–27. [2] Probably April 1927. A reply to a letter written in French by Potel. The three paragraphs beginning "Again who is the Father here" and ending "supported by the Ishwara" were struck through in the manuscript. Sri Aurobindo took up these ideas in the sixth chapter of *The Mother*, which he wrote towards the end of 1927. [3] Circa 1928. The subject of this letter almost certainly was Marie Potel, who left the Ashram in March 1928.

Section Three
Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life
1921–1938

The letters in this section are of two types. Those in the first group are addressed to disciples who had undertaken to collect or provide funds for the Ashram. Those in the second are to public figures who had written to Sri Aurobindo for various reasons.

On Yoga and Fund-raising in the Ashram, 1921–1938. These letters were written to two people who helped raise funds for the Ashram in Bengal and Gujarat. Besides fund-raising, the letters deal with the sadhana of the two individuals, and with other subjects as well.

To and about Durgadas Shett. A member of a wealthy family of industrialists based in Chandernagore, Durgadas Shett (1895–1958) sent significant amounts of money to Sri Aurobindo through Motilal Roy before 1922. In 1934 his family property was distributed, and he gave most of his share to Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards he lived an austere life; at times he was dependent on Sri Aurobindo for cash for

ordinary expenses. These twenty-three letters from Sri Aurobindo to Durgadas are interesting in showing Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards money and the interest he took in the spiritual and material welfare of his disciples. Letters [2], [4] and [5] were written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, whom he asked to reply to Durgadas on his behalf.

To Punamchand M. Shah. Punamchand Mohanlal Shah (born 1898), of Patan, Gujarat, met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in 1919. Four years later he became a member of his household. Between 1927 and 1931, he spent much of his time in Gujarat trying to collect money for the newly founded Ashram. In August 1927 Sri Aurobindo wrote three letters to Punamchand on fearlessness, work and money, which were published in 1928 as chapters 3, 4 and 5 of *The Mother*. Here thirteen other letters to Punamchand on fund-raising and other subjects are reproduced.

To and about Public Figures, 1930–1937. These letters were written to or about people who held positions of responsibility or were otherwise in the public eye. They have been grouped together here for the convenience of students of modern Indian history.

Draft of a Letter to Maharani Chimnabai II. 1930. Gajrabai Ghatge (1871–1958), later Maharani Chimnabai II, was married to Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda in 1885. Sri Aurobindo met her while working under the Gaekwar between 1893 and 1906. More than two decades later, she wrote to him about her personal life. In replying, Sri Aurobindo used, out of courtesy, the form of address required by official protocol in writing to Indian royalty.

On a Proposed Visit by Mahatma Gandhi. 1934. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) visited Pondicherry on 17 February 1934. At that time he was temporarily retired from politics. As he related in his letter to Sri Aurobindo (part of which is reproduced above Sri Aurobindo's reply of 7 January 1934), he had been anxious to meet Sri Aurobindo since he returned to India from South Africa in 1915. In order to arrange a meeting, he wrote to Govindbhai Patel, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's who previously had been connected with Gandhi's movement. (There is some evidence that Govindbhai had written earlier to Gandhi to suggest a meeting.) On 2 January 1934

Gandhi wrote directly to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's replies to Govindbhai and to Gandhi are reproduced in chronological order.

To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. 2 October 1934. At the time this letter was written, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), President of India between 1962 and 1967, was an academic in England. (In 1935 he was appointed Spaulding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford.) In August 1934 he approached Sri Aurobindo through Dilip Kumar Roy, asking him to contribute an article for a proposed volume on contemporary Indian philosophy. In a letter of September 1934, published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, Sri Aurobindo asked Dilip to beg off for him. Radhakrishnan persisted, and Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to him directly. (Radhakrishnan's book, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, was published, without a contribution by Sri Aurobindo, by George Allen & Unwin in 1936.)

To and about Morarji Desai. Morarji Desai (1896–1995) was Prime Minister of India between 1977 and 1979. [1] 15 February 1935. In 1934, Desai proposed coming to the Ashram with his friend Chandulal Manibhai, who wrote to A. B. Purani asking for permission to attend darshan. Sri Aurobindo's reply was addressed to Purani. [2] 17 August 1935. Desai came to the Ashram in August 1935. During his stay he wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo, asking him questions about spiritual matters. Desai published Sri Aurobindo's reply in *The Story of My Life* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1978), vol. I, pp. 126–27.

On a Proposed Visit by Jawaharlal Nehru. 5 October 1936. India's first Prime Minister (1947–64), Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was a leader of the Congress Party during the freedom movement, serving as its President four times. In 1936 Dilip Kumar Roy, a member of the Ashram who was acquainted with Nehru, proposed inviting Nehru to stay with him if and when Nehru came to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo jotted down these remarks on Dilip's letter.

Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury. 21 February 1937. A member of the landed aristocracy of East Bengal, Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury was also an industrialist and a politician. He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in January 1937. Today, however, he is best remembered as a musician (he played the veena in the Hindustani style) and as a musical scholar.

PART THREE
PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS
ON INDIAN AND WORLD EVENTS, 1940–1950

Section One
Public Statements, Messages, Letters and Telegrams
on Indian and World Events, 1940–1950

After his withdrawal from the national movement in 1910, Sri Aurobindo ceased to write on contemporary political issues. His letters to the editors of *New India* and *Hindustan* in 1918 (see Part Two, Section One) were his last public statements on political topics for more than twenty years. He first broke his silence in 1940 in connection with the Second World War. Later he spoke in support of the Cripps Proposal and other British offers to the leaders of the Indian national movement. Still later he provided, on invitation, messages when India achieved independence and on other occasions.

On the Second World War, 1940–1943. After opposing European imperialism for the better part of his life, Sri Aurobindo came out in support of the British and their allies after the fall of France. Whatever errors the Allies might have made in regard to their colonies, he thought, they still were open to the influence of the forces of higher evolution, while Hitler's Germany was possessed by forces that were positively anti-divine.

Contributions to Allied War Funds. This letter, dated 19 September 1940, was signed jointly by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It accompanied a contribution of Rs. 500 to the Madras War Fund. The letter was published on the same date in the *Hindu* (Madras). Later the second paragraph was included in a leaflet entitled “Sri Aurobindo’s views on the War” and headed “*For Sri Aurobindo’s Sadhaks only*”, which was distributed in the Ashram and among friends of the Ashram. Still later it was included in the booklet *On the War* (see below).

Notes on the War Fund Contribution. [1] This letter, undated but evidently written shortly after the above message, is reproduced from Sri Aurobindo’s handwritten manuscript. It was not published during his lifetime. [2] Sri Aurobindo wrote this note on the back of a letter

written by Anilbaran Roy to one of his friends. Anilbaran's letter is dated 22 October 1940.

On the War: An Unreleased Statement. On 23 September 1940, Anilbaran Roy wrote an article defending Sri Aurobindo's position on the war as set forth in the letter of 19 September. He submitted his article to Sri Aurobindo, who thoroughly revised and enlarged it, leaving almost nothing of Anilbaran's original text. Sri Aurobindo had his secretary make a typed copy of the enlarged piece, which he further revised, but he does not seem to have shown the result to anyone, and it remained unpublished during his lifetime.

India and the War. [1] 6 April 1942. The Japanese armed forces captured Singapore on 15 February and Rangoon on 7 March 1942. Quickly moving north, they forced British and Indian forces to retreat into India. At this point many disciples of Sri Aurobindo living in Calcutta and elsewhere asked to be admitted to the Ashram for their own and their children's safety. This text does not seem to have been printed during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, but it apparently was communicated privately to individuals. [2] Sri Aurobindo wrote this text around the same time as the above piece. It was not published during his lifetime.

On the War: Private Letters That Were Made Public. [1] 29 July 1942. This letter or extract from a letter was published in a leaflet and in two or more pamphlets that also contain the war fund letter of 1940. The leaflet and pamphlets were headed "*For Sri Aurobindo's Sadhakas Only*". This piece, piece [2] and the 19 September 1940 letter on the war fund contribution were subsequently brought out in a booklet entitled *On the War: Letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1944). [2] 3 September 1943. This item is an abridged version of Sri Aurobindo's reply to a letter from Dilip Kumar Roy, in the course of which Dilip said: "I have received of late from correspondents and friends objections to our dubbing the allies as 'modern Pandavas'. Those were protagonists of virtue (dharma) and unselfishness which can hardly be said of the Allies and . . . are they not all exploiters of the weaker races and essentially imperialistic—more or less?" Sri Aurobindo's complete reply is published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The extracts making up the present item were published in the first issue of the quarterly

journal *The Advent* (February 1944), under the following note: "Sri Aurobindo has made known to the public his standpoint with regard to the present war. He is for unconditional and unreserved help — an all-out help to the Allies whose cause, according to him, is humanity's and also India's cause. The present extracts from a private letter written some time ago in answer to certain doubts and misgivings will further elucidate his position." The extracts were also included in *On the War: Letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* (see above).

On Indian Independence, 1942 – 1947. After his retirement from active politics in 1910, Sri Aurobindo turned down all offers to rejoin the national movement or to play any other role in politics. The seriousness of the situation during World War II caused him to speak out in favour of the Cripps Proposal of 1942. Later, on request, he issued messages on two other British initiatives: the Wavell Plan and the Cabinet Mission Proposals.

On the Cripps Proposal. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps (1889–1952), a Labour member of the War Cabinet, came to India with a proposal from the British government. Indian leaders were invited to take part in the councils of war, and were promised a constitution-making assembly after the cessation of hostilities. Cripps announced the details of the proposal in a radio talk of 30 March 1942. Sri Aurobindo responded in several ways. [1] On 31 March, he sent a telegram to Cripps endorsing the proposal and offering his "public adhesion". Cripps replied to Sri Aurobindo in a telegram of 1 April 1942. Sri Aurobindo's telegram was published in many newspapers and reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949) and subsequently. [2] On 1 April, Sri Aurobindo sent his disciple S. Duraiswami, a prominent advocate of Madras, to Delhi to speak to members of the Congress Working Committee: Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and others. He gave Duraiswami this letter authorising him to speak on his behalf. [3 and 4] On 2 April, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed Dr. B. S. Moonje, a former nationalist colleague, now head of the Hindu Mahasabha, and C. Rajagopalachari, the Congress leader of Madras. [5 and 6] On 9 April and again on a later date, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed his old revolutionary associate Amarendra Chatterjee, now a member of the Bengal Legislative

Assembly, who had written, asking him to play a more active role.

On the Wavell Plan. On 14 June 1945, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, offered Indian leaders a new plan intended “to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government”. Sri Aurobindo expressed his approval in two ways. [1] On 15 June 1945, he dictated to his secretary a message that was subsequently released and printed in the *Hindu* and other Indian newspapers under the date 19 June. [2] Also on 15 June, he telegraphed Dr. Syed Mahmood, a member of the Congress Working Committee, who communicated Sri Aurobindo’s views to Gandhi and the rest of the committee.

On the Cabinet Mission Proposals. On 24 March 1946, three members of the British Cabinet came to India in order to find a solution to the constitutional deadlock brought about by the unwillingness of the Muslim League to work with the Congress and other Indian parties. After surveying the situation, the Cabinet Mission offered a new proposal on 16 May. Its most salient feature was the so-called group system, by which provinces in the Northwest, the Northeast, and the rest of the country would form semi-autonomous groups within the larger Indian union. (The idea was to grant the substance of the League’s demand for Pakistan without partitioning the country.) [1] In March 1946, before all the details of the proposal were known, Sri Aurobindo was asked his initial reaction by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He wrote this response on 24 March. Issued in the name of his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, it was published in the *Patrika* on 26 March and later reprinted in other newspapers. [2] Nine months later, after the details of the group system had come out, Sri Aurobindo was asked for his opinion by Surendra Mohan Ghosh, the President of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, with whom he occasionally held talks about political developments. He dictated this reply to Surendra Mohan’s letter on 16 December 1946.

The Fifteenth of August 1947. India became independent on 15 August 1947. This was Sri Aurobindo’s seventy-fifth birthday. Before the event he was asked by All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, to give a message for broadcast. Sri Aurobindo agreed and wrote two versions of a message, one of which was selected. On 9 August, AIR technicians made a recording of the Mother reading the message. This

was broadcast on 14 August. (The recording, apparently made on a perishable wax medium, was not preserved.) Sri Aurobindo's message exists in two versions, one long and the other short. [1] This version, which was found to be too long for broadcast in the allotted time-slot, was printed as a leaflet and reproduced in newspapers such as the *Sunday Times* of Madras. [2] This short version was broadcast by AIR and subsequently printed as a leaflet. Two years later it was reproduced in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949). Since then it has been reprinted many times.

On the Integration of the French Settlements in India, 1947–1950. Pondicherry, where Sri Aurobindo lived between 1910 and 1950, was at that time one of five French *établissements* or settlements in India. As one who was regarded by the British as a danger to the Empire, he was grateful for the hospitality that successive French administrations extended to him. When it became clear that British India would become independent, pro- and anti-French parties in Pondicherry engaged in political debate and violent clashes in order to decide the colony's future. Sri Aurobindo wished Pondicherry to become part of the Indian union, but to retain some measure of autonomy, which would permit it to serve as a "window" between India and France. The situation remained unsettled until 1954, when all French possessions in India became *de facto* parts of the Indian Union. The *de jure* transfer took place in 1962.

The Future Union. Sri Aurobindo dictated this text in or before June 1947. It was published, anonymously, in a pamphlet marked "Issued by the French India Socialist Party/June 1947". Sri Aurobindo supported this party's stance on the issue of Pondicherry's political future, though not necessarily its position on other issues.

On the Disturbances of 15 August 1947 in Pondicherry. 20 August 1947. In the evening of 15 August 1947, the day of India's independence, armed rioters attacked the Ashram, killing one member and injuring several others. Subsequently it was reported in the *Statesman* of Calcutta that "Satyagraha" (non-violent passive resistance) was offered by political workers in front of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo dictated this reply to be sent to the editor of the *Statesman* on 20 August. It was issued over the signature of the Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Letters to Surendra Mohan Ghosh. For details on the recipient of these letters, see below under Section Two. The letters in the present subsection were occasioned by a diplomatic conflict between the government of free India and the government of French India. [1] In April 1949, the Government of India put a customs cordon around French Pondicherry. This made it difficult for the Ashram to obtain food and other necessities. Sri Aurobindo dictated this letter to Surendra Mohan on 1 April 1949 when the crisis was beginning. [2] Sri Aurobindo dictated this letter on 6 May 1949, when the problems created by the customs cordon were at their worst.

Note on a *Projet de loi*. 12 February 1950. Sri Aurobindo made these comments on a French *projet de loi* (proposed article of legislation) that had been submitted to him for comment by Sanat Kumar Banerji, a disciple of his who was a member of the Indian Administrative Service and who had been named India's consul general in Pondicherry. In the event the *projet* was not discussed by the French and Indian governments.

Messages on Indian and World Events, 1948–1950. Sri Aurobindo dictated three of these messages on invitation. The other three were private letters (in one case, an extract from a private letter) that were released for publication after being sent.

On the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was murdered on 30 January 1948. [1] On 4 February a certain Mr. Kumbi of Gadag, Karnataka, telegraphed to Sri Aurobindo: "Darkness sorrow spreads fast India Bapuji death children pray message." Sri Aurobindo telegraphed this message in reply. It was published in the *Hindu* on 7 February. [2] Asked on 5 February for a message on the subject by All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph, which presumably was broadcast by the station. On 8 February it was published in the *Hindu*, and at the end of February was reproduced in the *Advent*, a quarterly journal of Madras, and also as a separate leaflet. Both messages were also reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949).

On the World Situation (July 1948). 18 July 1948. This letter from Sri Aurobindo to his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy was reproduced in the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Calcutta, and also as a separate leaflet,

in August 1948. It was included in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949).

On Linguistic Provinces (Message to Andhra University). December 1948. On 28 June 1948, Dr. C. R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, Waltair, wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking whether he would allow his name to be considered for the university's National Prize for eminent merit in the humanities. On 15 July Sri Aurobindo wrote to say that he would accept the prize if offered. On 30 October the Governor of Madras (who was ex-officio Chancellor of the university) wrote saying that the syndicate of the university had resolved to give the award to Sri Aurobindo. Subsequently Reddy wrote asking Sri Aurobindo for a message to be read out at the award ceremony. Sri Aurobindo replied by telegram that while he "usually does not give any message unless it comes by some inner inspiration", he felt sure "in this case inspiration and message will not fail to come". The message — which dealt at some length with the question of linguistic provinces, then a charged political issue, particularly in the Andhra country — was completed and sent on 5 December. On 11 December 1948 it was read out at a convocation at the university. The message was published in the *Hindu* on 12 December 1948, and subsequently in other newspapers, such as in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (22 December 1948). In 1949 it was reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother*.

Letters Related to the Andhra University Award. [1] This letter, in which Sri Aurobindo authorised his name to be considered for the C. R. Reddy National Prize, was written on 15 July 1948. [2] This letter, addressed to the Governor of Madras, was sent on 6 November, a week after the university offered him the prize. [3] This letter, sent to Dr. Reddy along with the message, is dated 5 December 1948.

The Present Darkness (April 1950). 4 April 1950. This paragraph is an extract from a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, which was released for publication shortly after it was written. It was printed in the *Hindusthan Standard* on 17 April 1950, and in other newspapers shortly thereafter. This paragraph also formed part of a larger extract from the letter that was published in the April 1950 issue of the *Advent of Madras*. Whenever the text was printed, all or part of the sentence mentioning Prime Minister Nehru was omitted. The

“Pakistan imbroglio” Sri Aurobindo referred to was the crisis created by attacks on Hindus in East Pakistan, retaliatory attacks in India, and the consequent movement of populations in both directions. For more on this crisis see the note to “On the Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After” in the next section.

On the Korean Conflict. 28 June 1950. In 1949 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of letters in answer to questions posed by his disciple K. D. Sethna, editor of *Mother India*, a newspaper of Bombay, in regard to various national and international problems (see Section Two, subsection two below). Sri Aurobindo wrote the present letter in reply to Sethna’s questions on the Korean Crisis. His letter subsequently was released to the Press Trust of India, and published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other journals under the date 17 August.

Section Two

Private Letters to Public Figures and to the Editor of *Mother India* 1948–1950

Private Letters to Public Figures, 1948–1950. Sri Aurobindo dictated these four letters between 1948 and 1950 in reply to political leaders who approached him for guidance.

To Surendra Mohan Ghosh. 12 June 1948. As a youth, Surendra Mohan Ghosh (1893–1976) was a member of the Anushilan Samiti, a revolutionary organisation that had been founded by Sri Aurobindo and others in 1902. Later he joined the Indian National Congress. From 1938, he was president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. During the 1940s, he had a series of private meetings with Sri Aurobindo, during which the two spoke of political and yogic matters. In 1946 he became a member of the Constituent Assembly, which was charged with drafting India’s constitution. In 1948 and 1949 Sri Aurobindo wrote several letters to him about political matters. Two are published in the subsection containing material dealing with the integration of the French Settlements; another, on the Cabinet Mission Proposals, appears in the subsection containing material dealing with Indian independence. The letter in the present subsection was written on 6 June 1948, after Surendra Mohan informed Sri Aurobindo that he wished to resign from the position of president of the Bengal Pradesh

Congress Committee (B.P.C.C.).

To Kailas Nath Katju. 3 September 1949. Dr. Kailas Nath Katju (1887–1968) was a lawyer and, after 1937, a Congress leader. In 1948 he was appointed Governor of West Bengal. In this capacity he presided over a public celebration of Sri Aurobindo's seventy-seventh birthday in Calcutta in August 1949. On the twentieth of that month, he wrote to Sri Aurobindo, telling him about his past and present activities, and his hopes and apprehensions in regard to the country. Sri Aurobindo dictated this reply two weeks later.

To K. M. Munshi. Educated at Baroda College while Sri Aurobindo was a professor there, Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi (1887–1971) became a leading member of the Congress in Gujarat. In 1946 he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and after independence joined the union cabinet as agriculture minister. In 1949 and 1950 he asked Sri Aurobindo for advice on two occasions. [1] 3 September 1949. While serving on the Constituent Assembly, Munshi telephoned the Ashram in Pondicherry, asking for Sri Aurobindo's opinion on the question of the numerals to be used with Hindi, which was being promoted as the national language. Sri Aurobindo dictated his reply to A. B. Purani. The substance of his remarks was published in at least two newspapers on 15 September. [2] 3 August 1950. On 30 July 1950, Munshi wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking him for guidance in regard to his personal sadhana and his plans to work for the sake of Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo dictated his reply to A. B. Purani.

Notes and Letters to the Editor of *Mother India* on Indian and World Events, 1949–1950. In February 1949 a new fortnightly newspaper, *Mother India*, was launched in Bombay. Its editor was K. D. Sethna, who had been a resident member of the Ashram between 1928 and 1938, and remained in close contact with Sri Aurobindo. Along with articles on yoga, literary criticism, and poetry, *Mother India* published commentary on political affairs. Sethna wrote to Sri Aurobindo for guidance when writing such articles, and Sri Aurobindo often replied. Eleven of his letters are reproduced in this section. (A twelfth, on the Korean Conflict, is published in the subsection containing messages on Indian and world events [see above], since it was released as a message during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime.)

On Pakistan. This comment was written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 12 March 1949.

On the Commonwealth and Secularism. This note was written in reply to two remarks in a letter from Sethna dated 5 April 1949. Sethna's first remark was: "Perhaps a concluding para should be added in which the suggestion could be made that the term 'secular' in our constitution should as soon as possible be qualified and the significance which does not contradict but rather confirms spirituality be openly introduced; or else the term 'spiritual' should be substituted, with an explanation that it goes nowise against but supports all the best that 'secularity' might connote." Sethna's second remark was: "What is Sri Aurobindo and Mother's view on the Commonwealth question?"

On the Unity Party. 25 April 1949. Written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 21 April 1949, in which he asked Sri Aurobindo whether people in agreement with *Mother India*'s position on the reunification of India ought to be referred to the Unity Party, a group then active in Bengal, whose Secretary, S. P. Sen, was an occasional contributor to *Mother India*. In a telegram written a few days after his letter, Sri Aurobindo wrote further: "Policy [of the Unity Party] not dictated by me — so how Aurobindonian? Policy guided mostly by A [Anilbaran]. Neither against nor for shall judge them by what they do."

On French India and on Pakistan. 27 June 1949. On 25 June 1949, the following text was published in *Mother India* under the title "Sri Aurobindo Supports Merger of French India":

Sri Aurobindo in his own supreme spiritual way strives for India's solidarity and greatness, Sjt. Nolini Kanta Gupta the Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram told the A.P.I. special representative on June 14.

Sri Aurobindo feels certain and has expressed it more than once, the Secretary said, that the different parts of India, whoever may be their present rulers, are bound to join the mother country and that India, free and united, will become a dynamic spiritual force bringing peace and harmony to the war-scarred world and suffering humanity in general.

Asked whether this meant that Sri Aurobindo desired Chandernagore, Pondicherry and other French Settlements in India to join India, the Secretary said: "Certainly so. He has

prophesied that these small foreign pockets in India would sooner or later become one with India and India would become the spiritual leader of the world. Sri Aurobindo's great Yoga-Shakti is directed to that end." . . .

As a spiritual home, the Ashram as such adopts a neutral attitude towards the burning question of the day in Pondicherry, namely, the referendum to decide the future of the French settlements in India, the Secretary said. He, however, strongly refuted the notion in certain quarters that the Ashram is pro-French, and referred to one of his public statements wherein he had stated: "Nobody here (Ashram) is for the continuation of French rule in India."

On 22 June, before publishing the statement, Sethna wrote to Nolini asking for Sri Aurobindo's views on Franco-Indian culture and on "the Contravention question". He concluded: "The statement on behalf of the Ashram by your honourable spokesman self will be featured on top of page 12 in the next issue." On receipt of this letter, Nolini drafted a letter to Sethna saying that the statement ought not to have been published as it "does not adequately represent Sri Aurobindo's views". Sri Aurobindo corrected and considerably enlarged Nolini's draft, making it his own letter. He also added a paragraph on the Pakistan problem. The revised text was typed and sent to Sethna in Bombay.

On Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholicism and Communism. 3 August 1949. Stefan Wyszynski (1901–1981) was made archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw and primate of Poland in 1949, and a cardinal in 1953. He was an opponent of the Communist government's efforts to limit the influence of the Catholic Church.

On the Kashmir Problem. Circa September 1949. This letter was written around the same time as the letter to Kailas Nath Katju (see above, previous subsection). The article of Sethna's to which Sri Aurobindo referred is no longer available.

On "New Year Thoughts". 1 January 1950. Sethna sent a copy of an editorial entitled "New Year Thoughts on Pacifism" to Sri Aurobindo at the end of December 1949. Sri Aurobindo wrote this reply on the first day of the new year.

Rishis as Leaders. 3 January 1950. This letter was written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 31 December 1949.

On Military Action. Written on 6 March 1950, in reply to a letter from Sethna that is not now available. For Indo-Pakistan relations in 1950, see the next note.

The Nehru–Liaquat Pact and After. 3 May 1950. Early in 1950, tension between India and Pakistan rose as a result of widespread communal rioting in East Pakistan, retaliatory attacks in India, and the consequent flight of Hindus from East Pakistan into West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, and Muslims from India into Pakistan. On 2 April 1950, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan came to India to discuss these problems with Prime Minister Nehru. Six days later the two men signed a pact addressing the refugee problem and guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities in both countries. The “letter to Dilip” that Sri Aurobindo referred to in the first sentence was the one written on 4 April 1950, a portion of which was published in the newspapers later in April. (See “The Present Darkness (April 1950)” in the preceding subsection.) On the 21st Sethna asked Sri Aurobindo if his position had changed since the letter of the 4th was written. Sri Aurobindo replied by wire: “Letter to Dilip written before Pact. Nothing changed in my direction.” The letter of 3 May 1950 published here was written two weeks after the telegram.

On the Communist Movement. On 13 September 1950, Swatantra Party leader Minoo Masani sent Sethna a draft of an anti-Communist tract entitled “Manifesto for the Defence of Democracy and Independence in Asia”. He asked Sethna: “Do you think Sri Aurobindo would consider signing the manifesto? Do try.” Later, at a private meeting, Masani told Sethna, “I would be very happy if Sri Aurobindo saw the manifesto and made his suggestions. They would indeed be valuable.” On 16 September, Sethna sent Masani’s letter and the draft manifesto to Sri Aurobindo, along with a letter of his own in which he noted: “The Manifesto is meant to rally the largest possible support to the anti-Communist front and it studiously avoids open or direct siding with the Western powers.” He added that even socialist leader Jai Prakash Narayan was thinking of signing it. On the other hand, Morarji Desai, with whom Masani had spoken, was opposed to getting the signatures of men like Narayan, as they were, he said, “not really

democratic". Desai "was strongly in favour of declaring our adherence to the western democracies". In closing his letter, Sethna asked Sri Aurobindo for his views. Sri Aurobindo's answer, reproduced here, was drafted on 19 September 1950.

PART FOUR
PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND NOTICES CONCERNING
SRI AUROBINDO'S ASHRAM AND YOGA
1927–1949

Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910 and devoted himself to the practice of yoga. He lived at first with a few young men from Bengal. Afterwards they were joined by a handful of others from different parts of the country. By 1926 the household had some two dozen members. After a major yogic experience in November 1926, Sri Aurobindo stopped seeing or speaking with visitors and most members of the community that had grown around him. Around this time, this community became known as Sri Aurobindo's Asram. Later the name was changed to Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Section One
Public Statements and Notices concerning the Ashram
1927–1938

The statements in the first subsection below were written for the general public. Those in the second subsection were written for members of the Ashram.

Public Statements about the Ashram, 1927 and 1934. On two occasions after the founding of the Ashram in 1926, Sri Aurobindo wrote short statements about it for publication. These are published here for their historical interest. It should be noted that what he wrote in the contexts of 1927 and 1934 does not necessarily apply to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of today, which is differently organised. It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo, while writing in English, spelled the Sanskrit word *āśrama* as "Asrama" or "Asram". Ashram became the established spelling sometime during the late 1940s.

On the Ashram's Finances (1927). On 6 May 1927 an article by Jatindranath Sen Gupta entitled "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram: Daily Life of Inmates: A Visitor's Account" was published in the *Hindu* of Madras. Sen Gupta noted in his first paragraph: "Though everywhere in India and even outside India there is a keen desire to know what is really going on inside this Ashram at Pondicherry, not only very few get the opportunity of knowing what is going on here, but, on the other hand, all sorts of false and ugly rumours have been assiduously spread by interested persons." Sen Gupta's piece was the first article about the Ashram to be published anywhere. It seems also to have been the first published writing in which the name "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram" was used. Sri Aurobindo saw and approved of the article as a whole, and wrote one paragraph for it himself. This paragraph, concerning the financial arrangements of the Ashram as of May 1927, is reproduced here. This was the only time Sri Aurobindo made a public appeal for funds. Later he specifically disallowed this approach.

On the Ashram (1934). February 1934 (probably the 16th of the month). In February 1934, the Government of French India, apparently under pressure from the British Consul, began an inquiry into the functioning of the Ashram. At question was the legal status of the community. Press reports had spoken of it as an "institution" that had a "common fund", but no attempt had been made to register it with the government as a legal or financial entity. In fact the Ashram was not, at that time, a public institution. All the houses that composed it were registered in the name of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Individuals who wished to practise yoga under their guidance were allowed to use the facilities only so long as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother allowed. Sri Aurobindo nevertheless was obliged to take the government's inquiry seriously. To clarify the situation, he wrote this statement on the Ashram and the one known as "Sri Aurobindo's Teaching" (see the next subsection), apparently on 16 February 1934 (see below). The two texts were published together in the *Hindu* of Madras on 20 February 1934 under the title "Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Some Misconceptions Cleared". A short while later, both texts were published in Pondicherry and in Madras in brochures entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" (Pondicherry: Barathy Press; Madras: Kesari Printing Works). Also around this time a brochure containing a French

translation of both texts was printed in Pondicherry at the Imprimerie de Sandhanam. (In this French brochure the first text, “L’enseignement et l’ashram de Sri Aurobindo”, was dated 16 February 1934. This may be the date of writing of the original English text of one or both pieces.) Five months later, in August 1934, both texts were published in English, along with Bengali and Hindi translations, in a booklet entitled “The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo” (Chandernagore: Rameshwar & Co.). A second edition, with English texts only, was published in 1945 (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). Both texts were included in the first and second editions of *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1948 and 1951).

“Sri Aurobindo’s Teaching” has continued to appear, notably in *On Himself* (1972), but “Sri Aurobindo’s Asram” has not been printed since 1951. A letter written by K. D. Sethna to the Mother in 1937 helps explain why. Wondering whether he should send a copy of “The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo” to someone, Sethna noted that the passage about there being “no public institution” etc. “was written in this downright way when that anti-Asram movement [of 1934] was in full career in Pondy”. The Mother agreed and said that Sethna need not send the pamphlet. What Sri Aurobindo said in “Sri Aurobindo’s Asram” does not necessarily apply to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of today. The text is reproduced here for its historical interest.

Notices for Members of the Ashram, 1928–1937. This subsection consists of notices written by Sri Aurobindo himself (and not on his behalf by a secretary) that were posted or circulated in the Ashram between 1928 and 1937. Most of them were written in response to temporary situations. A few were incorporated into lists of rules of the Ashram.

Notices of May 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote these three notes after the Mother suffered a serious illness. He insisted at this time on introducing changes in the schedule of Ashram activities in order to lessen the pressure of work on her.

Notices of 1929–1937. These are notices that were posted on the Ashram notice board between 1929 and 1937. Many of them were attempts to regulate the correspondence between the members of the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo, which took him as much as ten hours a day during the middle 1930s.

Section Two
Public Statements about Sri Aurobindo's Path of Yoga
1934 and 1949

Sri Aurobindo wrote these essays in 1934 and 1949 to explain his system of yoga to the general public.

Sri Aurobindo's Teaching. This essay was published in the *Hindu* on 20 February 1934 immediately below the article entitled "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram", which is described above in the note to "On the Ashram (1934)". It was published along with that article in leaflets and pamphlets of 1934 and 1945. Subsequently it was included in *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, first published in 1948 and reprinted many times. It was also included in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself* (1972 and subsequently).

A Message to America. 11 August 1949. This message was written for release at a public celebration of Sri Aurobindo's seventy-seventh birthday in New York City. Leaflets containing the text and a message by the Mother were printed in New York at that time. The message was reprinted in Indian newspapers, and has since appeared many times, notably in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself* (1972 and subsequently).

PUBLISHING HISTORY

Only a few of the items in this book appeared in print during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. *Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch* was published anonymously as a booklet in 1937 and subsequently. The information provided to King's College appeared, in edited form, in the *Register of Admissions to King's College, Cambridge* in 1903 and 1929. One of the letters on the departure to Chandernagore was printed in 1945. "A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life" was published in "Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram" in 1948. All the "Open Letters and Messages Published in Newspapers" came out in the newspapers in question immediately after they were written. Most of the letter to Gogte was published in the *Standard Bearer* in 1921. Three of the statements on the Second World War, four of the statements on

Indian independence, one of the texts on French India, all the messages on India and world events and one of the messages to Munshi were published as leaflets and/or in newspapers shortly after they were written. In 1949, six of these messages — the telegram to Cripps, the message of 15 August 1947, the two messages on the death of Gandhi, “On the World Situation (July 1948)” and “On Linguistic Provinces (Message to Andhra University)” — were reproduced in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram). The note of 1934 on the Ashram and the essays of 1934 and 1949 on Sri Aurobindo’s yoga were issued in leaflets and pamphlets and later reprinted. See the notes on specific pieces for details.

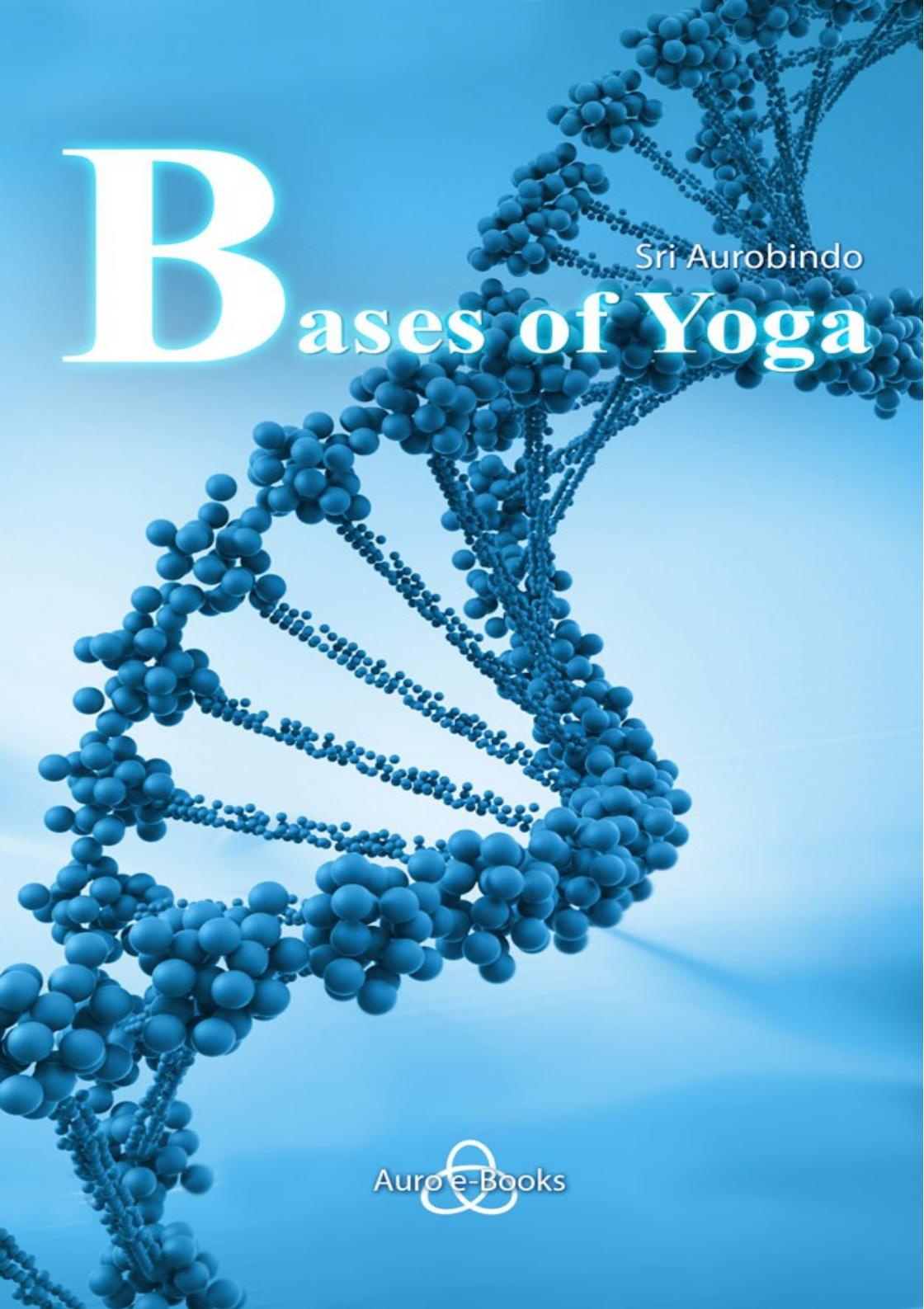
In 1953, many of the pieces making up this book, and others now appearing in *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (volumes 32 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO), were published in a collection entitled *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*. Portions of the present book that appeared in that collection include most of the notes in Part One, Section Two, “Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies and Other Publications”, some of the letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, and the message of 15 August 1947.

In 1972 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* was divided into two volumes. Notes and letters dealing with Sri Aurobindo or with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother jointly were published, along with much hitherto unpublished material, in volume 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters*. Letters dealing with the Mother, some of which had been brought out separately in 1951 in a volume entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*, were included in volume 25, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother and Translations of Prayers and Meditations*. Both *On Himself* and *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* were reprinted several times after 1972.

Most of Sri Aurobindo’s letters to Motilal Roy, along with the letter to Anandrao, were first published in *Light to Superlight* by Prabartak Publishers, Calcutta, in 1972. These letters were included in the *Supplement* (volume 27) to the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The letters of Sri Aurobindo to his father, his sister and his brother, one of the letters to his father-in-law, the letter to the Maharani

of Baroda, one of the letters to the editor of the *Hindu*, and one of the letters to the editor of *New India* were included in the same volume. Some of the “Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life” and “Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates” came out in *Champaklal’s Treasures* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1976). The letters to Lord Kimberley were first printed in A. B. Purani’s *Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1957). The letter to Morarji Desai was published in Desai’s *The Story of My Life* in 1978. Most of the messages on the Second World War appeared in the *Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* in 1978. Many other items included in this book first appeared in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* between 1977 and 1994.

In THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, the material making up *On Himself*, together with related material first published after 1972, has been placed in two volumes: the present one and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The latter volume is made up of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples between 1927 and 1950. Earlier letters, autobiographical writings and public messages appear in the present volume. Several items are being published here for the first time: the information supplied to the *King’s College Register*; a few of the corrections of statements made in biographies and other publications; most of the letters written while Sri Aurobindo was employed in Baroda; some of the letters to political and professional associates; some of the letters to Durgadas Shett and Punamchand Shah; most of the letters to public figures; many of the “Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life”; some of the messages on the integration of the French settlements in India; all the letters to the editor of *Mother India*; and some of the statements and notices concerning the Ashram.

The background of the entire image is a stylized blue DNA double helix structure, composed of numerous small blue spheres connected by lines, set against a lighter blue gradient background.

Sri Aurobindo

Bases of Yoga

The logo consists of two interlocking white circles forming a stylized infinity or 'A' shape, positioned above the text.

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BASES of YOGA

Sri Aurobindo

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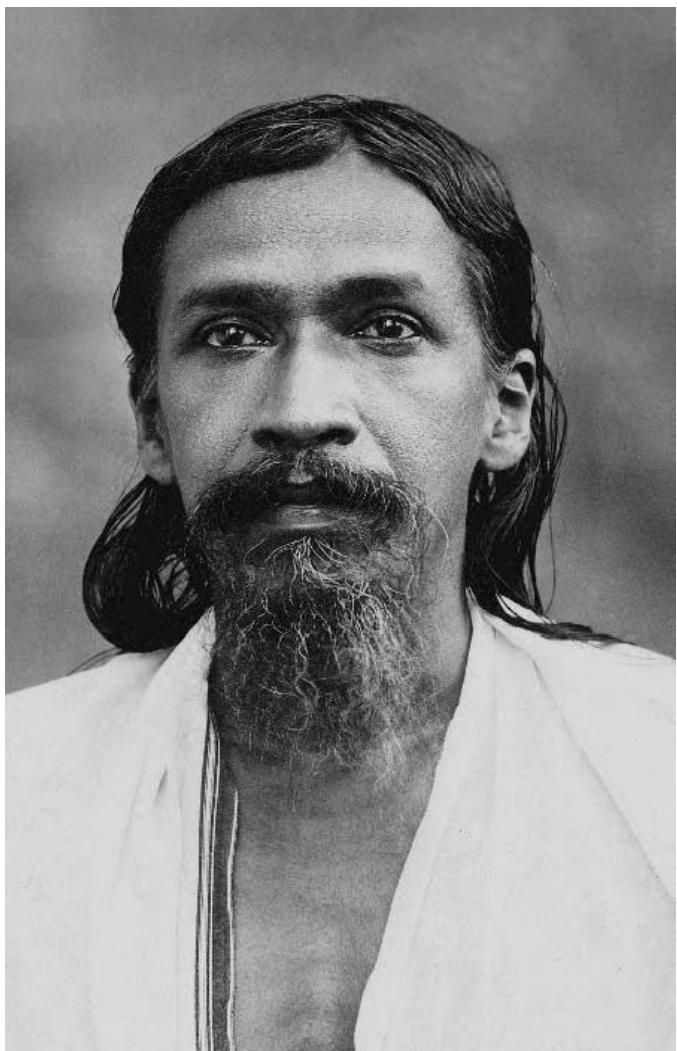
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Publishers' Note

These are extracts from letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples in answer to their queries. They have been put together and arranged so as to be of some help to aspirants for the understanding and practice of the Yoga.



Sri Aurobindo

Table of Contents

Publishers' Note.....	4
I. Calm — Peace — Equality.....	1
II. Faith — Aspiration — Surrender.....	17
III. In Difficulty.....	30
IV. Desire — Food — Sex.....	47
V. Physical Consciousness — Subconscious — Sleep And Dreem — Illness.....	63

I

Calm — Peace — Equality

It is not possible to make a foundation in yoga if the mind is restless. The first thing needed is quiet in the mind. Also to merge the personal consciousness is not the first aim of the yoga: the first aim is to open it to a higher spiritual consciousness and for this also a quiet mind is the first need.

*

The first thing to do in the sadhana is to get a settled peace and silence in the mind. Otherwise you may have experiences, but nothing will be permanent. It is in the silent mind that the true consciousness can be built.

A quiet mind does not mean that there will be no thoughts or mental movements at all, but that these will be on the surface and you will feel your true being within separate from them, observing but not carried away, able to watch and judge them and reject all that has to be rejected and to accept and keep to all that is true consciousness and true experience.

Passivity of the mind is good, but take care to be passive only to the Truth and to the touch of the Divine Shakti. If you are passive to the suggestions and influences of the lower nature, you will not be able to progress or else you will expose yourself to adverse forces which may take you far away from the true path of yoga.

Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth.

The forces that stand in the way of sadhana are the forces of the lower mental, vital and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds. These can be dealt with only after the mind and heart have become one-pointed and concentrated in the single aspiration to the Divine.

*

Silence is always good; but I do not mean by quietness of mind entire silence. I mean a mind free from disturbance and trouble, steady, light and glad so as to open to the Force that will change the nature. The important thing is to get rid of the habit of the invasion of troubling thoughts, wrong feelings, confusion of ideas, unhappy movements. These disturb the nature and cloud it and make it difficult for the Force to work; when the mind is quiet and at peace, the Force can work more easily. It should be possible to see things that have to be changed in you without being upset or depressed; the change is the more easily done.

*

The difference between a vacant mind and a calm mind is this: that when the mind is vacant, there is no thought, no conception, no mental action of any kind, except an essential perception of things without the formed idea; but in the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness — originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage.

*

It is not an undesirable thing for the mind to fall silent, to be free from thoughts and still — for it is oftenest when the mind falls silent that there is the full descent of a wide peace from above and in that wide tranquillity the realisation of the silent Self above the mind spread out in its vastness everywhere. Only, when there is the peace and the mental silence, the vital

mind tries to rush in and occupy the place or else the mechanical mind tries to raise up for the same purpose its round of trivial habitual thoughts. What the sadhak has to do is to be careful to reject and hush these outsiders, so that during the meditation at least the peace and quietude of the mind and vital may be complete. This can be done best if you keep a strong and silent will. That will is the will of the Purusha behind the mind; when the mind is at peace, when it is silent one can become aware of the Purusha, silent also, separate from the action of the nature.

To be calm, steady, fixed in the spirit, *dhīra, sthira*, this quietude of the mind, this separation of the inner Purusha from the outer Prakriti is very helpful, almost indispensable. So long as the being is subject to the whirl of thoughts or the turmoil of the vital movements, one cannot be thus calm and fixed in the spirit. To detach oneself, to stand back from them, to feel them separate from oneself is indispensable.

For the discovery of the true individuality and building up of it in the nature, two things are necessary, first, to be conscious of one's psychic being behind the heart and, next, this separation of the Purusha from the Prakriti. For the true individual is behind veiled by the activities of the outer nature.

*

A great wave (or sea) of calm and the constant consciousness of a vast and luminous Reality — this is precisely the character of the fundamental realisation of the Supreme Truth in its first touch on the mind and the soul. One could not ask for a better beginning or foundation — it is like a rock on which the rest can be built. It means certainly not only a Presence, but the Presence — and it would be a great mistake to weaken the experience by any non-acceptance or doubt of its character.

It is not necessary to define it and one ought not even to try to turn it into an image; for this Presence is in its nature infinite. Whatever it has to manifest of itself or out of itself, it will do inevitably by its own power, if there is a sustained acceptance.

It is quite true that it is a grace sent and the only return needed for such a grace is acceptance, gratitude and to allow the Power that has touched the

consciousness to develop what has to be developed in the being — by keeping oneself open to it. The total transformation of the nature cannot be done in a moment; it must take long and proceed through stages; what is now experienced is only an initiation, a foundation for the new consciousness in which that transformation will become possible. The automatic spontaneity of the experience ought by itself to show that it is nothing constructed by the mind, will or emotions; it comes from a Truth that is beyond them.

*

To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts — very certainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body — for the yoga, and not for the yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master, — the mental Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa*, *sākṣī*, *anumantā*, *īśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis-ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least on a certain part of its movements; it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulsions and desires; but to sit like the Tantric yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts, is less facile. Nevertheless, it can be done; all developed mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the Master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *sāmrājya*.

The yogi goes still farther; he is not only a master there, but even while

in mind in a way, he gets out of it as it were, and stands above or quite back from it and free. For him the image of the factory of thoughts is no longer quite valid; for he sees that thoughts come from outside, from the universal Mind or universal Nature, sometimes formed and distinct, sometimes unformed and then they are given shape somewhere in us. The principal business of our mind is either a response of acceptance or a refusal to these thought-waves (as also vital waves, subtle physical energy waves) or this giving a personal-mental form to thought-stuff (or vital movements) from the environing Nature-Force.

The possibilities of the mental being are not limited, it can be the free Witness and Master in its own house. A progressive freedom and mastery of one's mind is perfectly within the possibilities of anyone who has the faith and the will to undertake it.

*

The first step is a quiet mind — silence is a further step, but quietude must be there; and by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country — the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them, but, in either case, does not become active or lose its quietude. Silence is more than quietude; it can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind keeping it voiceless or quite outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from above — one feels it coming down, entering and occupying or surrounding the personal consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast impersonal silence.

*

The words "peace, calm, quiet, silence" have each their own shade of meaning, but it is not easy to define them.

Peace — *śānti*.

Calm — *sthiratā*.

Quiet — acañcalatā.

Silence — niścala-nīravatā.

Quiet is a condition in which there is no restlessness or disturbance.

Calm is a still unmoved condition which no disturbance can affect — it is a less negative condition than quiet.

Peace is a still more positive condition; it carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest and deliverance.

Silence is a state in which either there is no movement of the mind or vital or else a great stillness which no surface movement can pierce or alter.

*

Keep the quietude and do not mind if it is for a time an empty quietude; the consciousness is often like a vessel which has to be emptied of its mixed or undesirable contents; it has to be kept vacant for a while till it can be filled with things new and true, right and pure. The one thing to be avoided is the refilling of the cup with the old turbid contents. Meanwhile wait, open yourself upwards, call very quietly and steadily, not with a too restless eagerness, for the peace to come into the silence and, once the peace is there, for the joy and the presence.

*

Calm, even if it seems at first only a negative thing, is so difficult to attain, that to have it at all must be regarded as a great step in advance.

In reality, calm is not a negative thing, it is the very nature of the Sat-Purusha and the positive foundation of the divine consciousness. Whatever else is aspired for and gained, this must be kept. Even Knowledge, Power, Ananda, if they come and do not find this foundation, are unable to remain and have to withdraw until the divine purity and peace of the Sat-Purusha are permanently there.

Aspire for the rest of the divine consciousness, but with a calm and deep aspiration. It can be ardent as well as calm, but not impatient, restless or full of rajasic eagerness.

Only in the quiet mind and being can the supramental Truth build its true creation.

*

Experience in the sadhana is bound to begin with the mental plane, — all that is necessary is that the experience should be sound and genuine. The pressure of understanding and will in the mind and the Godward emotional urge in the heart are the two first agents of yoga, and peace, purity and calm (with a lulling of the lower unrest) are precisely the first basis that has to be laid; to get that is much more important in the beginning than to get a glimpse of the supraphysical worlds or to have visions, voices and powers. Purification and calm are the first needs in the yoga. One may have a great wealth of experiences of that kind (worlds, visions, voices, etc.) without them, but these experiences occurring in an unpurified and troubled consciousness are usually full of disorder and mixture.

At first the peace and calm are not continuous, they come and go, and it usually takes a long time to get them settled in the nature. It is better therefore to avoid impatience and to go on steadily with what is being done. If you wish to have something beyond the peace and calm, let it be the full opening of the inner being and the consciousness of the Divine Power working in you. Aspire for that sincerely and with a great intensity but without impatience and it will come.

*

At last you have the true foundation of the sadhana. This calm, peace and surrender are the right atmosphere for all the rest to come, knowledge, strength, Ananda. Let it become complete.

It does not remain when engaged in work because it is still confined to the mind proper which has only just received the gift of silence. When the new consciousness is fully formed and has taken entire possession of the vital nature and the physical being (the vital as yet is only touched or dominated by the silence, not possessed by it), then this defect will disappear.

The quiet consciousness of peace you now have in the mind must

become not only calm but wide. You must feel it everywhere, yourself in it and all in it. This also will help to bring the calm as a basis into the action.

The wider your consciousness becomes, the more you will be able to receive from above. The Shakti will be able to descend and bring strength and light as well as peace into the system. What you feel as narrow and limited in you is the physical mind; it can only widen if this wider consciousness and the light come down and possess the nature.

The physical inertia from which you suffer is likely to lessen and disappear only when strength from above descends into the system.

Remain quiet, open yourself and call the divine Shakti to confirm the calm and peace, to widen the consciousness and to bring into it as much light and power as it can at present receive and assimilate.

Take care not to be over-eager, as this may disturb again such quiet and balance as has been already established in the vital nature.

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work.

*

Aspire, concentrate in the right spirit and, whatever the difficulties, you are sure to attain the aim you have put before you.

It is in the peace behind and that "something truer" in you that you must learn to live and feel it to be yourself. You must regard the rest as not your real self, but only a flux of changing or recurring movements on the surface which are sure to go as the true self emerges.

Peace is the true remedy; distraction by hard work is only a temporary relief — although a certain amount of work is necessary for the proper balance of the different parts of the being. To feel the peace above and about your head is a first step; you have to get connected with it and it must descend into you and fill your mind and life and body and surround you so that you live in it — for this peace is the one sign of the Divine's presence with you, and once you have it all the rest will begin to come.

Truth in speech and truth in thought are very important. The more you can feel falsehood as being not part of yourself, as coming on you from

outside, the easier it will be to reject and refuse it.

Persevere and what is still crooked will be made straight and you will know and feel constantly the truth of the Divine's presence and your faith will be justified by direct experience.

*

First aspire and pray to the Mother for quiet in the mind, purity, calm and peace, an awakened consciousness, intensity of devotion, strength and spiritual capacity to face all inner and outer difficulties and go through to the end of the yoga. If the consciousness awakens and there is devotion and intensity of aspiration, it will be possible for the mind, provided it learns quietude and peace, to grow in knowledge.

*

This is due to an acute consciousness and sensitiveness of the physical being, especially the vital-physical.

It is good for the physical to be more and more conscious, but it should not be over-powered by these ordinary human reactions of which it becomes aware or badly affected or upset by them. A strong equality and mastery and detachment must come, in the nerves and body as in the mind, which will enable the physical to know and contact these things without feeling any disturbance; it should know and be conscious and reject and throw away the pressure of the movements in the atmosphere, not merely feel them and suffer.

*

To recognise one's weaknesses and false movements and draw back from them is the way towards liberation.

Not to judge anyone but oneself until one can see things from a calm mind and a calm vital is an excellent rule. Also, do not allow your mind to form hasty impressions on the strength of some outward appearance, nor your vital to act upon them.

There is a place in the inner being where one can always remain calm and from there look with poise and judgment on the perturbations of the surface consciousness and act upon it to change it. If you can learn to live in that calm of the inner being, you will have found your stable basis.

*

Do not allow yourself to be shaken or troubled by these things. The one thing to do always is to remain firm in your aspiration to the Divine and to face with equanimity and detachment all difficulties and all oppositions. For those who wish to lead the spiritual life, the Divine must always come first, everything else must be secondary.

Keep yourself detached and look at these things from the calm inner vision of one who is inwardly dedicated to the Divine.

*

At present your experiences are on the mental plane, but that is the right movement. Many sadhaks are unable to advance because they open the vital plane before the mental and psychic are ready. After some beginning of true spiritual experiences on the mental plane there is a premature descent into the vital and great confusion and disturbance. This has to be guarded against. It is still worse if the vital desire-soul opens to experience before the mind has been touched by the things of the spirit.

Aspire always for the mind and psychic being to be filled with the true consciousness and experience and made ready. You must aspire especially for quietness, peace, a calm faith, an increasing steady wideness, for more and more knowledge, for a deep and intense but quiet devotion.

Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their opposition. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal. If you can remain tranquil and undisturbed and continue your sadhana without allowing yourself to be inwardly troubled under these circumstances, it will help to give you a much needed strength; for the path of yoga is always beset with inner and outer difficulties and the sadhak must develop a quiet, firm and solid strength to meet them.

The inner spiritual progress does not depend on outer conditions so much as in the way we react to them from within — that has always been the ultimate verdict of spiritual experience. It is why we insist on taking the right attitude and persisting in it, on an inner state not dependent on outer circumstances, a state of equality and calm, if it cannot be at once of inner happiness, on going more and more within and looking from within outwards instead of living in the surface mind which is always at the mercy of the shocks and blows of life. It is only from that inner state that one can be stronger than life and its disturbing forces and hope to conquer.

To remain quiet within, firm in the will to go through, refusing to be disturbed or discouraged by difficulties or fluctuations, that is one of the first things to be learned in the Path. To do otherwise is to encourage the instability of consciousness, the difficulty of keeping experience of which you complain. It is only if you keep quiet and steady within that the lines of experience can go on with some steadiness — though they are never without periods of interruption and fluctuation; but these, if properly treated, can then become periods of assimilation and exhaustion of difficulty rather than denials of sadhana.

A spiritual atmosphere is more important than outer conditions; if one can get that and also create one's own spiritual air to breathe in and live in it, that is the true condition of progress.

To be able to receive the Divine Power and let it act through you in the things of the outward life, there are three necessary conditions:

(i) Quietude, equality — not to be disturbed by anything that happens, to keep the mind still and firm, seeing the play of forces, but itself tranquil.

(ii) Absolute faith — faith that what is for the best will happen, but also that if one can make oneself a true instrument, the fruit will be that which one's will guided by the Divine Light sees as the thing to be done — *kartavyam karma*.

(iii) Receptivity — the power to receive the Divine Force and to feel its

presence and the presence of the Mother in it and allow it to work, guiding one's sight and will and action. If this power and presence can be felt and this plasticity made the habit of the consciousness in action, — but plasticity to the Divine force alone without bringing in any foreign element, — the eventual result is sure.

*

Equality is a very important part of this yoga; it is necessary to keep equality under pain and suffering — and that means to endure firmly and calmly, not to be restless or troubled or depressed or despondent, to go on with a steady faith in the Divine Will. But equality does not include inert acceptance. If, for instance, there is temporary failure of some endeavour in the sadhana, one has to keep equality, not to be troubled or despondent, but one has not to accept the failure as an indication of the Divine Will and give up the endeavour. You ought rather to find out the reason and meaning of the failure and go forward in faith towards victory. So with illness — you have not to be troubled, shaken or restless, but you have not to accept illness as the Divine Will, but rather look upon it as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as you try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors.

*

There can be no firm foundation in sadhana without equality, samata. Whatever the unpleasantness of circumstances, however disagreeable the conduct of others, you must learn to receive them with a perfect calm and without any disturbing reaction. These things are the test of equality. It is easy to be calm and equal when things go well and people and circumstances are pleasant; it is when they are the opposite that the completeness of the calm, peace, equality can be tested, reinforced, made perfect.

*

What happened to you shows what are the conditions of that state in which the Divine Power takes the place of the ego and directs the action, making

the mind, life and body an instrument. A receptive silence of the mind, an effacement of the mental ego and the reduction of the mental being to the position of a witness, a close contact with the Divine Power and an openness of the being to that one Influence and no other are the conditions for becoming an instrument of the Divine, moved by that and that only.

The silence of the mind does not of itself bring in the supramental consciousness; there are many states or planes or levels of consciousness between the human mind and the supermind. The silence opens the mind and the rest of the being to greater things, sometimes to the cosmic consciousness, sometimes to the experience of the silent Self, sometimes to the presence or power of the Divine, sometimes to a higher consciousness than that of the human mind; the mind's silence is the most favourable condition for any of these things to happen. In this yoga it is the most favourable condition (not the only one) for the Divine Power to descend first upon and then into the individual consciousness and there do its work to transform that consciousness, giving it the necessary experiences, altering all its outlook and movements, leading it from stage to stage till it is ready for the last (supramental) change.

*

The experience of this "solid block" feeling indicates the descent of a solid strength and peace into the external being — but into the vital-physical most. It is this always that is the foundation, the sure basis into which all else (Ananda, light, knowledge, Bhakti) can descend in the future and stand on it or play safely. The numbness was there in the other experience because the movement was inward; but here the Yogashakti is coming *outward* into the fully aware external nature, — as a first step towards the establishment of the yoga and its experience there. So the numbness which was a sign of the consciousness tending to draw back from the external parts is not there.

*

Remember first that an inner quietude, caused by the purification of the restless mind and vital, is the first condition of a secure sadhana.

Remember next, that to feel the Mother's presence while in external action is already a great step and one that cannot be attained without a considerable inner progress. Probably, what you feel you need so much but cannot define is a constant and vivid sense of the Mother's force working in you, descending from above and taking possession of the different planes of your being. That is often a prior condition for the twofold movement of ascent and descent; it will surely come in time. These things can take a long time to begin visibly, especially when the mind is accustomed to be very active and has not the habit of mental silence. When that veiling activity is there, much work has to be carried on behind the mobile screen of the mind and the sadhak thinks nothing is happening when really much preparation is being done. If you want a more swift and visible progress, it can only be by bringing your psychic to the front through a constant self-offering. Aspire intensely, but without impatience.

*

A strong mind and body and life-force are needed in the sadhana. Especially steps should be taken to throw out tamas and bring strength and force into the frame of the nature.

The way of yoga must be a living thing, not a mental principle or a set method to be stuck to against all necessary variations.

*

Not to be disturbed, to remain quiet and confident is the right attitude, but it is necessary also to receive the help of the Mother and not to stand back for any reason from her solicitude. One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account; for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the Divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged. Yoga is not an easy path and the total change of the nature cannot be done in a day.

*

The depression and vital struggle must have been due to some defect of over-eagerness and straining for a result in your former effort — so that when a fall in the consciousness came, it was a distressed, disappointed and confused vital that came to the surface giving full entry to the suggestions of doubt, despair and inertia from the adverse side of Nature. You have to move towards a firm basis of calm and equality in the vital and physical no less than in the mental consciousness; let there be the full downflow of Power and Ananda, but into a firm Adhara capable of containing it — it is complete equality that gives that capacity and firmness.

*

Wideness and calmness are the foundation of the yogic consciousness and the best condition for inner growth and experience. If a wide calm can be established in the physical consciousness, occupying and filling the very body and all its cells, that can become the basis for its transformation; in fact, without this wideness and calmness the transformation is hardly possible.

*

It is the aim of the sadhana that the consciousness should rise out of the body and take its station above, — spreading in the wideness everywhere, not limited to the body. Thus liberated one opens to all that is above this station, above the ordinary mind, receives there all that descends from the heights, observes from there all that is below. Thus it is possible to witness in all freedom and to control all that is below and to be a recipient or a channel for all that comes down and presses into the body, which it will prepare to be an instrument of a higher manifestation, remoulded into a higher consciousness and nature.

What is happening in you is that the consciousness is trying to fix itself in this liberation. When one is there in that higher station, one finds the freedom of the Self and the vast silence and immutable calm — but this calm has to be brought down also into the body, into all the lower planes

and fix itself there as something standing behind and containing all the movements.

*

If your consciousness rises above the head, that means that it goes beyond the ordinary mind to the centre above which receives the higher consciousness or else towards the ascending levels of the higher consciousness itself. The first result is the silence and peace of the Self which is the basis of the higher consciousness; this may afterwards descend into the lower levels, into the very body. Light also can descend and Force. The navel and the centres below it are those of the vital and the physical; something of the higher Force may have descended there.

II

Faith — Aspiration — Surrender

This yoga demands a total dedication of the life to the aspiration for the discovery and embodiment of the Divine Truth and to nothing else whatever. To divide your life between the Divine and some outward aim and activity that has nothing to do with the search for the Truth is inadmissible. The least thing of that kind would make success in the yoga impossible.

You must go inside yourself and enter into a complete dedication to the spiritual life. All clinging to mental preferences must fall away from you, all insistence on vital aims and interests and attachments must be put away, all egoistic clinging to family, friends, country must disappear if you want to succeed in yoga. Whatever has to come as outgoing energy or action, must proceed from the Truth once discovered and not from the lower mental or vital motives, from the Divine Will and not from personal choice or the preferences of the ego.

*

Mental theories are of no fundamental importance, for the mind forms or accepts the theories that support the turn of the being. What is important is that turn and the call within you.

The knowledge that there is a Supreme Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which is not merely a negative Nirvana or a static and featureless Absolute, but dynamic, the perception that this Divine Consciousness can be realised not only beyond but here, and the consequent acceptance of a divine life as the aim of yoga, do not belong to the mind. It is not a question of mental theory — even though mentally this outlook can be as well supported as any other, if not better, — but of experience and, before the experience comes, of the soul's faith bringing with it the mind's and the life's adhesion. One who is in contact with the higher Light and has the experience can follow this way, however difficult it may be for the lower members to follow; one who is touched by it, without having the

experience, but having the call, the conviction, the compulsion of the soul's adherence, can also follow it.

*

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

*

Not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's will and follow it, is the true attitude of sadhana. Not to say, "This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?" but to give oneself, to surrender and to receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the better way. Then what you receive will be the right thing for you.

*

Faith, reliance upon God, surrender and self-giving to the Divine Power are necessary and indispensable. But reliance upon God must not be made an excuse for indolence, weakness and surrender to the impulses of the lower Nature: it must go along with untiring aspiration and a persistent rejection of all that comes in the way of the Divine Truth. The surrender to the Divine must not be turned into an excuse, a cloak or an occasion for surrender to one's own desires and lower movements or to one's ego or to some Force of the ignorance and darkness that puts on a false appearance of the Divine.

*

You have only to aspire, to keep yourself open to the Mother, to reject all that is contrary to her will and to let her work in you — doing also all your work for her and in the faith that it is through her force that you can do it.

If you remain open in this way the knowledge and realisation will come to you in due course.

*

In this yoga all depends on whether one can open to the Influence or not. If there is a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come. But it may take a long or short time according to the prepared or unprepared condition of the mind, heart and body; so if one has not the necessary patience, the effort may be abandoned owing to the difficulty of the beginning. There is no method in this yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

*

It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force. Nobody can transform himself by his own unaided efforts; it is only the Divine Force that can transform him. If you keep yourself open, all the rest will be done for you.

*

Hardly anyone is strong enough to overcome by his own unaided aspiration and will the forces of the lower nature; even those who do it get only a certain kind of control, but not a complete mastery. Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers. The Divine

Force fulfilling the spiritual will and the heart's psychic aspiration can alone bring about the conquest.

*

To do anything by mental control is always difficult, when what is attempted runs contrary to the trend of human nature or of the personal nature. A strong will patiently and perseveringly turned towards its object can effect a change, but usually it takes a long time and the success at the beginning may be only partial and chequered by many failures.

To turn all actions automatically into worship cannot be done by thought control only; there must be a strong aspiration in the heart which will bring about some realisation or feeling of the presence of the One to whom worship is offered. The bhakta does not rely on his own effort alone, but on the grace and power of the Divine whom he adores.

*

There has always been too much reliance on the action of your own mind and will — that is why you cannot progress. If you could once get the habit of silent reliance on the power of the Mother, — not merely calling it in to support your own effort, — the obstacle would diminish and eventually disappear.

*

All sincere aspiration has its effect; if you are sincere you will grow into the divine life.

To be entirely sincere means to desire the divine Truth only, to surrender yourself more and more to the Divine Mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the Divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. This is the basis of the divine life.

One cannot become altogether this at once, but if one aspires at all times and calls in always the aid of the Divine Shakti with a true heart and straightforward will, one grows more and more into this consciousness.

*

A complete surrender is not possible in so short a time, — for a complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine. The mind, the vital, the physical consciousness (and even each part of these in all its movements) have one after the other to surrender separately, to give up their own way and to accept the way of the Divine. But what one can do is to make from the beginning a central resolve and self-dedication and to implement it in whatever way one finds open, at each step, taking advantage of each occasion that offers itself to make the self-giving complete. A surrender in one direction makes others easier, more inevitable; but it does not of itself cut or loosen the other knots, and especially those which are very intimately bound up with the present personality and its most cherished formations may often present great difficulties, even after the central will has been fixed and the first seals put on its resolve in practice.

*

You ask how you can repair the wrong you seem to have done. Admitting that it is as you say, it seems to me that the reparation lies precisely in this, in making yourself a vessel for the Divine Truth and the Divine Love. And the first steps towards that are a complete self-consecration and self-purification, a complete opening of oneself to the Divine, rejecting all in oneself that can stand in the way of the fulfilment. In the spiritual life there is no other reparation for any mistake, none that is wholly effective. At the beginning one should not ask for any other fruit or results than this internal growth and change — for otherwise one lays oneself open to severe disappointments. Only when one is free, can one free others and in yoga it is out of the inner victory that there comes the outer conquest.

*

It is not possible to get rid of the stress on personal effort at once — and not always desirable; for personal effort is better than tamasic inertia.

The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into a movement of the Divine Force. If you feel conscious of the Divine Force,

then call it in more and more to govern your effort, to take it up, to transform it into something not yours, but the Mother's. There will be a sort of transfer, a taking up of the forces at work in the personal Adhar — a transfer not suddenly complete but progressive.

But the psychic poise is necessary: the discrimination must develop which sees accurately what is the Divine Force, what is the element of personal effort, and what is brought in as a mixture from the lower cosmic forces. And until the transfer is complete which always takes time, there must always be as a personal contribution, a constant consent to the true Force, a constant rejection of any lower mixture.

At present to give up personal effort is not what is wanted, but to call in more and more the Divine Power and govern and guide by it the personal endeavour.

*

It is not advisable in the early stages of the sadhana to leave everything to the Divine or expect everything from it without the need of one's own endeavour. That is only possible when the psychic being is in front and influencing the whole action (and even then vigilance and a constant assent are necessary), or else later on in the ultimate stages of the yoga when a direct or almost direct supramental force is taking up the consciousness; but this stage is very far away as yet. Under other conditions this attitude is likely to lead to stagnation and inertia.

It is only the more mechanical parts of the being that can truly say they are helpless: the physical (material) consciousness, especially, is inert in its nature and moved either by the mental and vital or by the higher forces. But one has always the power to put the mental will or vital push at the service of the Divine. One cannot be sure of the immediate result, for the obstruction of the lower Nature or the pressure of the adverse forces can often act successfully for a time, even for a long time, against the necessary change. One has then to persist, to put always the will on the side of the Divine, rejecting what has to be rejected, opening oneself to the true Light and the true Force, calling it down quietly, steadfastly, without tiring, without depression or impatience, until one feels the Divine Force at work and the obstacles beginning to give way.

You say you are conscious of your ignorance and obscurity. If it is only a general consciousness, that is not enough. But if you are conscious of it in the details, in its actual working, then that is sufficient to start with; you have to reject steadfastly the wrong workings of which you are conscious and make your mind and vital a quiet and clear field for the action of the Divine Force.

*

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

The practice of rejection prevails in the end; but with personal effort only, it may take a long time. If you can feel the Divine Power working in you, then it should become easier.

There should be nothing inert or tamasic in the self-giving to the guidance and it should not be made by any part of the vital into a plea for not rejecting the suggestions of lower impulse and desire.

There are always two ways of doing the yoga — one by the action of a vigilant mind and vital seeing, observing, thinking and deciding what is or is not to be done. Of course it acts with the Divine Force behind it, drawing or calling in that Force — for otherwise nothing much can be done. But still it is the personal effort that is prominent and assumes most of the burden.

The other way is that of the psychic being, the consciousness opening to the Divine, not only opening the psychic and bringing it forward, but opening the mind, the vital and the physical, receiving the Light, perceiving what is to be done, feeling and seeing it done by the Divine Force itself and helping constantly by its own vigilant and conscious assent to and call for the Divine working.

Usually there cannot but be a mixture of these two ways until the consciousness is ready to be entirely open, entirely submitted to the Divine's origination of all its action. It is then that all responsibility disappears and there is no personal burden on the shoulders of the sadhak.

*

Whether by tapasya or surrender does not matter, the one thing is to be firm in setting one's face to the goal. Once one has set one's feet on the way, how can one draw back from it to something inferior — If one keeps firm, falls do not matter, one rises up again and goes forward. If one is firm towards the goal, there can be on the way to the Divine no eventual failure. And if there is something within you that drives as surely there is, falterings or falls or failure of faith make no eventual difference. One has to go on till the struggle is over and there is the straight and open and thornless way before us.

*

The fire is the divine fire of aspiration and inner tapasya. When the fire descends again and again with increasing force and magnitude into the darkness of human ignorance, it at first seems swallowed up and absorbed in the darkness, but more and more of the descent changes the darkness into light, the ignorance and unconsciousness of the human mind into spiritual consciousness.

*

To practise Yoga implies the will to overcome all attachments and turn to the Divine alone. The principal thing in the Yoga is to trust in the Divine Grace at every step, to direct the thought continually to the Divine and to offer oneself till the being opens and the Mother's force can be felt working in the Adhar.

*

In this yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence. It is there above you and, if you can once become conscious of it, you have then to call it down into you. It descends into the mind and into the body as Peace, as a Light, as a Force that works, as the Presence of the Divine with or without form, as Ananda. Before one has this consciousness, one has to have faith and aspire for the opening. Aspiration, call, prayer are forms of

one and the same thing and are all effective; you can take the form that comes to you or is easiest to you. The other way is concentration; you concentrate your consciousness in the heart (some do it in the head or above the head) and meditate on the Mother in the heart and call her in there. One can do either and both at different times — whatever comes naturally to you or you are moved to do at the moment. Especially in the beginning the one great necessity is to get the mind quiet, reject at the time of meditation all thoughts and movements that are foreign to the sadhana. In the quiet mind there will be a progressive preparation for the experience. But you must not become impatient, if all is not done at once; it takes time to bring entire quiet into the mind; you have to go on till the consciousness is ready.

*

In the practice of yoga, what you aim at can only come by the opening of the being to the Mother's force and the persistent rejection of all egoism and demand and desire, all motives except the aspiration for the Divine Truth. If this is rightly done, the Divine Power and Light will begin to work and bring in the peace and equanimity, the inner strength, the purified devotion and the increasing consciousness and self-knowledge which are the necessary foundation for the siddhi of the yoga.

*

The Truth for you is to feel the Divine in you, open to the Mother and work for the Divine till you are aware of her in all your activities. There must be the consciousness of the divine presence in your heart and the divine guidance in your acts. This the psychic being can easily, swiftly, deeply feel if it is fully awake; once the psychic has felt it, it can spread to the mental and vital also.

*

The only truth in your other experience, — which, you say, seems at the time so true to you, — is that it is hopeless for you or anyone to get out of the inferior consciousness by your or his unaided effort. That is why when

you sink into this inferior consciousness, everything seems hopeless to you, because you lose hold for a time of the true consciousness. But the suggestion is untrue, because you have an opening to the Divine and are not bound to remain in the inferior consciousness.

When you are in the true consciousness, then you see that everything can be done, even if at present only a slight beginning has been made; but a beginning is enough, once the Force, the Power are there. For the truth is that it can do everything and only time and the soul's aspiration are needed for the entire change and the soul's fulfilment.

*

The conditions for following the Mother's Will are to turn to her for Light and Truth and Strength, to aspire that no other force shall influence or lead you, to make no demands or conditions in the vital, to keep a quiet mind ready to receive the Truth but not insisting on its own ideas and formations, — finally to keep the psychic awake and in front, so that you may be in a constant contact and know truly what her will is; for the mind and vital can mistake other impulsions and suggestions for the Divine Will, but the psychic once awakened makes no mistake.

A perfect perfection in working is only possible after supramentalisation; but a relative good working is possible on the lower planes, if one is in contact with the Divine and careful, vigilant and conscious in mind and vital and body. That is a condition, besides, which is preparatory and almost indispensable for the supreme liberation.

*

One who fears monotony and wants something new would not be able to do yoga or at least this yoga which needs an inexhaustible perseverance and patience. The fear of death shows a vital weakness which is also contrary to a capacity for yoga. Equally, one who is under the domination of his passions, would find the yoga difficult and, unless supported by a true inner call and a sincere and strong aspiration for the spiritual consciousness and union with the Divine, might very easily fall fatally and his effort come to nothing.

*

As for working, it depends on what you mean by the word. Desire often leads either to excess of effort, meaning often much labour and a limited fruit with strain, exhaustion and in case of difficulty or failure, despondence, disbelief or revolt; or else it leads to pulling down the force. That can be done, but except for the yogically strong and experienced, it is not always safe, though it may be often very effective; not safe, first, because it may lead to violent reactions or it brings down contrary or wrong or mixed forces which the sadhak is not experienced enough to distinguish from the true ones. Or else it may substitute the sadhak's own limited power of experience or his mental and vital constructions for the free gift and true leading of the Divine. Cases differ, each has his own way of sadhana. But for you what I would recommend is constant openness, a quiet steady aspiration, no over-eagerness, a cheerful trust and patience.

*

It is very unwise for anyone to claim prematurely to have possession of the supermind or even to have a taste of it. The claim is usually accompanied by an outburst of superegoism, some radical blunder of perception or a gross fall, wrong condition and wrong movement. A certain spiritual humility, a serious unarrogant look at oneself and quiet perception of the imperfections of one's present nature and, instead of self-esteem and self-assertion, a sense of the necessity of exceeding one's present self, not from egoistic ambition, but from an urge towards the Divine would be, it seems to me, for this frail terrestrial and human composition far better conditions for proceeding towards the supramental change.

*

It is the psychic surrender in the physical that you have begun to experience.

All the parts are essentially offered, but the surrender has to be made complete by the growth of the psychic self-offering in all of them and in all their movements separately and together.

To be enjoyed by the Divine is to be entirely surrendered so that one feels the Divine Presence, Power, Light, Ananda possessing the whole being rather than oneself possessing these things for one's own satisfaction. It is a much greater ecstasy to be thus surrendered and possessed by the Divine than oneself to be the possessor. At the same time by this surrender there comes also a calm and happy mastery of self and nature.

*

Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical, so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from Light and Truth.

Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness.

Develop the cosmic consciousness — let the ego-centric outlook disappear in wideness, impersonality, the sense of the Cosmic Divine, the perception of universal forces, the realisation and understanding of the cosmic manifestation, the play.

Find in place of ego the true being — a portion of the Divine, issued from the World-Mother and an instrument of the manifestation. This sense of being a portion of the Divine and an instrument should be free from all pride, sense or claim of ego or assertion of superiority, demand or desire. For if these elements are there, then it is not the true thing.

Most in doing yoga live in the mind, vital, physical, lit up occasionally or to some extent by the higher mind and by the illumined mind; but to prepare for the supramental change it is necessary (as soon as, personally, the time has come) to open up to the Intuition and the overmind, so that these may make the whole being and the whole nature ready for the supramental change. Allow the consciousness quietly to develop and widen and the knowledge of these things will progressively come.

Calm, discrimination, detachment (but not indifference) are all very important, for their opposites impede very much the transforming action. Intensity of aspiration should be there, but it must go along with these. No

hurry, no inertia, neither rajasic over-eagerness nor tamasic discouragement — a steady and persistent but quiet call and working. No snatching or clutching at realisation, but allowing realisation to come from within and above and observing accurately its field, its nature, its limits.

Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid any mixture or substitution, in its place, of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

These are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change; but none of them is easy, and they must be complete before the nature can be said to be ready. If the true attitude (psychic, unegoistic, open only to the Divine Force) can be established, then the process can go on much more quickly. To take and keep the true attitude, to further the change in oneself, is the help that can be given, the one thing asked to assist the general change.

III

In Difficulty

There are always difficulties and a hampered progress in the early stages and a delay in the opening of the inner doors until the being is ready. If you feel whenever you meditate the quiescence and the flashes of the inner Light and if the inward urge is growing so strong that the external hold is decreasing and the vital disturbances are losing their force, that is already a great progress. The road of yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures.

*

These obstacles are usual in the first stages of the sadhana. They are due to the nature being not yet sufficiently receptive. You should find out where the obstacle is, in the mind or the vital, and try to widen the consciousness there, call in more purity and peace and in that purity and peace offer that part of your being sincerely and wholly to the Divine Power.

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Each part of the nature wants to go on with its old movements and refuses, so far as it can, to admit a radical change and progress, because that would subject it to something higher than itself and deprive it of its sovereignty in its own field, its separate empire. It is this that makes transformation so long and difficult a process.

Mind gets dulled because at its lower basis is the physical mind with its principle of tamas or inertia — for in matter inertia is the fundamental principle. A constant or long continuity of higher experiences produces in this part of mind a sense of exhaustion or reaction of unease or dullness. Trance or *samādhi* is a way of escape — the body is made quiet, the physical mind is in a state of torpor, the inner consciousness is left free to

go on with its experiences. The disadvantage is that trance becomes indispensable and the problem of the waking consciousness is not solved; it remains imperfect.

*

If the difficulty in meditation is that thoughts of all kinds come in, that is not due to hostile forces but to the ordinary nature of the human mind. All sadhaks have this difficulty and with many it lasts for a very long time. There are several ways of getting rid of it. One of them is to look at the thoughts and observe what is the nature of the human mind as they show it but not to give any sanction and to let them run down till they come to a standstill — this is a way recommended by Vivekananda in his Rajayoga. Another is to look at the thoughts as not one's own, to stand back as the witness Purusha and refuse the sanction — the thoughts are regarded as things coming from outside, from Prakriti, and they must be felt as if they were passers-by crossing the mind-space with whom one has no connection and in whom one takes no interest. In this way it usually happens that after a time the mind divides into two, a part which is the mental witness watching and perfectly undisturbed and quiet and a part which is the object of observation, the Prakriti part in which the thoughts cross or wander. Afterwards one can proceed to silence or quiet the Prakriti part also. There is a third, an active method by which one looks to see where the thoughts come from and finds they come not from oneself, but from outside the head as it were; if one can detect them coming, then, before they enter, they have to be thrown away altogether. This is perhaps the most difficult way and not all can do it, but if it can be done it is the shortest and most powerful road to silence.

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It is necessary to observe and know the wrong movements in you; for they are the source of your trouble and have to be persistently rejected if you are to be free.

But do not be always thinking of your defects and wrong movements. Concentrate more upon what you are to be, on the ideal, with the faith that,

since it is the goal before you, it must and will come.

To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith. Turn your eyes more to the coming light and less to any immediate darkness. Faith, cheerfulness, confidence in the ultimate victory are the things that help, — they make the progress easier and swifter.

Make more of the good experiences that come to you; one experience of the kind is more important than the lapses and failures. When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to a still deeper and fuller experience.

Aspire always, but with more quietude, opening yourself to the Divine simply and wholly.

*

The lower vital in most human beings is full of grave defects and of movements that respond to hostile forces. A constant psychic opening, a persistent rejection of these influences, a separation of oneself from all hostile suggestions and the inflow of the calm, light, peace, purity of the Mother's power would eventually free the system from the siege.

What is needed is to be quiet and more and more quiet, to look on these influences as something not yourself which has intruded, to separate yourself from it and deny it and to abide in a quiet confidence in the Divine Power. If your psychic being asks for the Divine and your mind is sincere and calls for liberation from the lower nature and from all hostile forces and if you can call the Mother's power into your heart and rely upon it more than on your own strength, this siege will in the end be driven away from you and strength and peace take its place.

*

The lower nature is ignorant and undivine, not in itself hostile but shut to the Light and Truth. The hostile forces are anti-divine, not merely undivine; they make use of the lower nature, pervert it, fill it with distorted

movements and by that means influence man and even try to enter and possess or at least entirely control him.

Free yourself from all exaggerated self-depreciation and the habit of getting depressed by the sense of sin, difficulty or failure. These feelings do not really help, on the contrary, they are an immense obstacle and hamper the progress. They belong to the religious, not to the yogic mentality. The yogin should look on all the defects of the nature as movements of the lower Prakriti common to all and reject them calmly, firmly and persistently with full confidence in the Divine Power — without weakness or depression or negligence and without excitement, impatience or violence.

*

The rule in yoga is not to let the depression depress you, to stand back from it, observe its cause and remove the cause; for the cause is always in oneself, perhaps a vital defect somewhere, a wrong movement indulged or a petty desire causing a recoil, sometimes by its satisfaction, sometimes by its disappointment. In yoga a desire satisfied, a false movement given its head produces very often a worse recoil than disappointed desire.

What is needed for you is to live more deeply within, less in the outer vital and mental part which is exposed to these touches. The inmost psychic being is not oppressed by them; it stands in its own closeness to the Divine and sees the small surface movements as surface things foreign to the true Being.

*

In your dealing with your difficulties and the wrong movements that assail you, you are probably making the mistake of identifying yourself with them too much and regarding them as part of your own nature. You should rather draw back from them, detach and dissociate yourself from them, regard them as movements of the universal lower imperfect and impure nature, forces that enter into you and try to make you their instrument for their self-expression. By so detaching and dissociating yourself it will be more possible for you to discover and to live more and more in a part of

yourself, your inner or your psychic being which is not attacked or troubled by these movements, finds them foreign to itself and automatically refuses assent to them and feels itself always turned to or in contact with the Divine Forces and the higher planes of consciousness. Find that part of your being and live in it; to be able to do so is the true foundation of the yoga.

By so standing back it will be easier also for you to find a quiet poise in yourself, behind the surface struggle, from which you can more effectively call in the help to deliver you. The Divine presence, calm, peace, purity, force, light, joy, wideness are above waiting to descend in you. Find this quietude behind and your mind also will become quieter and through the quiet mind you can call down the descent first of the purity and peace and then of the Divine Force. If you can feel this peace and purity descending into you, you can then call it down again and again till it begins to settle; you will feel too the Force working in you to change the movements and transform the consciousness. In this working you will be aware of the presence and power of the Mother. Once that is done, all the rest will be a question of time and of the progressive evolution in you of your true and divine nature.

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The existence of imperfections, even many and serious imperfections, cannot be a *permanent* bar to progress in the yoga. (I do not speak of a recovery of the former opening, for according to my experience, what comes after a period of obstruction or struggle is usually a new and wider opening, some larger consciousness and an advance on what had been gained before and seems — but only seems — to be lost for the moment.) The only bar that can be permanent — but need not be, for this too can change — is insincerity, and this does not exist in you. If imperfection were a bar, then no man could succeed in yoga; for all are imperfect, and I am not sure, from what I have seen, that it is not those who have the greatest power for yoga who have too, very often, or have had the greatest imperfections. You know, I suppose, the comment of Socrates on his own character; that could be said by many great yogins of their own initial human nature. In yoga the one thing that counts in the end is sincerity and

with it the patience to persist in the path — many even without this patience go through, for in spite of revolt, impatience, depression, despondency, fatigue, temporary loss of faith, a force greater than one's outer self, the force of the Spirit, the drive of the soul's need, pushes them through the cloud and the mist to the goal before them. Imperfections can be stumbling-blocks and give one a bad fall for the moment, but not a permanent bar. Obscurations due to some resistance in the nature can be more serious causes of delay, but they too do not last for ever.

The length of your period of dullness is also no sufficient reason for losing belief in your capacity or your spiritual destiny. I believe that alternations of bright and dark periods are almost a universal experience of yogis, and the exceptions are very rare. If one inquires into the reasons of this phenomenon, — very unpleasant to our impatient human nature, — it will be found, I think, that they are in the main two. The first is that the human consciousness either cannot bear a constant descent of the Light or Power or Ananda, or cannot at once receive and absorb it; it needs periods of assimilation; but this assimilation goes on behind the veil of the surface consciousness; the experience or the realisation that has descended retires behind the veil and leaves this outer or surface consciousness to lie fallow and become ready for a new descent. In the more developed stages of the yoga these dark or dull periods become shorter, less trying as well as uplifted by the sense of the greater consciousness which, though not acting for immediate progress, yet remains and sustains the outer nature. The second cause is some resistance, something in the human nature that has not felt the former descent, is not ready, is perhaps unwilling to change, — often it is some strong habitual formation of the mind or the vital or some temporary inertia of the physical consciousness and not exactly a part of the nature, — and this, whether showing or concealing itself, thrusts up the obstacle. If one can detect the cause in oneself, acknowledge it, see its workings and call down the Power for its removal, then the periods of obscurity can be greatly shortened and their acuity becomes less. But in any case the Divine Power is working always behind and one day, perhaps when one least expects it, the obstacle breaks, the clouds vanish and there is again the light and the sunshine. The best thing in these cases is, if one can manage it, not to fret, not to despond, but to insist quietly and keep oneself open, spread to the Light and waiting in faith for it to come; that I

have found shortens these ordeals. Afterwards, when the obstacle disappears, one finds that a great progress has been made and that the consciousness is far more capable of receiving and retaining than before. There is a return for all the trials and ordeals of the spiritual life.

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While the recognition of the Divine Power and the attunement of one's own nature to it cannot be done without the recognition of the imperfections in that nature, yet it is a wrong attitude to put too much stress either on them or on the difficulties they create, or to distrust the Divine working because of the difficulties one experiences, or to lay too continual an emphasis on the dark side of things. To do this increases the force of the difficulties, gives a greater right of continuance to the imperfections. I do not insist on a Coueistic optimism — although excessive optimism is more helpful than excessive pessimism; that (Coueism) tends to cover up difficulties and there is, besides, always a measure to be observed in things. But there is no danger of your covering them up and deluding yourself with too bright an outlook; quite the contrary, you always lay stress too much on the shadows and by so doing thicken them and obstruct your outlets of escape into the Light. Faith, more faith! Faith in your possibilities, faith in the Power that is at work behind the veil, faith in the work that is to be done and the offered guidance.

There cannot be any high endeavour, least of all in the spiritual field, which does not raise or encounter grave obstacles of a very persistent character. These are both internal and external, and, although in the large they are fundamentally the same for all, there may be a great difference in the distribution of their stress or the outward form they take. But the one real difficulty is the attunement of the nature with the working of the Divine Light and Power. Get that solved and the others will either disappear or take a subordinate place; and even with those difficulties that are of a more general character, more lasting because they are inherent in the work of transformation, they will not weigh so heavily because the sense of the supporting Force and a greater power to follow its movement will be there.

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The entire oblivion of the experience means merely that there is still no sufficient bridge between the inner consciousness which has the experience in a kind of samadhi and the exterior waking consciousness. It is when the higher consciousness has made the bridge between them that the outer also begins to remember.

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These fluctuations in the force of the aspiration and the power of the sadhana are unavoidable and common to all sadhaks until the whole being has been made ready for the transformation. When the psychic is in front or active and the mind and vital consent, then there is the intensity. When the psychic is less prominent and the lower vital has its ordinary movements or the mind its ignorant action, then the opposing forces can come in unless the sadhak is very vigilant. Inertia comes usually from the ordinary physical consciousness, especially when the vital is not actively supporting the sadhana. These things can only be cured by a persistent bringing down of the higher spiritual consciousness into all the parts of the being.

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An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical parts of nature. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true conditions and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause of the thing that needs to be set right.

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There are always pauses of preparation and assimilation between two movements. You must not regard these with fretfulness or impatience as if they were untoward gaps in the sadhana. Besides, the Force rises up lifting

part of the nature on a higher level and then comes down to a lower layer to raise it; this motion of ascent and descent is often extremely trying because the mind partial to an ascent in a straight line and the vital eager for rapid fulfilment cannot understand or follow the intricate movement and are apt to be distressed by it or resent it. But the transformation of the whole nature is not an easy thing to accomplish and the Force that does it knows better than our mental ignorance or our vital impatience.

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It is a very serious difficulty in one's yoga — the absence of a central will always superior to the waves of the Prakriti forces, always in touch with the Mother, imposing its central aim and aspiration on the nature. That is because you have not yet learned to live in your central being; you have been accustomed to run with every wave of Force, no matter of what kind, that rushed upon you and to identify yourself with it for the time being. It is one of the things that has to be unlearned; you must find your central being with the psychic as its basis and live in it.

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However hard the fight, the only thing is to fight it out now and here to the end.

The trouble is that you have never fully faced and conquered the real obstacle. There is in a very fundamental part of your nature a strong formation of ego-individuality which has mixed in your spiritual aspiration a clinging element of pride and spiritual ambition. This formation has never consented to be broken up in order to give place to something more true and divine. Therefore, when the Mother has put her force upon you or when you yourself have pulled the force upon you, this in you has always prevented it from doing its work in its own way. It has begun itself building according to the ideas of the mind or some demand of the ego, trying to make its own creation in its "own way", by its own strength, its own sadhana, its own tapasya. There has never been here any real surrender, any giving up of yourself freely and simply into the hands of the Divine Mother. And yet that is the only way to succeed in the supramental

Yoga. To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done by a force infinitely greater than your own; it can only be done by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.

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There is no reason why you should abandon hope of success in the yoga. The state of depression which you now feel is temporary and it comes even upon the strongest sadhaks at one time or another or even often recurs. The only thing needed is to hold firm with the awakened part of the being, to reject all contrary suggestions and to wait, opening yourself as much as you can to the true Power, till the crisis or change of which this depression is a stage is completed. The suggestions which come to your mind telling you that you are not fit and that you must go back to the ordinary life are promptings from a hostile source. Ideas of this kind must always be rejected as inventions of the lower nature; even if they are founded on appearances which seem convincing to the ignorant mind, they are false, because they exaggerate a passing movement and represent it as the decisive and definite truth. There is only one truth in you on which you have to lay constant hold, the truth of your divine possibilities and the call of the higher Light to your nature. If you hold to that always, or, even if you are momentarily shaken from your hold, return constantly to it, it will justify itself in the end in spite of all difficulties and obstacles and stumblings. All that resists will disappear in time with the progressive unfolding of your spiritual nature.

What is needed is the conversion and surrender of the vital part. It must learn to demand only the highest truth and to forego all insistence on the satisfaction of its inferior impulses and desires. It is this adhesion of the vital being that brings the full satisfaction and joy of the whole nature in the spiritual life. When that is there, it will be impossible even to think of returning to the ordinary existence. Meanwhile the mental will and the psychic aspiration must be your support; if you insist, the vital will finally yield and be converted and surrender.

Fix upon your mind and heart the resolution to live for the Divine Truth and for that alone; reject all that is contrary and incompatible with it and

turn away from the lower desires; aspire to open yourself to the Divine Power and to no other. Do this in all sincerity and the present and living help you need will not fail you.

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The attitude you have taken is the right one. It is this feeling and attitude which help you to overcome so rapidly the attacks that sometimes fall upon you and throw you out of the right consciousness. As you say, difficulties so taken become opportunities; the difficulty faced in the right spirit and conquered, one finds that an obstacle has disappeared, a first step forward has been taken. To question, to resist in some part of the being increases trouble and difficulties — that is why an unquestioning acceptance, an unfailing obedience to the directions of the Guru was laid down as indispensable in the old Indian yogas — it was demanded not for the sake of the Guru, but for the sake of the Shishya.

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It is one thing to see things and quite another to let them enter into you. One has to experience many things, to see and observe, to bring them into the field of the consciousness and know what they are. But there is no reason why you should allow them to enter into you and possess you. It is only the Divine or what comes from the Divine that can be admitted to enter you.

To say that all light is good is as if you said that all water is good — or even that all clear or transparent water is good: it would not be true. One must see what is the nature of the light or where it comes from or what is in it, before one can say that it is the true Light. False lights exist and misleading lustres, lower lights too that belong to the being's inferior reaches. One must therefore be on one's guard and distinguish; the true discrimination has to come by growth of the psychic feeling and a purified mind and experience.

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The cry you heard was not in the physical heart, but in the emotional centre. The breaking of the wall meant the breaking of the obstacle or at least of some obstacle there between your inner and your outer being. Most people live in their ordinary outer ignorant personality which does not easily open to the Divine; but there is an inner being within them of which they do not know, which can easily open to the Truth and the Light. But there is a wall which divides them from it, a wall of obscurity and unconsciousness. When it breaks down, then there is a release; the feelings of calm, Ananda, joy which you had immediately afterwards were due to that release. The cry you heard was the cry of the vital part in you overcome by the suddenness of the breaking of the wall and the opening.

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The consciousness is usually imprisoned in the body, centralised in the brain and heart and navel centres (mental, emotional, sensational); when you feel it or something of it go up and take its station above the head, that is the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness from the body-formula. It is the mental in you that goes up there, gets into touch with something higher than the ordinary mind and from there puts the higher mental will on the rest for transformation. The trembling and the heat come from a resistance, an absence of habituation in the body and the vital to this demand and to this liberation. When the mental consciousness can take its stand permanently or at will above like this, then this first liberation becomes accomplished (*siddha*). From there the mental being can open freely to the higher planes or to the cosmic existence and its forces and can also act with greater liberty and power on the lower nature.

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The method of the Divine Manifestation is through calm and harmony, not through a catastrophic upheaval. The latter is the sign of a struggle, generally of conflicting vital forces, but at any rate a struggle on the inferior plane.

You think too much of the adverse forces. That kind of preoccupation causes much unnecessary struggle. Fix your mind on the positive side.

Open to the Mother's power, concentrate on her protection, call for light, calm and peace and purity and growth into the divine consciousness and knowledge.

The idea of tests also is not a healthy idea and ought not to be pushed too far. Tests are applied not by the Divine but by the forces of the lower planes — mental, vital, physical — and allowed by the Divine because that is part of the soul's training and helps it to know itself, its powers and the limitations it has to outgrow. The Mother is not testing you at every moment, but rather helping you at every moment to rise beyond the necessity of tests and difficulties which belong to the inferior consciousness. To be always conscious of that help will be your best safeguard against all attacks whether of adverse powers or of your own lower nature.

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The hostile forces have a certain self-chosen function: it is to test the condition of the individual, of the work, of the earth itself and their readiness for the spiritual descent and fulfilment. At every step of the journey, they are there attacking furiously, criticising, suggesting, imposing despondency or inciting to revolt, raising unbelief, amassing difficulties. No doubt, they put a very exaggerated interpretation on the rights given them by their function, making mountains even out of what seems to us a mole-hill. A little trifling false step or mistake and they appear on the road and clap a whole Himalaya as a barrier across it. But this opposition has been permitted from of old not merely as a test or ordeal, but as a compulsion on us to seek a greater strength, a more perfect self-knowledge, an intenser purity and force of aspiration, a faith that nothing can crush, a more powerful descent of the Divine Grace.

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The Power does not descend with the object of raising up the lower forces, but in the way it has to work at present, that uprising comes in as a reaction to the working. What is needed is the establishment of the calm and wide consciousness at the base of the whole Nature, so that when the lower

nature appears it will not be as an attack or struggle but as if a Master of forces were there seeing the defects of the present machinery and doing step by step what is necessary to remedy and change it.

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It is the forces of the Ignorance that begin first to lay siege from outside and then make a mass attack in order to overpower and capture. Every time such an attack can be defeated and cast out, there is a clearance in the being, a new field gained for the Mother in the mind, vital or physical or the adjacent parts of the nature. That the place in the vital occupied by the Mother is increasing is shown by the fact that you are now offering a stronger resistance to these sieges that used formerly to overpower you altogether.

To be able to call the Mother's presence or force at such times is the best way to meet the difficulty.

It is with the Mother who is always with you and in you that you converse. The only thing is to hear aright, so that no other voice can ape hers or come in between her and you.

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Your mind and psychic being are concentrated on the spiritual aim and open to the Divine — that is why the Influence comes down only to the head and as far as the heart. But the vital being and nature and physical consciousness are under the influence of the lower nature. As long as the vital and physical being are not surrendered or do not on their own account call for the higher life, the struggle is likely to continue.

Surrender everything, reject all other desires or interests, call on the Divine Shakti to open the vital nature and bring down calm, peace, light, Ananda into all the centres. Aspire, await with faith and patience the result. All depends on a complete sincerity and an integral consecration and aspiration.

The world will trouble you so long as any part of you belongs to the world. It is only if you belong entirely to the Divine that you can become

free.

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One who has not the courage to face patiently and firmly life and its difficulties will never be able to go through the still greater inner difficulties of the sadhana. The very first lesson in this yoga is to face life and its trials with a quiet mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine Shakti.

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Suicide is an absurd solution; he is quite mistaken in thinking that it will give him peace. He will only carry his difficulties with him into a more miserable condition of existence beyond and bring them back to another life on earth. The only remedy is to shake off these morbid ideas and face life with a clear will for some definite work to be done as the life's aim and with a quiet and active courage.

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Sadhana has to be done in the body, it cannot be done by the soul without the body. When the body drops, the soul goes wandering in other worlds — and finally it comes back to another life and another body. Then all the difficulties it had not solved meet it again in the new life. So what is the use of leaving the body?

Moreover, if one throws away the body wilfully, one suffers much in the other worlds and when one is born again, it is in worse, not in better conditions.

The only sensible thing is to face the difficulties in this life and this body and conquer them.

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The goal of yoga is always hard to reach, but this one is more difficult than any other, and it is only for those who have the call, the capacity, the

willingness to face everything and every risk, even the risk of failure, and the will to progress towards an entire selflessness, desirelessness and surrender.

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Let nothing and nobody come between you and the Mother's force. It is on your admitting and keeping that force and responding to the true inspiration and not on any ideas the mind may form that success will depend. Even ideas or plans which might otherwise be useful, will fail if there is not behind them the true spirit and the true force and influence.

*

The difficulty must have come from distrust and disobedience. For distrust and disobedience are like falsehood (they are themselves a falsity, based on false ideas and impulses), they interfere in the action of the Power, prevent it from being felt or from working fully and diminish the force of the Protection.

Not only in your inward concentration, but in your outward acts and movements you must take the right attitude. If you do that and put everything under the Mother's guidance, you will find that difficulties begin to diminish or are much more easily got over and things become steadily smoother.

In your work and acts you must do the same as in your concentration. Open to the Mother, put them under her guidance, call in the peace, the supporting Power, the protection and, in order that they may work, reject all wrong influences that might come in their way by creating wrong, careless or unconscious movements.

Follow this principle and your whole being will become one, under one rule, in the peace and sheltering Power and Light.

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When I spoke of being faithful to the light of the soul and the divine Call, I was not referring to anything in the past or to any lapse on your part. I was

simply affirming the great need in all crises and attacks, — to refuse to listen to any suggestions, impulses, lures and to oppose to them all the call of the Truth, the imperative beckoning of the Light. In all doubt and depression, to say, "I belong to the Divine, I cannot fail"; to all suggestions of impurity and unfitness, to reply, "I am a child of Immortality chosen by the Divine; I have but to be true to myself and to Him — the victory is sure; even if I fell, I would rise again"; to all impulses to depart and serve some smaller ideal, to reply, "This is the greatest, this is the Truth that alone can satisfy the soul within me; I will endure through all tests and tribulations to the very end of the divine journey". This is what I mean by faithfulness to the Light and the Call.

IV

Desire — Food — Sex

All the ordinary vital movements are foreign to the true being and come from outside; they do not belong to the soul nor do they originate in it but are waves from the general Nature, Prakriti.

The desires come from outside, enter the subconscious vital and rise to the surface. It is only when they rise to the surface and the mind becomes aware of them, that we become conscious of the desire. It seems to us to be our own because we feel it thus rising from the vital into the mind and do not know that it came from outside. What belongs to the vital, to the being, what makes it responsible is not the desire itself, but the habit of responding to the waves or the currents of suggestion that come into it from the universal Prakriti.

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The rejection of desire is essentially the rejection of the element of craving, putting that out from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature. But refusal to indulge the suggestions of desire is also a part of the rejection; to abstain from the action suggested, if it is not the right action, must be included in the yogic discipline. It is only when this is done in the wrong way, by a mental ascetic principle or a hard moral rule, that it can be called suppression. The difference between suppression and an inward essential rejection is the difference between mental or moral control and a spiritual purification.

When one lives in the true consciousness one feels the desires outside oneself, entering from outside, from the universal lower Prakriti, into the mind and the vital parts. In the ordinary human condition this is not felt; men become aware of the desire only when it is there, when it has come inside and found a lodging or a habitual harbourage and so they think it is their own and a part of themselves. The first condition for getting rid of desire is, therefore, to become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle

with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movements of the nature.

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Demand and desire are only two different aspects of the same thing — nor is it necessary that a feeling should be agitated or restless to be a desire; it can be, on the contrary, quietly fixed and persistent or persistently recurrent. Demand or desire comes from the mental or the vital, but a psychic or spiritual need is a different thing. The psychic does not demand or desire — it aspires; it does not make conditions for its surrender or withdraw if its aspiration is not immediately satisfied — for the psychic has complete trust in the Divine or in the Guru and can wait for the right time or the hour of the Divine Grace. The psychic has an insistence of its own, but it puts its pressure not on the Divine, but on the nature, placing a finger of light on all the defects there that stand in the way of the realisation, sifting out all that is mixed, ignorant or imperfect in the experience or in the movements of the yoga and never satisfied with itself or with the nature till it has got it perfectly open to the Divine, free from all forms of ego, surrendered, simple and right in the attitude and all the movements. This is what has to be established entirely in the mind and vital and in the physical consciousness before supramentalisation of the whole nature is possible. Otherwise what one gets is more or less brilliant, half-luminous, half-cloudy illuminations and experiences on the mental and vital and physical planes inspired either from some larger mind or larger vital or at the best from the mental reaches above the human that intervene between the intellect and the overmind. These can be very stimulating and satisfying up to a certain point and are good for those who want some spiritual realisation on these planes; but the supramental

realisation is something much more difficult and exacting in its conditions and the most difficult of all is to bring it down to the physical level.

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Desire takes a long time to get rid of entirely. But, if you can once get it out of the nature and realise it as a force coming from outside and putting its claws into the vital and physical, it will be easier to get rid of the invader. You are too accustomed to feel it as part of yourself or planted in you — that makes it more difficult for you to deal with its movements and dismiss its ancient control over you.

You should not rely on anything else alone, however helpful it may seem, but chiefly, primarily, fundamentally on the Mother's Force. The Sun and the Light may be a help, and will be if it is the true Light and the true Sun, but cannot take the place of the Mother's Force.

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The *necessities* of a sadhak should be as few as possible; for there are only a very few things that are real necessities in life. The rest are either utilities or things decorative to life or luxuries. These a yogin has a right to possess or enjoy only on one of two conditions -

(1) If he uses them during his sadhana solely to train himself in possessing things without attachment or desire and learn to use them rightly, in harmony with the Divine Will, with a proper handling, a just organisation, arrangement and measure — or,

(2) if he has already attained a true freedom from desire and attachment and is not in the least moved or affected in any way by loss or withholding or deprival. If he has any greed, desire, demand, claim for possession or enjoyment, any anxiety, grief, anger or vexation when denied or deprived, he is not free in spirit and his use of the things he possesses is contrary to the spirit of sadhana. Even if he is free in spirit, he will not be fit for possession if he has not learned to use things not for himself, but for the Divine Will, as an instrument, with the right knowledge and action in the use, for the proper equipment of a life lived not for oneself but for and in the Divine.

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Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of this yoga, but self-control in the vital and right order in the material are a very important part of it — and even an ascetic discipline is better for our purpose than a loose absence of true control. Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.

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If you want to do yoga, you must take more and more in all matters, small or great, the yogic attitude. In our path that attitude is not one of forceful suppression, but of detachment and equality with regard to the objects of desire. Forceful suppression (fasting comes under the head) stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains; in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression. It is only when one stands back, separates oneself from the lower vital, refusing to regard its desires and clamours as one's own, and cultivates an entire equality and equanimity in the consciousness with respect to them that the lower vital itself becomes gradually purified and itself also calm and equal. Each wave of desire as it comes must be observed, as quietly and with as much unmoved detachment as you would observe something going on outside you, and allowed to pass, rejected from the consciousness, and the true movement, the trueconsciousness steadily put in its place.

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It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life, that is contrary to the spirit of yoga. To be aware that something is pleasant to the palate is not wrong; only one must have no desire nor hankering for it, no exultation in getting it, no displeasure or regret at not getting it. One must be calm and equal, not getting upset or dissatisfied when the food is not tasty or not in abundance — eating the fixed amount that is necessary, not less or more. There should

be neither eagerness nor repugnance.

To be always thinking about food and troubling the mind is quite the wrong way of getting rid of the food-desire. Put the food element in the right place in the life, in a small corner, and don't concentrate on it but on other things.

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Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you; then it need not create tamas.

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It is no part of this yoga to suppress taste, *rasa*, altogether. What is to be got rid of is vital desire and attachment, the greed of food, being overjoyed at getting the food you like, sorry and discontented when you do not have it, giving an undue importance to it. Equality is here the test as in so many other matters.

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The idea of giving up food is a wrong inspiration. You can go on with a small quantity of food, but not without food altogether, except for a comparatively short time. Remember what the Gita says, "Yoga is not for one who eats in excess nor for one who abstains from eating altogether." Vital energy is one thing — of that one can draw a great amount without food and often it increases with fasting; but physical substance, without which life loses its support, is of a different order.

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Neither neglect this turn of the nature (food-desire) nor make too much of it; it has to be dealt with, purified and mastered but without giving it too much importance. There are two ways of conquering it — one of

detachment, learning to regard food as only a physical necessity and the vital satisfaction of the stomach and the palate as a thing of no importance; the other is to be able to take without insistence or seeking any food given and to find in it (whether pronounced good or bad by others) the equal rasa, not of the food for its own sake, but of the universal Ananda.

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It is a mistake to neglect the body and let it waste away; the body is the means of the sadhana and should be maintained in good order. There should be no attachment to it, but no contempt or neglect either of the material part of our nature.

In this yoga the aim is not only the union with the higher consciousness but the transformation (by its power) of the lower including the physical nature.

It is not necessary to have desire or greed of food in order to eat. The yogi eats not out of desire, but to maintain the body.

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It is a fact that by fasting, if the mind and the nerves are solid or the will-force dynamic, one can get for a time into a state of inner energy and receptivity which is alluring to the mind and the usual reactions of hunger, weakness, intestinal disturbance, etc., can be wholly avoided. But the body suffers by diminution and there can easily develop in the vital a morbid overstrained condition due to the inrush of more vital energy than the nervous system can assimilate or co-ordinate. Nervous people should avoid the temptation to fast, it is often accompanied or followed by delusions and a loss of balance. Especially if there is a motive of hunger-strike or that element comes in, fasting becomes perilous, for it is then an indulgence of a vital movement which may easily become a habit injurious and pernicious to the sadhana. Even if all these reactions are avoided, still there is no sufficient utility in fasting, since the higher energy and receptivity ought to come not by artificial or physical means but by intensity of the consciousness and strong will for the sadhana.

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The transformation to which we aspire is too vast and complex to come at one stroke; it must be allowed to come by stages. The physical change is the last of these stages and is itself a progressive process.

The inner transformation cannot be brought about by physical means either of a positive or a negative nature. On the contrary, the physical change itself can only be brought about by a descent of the greater supramental consciousness into the cells of the body. Till then at least the body and its supporting energies have to be maintained in part by the ordinary means, food, sleep, etc. Food has to be taken in the right spirit, with the right consciousness; sleep has to be gradually transformed into the yogic repose. A premature and excessive physical austerity, Tapasya, may endanger the process of the sadhana by establishing a disturbance and abnormality of the forces in the different parts of the system. A great energy may pour into the mental and vital parts but the nerves and the body may be overstrained and lose the strength to support the play of these higher energies. This is the reason why an extreme physical austerity is not included here as a substantive part of the sadhana.

There is no harm in fasting from time to time for a day or two or in reducing the food taken to a small but sufficient modicum; but entire abstinence for a long period is not advisable.

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The sadhak has to turn away entirely from the invasion of the vital and the physical by the sex-impulse — for, if he does not conquer the sex-impulse there can be no settling in the body of the divine consciousness and the divine Ananda.

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It is true that the mere suppression or holding down of desire is not enough, not by itself truly effective, but that does not mean that desires are to be indulged; it means that desires have not merely to be suppressed, but to be rejected from the nature. In place of desire there must be a single-

minded aspiration towards the Divine.

As for love, the love must be turned singly towards the Divine. What men call by that name is a vital interchange for mutual satisfaction of desire, vital impulse or physical pleasure. There must be nothing of this interchange between sadhaks; for to seek for it or indulge this kind of impulse only leads away from the sadhana.

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The whole principle of this yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone and to nobody and nothing else, and to bring down into ourselves by union with the Divine Mother-Power all the transcendent light, force, wideness, peace, purity, truth-consciousness and Ananda of the supramental Divine. In this yoga, therefore, there can be no place for vital relations or interchanges with others; any such relation or interchange immediately ties down the soul to the lower consciousness and its lower nature, prevents the true and full union with the Divine and hampers both the ascent to the supramental Truth-consciousness and the descent of the supramental Ishwari Shakti. Still worse would it be if this interchange took the form of a sexual relation or a sexual enjoyment, even if kept free from any outward act; therefore these things are absolutely forbidden in the sadhana. It goes without saying that any physical act of the kind is not allowed; but also any subtler form is ruled out. It is only after becoming one with the supramental Divine that we can find our true spiritual relations with others in the Divine; in that higher unity this kind of gross lower vital movement can have no place.

To master the sex-impulse, — to become so much master of the sex-centre that the sexual energy would be drawn upwards, not thrown outwards and wasted — it is so indeed that the force in the seed can be turned into a primal physical energy supporting all the others, *retas* into *ojas*. But no error can be more perilous than to accept the immixture of the sexual desire and some kind of subtle satisfaction of it and look on this as a part of the sadhana. It would be the most effective way to head straight towards spiritual downfall and throw into the atmosphere forces that would block the supramental descent, bringing instead the descent of adverse vital powers to disseminate disturbance and disaster. This deviation must be

absolutely thrown away, should it try to occur and expunged from the consciousness, if the Truth is to be brought down and the work is to be done.

It is an error too to imagine that, although the physical sexual action is to be abandoned, yet some inward reproduction of it is part of the transformation of the sex-centre. The action of the animal sex-energy in Nature is a device for a particular purpose in the economy of the material creation in the Ignorance. But the vital excitement that accompanies it makes the most favourable opportunity and vibration in the atmosphere for the inrush of those very vital forces and beings whose whole business is to prevent the descent of the supramental Light. The pleasure attached to it is a degradation and not a true form of the divine Ananda. The true divine Ananda in the physical has a different quality and movement and substance; self-existent in its essence, its manifestation is dependent only on an inner union with the Divine. You have spoken of Divine Love; but Divine Love, when it touches the physical, does not awaken the gross lower vital propensities; indulgence of them would only repel it and make it withdraw again to the heights from which it is already difficult enough to draw it down into the coarseness of the material creation which it alone can transform. Seek the Divine Love through the only gate through which it will consent to enter, the gate of the psychic being, and cast away the lower vital error.

The transformation of the sex-centre and its energy is needed for the physical siddhi; for this is the support in the body of all the mental, vital and physical forces of the nature. It has to be changed into a mass and a movement of intimate Light, creative Power, pure divine Ananda. It is only the bringing down of the supramental Light, Power and Bliss into the centre that can change it. As to the working afterwards, it is the supramental Truth and the creative vision and will of the Divine Mother that will determine it. But it will be a working of the conscious Truth, not of the Darkness and Ignorance to which sexual desire and enjoyment belong; it will be a power of preservation and free desireless radiation of the life-forces and not of their throwing out and waste. Avoid the imagination that the supramental life will be only a heightened satisfaction of the desires of the vital and the body; nothing can be a greater obstacle to the Truth in its descent than this hope of glorification of the animal in the

human nature. Mind wants the supramental state to be a confirmation of its own cherished ideas and preconceptions; the vital wants it to be a glorification of its own desires; the physical wants it to be a rich prolongation of its own comforts and pleasures and habits. If it were to be that, it would be only an exaggerated and highly magnified consummation of the animal and the human nature, not a transition from the human into the Divine.

It is dangerous to think of giving up "all barrier of discrimination and defence against what is trying to descend" upon you. Have you thought what this would mean if what is descending is something not in consonance with the divine Truth, perhaps even adverse? An adverse Power would ask no better condition for getting control over the seeker. It is only the Mother's force and the divine Truth that one should admit without barriers. And even there one must keep the power of discernment in order to detect anything false that comes masquerading as the Mother's force and the divine Truth, and keep too the power of rejection that will throw away all mixture.

Keep faith in your spiritual destiny, draw back from error and open more the psychic being to the direct guidance of the Mother's light and power. If the central will is sincere, each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping-stone to a truer movement and a higher progress.

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I have stated very briefly in my previous letter my position with regard to the sex-impulse and yoga. I may add here that my conclusion is not founded on any mental opinion or preconceived moral idea, but on probative facts and on observation and experience. I do not deny that so long as one allows a sort of separation between inner experience and outer consciousness, the latter being left as an inferior activity controlled but not transformed, it is quite possible to have spiritual experiences and make progress without any entire cessation of the sex-activity. The mind separates itself from the outer vital (life-parts) and the physical consciousness and lives its own inner life. But only a few can really do this with any completeness and the moment one's experiences extend to the life-plane and the physical, sex can no longer be treated in this way. It can

become at any moment a disturbing, upsetting and deforming force. I have observed that to an equal extent with ego (pride, vanity, ambition) and rajasic greeds and desires it is one of the main causes of the spiritual casualties that have taken place in sadhana. The attempt to treat it by detachment without complete excision breaks down; the attempt to sublimate it, favoured by many modern mystics in Europe, is a most rash and perilous experiment. For it is when one mixes up sex and spirituality that there is the greatest havoc. Even the attempt to sublimate it by turning it towards the Divine as in the Vaishnava *madhura bhāva* carries in it a serious danger, as the results of a wrong turn or use in this method so often show. At any rate in this yoga which seeks not only the essential experience of the Divine but a transformation of the whole being and nature, I have found it an absolute necessity of the sadhana to aim at a complete mastery over the sex-force; otherwise the vital consciousness remains a turbid mixture, the turbidity affecting the purity of the spiritualised mind and seriously hindering the upward turn of the forces of the body. This yoga demands a full ascension of the whole lower or ordinary consciousness to join the spiritual above it and a full descent of the spiritual (eventually of the supramental) into the mind, life and body to transform it. The total ascent is impossible so long as sex-desire blocks the way; the descent is dangerous so long as sex-desire is powerful in the vital. For at any moment an unexcised or latent sex-desire may be the cause of a mixture which throws back the true descent and uses the energy acquired for other purposes or turns all the action of the consciousness towards wrong experience, turbid and delusive. One must, therefore, clear this obstacle out of the way; otherwise there is either no safety or no free movement towards finality in the sadhana.

The contrary opinion of which you speak may be due to the idea that sex is a natural part of the human vital-physical whole, a necessity like food and sleep, and that its total inhibition may lead to unbalancing and to serious disorders. It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But I have observed that these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by

imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind, — I do not think harm ever occurs when there is a true spiritual effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, *if it is genuine*, is beneficial; for the element in the *retas* which serves the sexual act is then changed into its other element which feeds the energies of the system, mental, vital and physical — and that justifies the Indian idea of Brahmacharya, the transformation of *retas* into *ojas* and the raising of its energies upward so that they change into a spiritual force.

As for the method of mastery, it cannot be done by physical abstinence alone — it proceeds by a process of combined detachment and rejection. The consciousness stands back from the sex-impulse, feels it as not its own, as something alien thrown on it by Nature-force to which it refuses assent or identification — each time a certain movement of rejection throws it more and more outward. The mind remains unaffected; after a time the vital being which is the chief support withdraws from it in the same way, finally the physical consciousness no longer supports it. This process continues until even the subconscious can no longer rouse it up in dream and no further movement comes from the outer Nature-force to rekindle this lower fire. This is the course when the sex-propensity sticks obstinately; but there are some who can eliminate it decisively by a swift radical dropping away from the nature. That, however, is more rare.

It has to be said that the total elimination of the sex-impulse is one of the most difficult things in sadhana and one must be prepared for it to take time. But its total disappearance has been achieved and a practical liberation crossed only by occasional dream-movements from the subconscious is fairly common.

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As to sexual impulse. Regard it not as something sinful and horrible and attractive at the same time, but as a mistake and wrong movement of the lower nature. Reject it entirely, not by struggling with it, but by drawing back from it, detaching yourself and refusing your consent; look at it as something not your own, but imposed on you by a force of Nature outside you. Refuse all consent to the imposition. If anything in your vital consents, insist on that part of you withdrawing its consent. Call in the

Divine Force to help you in your withdrawal and refusal. If you can do this quietly and resolutely and patiently, in the end your inner will will prevail against the habit of the outer Nature.

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There is no reason to be depressed to this extent or to have these imaginations about failure in the yoga. It is not at all a sign that you are unfit for the yoga. It simply means that the sexual impulse rejected by the conscious parts has taken refuge in the subconscious, somewhere probably in the lower vital-physical and the most physical consciousness where there are some regions not yet open to the aspiration and the light. The persistence in sleep of things rejected in the waking consciousness is a quite common occurrence in the course of the sadhana.

The remedy is:

- (1) to get the higher consciousness, its light and the workings of its power down into the obscurer parts of the nature,
- (2) to become progressively more conscious in sleep, with an inner consciousness which is aware of the working of the sadhana in sleep as in waking,
- (3) to bring to bear the waking will and aspiration on the body in sleep.

One way to do the last is to make a strong and conscious suggestion to the body, before sleeping, that the thing should not happen; the more concrete and physical the suggestion can be made and the more directly on the sexual centre, the better. The effect may not be quite immediate at first or invariable; but usually this kind of suggestion, if you know how to make it, prevails in the end: even when it does not prevent the dream, it very often awakes the consciousness within in time to prevent untoward consequences.

It is a mistake to allow yourself to be depressed in the sadhana even by repeated failures. One must be calm, persistent and more obstinate than the resistance.

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The trouble of the sex-impulse is bound to dwindle away if you are in earnest about getting rid of it. The difficulty is that part of your nature (especially, the lower vital and the subconscious which is active in sleep) keeps the memory and attachment to these movements, and you do not open these parts and make them accept the Mother's Light and Force to purify them. If you did that and, instead of lamenting and getting troubled and clinging to the idea that you cannot get rid of these things, insisted quietly with a calm faith and patient resolution on their disappearance, separating yourself from them, refusing to accept them or at all regard them as part of yourself, they would after a time lose their force and dwindle.

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The sex-trouble is serious only so long as it can get the consent of the mind and the vital will. If it is driven from the mind, that is, if the mind refuses its consent, but the vital part responds to it, it comes as a large wave of vital desire and tries to sweep the mind away by force along with it. If it is driven also from the higher vital, from the heart and the dynamic possessive life-force, it takes refuge in the lower vital and comes in the shape of smaller suggestions and urges there. Driven from the lower vital level, it goes down into the obscure inertly repetitive physical and comes as sensations in the sex-centre and a mechanical response to suggestion. Driven from there too, it goes down into the subconscious and comes up as dreams and night-emissions even without dreams. But to wherever it recedes, it tries still for a time from that base or refuge to trouble and recapture the assent of the higher parts, until the victory is complete and it is driven even out of the surrounding or environmental consciousness which is the extension of ourselves into the general or universal Nature.

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When the psychic puts its influence on the vital, the first thing you must be careful to avoid is any least mixture of a wrong vital movement with the psychic movement. Lust is the perversion or degradation which prevents love from establishing its reign; so when there is the movement of psychic love in the heart, lust or vital desire is the one thing that must not be

allowed to come in — just as when strength comes down from above, personal ambition and pride have to be kept far away from it; for any mixture of the perversion will corrupt the psychic or spiritual action and prevent a true fulfilment.

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Pranayama and other physical practices like Asana do not necessarily root out sexual desire — sometimes by increasing enormously the vital force in the body they can even exaggerate in a rather startling way the force too of the sexual tendency, which, being at the base of the physical life, is always difficult to conquer. The one thing to do is to separate oneself from these movements, to find one's inner self and live in it; these movements will not then any longer appear as belonging to oneself but as surface impositions of the outer Prakriti upon the inner self or Purusha. They can then be more easily discarded or brought to nothing.

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This kind of sexual attack through sleep does not depend very much on food or anything else that is outward. It is a mechanical habit in the subconscious; when the sexual impulse is rejected or barred out in the waking thoughts and feelings, it comes in this form in sleep, for then there is only the subconscious at work and there is no conscious control. It is a sign of sexual desire suppressed in the waking mind and vital, but not eliminated in the stuff of the physical nature.

To eliminate it one must first be careful to harbour no sexual imagination or feeling in the waking state, next, to put a strong will on the body and especially on the sexual centre that there should be nothing of the kind in sleep. This may not succeed at once, but if persevered in for a long time, it usually has a result; the subconscious begins to obey.

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Hurting the flesh is no remedy for the sex-impulse, though it may be a temporary diversion. It is the vital and mostly the vital-physical that takes

the sense-perception as pleasure or otherwise.

Reduction of diet has not usually a permanent effect. It may give a greater sense of physical or vital-physical purity, lighten the system and reduce certain kinds of tamas. But the sex-impulse can very well accommodate itself to a reduced diet. It is not by physical means but by a change in the consciousness that these things can be surmounted.

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Your difficulty in getting rid of the aboriginal in your nature will remain so long as you try to change your vital part by the sole or main strength of your mind and mental will, calling in at most an indefinite and impersonal divine power to aid you. It is an old difficulty which has never been radically solved in life itself because it has never been met in the true way. In many ways of yoga it does not so supremely matter because the aim is not a transformed life but withdrawal from life. When that is the object of an endeavour, it may be sufficient to keep the vital down by a mental and moral compulsion, or else it may be stilled and kept lying in a kind of sleep and quiescence. There are some even who allow it to run and exhaust itself if it can while its possessor professes to be untouched and unconcerned by it; for it is only old Nature running on by a past impetus and will drop off with the fall of the body. When none of these solutions can be attained, the sadhak sometimes simply leads a double inner life, divided between his spiritual experiences and his vital weaknesses to the end, making the most of his better part, making as little as may be of the outer being. But none of these methods will do for our purpose. If you want a true mastery and transformation of the vital movements, it can be done only on condition you allow your psychic being, the soul in you, to awake fully, to establish its rule and opening all to the permanent touch of the Divine Shakti, impose its own way of pure devotion, whole-hearted aspiration and complete uncompromising urge to all that is divine on the mind and heart and vital nature. There is no other way and it is no use hankering after a more comfortable path. *Nānyah panthā vidyate ayanāya.*

Physical Consciousness — Subconscious — Sleep And Dreem — Illness

Our object is the supramental realisation and we have to do whatever is necessary for that or towards that under the conditions of each stage. At present the necessity is to prepare the physical consciousness; for that a complete equality and peace and a complete dedication free from personal demand or desire in the physical and the lower vital parts is the thing to be established. Other things can come in their proper time. What is the need now is not insistence on physical nearness, which is one of these other things, but the psychic opening in the physical consciousness and the constant presence and guidance there.

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What you describe is the material consciousness; it is mostly subconscious, but the part of it that is conscious is mechanical, inertly moved by habits or by the forces of the lower nature. Always repeating the same unintelligent and unenlightened movements, it is attached to the routine and established rule of what already exists, unwilling to change, unwilling to receive the Light or obey the higher Force. Or, if it is willing, then it is unable. Or, if it is able, then it turns the action given to it by the Light or the Force into a new mechanical routine and so takes out of it all soul and life. It is obscure, stupid, indolent, full of ignorance and inertia, darkness and slowness of *tamas*.

It is this material consciousness into which we are seeking to bring first the higher (divine or spiritual) Light and Power and Ananda, and then the supramental Truth which is the object of our yoga.

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It is the most physical consciousness of which you have become aware; it is like that in almost everyone: when one gets fully or exclusively into it,

one feels it to be like that of an animal, either obscure and restless or inert and stupid and in either condition not open to the Divine. It is only by bringing the Force and higher consciousness into it that it can fundamentally alter. When these things show themselves do not be upset by their emergence, but understand that they are there to be changed.

Here as elsewhere, quiet is the first thing needed, to keep the consciousness quiet, not allow it to get agitated and in turmoil. Then in the quiet to call for the Force to clear up all this obscurity and change it.

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"At the mercy of the external sounds and external bodily sensations", "no control to drop the ordinary consciousness at will", "the whole tendency of the being away from yoga" — all that is unmistakably applicable to the physical mind and the physical consciousness when they isolate themselves, as it were, and take up the whole front, pushing the rest into the background. When a part of the being is brought forward to be worked upon for change, this kind of all-occupying emergence, the dominant activity of that part as if it alone existed very usually happens, and unfortunately it is always what has to be changed, the undesirable conditions, the difficulties of that part which rise first and obstinately hold the field and recur. In the physical it is inertia, obscurity, inability that come up and the obstinacy of these things. The only thing to do in this unpleasant phase is to be more obstinate than the physical inertia and to persist in a fixed endeavour — steady persistency without any restless struggle — to get a wide and permanent opening made even in this solid rock of obstruction.

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These variations in the consciousness during the day are a thing that is common to almost everybody in the sadhana. The principle of oscillation, relaxation, relapse to a normal or a past lower condition from a higher state that is experienced but not yet perfectly stable, becomes very strong and marked when the working of the sadhana is in the physical consciousness. For there is an inertia in the physical nature that does not easily allow the

intensity natural to the higher consciousness to remain constant, — the physical is always sinking back to something more ordinary; the higher consciousness and its force have to work long and come again and again before they can become constant and normal in the physical nature. Do not be disturbed or discouraged by these variations or this delay, however long and tedious; remain careful only to be quiet always with an inner quietude and as open as possible to the higher Power, not allowing any really adverse condition to get hold of you. If there is no adverse wave, then the rest is only a persistence of imperfections which all have in abundance; that imperfection and persistence the Force must work out and eliminate, but for the elimination time is needed.

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You should not allow yourself to be discouraged by any persistence of the movements of the lower vital nature. There are some that tend always to persist and return until the whole physical nature is changed by the transformation of the most material consciousness; till then their pressure recurs — sometimes with a revival of their force, sometimes more dully — as a mechanical habit. Take from them all life-force by refusing any mental or vital assent; then the mechanical habit will become powerless to influence the thoughts and acts and will finally cease.

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The Muladhar is the centre of the physical consciousness proper, and all below in the body is the sheer physical, which as it goes downward becomes increasingly subconscious, but the real seat of the subconscious is below the body, as the real seat of the higher consciousness (superconscious) is above the body. At the same time, the subconscious can be felt anywhere, felt as something below the movement of the consciousness and, in a way, supporting it from beneath or else drawing the consciousness down towards itself. The subconscious is the main support of all habitual movements, especially the physical and lower vital movements. When something is thrown out of the vital or physical, it very usually goes down into the subconscious and remains there as if in seed and comes up again when it can. That is the reason why it is so difficult to get

rid of habitual vital movements or to change the character; for, supported or refreshed from this source, preserved in this matrix your vital movements, even when suppressed or repressed, surge up again and recur. The action of the subconscious is irrational, mechanical, repetitive. It does not listen to reason or the mental will. It is only by bringing the higher Light and Force into it that it can change.

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The subconscious is universal as well as individual like all the other main parts of the Nature. But there are different parts or planes of the subconscious. All upon earth is based on the Inconscient as it is called, though it is not really inconscient at all, but rather a complete "sub"-conscious, a suppressed or involved consciousness, in which there is everything but nothing is formulated or expressed. The subconscious lies between this Inconscient and the conscious mind, life and body. It contains the potentiality of all the primitive reactions to life which struggle out to the surface from the dull and inert strands of Matter and form by a constant development a slowly evolving and self-formulating consciousness; it contains them not as ideas, perceptions or conscious reactions but as the fluid substance of these things. But also all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious, not as precise though submerged memories but as obscure yet obstinate impressions of experience, and these can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought, feelings, action, etc., as "complexes" exploding into action and event, etc., etc. The subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearance. It is the cause why people say character cannot be changed, the cause also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of for ever. All seeds are there and all Sanskaras of the mind, vital and body, — it is the main support of death and disease and the last fortress (seemingly impregnable) of the Ignorance. All too that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains as seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment.

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The sub-conscious is the evolutionary basis in us, it is not the whole of our hidden nature, nor is it the whole origin of what we are. But things can rise from the subconscious and take shape in the conscious parts and much of our smaller vital and physical instincts, movements, habits, character-forms has this source.

There are three occult sources of our action — the superconscious, the subliminal, the subconscious, but of none of them are we in control or even aware. What we are aware of is the surface being which is only an instrumental arrangement. The source of all is the general Nature, — universal Nature individualising itself in each person; for this general Nature deposits certain habits of movement, personality, character, faculties, dispositions, tendencies in us, and that, whether formed now or before our birth, is what we usually call ourselves. A good deal of this is in habitual movement and use in our known conscious parts on the surface, a great deal more is concealed in the other unknown three which are below or behind the surface.

But what we are on the surface is being constantly set in motion, changed, developed or repeated by the waves of the general Nature coming in on us either directly or else indirectly through others, through circumstances, through various agencies or channels. Some of this flows straight into the conscious parts and acts there, but our mind ignores its source, appropriates it and regards all that as its own; a part comes secretly into the subconscious or sinks into it and waits for an opportunity of rising up into the conscious surface; a good deal goes into the subliminal and may at any time come out — or may not, may rather rest there as unused matter. Part passes through and is rejected, thrown back or thrown out or spilt into the universal sea. Our nature is a constant activity of forces supplied to us out of which (or rather out of a small amount of it) we make what we will or can. What we make seems fixed and formed for good, but in reality it is all a play of forces, a flux, nothing fixed or stable; the appearance of stability is given by constant repetition and recurrence of the same vibrations and formations. That is why our nature can be changed in spite of Vivekananda's saying and Horace's adage and in spite of the conservative resistance of the subconscious, but it is a difficult job because the master mode of Nature is this obstinate repetition and recurrence.

As for the things in our nature that are thrown away from us by

rejection but come back, it depends on where you throw them. Very often there is a sort of procedure about it. The mind rejects its mentalities, the vital its vitalities, the physical its physicalities — these usually go back into the corresponding domain of general Nature. It all stays at first, when that happens, in the environmental consciousness which we carry about with us, by which we communicate with the outside Nature, and often it persistently rushes back from there — until it is so absolutely rejected, or thrown far away as it were, that it cannot return upon us any more. But when what the thinking and willing mind rejects is strongly supported by the vital, it leaves the mind indeed but sinks down into the vital, rages there and tries to rush up again and reoccupy the mind and compel or capture our mental acceptance. When the higher vital too — the heart or the larger vital dynamis rejects it, it sinks from there and takes refuge in the lower vital with its mass of small current movements that make up our daily littleness. When the lower vital too rejects it, it sinks into the physical consciousness and tries to stick by inertia or mechanical repetition. Rejected even from there it goes into the subconscious and comes up in dreams, in passivity, in extreme *tamas*. The Inconscient is the last resort of the Ignorance.

As for the waves that recur from the general Nature, it is the natural tendency of the inferior forces there to try and perpetuate their action in the individual, to rebuild what he has unbuilt of their deposits in him; so they return on him, often with an increased force, even with a stupendous violence, when they find their influence rejected. But they cannot last long once the environmental consciousness is cleared — unless the "Hostiles" take a hand. Even then these can indeed attack, but if the sadhak has established his position in the inner self, they can only attack and retire.

It is true that we bring most of ourselves, — or rather most of our predispositions, tendencies of reaction to the universal Nature, from past lives. Heredity only affects strongly the external being; besides, all the effects of heredity are not accepted even there, only those that are in consonance with what we are to be or not preventive of it at least.

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The subconscious is a thing of habits and memories and repeats persistently or whenever it can old suppressed reactions, reflexes, mental, vital or

physical responses. It must be trained by a still more persistent insistence of the higher parts of the being to give up its old responses and take on the new and true ones.

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You do not realise how much of the ordinary natural being lives in the subconscious physical. It is there that habitual movements, mental and vital, are stored and from there they come up into the waking mind. Driven out of the upper consciousness, it is in this cavern of the Panis that they take refuge. No longer allowed to emerge freely in the waking state, they come up in sleep as dreams. It is when they are cleared out of the subconscious, their very seeds killed by the enlightening of these hidden layers, that they cease for good. As your consciousness deepens inwardly and the higher light comes down into those inferior covered parts, the things that now recur in this way will disappear.

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It is certainly possible to draw forces from below. It may be the hidden divine forces from below that rise at your pull, and then this motion upward completes the motion and effort of the divine force from above, helping especially to bring it into the body. Or it may be the obscure forces from below that respond to the summons and then this kind of drawing brings either *tamas* or disturbance — sometimes great masses of inertia or a formidable upheaval and disturbance.

The lower vital is a very obscure plane and it can be fully opened with advantage only when the other planes above it have been thrown wide to light and knowledge. One who concentrates on the lower vital without that higher preparation and without knowledge is likely to fall into many confusions. This does not mean that experiences of this plane may not come earlier or even at the beginning; they do come of themselves, but they must not be given too large a place.

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There is a Yoga-Shakti lying coiled or asleep in the inner body, not active. When one does yoga, this force uncoils itself and rises upward to meet the Divine Consciousness and Force that are waiting above us. When this happens, when the awakened Yoga-Shakti arises, it is often felt like a snake uncoiling and standing up straight and lifting itself more and more upwards. When it meets the Divine Consciousness above, then the force of the Divine Consciousness can more easily descend into the body and be felt working there to change the nature.

The feeling of your body and eyes being drawn upwards is part of the same movement. It is the inner consciousness in the body and the inner subtle sight in the body that are looking and moving upward and trying to meet the divine consciousness and divine seeing above.

*

If you go down into your lower parts or ranges of nature, you must be always careful to keep a vigilant connection with the higher already regenerated levels of the consciousness and to bring down the Light and Purity through them into these nether still unregenerated regions. If there is not this vigilance, one gets absorbed in the unregenerated movement of the inferior layers and there is obscuration and trouble.

The safest way is to remain in the higher part of the consciousness and put a pressure from it on the lower to change. It can be done in this way, only you must get the knack and the habit of it. If you achieve the power to do that, it makes the progress much easier, smoother and less painful.

*

Your practice of psycho-analysis was a mistake. It has, for the time at least, made the work of purification more complicated, not easier. The psycho-analysis of Freud is the last thing that one should associate with yoga. It takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena and attributes to it and them an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature. Modern psychology is an infant science, at once rash, fumbling and crude. As in all infant sciences, the

universal habit of the human mind — to take a partial or local truth, generalise it unduly and try to explain a whole field of Nature in its narrow terms — runs riot here. Moreover, the exaggeration of the importance of suppressed sexual complexes is a dangerous falsehood and it can have a nasty influence and tend to make the mind and vital more and not less fundamentally impure than before.

It is true that the subliminal in man is the largest part of his nature and has in it the secret of the unseen dynamisms which explain his surface activities. But the lower vital subconscious which is all that this psycho-analysis of Freud seems to know, — and even of that it knows only a few ill-lit corners, — is no more than a restricted and very inferior portion of the subliminal whole. The subliminal self stands behind and supports the whole superficial man; it has in it a larger and more efficient mind behind the surface mind, a larger and more powerful vital behind the surface vital, a subtler and freer physical consciousness behind the surface bodily existence. And above them it opens to higher superconscious as well as below them to lower subconscious ranges. If one wishes to purify and transform the nature, it is the power of these higher ranges to which one must open and raise to them and change by them both the subliminal and the surface being. Even this should be done with care, not prematurely or rashly, following a higher guidance, keeping always the right attitude; for otherwise the force that is drawn down may be too strong for an obscure and weak frame of nature. But to begin by opening up the lower subconscious, risking to raise up all that is foul or obscure in it, is to go out of one's way to invite trouble. First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open up or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change.

The system of getting rid of things by *anubhava* can also be a dangerous one; for on this way one can easily become more entangled instead of arriving at freedom. This method has behind it two well-known psychological motives. One, the motive of purposeful exhaustion, is valid only in some cases, especially when some natural tendency has too strong a hold or too strong a drive in it to be got rid of by vicara or by the process of rejection and the substitution of the true movement in its place; when that happens in excess, the sadhak has sometimes even to go back to the

ordinary action of the ordinary life, get the true experience of it with a new mind and will behind and then return to the spiritual life with the obstacle eliminated or else ready for elimination. But this method of purposive indulgence is always dangerous, though sometimes inevitable. It succeeds only when there is a very strong will in the being towards realisation; for then indulgence brings a strong dissatisfaction and reaction, *vairagya*, and the will towards perfection can be carried down into the recalcitrant part of the nature.

The other motive for *anubhava* is of a more general applicability; for in order to reject anything from the being one has first to become conscious of it, to have the clear inner experience of its action and to discover its actual place in the workings of the nature. One can then work upon it to eliminate it, if it is an entirely wrong movement, or to transform it if it is only the degradation of a higher and true movement. It is this or something like it that is attempted crudely and improperly with a rudimentary and insufficient knowledge in the system of psycho-analysis. The process of raising up the lower movements into the full light of consciousness in order to know and deal with them is inevitable; for there can be no complete change without it. But it can truly succeed only when a higher light and force are sufficiently at work to overcome, sooner or later, the force of the tendency that is held up for change. Many, under the pretext of *anubhava*, not only raise up the adverse movement, but support it with their consent instead of rejecting it, find justifications for continuing or repeating it and so go on playing with it, indulging its return, eternising it; afterwards when they want to get rid of it, it has got such a hold that they find themselves helpless in its clutch and only a terrible struggle or an intervention of divine grace can liberate them. Some do this out of a vital twist or perversity, others out of sheer ignorance; but in yoga, as in life, ignorance is not accepted by Nature as a justifying excuse. This danger is there in all improper dealings with the ignorant parts of the nature; but none is more ignorant, more perilous, more unreasoning and obstinate in recurrence than the lower vital subconscious and its movements. To raise it up prematurely or improperly for *anubhava* is to risk suffusing the conscious parts also with its dark and dirty stuff and thus poisoning the whole vital and even the mental nature. Always therefore one should begin by a positive, not a negative experience, by bringing down something of the divine nature,

calm, light, equanimity, purity, divine strength into the parts of the conscious being that have to be changed; only when that has been sufficiently done and there is a firm positive basis, is it safe to raise up the concealed subconscious adverse elements in order to destroy and eliminate them by the strength of the divine calm, light, force and knowledge. Even so, there will be enough of the lower stuff rising up of itself to give you as much of the *anubhava* as you will need for getting rid of the obstacles; but then they can be dealt with with much less danger and under a higher internal guidance.

*

I find it difficult to take these psycho-analysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinise spiritual experience by the flicker of their torch-lights, — yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t cat, t-r-e-e tree) is the very heart of the real knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above and not below, *upari budhna esam*. The superconscious, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing.

*

Sleep, because of its subconscious basis, usually brings a falling down to a lower level, unless it is a conscious sleep; to make it more and more

conscious is the one permanent remedy: but also until that is done, one should always react against this sinking tendency when one wakes and not allow the effect of dull nights to accumulate. But these things need always a settled endeavour and discipline and must take time, sometimes a long time. It will not do to refrain from the effort because immediate results do not appear.

*

The consciousness in the night almost always descends below the level of what one has gained by sadhana in the waking consciousness, unless there are special experiences of an uplifting character in the time of sleep or unless the yogic consciousness acquired is so strong in the physical itself as to counteract the pull of the subconscious inertia. In ordinary sleep the consciousness in the body is that of the subconscious physical, which is a diminished consciousness, not awake and alive like the rest of the being. The rest of the being stands back and part of its consciousness goes out into other planes and regions and has experiences which are recorded in dreams such as that you have related. You say you go to very bad places and have experiences like the one you narrate; but that is not a sign, necessarily, of anything wrong in you. It merely means that you go into the vital world, as everybody does, and the vital world is full of such places and such experiences. What you have to do is not so much to avoid at all going there, for it cannot be avoided altogether, but to go with full protection until you get mastery in these regions of supraphysical Nature. That is one reason why you should remember the Mother and open to the Force before sleeping; for the more you get that habit and do it successfully, the more the protection will be with you.

*

These dreams are not all mere dreams, all have not a casual, incoherent or subconscious building. Many are records or transcripts of experiences on the vital plane into which one enters in sleep, some are scenes or events of the subtle physical plane. There one often undergoes happenings or carries on actions that resemble those of the physical life with the same surroundings and the same people, though usually there is in arrangement

and feature some or a considerable difference. But it may also be a contact with other surroundings and with other people, not known in the physical life or not belonging at all to the physical world.

In the waking state you are conscious only of a certain limited field and action of your nature. In sleep you can become vividly aware of things beyond this field — a larger mental or vital nature behind the waking state or else a subtle physical or a subconscious nature which contains much that is there in you but not distinguishably active in the waking state. All these obscure tracts have to be cleared or else there can be no change of Prakriti. You should not allow yourself to be disturbed by the press of vital or subconscious dreams — for these two make up the larger part of dream-experience — but aspire to get rid of these things and of the activities they indicate, to be conscious and reject all but the divine Truth; the more you get that Truth and cling to it in the waking state, rejecting all else, the more all this inferior dream-stuff will get clear.

*

The dreams you describe are very clearly symbolic dreams on the vital plane. These dreams may symbolise anything, forces at play, the underlying structure and tissue of things done or experienced, actual or potential happenings, real or suggested movements or changes in the inner or outer nature.

The timidity of which the apprehension in the dream was an indication, was probably not anything in the conscious mind or higher vital, but something subconscious in the lower vital nature. This part always feels itself small and insignificant and has very easily a fear of being submerged by the greater consciousness — a fear which in some may amount at the first contact to something like a panic, alarm or terror.

*

All dreams of this kind are very obviously formations such as one often meets on the vital, more rarely on the mental plane. Sometimes they are the formations of your own mind or vital; sometimes they are the formations of other minds with an exact or modified transcription in yours; sometimes

formations come that are made by the non-human forces or beings of these other planes. These things are not true and need not become true in the physical world, but they may still have effects on the physical if they are framed with that purpose or that tendency and, if they are allowed, they may realise their events or their meaning — for they are most often symbolical or schematic — in the inner or the outer life. The proper course with them is simply to observe and understand and, if they are from a hostile source, reject or destroy them.

There are other dreams that have not the same character but are a representation or transcription of things that actually happen on other planes, in other worlds under other conditions than ours. There are, again, some dreams that are purely symbolic and some that indicate existing movements and propensities in us, whether familiar or undetected by the waking mind, or exploit old memories or else raise up things either passively stored or still active in the subconscious, a mass of various stuff which has to be changed or got rid of as one rises into a higher consciousness. If one learns how to interpret, one can get from dreams much knowledge of the secrets of our nature and of other-nature.

*

It is not a right method to try to keep awake at night; the suppression of the needed sleep makes the body tamasic and unfit for the necessary concentration during the waking hours. The right way is to transform the sleep and not suppress it, and especially to learn how to become more and more conscious in sleep itself. If that is done, sleep changes into an inner mode of consciousness in which the sadhana can continue as much as in the waking state, and at the same time one is able to enter into other planes of consciousness than the physical and command an immense range of informative and utilisable experience.

*

Sleep cannot be replaced, but it can be changed; for you can become conscious in sleep. If you are thus conscious, then the night can be utilised for a higher working — provided the body gets its due rest; for the object

of sleep is the body's rest and the renewal of the vital-physical force. It is a mistake to deny to the body food and sleep, as some from an ascetic idea or impulse want to do — that only wears out the physical support and although either the yogic or the vital energy can long keep at work an overstrained or declining physical system, a time comes when this drawing is no longer so easy nor perhaps possible. The body should be given what it needs for its own efficient working. Moderate but sufficient food (without greed or desire), sufficient sleep, but not of the heavy *tāmasic* kind, this should be the rule.

*

The sleep you describe in which there is a luminous silence or else the sleep in which there is Ananda in the cells, these are obviously the best states. The other hours, those of which you are unconscious, may be spells of a deep slumber in which you have got out of the physical into the mental, vital or other planes. You say you were unconscious, but it may simply be that you do not remember what happened; for in coming back there is a sort of turning over of the consciousness, a transition or reversal, in which everything experienced in sleep except perhaps the last happening of all or else one that was very impressive, recedes from the physical consciousness and all becomes as if a blank. There is another blank state, a state of inertia, not only blank, but heavy and unremembering; but that is when one goes deeply and crassly into the subconscious; this subterranean plunge is very undesirable, obscuring, lowering, often fatiguing rather than restful, the reverse of the luminous silence.

*

It was not half sleep or quarter sleep or even one-sixteenth sleep that you had; it was a going inside of the consciousness, which in that state remains conscious but shut to outer things and open only to inner experience. You must distinguish clearly between these two quite different conditions, one is *nidra*, the other, the beginning at least of *samadhi* (not *nirvikalpa*, of course). This drawing inside is necessary because the active mind of the human being is at first too much turned to outward things; it has to go inside altogether in order to live in the inner being (inner mind, inner vital,

inner physical, psychic). But with training one can arrive at a point when one remains outwardly conscious and yet lives in the inner being and has at will the indrawn or the outpoured condition; you can then have the same dense immobility and the same inpouring of a greater and purer consciousness in the waking state as in that which you erroneously call sleep.

*

Physical fatigue like this in the course of the sadhana may come from various reasons:

(1) It may come from receiving more than the physical is ready to assimilate. The cure is then quiet rest in conscious immobility receiving the forces but not for any other purpose than the recuperation of the strength and energy.

(2) It may be due to the passivity taking the form of inertia — inertia brings the consciousness down towards the ordinary physical level which is soon fatigued and prone to *tamas*. The cure here is to get back into the true consciousness and to rest there, not in inertia.

(3) It may be due to mere overstrain of the body — not giving it enough sleep or repose. The body is the support of the yoga, but its energy is not inexhaustible and needs to be husbanded; it can be kept up by drawing on the universal vital Force but that reinforcement too has its limits. A certain moderation is needed even in the eagerness for progress — moderation, not indifference or indolence.

*

Illness marks some imperfection or weakness or else opening to adverse touches in the physical nature and is often connected also with some obscurity or disharmony in the lower vital or the physical mind or elsewhere.

It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and yoga-power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the whole nature is not open or able to respond

to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond, but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or, if the mind and vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a particular illness, and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to, — not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body.

*

Attacks of illness are attacks of the lower nature or of adverse forces taking advantage of some weakness, opening or response in the nature, — like all other things that come and have got to be thrown away, they come from outside. If one can feel them so coming and get the strength and the habit to throw them away before they can enter the body, then one can remain free from illness. Even when the attack seems to rise from within, that means only that it has not been detected before it entered the subconscious; once in the subconscious, the force that brought it rouses it from there sooner or later and it invades the system. When you feel it just after it has entered, it is because though it came direct and not through the subconscious, yet you could not detect it while it was still outside. Very often it arrives like that frontally or more often tangentially from the side direct, forcing its way through the subtle vital envelope which is our main armour of defence, but it can be stopped there in the envelope itself before it penetrates the material body. Then one may feel some effect, e.g., feverishness or a tendency to cold, but there is not the full invasion of the malady. If it can be stopped earlier or if the vital envelope of itself resists and remains strong, vigorous and intact, then there is no illness; the attack produces no physical effect and leaves no traces.

*

Certainly, one can act from within on an illness and cure it. Only it is not always easy as there is much resistance in Matter, a resistance of inertia. An untiring persistence is necessary; at first one may fail altogether or the symptoms increase, but gradually the control of the body or of a particular

illness becomes stronger. Again, to cure an occasional attack of illness by inner means is comparatively easy, to make the body immune from it in future is more difficult. A chronic malady is harder to deal with, more reluctant to disappear entirely than an occasional disturbance of the body. So long as the control of the body is imperfect, there are all these and other imperfections and difficulties in the use of the inner force.

If you can succeed by the inner action in preventing increase, even that is something; you have then by *abhyāsa* to strengthen the power till it becomes able to cure. Note that so long as the power is not entirely there, some aid of physical means need not be altogether rejected.

*

Medicines are a *pis aller* that have to be used when something in the consciousness does not respond or responds superficially to the Force. Very often it is some part of the material consciousness that is unreceptive — at other times it is the subconscious which stands in the way even when the whole waking mind, life, physical consent to the liberating influence. If the subconscious also answers, then even a slight touch of the Force can not only cure the particular illness but make that form or kind of illness practically impossible hereafter.

*

Your theory of illness is rather a perilous creed — for illness is a thing to be eliminated, not accepted or enjoyed. There *is* something in the being that enjoys illness, it is possible even to turn the pains of illness like any other pain into a form of pleasure; for pain and pleasure are both of them degradations of an original Ananda and can be reduced into the terms of each other or else sublimated into their original principle of Ananda. It is true also that one must be able to bear illness with calm, equanimity, endurance, even recognition of it, since it has come, as something that had to be passed through in the course of experience. But to accept and enjoy it means to help it to last and that will not do; for illness is a deformation of the physical nature just as lust, anger, jealousy, etc., are deformations of the vital nature and error and prejudice and indulgence of falsehood are

deformations of the mental nature. All these things have to be eliminated and rejection is the first condition of their disappearance while acceptance has a contrary effect altogether.

*

All illnesses pass through the nervous or vital-physical sheath of the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious of the subtle body or with the subtle consciousness, one can stop an illness on its way and prevent it from entering the physical body. But it may have come without one's noticing, or when one is asleep or through the subconscious, or in a sudden rush when one is off one's guard; then there is nothing to do but to fight it out from a hold already gained on the body. Self-defence by these inner means may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many yogis are. Still this "practically" does not mean "absolutely". The absolute immunity can only come with the supramental change. For below the supramental it is the result of an action of a Force among many forces and can be disturbed by a disruption of the equilibrium established — in the supramental it is a law of the nature; in a supramentalised body immunity from illness would be automatic, inherent in its new nature.

There is a difference between yogic Force on the mental and inferior planes and the supramental Nature. What is acquired and held by the yoga-Force in the mind-and-body consciousness is in the supramental inherent and exists not by achievement but by nature — it is self-existent and absolute.

Sri Aurobindo

Elements of Yoga



ELEMENTS of YOGA

Sri Aurobindo

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Table of Contents

- 1. The Call and Fitness**
- 2. The Foundation**
- 3. Aspiration**
- 4. Sincerity**
- 5. Faith**
- 6. Surrender**
- 7. Love**
- 8. The Psychic Opening**
- 9. Experiences and Visions**
- 10. Work**
- 11. Transformation**
- 12. Difficulties and Progress**
- 13. Sex — Food— Sleep**
- 14. Some Explanations**

Publishers' Note

This book is a compilation of Sri Aurobindo's replies to elementary questions about Yoga raised by a disciple during the years 1933 to 1936. It was first published in 1953 and reissued in 1956. In 1991 the text was reproduced as the first part of *Commentaries on "Elements of Yoga"* by the Mother. Elements of Yoga is now being issued independently again in a second edition.

1. The Call and Fitness

How can one know if he is fit for the spiritual life before taking up Yoga?

How can anyone know before he puts his step on the path? He can only know whether he has the aspiration or not, whether he feels a call or not.

*

You have said that to enter the path of Yoga "all one needs to know is whether the soul in one has been moved to the Yoga or not". But how to know this clearly before entering the path?

It is a question of feeling it or not. There is no "how to know" about it. One knows or one does not know, one feels or one does not feel. You don't ask how to know when one is happy or angry or sorrowful — one knows at once.

*

How can people know whether they have any spiritual possibility in them?

Nobody does know. When the soul pushes them, they turn towards the Divine, that is all.

*

Please let me know if I have any possibility for spiritual realisation.

It is a waste of time to ask such a question. When you have entered the spiritual path, you have only to go on relying not on your possibility but on the Mother's Power.

*

Is it not true that those who enter the path of Yoga without the full knowledge of their nature and its possibilities get into difficulties?

Who comes into the path of Yoga with full knowledge or any knowledge? All are ignorant; it is only by Yoga itself that they get the knowledge.

*

Sometimes a person enters the path because he feels the aspiration and the call but afterwards leaves it. What is the reason? Is it not because before entering it he was not able to judge the possibility of his nature?

Because his aspiration flags or because he is unfaithful to the call. It is not a question of judging. I have told you nobody can know or judge.

*

Some people say that unless the whole nature is purified there can be no real beginning of Yoga. Is this true?

It is absurd to say that.

*

Is it true that only a person who has some experiences and realisations in sadhana is accepted by the Mother while one who has no such experiences and lives in ordinary consciousness is not accepted by her?

Why should he not be accepted by the Mother? What do you mean by "accepted"?

*

If a sadhak cannot open himself fully to the Mother because of the obstacles in his nature, will he not be accepted by the Mother?

There is no meaning in such a question. Those who follow the Yoga here are accepted by the Mother — for "accepted" means "admitted into the Yoga, accepted as disciples". But the progress in the Yoga and the Siddhi in the Yoga depend on the degree to which there is the opening.

*

When a sadhak is faced with serious difficulties in his sadhana over and over again and is not able to reject his lower nature, what will help him to keep up his faith and stick to the path?

Who is able to reject the lower nature fully? All one can do is to aspire and reject the lower impulses and call in the Divine to do the rest.

*

It is said in the Gita that out of thousands only a few seek the Divine and even of these few only one or two can reach Him. Is this true?

If one goes by one's own strength, very few can do it — but by faith in the Divine, by the Grace of the Divine, it becomes possible.

*

What should be the final aim of a sadhak? Should it not be to become a Yogi?

To be in full union with the Divine is the final aim. When one has some kind of constant union, one can be called a Yogi, but the union has to be made complete. There are Yogis who have only the union on the spiritual plane, others who are united in mind and heart, others in the vital also. In our Yoga our aim is to be united too in the physical consciousness and on the supramental plane.

2. The Foundation

When can it be said that a sadhak has laid his foundation in sadhana?

When he has a settled calm and equality and devotion and a continuity of spiritual experience.

*

What is the right way to establish peace and equality in the nature?

The peace and the equality are there above you, you have to call them down into the mind and vital and the body. And whenever something disturbs, you have to reject the thing that disturbs and the disturbance.

*

Do calm and equality come down from above by the Mother's Grace?

When they descend, it is by the soul's aspiration and the Mother's Grace.

*

What is the true sign indicating that equality is established in the nature? Is it to receive all the disturbance from outside or inside in perfect calm and without doing anything to remedy it?

It is to face it without being disturbed and to reject it calmly. Whether one tries to remedy or not remedy should make no difference. Only when one acts against it, one must do it calmly, without anger, excitement, grief or any other disturbing movement.

*

When a person has attained samata or equality, can we say that he is egoless?

Samata does not mean the absence of ego, but the absence of desire and attachment. The ego-sense may disappear or it may remain in a subtilised or dense form — it depends on the person.

*

Does the Divine descent mean descent of Peace, Purity and Silence?

It is part of the Divine descent, not the whole of it.

*

I find that when Peace has come down in my being there is a play of a higher Force in it. Is this Force different from the force of Peace?

The peace is the condition of the right play of the Force. Force and Peace are two different powers of the Divine.

*

How to develop the capacity to receive the Divine Force?

Quietness of mind is the first requisite — for the rest aspiration and abhyas.

*

What is the exact meaning of calm mind? Does it mean that there will be no thought at all in the mind?

No. It is not necessary that there should be no thought. When there is no thought, it is silence. But the mind is said to be calm when thoughts,

feelings, etc., may pass through it, but it is not disturbed. It feels that the thoughts are not its own; it observes them perhaps; but it is not perturbed by anything.

*

What is the real meaning of activity and passivity in sadhana?

Activity in aspiration, Tapasya, rejection of the wrong forces; passivity to the true working, the working of the Mother's Force, are the right things in sadhana.

3. Aspiration

What is meant by spiritual aspiration?

It means the aspiration towards spiritual things, spiritual experience, spiritual realisation, the Divine.

*

Are will and aspiration the same?

No, certainly not. Aspiration is a call to the Divine, — will is the pressure of a conscious force on Nature.

*

Is prayer the same as aspiration?

It is an expression of aspiration or can be. For there are prayers which only express a desire — e.g., prayers for wealth, worldly success, etc.

*

What is the difference between aspiration and opening?

They have nothing to do with each other, except that aspiration brings opening. Opening means that the consciousness becomes opened to the Truth or the Divine to which it is now shut — it indicates a state of receptivity. Aspiration is a call in the being, it is not opening.

*

Is the aspiration rising from the vital of the same nature as that rising from the heart?

No, the vital is dynamic, a call from the Life-force — that from the heart is either emotional or psychic.

*

Does the power of aspiration vary in different sadhaks according to their natures?

No. Aspiration is the same power in all; it differs only in purity, intensity and object.

*

Can a person with a weak will progress in sadhana by aspiration only?

No. He must either increase his will-power or call in a Higher Power to do it for him.

*

Can aspiration increase the will-power of a person whose will is weak?

Yes, it can — by calling in the Divine Will.

*

Why does aspiration become sometimes slow and sometimes rapid?

It is so with everyone — the nature cannot always go at a rapid pace.

*

If the nature cannot always go at a rapid pace, why are we asked to remain constant in aspiration?

If you are not constant in aspiration, the nature will then sink back into the old lower ways.

*

Will a sadhak who feels neither any intense aspiration nor any acute resistance of the obstacles of his nature, be able to go forward in his sadhana?

I suppose it means that he can only progress slowly.

*

When a sadhak does not feel any aspiration and does not get any experience, what should he do to stick on to his sadhana?

Remember the Mother, remain quiet and call.

*

Is it possible for a sadhak to realise the Divine fully from the beginning by the power of his aspiration?

If there is the full purity of the psychic and spiritual aspiration, then that can happen — but it is rare.

*

I feel that aspiration also is increased by the Mother's Will and Grace. Is it not so?

Yes, but not if you do not aspire.

*

You have asked me to have ceaseless aspiration. But I find that it is the Mother's Force that kindles up aspiration and strengthens and increases it in me. What personal effort on my part is then needed?

It is true that it is the Mother's Force that aspires in you, but if the personal consciousness does not give its assent, then the Force does not work. If the personal consciousness ceaselessly looks for the Divine and assents to the working, the aspiration and the working of the Force become also ceaseless.

*

But is it not true that the personal consciousness of the sadhak is also moved by the Mother and all his actions governed by her?

But if your personal consciousness does wrong things, it is also the Mother who does those wrong things?

*

But is it not a fact that if a sadhak is not open to the Mother's working in his higher parts, the Mother works in his lower parts and makes him commit mistakes so that he may learn through the suffering brought by them to turn to her in his higher parts?

The Mother does not make people commit mistakes; it is the Prakriti that makes them do it — if the Purusha does not refuse his consent. The Mother here is not this lower Prakriti, but the Divine Shakti and it is her work to press on this lower Nature to change. You can say that under the pressure, the Prakriti stumbles and is unable to reply perfectly and makes mistakes. But it is not the Mother who makes you do wrong movements or does the wrong movements in you — if you think that, you are in danger of justifying the movements or their continuance.

*

But is it not a fact that Prakriti herself comes from the Divine? In that case is she not a power and a portion of the Divine Mother?

Everything comes from the Divine; but the lower Prakriti is the power of the Ignorance — it is not therefore a power of truth, but only of mixed truth and falsehood. The Mother here stands not for the Power of Ignorance, but for the Power that has come down to bring down the Truth and raise up to the Truth out of the Ignorance.

*

In what way my personal effort is needed to assent to the Mother's working in me?

By opening yourself more and more by assent to the true things, Peace, Light, Truth, Ananda — by refusing the wrong things, such as anger, falsehood, lust, etc.

*

What are the obstacles in the way of giving full assent to the Mother's working in the sadhak's nature?

It is the wrong movements, — self-will, egoism, the vital passions, vanity, personal desire, etc.

*

Is it true that if a person has true aspiration, the Divine makes him a fit receptacle for His descent in him even if his mind is ignorant and limited?

Yes — only the mind must not be small and narrow — and in love with its narrowness.

*

What is meant by being in love with the mind's narrowness?

People like to be narrow; they are attached to their own limited ideas, feelings, opinions, preferences and get disturbed, angry or full of doubt if anyone tries to make them think more widely — that is being in love with the mind's narrowness.

*

Some people say that a scholarly person with a developed intellect progresses in sadhana more rapidly than an uneducated person with an undeveloped intellect even though both have the same intensity of aspiration, Is this true?

There is no such rule. It is better if the mind is strong and developed, but scholarship does not necessarily create a strong and developed mind.

*

You say that scholarship does not create a strong and developed mind. What creates it then?

It creates itself by the will to know rightly, widely and with a plastic reception of the truth.

*

Is it necessary for a person with a weak and narrow mind to make effort to make his mind strong and developed in order to receive the Divine Grace or he can leave it to the Grace itself to prepare it for its descent?

It depends on the person. If his weak or narrow mind is coming in the way of his sadhana, he can make the attempt to broaden it — if the

heart is strong and true or the psychic being active, then he can leave it to the Divine Force to do it in the course of the Yoga.

*

For the proper education and cultural development of the mind is reading of books not necessary for a sadhak?

It is not by reading books that he can do it — it is by trying to think and see things clearly that it comes. Reading is a quite secondary thing. One may read thousands of books, yet remain narrow and foolish.

*

Is it true that "satsanga" (company of spiritual persons) creates and increases the aspiration for the Divine?

Yes.

4. Sincerity

Is it true that it is only through the power of absolute sincerity that one can get full transformation and reach the Supramental Truth?

Yes.

*

The Mother has said: "If you are not sincere do not begin Yoga." Does this imply that if after entering Yoga a person finds that his sincerity is not complete, he should leave it?

No. It is only if he is fundamentally insincere that he should leave it.

*

How can a sadhak know whether he is fundamentally insincere?

If he sees that he is full of ego and doing sadhana for the sake of the ego only and has no real turning towards the Divine.

*

Is there no possibility for a sadhak to get rid of his fundamental insincerity?

If the sadhak becomes aware of his insincerity and sincerely wants to get rid of it, he can.

*

How can a sadhak know whether he is growing in sincerity?

By seeing whether he responds to the Divine forces only or still responds to, accepts and harbours the ego-forces and desire-forces.

*

Is it true that if a sadhak has complete sincerity he can make rapid progress even if his devotion is deficient?

If he is sincere, there is bound to be devotion. Sincerity in Yoga means to respond to the Divine alone and if he has no devotion he cannot do it.

*

What is the right attitude to stick on to this path till the Supramental Truth is realised?

There is the psychic condition and sincerity and devotion to the Mother.

*

Is it a sign of sincerity to confess one's weaknesses and faults to the Divine and to others?

Why to others? One has to confess them to the Divine.

*

But if one does some wrong to a person, is it not necessary to confess it to him? Is it enough to confess it to the Divine?

If it concerns the other persons, then it can be done.

*

How can the sadhaks avoid being misled by the forces of falsehood in their sadhana?

They have to be always sincere — it depends upon that.

*

How long is it necessary for the sadhaks to live in discipline?

Till they get the realisation at least.

*

Does this mean that they have to live in discipline till they get the complete realisation?

At any rate a fundamental realisation so that they will no longer seek to act according to their mental fancy or vital ego.

*

What is meant by "fundamental realisation"? Does it refer to the condition of those sadhaks who are fully surrendered to the Divine and completely transformed?

That is the complete realisation. If they are fully transformed, there is no more sadhana.

*

What is meant by "mental fancy"?

When the mind follows its own ideas for the pleasure of it and out of attachment to them, not caring for the Truth.

*

Is it possible for the sadhaks who have not got rid of mental fancy and vital ego to get even a partial realisation?

No, they must be surrendered to the Divine.

*

Is it sufficient to get rid of mental fancy and vital ego to reach the fundamental realisation?

No. He must surrender and his psychic must be in front and dominate the mind and vital.

5. Faith

What is the difference between faith, belief and confidence?

Faith is a feeling in the whole being; belief is mental; confidence means trust in a person or in the Divine or a feeling of surety about the result of one's seeking or endeavour.

*

What do people mean by "blind faith"?

The phrase has no real meaning. I suppose they mean they will not believe without proof — but the conclusion formed after proof is not faith, it is knowledge or it is a mental opinion. Faith is something which one has before proof or knowledge and it helps you to arrive at knowledge or experience. There is no proof that God exists, but if I have faith in God, then I can arrive at the experience of the Divine.

*

What is the difference between psychic faith, mental faith, vital faith and physical faith?

Mental faith combats doubt and helps to open to the true knowledge; vital faith prevents the attacks of the hostile forces or defeats them and helps to open to the true spiritual will and action; physical faith keeps one firm through all physical obscurity, inertia or suffering and helps to open to the foundation of the true consciousness; psychic faith opens to the direct touch of the Divine and helps to bring union and surrender.

*

What is meant by "dynamic faith"? Is not all faith dynamic?

Faith can be Tamasic and ineffective, e.g. "I believe the Mother will do everything, so I will do nothing. When she wants, she will transform me." That is not a dynamic but a static and inert faith.

*

Even after the sadhaks have complete faith and surrender, have they to wait long to get the higher experiences by the Divine Grace ?

If the faith and surrender are complete in every part, it is not possible that there should be no experience.

6. Surrender

Is it not possible to transform the being without surrender?

If there is no surrender, there can be no transformation of the whole being.

*

When does real surrender begin in a sadhak?

It begins when there is the true self-offering.

*

How to bring about true self-offering?

By not following ego and desire. It is ego and desire that prevent surrender.

*

What is the sign to indicate that a sadhak's determination to surrender to the Divine is having practical effect in his life?

The sign is that he has full obedience without question or revolt or demand or condition and that he answers to all divine influences and rejects all that are not from the Divine.

*

Is it not a fact that even after repeated determination to surrender the old habits come in the way of its effective realisation?

Yes, certainly — they always do that till the sincerity and purity and surrender are complete.

*

What is the most powerful way to make the determination of surrender rapidly effective?

Absolute sincerity.

*

When does the Divine himself fully take up the sadhana and carry it out for the sadhaks?

When they give up the ego.

*

What is meant by the Divine taking up the sadhana?

When it is the Divine Force that works out all the Yoga and the actions by a direct action of which the sadhak is conscious.

*

How can one know that one's sadhana has been taken up by the Divine?

You can feel it.

*

The Gita's central secret is to surrender to the Divine by rejecting all

dharmas, "sarva dharman parityajya ". What is the meaning of "sarva dharman"?

All formations based on the mind's preferences, the vital's desires, the physical's attachments to its habits.

*

Is it possible for a sadhak to reject all dharmas from the beginning of his sadhana?

No, it takes time — but the will to surrender must be there.

*

For offering all movements of the nature to the Divine, it is first necessary to observe them. How to make this power of observation true and complete?

By looking and observing vigilantly and letting nothing escape one's observation of oneself and by aspiring for still greater power of vision until it is complete.

*

What is the difference between active and passive surrender?

Active surrender is when you associate your will with the Divine Will, reject what is not the Divine, assent to what is the Divine. Passive surrender is when everything is left entirely to the Divine — that few can really do, because in practice it turns out that you surrender to the lower nature under pretext of surrendering to the Divine.

*

In "Conversations", the Mother says that if the central being is surrendered then the chief difficulty is gone. What is this central being? Is it the psychic?

The central being is the Purusha. If it is surrendered, then all the other beings can be offered to the Divine and the psychic being brought in front.

*

What is the function of this Purusha which you say is the central being and where is it located?

Purusha is the conscious being who supports all the action of Nature. There is no fixed place, but as the central being he usually stands above the adhar — he becomes also the mental, vital, physical, psychic being.

*

What is meant by "Detailed surrender" — the flower which the Mother sometimes gives?

Surrender in every action and every detail of one's nature.

*

Is it true that until a sadhak's sincerity and surrender are complete, he has to undergo many sufferings?

He need not suffer if he takes the true way, but he has to deal with the difficulties.

*

Is the Purusha the soul in man?

No, the psychic being is the soul in man.

*

How long does the Purusha take to surrender completely to the Divine?

There is no fixed time.

*

How can one swiftly surrender the Purusha to the Divine?

By aspiration and by Divine Grace.

*

Is it the Purusha who consents to the action of the Mother's Force and Grace in the being?

Yes.

*

Are all the beings (mental, vital, physical and psychic) under the influence of the Purusha?

He presides in a way over all.

*

If the Purusha does not consent to the action of the Mother's Grace, does it prevent the other beings from receiving or feeling the Mother's Grace for transformation?

No. The Purusha often holds back and lets the other beings consent or feel in his place.

*

When a sadhak feels the Mother's Grace coming down in him, is it due to the Mother's consent?

What do you mean by consent? The Mother's Grace comes down by the Mother's will. The Purusha can accept or reject the Grace.

7. Love

Can psychic love reach the Highest Truth by its own power?

Yes, certainly.

*

How can one know that he has full psychic love for the Divine?

By the absence of ego, by pure devotion, by submission and surrender to the Divine.

*

Is psychic love always turned towards the Divine?

It is sometimes turned to the human person, but it never gets its true satisfaction till it turns to the Divine.

*

Is not psychic love the same as divine Love?

No. There is a human psychic love also marked by selflessness, fidelity and self-giving to a human being.

*

Can human love if it takes a psychic turn not lead to divine Love?

One can pass from one to the other.

*

Can divine Love not be expressed through human emotions?

How can divine Love be expressed through human emotions ? It becomes then human, not divine. If you mean there is something corresponding but much greater in divine Love, that may be.

*

Can one not realise spiritual truth through psychicised human love?

No — one only gets faint glimpses of something, one does not realise.

*

Is it not that the motive which leads people to begin Yoga is divine Love?

No — there may be a human love turning towards the Divine. But Yoga begins from many motives, not love alone.

*

Is there no emotion in the divine Love?

There is an intense feeling — there is not what men call emotion, — for that is superficial and transient. The intensity of divine Love never creates a disturbance anywhere in the being.

*

Is emotion an expression of Ananda?

How does emotion express Ananda? Emotion may be one result of a touch of Ananda in the consciousness, but it does not express Ananda. Ananda is itself its own expression.

*

What is the true way to manifest divine Love?

By a more and more selfless turning to the Divine.

*

Is it possible to receive Divine Love before full transformation?

Partly.

*

Is love the only power of the psychic or there are other powers in it?

In the psychic there are plenty of powers — faith, psychic sight, gratitude to the Divine, fire of aspiration and many others.

*

Is there any "abhiman" in psychic love?

None. Abhiman is sheer egoism.

*

Is not ordinary human love a shadow of psychic love?

No, certainly not. Ordinary human love is vital, emotional and physical and always egoistic — a form of self-love. The psychic element is very small except in a few.

*

Can there be any manifestation of psychic love in the physical?

There can be — it must have no taint of sexuality in it.

*

Is there any psychic love in animals?

Their sexual love is vital-physical — the rest also mostly. Some psychic element does come in the higher kinds. Some animals have a psychic affection for men.

*

How to distinguish between psychic bhakti, mental bhakti and vital bhakti for the Mother?

The psychic is made up of love and self-giving without demand, the vital of the will to be possessed by the Mother and serve her, the mental of faith and unquestioning acceptance of all that the Mother is, says and does. These, however, are outside signs — it is in inner character quite recognizable but not to be put into words that they differ.

*

Is there no use of mental and vital bhakti in our Yoga?

Who says there is not ? So long as it is real devotion, all Bhakti has a place.

*

Is psychic bhakti the same as perfect devotion?

It is the basis of perfect devotion.

*

What is the difference between psychic emotion and psychic bhakti?

Bhakti is psychic emotion, psychic feeling directed towards the Divine, the Guru, etc.

*

What is the meaning of "Prem Bhakti"? In what way is it different from simple bhakti?

I suppose it is Bhakti with love as its basis; there can be Bhakti of worship, submission, reverence, obedience, etc., but without love.

*

I often feel an aspiration to see all in the Mother and the Mother in all. Will it be fulfilled?

To see all in the Mother and the Mother in all is a necessary experience in the Yoga. There is no reason why it should not happen.

*

Often a very strong feeling comes to me that I am very far from the Mother. Why do I have this feeling?

It is the feeling of the physical or outward being which is by its ignorance unable to feel the Mother's nearness.

*

How to overcome this feeling of being far away from the Mother?

The Mother is always near and within, it is only the obscurity of mind and vital that does not see or feel it. That is a knowledge which the mind ought to hold firmly.

*

What is the right way of maintaining a relation of harmony and good will with others?

In the life of Yoga it is the psychic alone that can do that. The mind and vital can only do it with this or that person with whom it has a mental or vital affinity and it is not the real thing.

*

If my love is associated with demand, is it vital love?

Yes, that is the nature of vital love. It is based on desire and the sense of claim or sense of possession; psychic love is based on self-giving.

*

"If you love me, I will love you"; is this not an expression of vital love?

Yes — bargaining vital love.

*

"Even if you hate me and do not care for me, I will love you"; can this be an expression of vital love?

It may be the expression of a certain kind of passionate vital love — but it can also be the expression of a certain kind of psychic love too.

*

"I will love you as much as you love me "; what kind of love is revealed in this expression?

It is not love at all — it is commercial barter.

8. The Psychic Opening

In "Conversations", the Mother speaks of a fire burning in the deep quietude of the heart. Is this fire the psychic being?

A fire is not a being — it is the psychic fire, an intense condition of aspiration.

*

Where is the psychic being located?

It is behind the heart centre, deep in.

*

The Mother sometimes says that the psychic being of this or that person is good. But is it not a fact that the psychic being in all is a portion of the Divine and therefore always good? Why then does Mother make a distinction in particular cases?

The psychic being develops — in some it is strong enough to overcome easily the mental and vital resistance — in some it is less developed and has more difficulty.

*

Does not the power of Yoga come first through the psychic and then produce a swift change in the mind?

Not necessarily. Most people begin with the power working in the mind — it is only when the mind and vital have been changed to some extent before that the psychic is ready to come forward.

*

Can the psychic being manifest itself directly without the help of mental, vital and physical beings?

The mind, life and body are the instruments for manifestation. Of course, the psychic can manifest things by itself inwardly or in its own plane, but for manifestation in the physical plane the instrumentality of other parts is needed.

*

Is it not possible to bring the psychic being forward without changing the mind and vital?

No. If they are unchanged they prevent the psychic from coming forward.

*

What is the difference between the spiritual and psychic consciousness?

The Spirit is the consciousness above mind, the Atman or Self, which is always in oneness with the Divine — a spiritual consciousness is one which is always in unity or at least in contact with the Divine.

The psychic is a spark come from the Divine which is there in all things and as the individual evolves it grows in him and manifests as the psychic being, the soul, seeking always for the Divine and the Truth and answering to the Divine and the Truth whenever and wherever it meets it.

*

What is the difference between the Divine and the Spirit?

The Divine is everywhere even in the Ignorance. It is not only the Spirit, but it is in mind, life and body. What stands behind mind, life and body is the Spirit.

*

Are there many psychic planes?

No, there is only one.

*

Can a person whose psychic being is not sufficiently developed, overcome the fundamental difficulties of his nature?

No, not by his own strength; but with the Divine Grace supporting him he can.

*

Is it true that if the psychic being comes to the front all doubts and difficulties can be swiftly destroyed?

Yes.

*

How to bring the psychic being in front? Can it be done by avoiding wrong movements?

That is the negative way; the positive way is obedience to the Divine, devotion, surrender.

*

Can the psychic being be brought and kept always in front by making the physical consciousness plastic?

No, that is rather a result of the spiritual and psychic development acting on the body consciousness.

*

Nowadays I feel very intensely a sorrow which brings a flow of tears in my eyes. There is no unrest or disturbance in it, rather there is a feeling of calm and purity and a deep gravity associated with it. Is this what is called the psychic sorrow?

Yes, there is a psychic sorrow of that kind — but psychic tears need not be sorrowful, there are also tears of emotion and joy.

9. Experiences and Visions

What is the difference between concentration and meditation in our Yoga?

Concentration, for our Yoga, means when the consciousness is fixed in a particular state (e.g., peace) or movement (e.g., aspiration, will, coming into contact with the Mother, taking the Mother's name); meditation is when the inner mind is looking at things to get the right knowledge.

*

You wrote that "the Mother is always in concentrated consciousness in her inner being". What is meant by "concentrated consciousness"?

The higher consciousness is a concentrated consciousness, concentrated in the Divine Unity and in the working out of the Divine Will, not dispersed and rushing about after this or that mental idea or vital desire or physical need as is the ordinary human consciousness — also not invaded by a hundred haphazard thoughts, feelings and impulses, but master of itself, centred and harmonious.

*

What is the sign of successful meditation?

To enter into a deeper or higher consciousness or for that deeper or higher consciousness to descend into you — that is true success of meditation.

*

Is it true that without meditation it is impossible to get higher experiences?

It is easier with some meditation — but people do get these things who never sit in meditation — so what is the use of saying "impossible"?

*

Does sitting in an asana have any effect on meditation?

The effect is to strengthen the vital forces, especially to consolidate them in the body.

*

Do all sadhaks have similar kinds of experiences and realisations in the development of their sadhana or these things vary according to their nature?

There is something common to all — all the essential things are in possibility common to all, but each develops what he can, in the way he can, according to his nature.

*

What is the difference between experience, realisation and siddhi?

Experience is a word that covers almost all the happenings in Yoga; only when something gets settled, then it is no longer an experience but part of the Siddhi; e.g., peace when it comes and goes is an experience — when it is settled and goes no more it is Siddhi. Realisation is different — it is when something for which you are aspiring becomes real to you; e.g., you have the idea of the Divine in all, but it is only an idea, a belief; when you feel or see the Divine in all, it becomes a realisation.

*

What is the difference between vision, experience and realisation?

When you see Light, that is vision; when you feel Light entering into you, that is experience; when Light settles in you and brings illumination and knowledge, that is a realisation. But ordinarily visions are also called experiences.

*

What is the difference between feeling and realisation?

One can realise the Divine by feeling the Divine or by seeing or by both.

*

What is the difference between the visions of the vital plane and those of the spiritual plane?

Visions do not come from the spiritual plane — they come from the subtle physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic or from the planes above the Mind. What comes from the spiritual plane are experiences of the Divine, e.g., the experience of self everywhere, of the Divine in all, etc.

*

Is it possible to get the higher experience before the nature is transformed?

Yes, but then it does not transform the nature, it is only an experience of the inner consciousness in its own field and even there no real perfection is possible.

*

There are people who frequently have dreams and visions of the vital plane. Is it an indication of their high spiritual development?

No. They are helpful for developing beyond the ordinary limited physical consciousness and becoming aware of things behind and the forces that move the being. Unless one knows the things of the mental and vital plane, one cannot have a complete self-knowledge.

*

Is it possible to have spiritual development without seeing anything psychically?

What do you mean by seeing "psychically"? Is it visions or the psychic sight of the Truth, psychic perception? One develops by spiritual knowledge and experience which comes from above the mind or one develops by psychic perception and experience which comes from within — these are the two main things. But it is also necessary to grow by inner mental and vital experiences, and visions and dream-experiences play a large part here. One thing may predominate in one sadhak, others in another; each develops according to his nature.

*

Is there any difference between experience and knowledge?

When you have a symbolic dream, that is an experience; when you know what it means, that is knowledge.

*

When will I get clear knowledge to understand and interpret my visions and experiences?

When by practice and intuition you begin to learn what things mean in the different planes. You have to grow more conscious and observant, that is all.

10. Work

When people join the Ashram to do sadhana and live under the Mother's protection, is it not necessary for them to do some Ashram work to progress in their sadhana?

They should do.

*

Should they ask the Mother for work or wait till she herself gives them work?

If they have the true spirit in them, they will ask for work.

*

Sometimes when a sadhak asks the Mother's permission to do a work of his choice and the Mother gives it, can it be said that it is the work done for the Mother?

The sadhak ought to be ready to do any work that is needed, not only the work he prefers.

*

Some say that if a sadhak asks Mother's permission for a work and she gives it, it cannot be said to be directly the Mother's work. Only the work given by the Mother herself is her work. Is this true?

It depends on the circumstances.

*

I find that when something is required to be done in the Ashram the sadhaks usually say: "I will do it, if the Mother asks me." Often necessary work is thus neglected in the Mother's name.

If they sincerely depend upon the Mother's directions, it is all right; if it is a mere excuse for not doing something that ought to be done, it is another matter. But it depends upon the case — the discrimination of one man is not the same as that of another nor the commonsense either. One may think a thing right to do, another may not see it in the same way.

*

Sometimes when help is urgently required in some work and a sadhak is approached to render it, he says: "I cannot give even a minute's help without the Mother's order." Does he say this out of sincere understanding?

Usually he is not sincere — it means that he does not want to do it.

*

Some people in the Ashram say: "If the Mother herself does not give us any work to do, why should we ask her to give us work? If it is her wish she will herself give us work, there is no need for us to ask." How far are these people right in their understanding?

There is no reason why one should not offer to work if there is work to do. Often there is work to be done and no one offers, so it is not done. Most of the Ashram work is done by a few people, while others do a little only or only what they please.

*

What is meant by your writing that "most of the Ashram work is done by

a few people while others do a little only or do what they please"? Is it meant that these others work only for their satisfaction and convenience and not for the Mother's?

I simply noted the fact that the zealous workers are few and whenever a work has to be done it is they who come forward — the rest do without enthusiasm some fixed work chosen by themselves or else do nothing or practically nothing at all.

*

If a sadhak finds himself incapable of doing meditation, can he progress in sadhana by only doing work for the Mother?

If he does the work in a consecrated spirit opening to the Mother and to her consciousness and force.

*

If a person joins the Ashram and does the work given by the Mother sincerely but finds that he often gets into a bad condition, is he really not a sadhak? Does it mean that he is not doing the work in the true spirit of consecration?

It depends on the sadhak. None keep the good condition at all times, that is not the point. If he is fundamentally sincere in the work and the sadhana, he is a sadhak; but if he works merely because he has to work or if he works in a selfish spirit, then it cannot be called a spirit of consecration.

*

Some people say that many persons who do not understand anything about Yoga are taken as permanent sadhaks by the Mother and given some work only to give them a chance to come into the possibility of

Yoga. What is the truth in this?

What you report them as saying seems to be without meaning.

*

My faith is that Sri Aurobindo's Ashram is a divine place and if a person comes there and takes up its work, it is the divine force that leads him to take it up and if he does it in the spirit of consecration to the Mother, he will become the Mother's instrument. The very atmosphere of the Ashram will induce him to take up this attitude. Is my faith true?

There may be a power in the atmosphere of the Ashram and there is, but the internal consent of the individual is also necessary.

*

When X came today to join in our work, Y told him jokingly: "Why have you come to this work? It is very difficult. It is better to leave it." Though he was saying this in a humorous way, is it not likely that this sort of talk can do harm to others?

Yes. There is no use in it and it can do harm.

*

Is work indispensable for growing into the spiritual consciousness and realising the Supramental Truth?

The growth out of the ordinary mind into the spiritual consciousness can be effected either by meditation, dedicated work or Bhakti for the Divine. In our Yoga, which seeks not only a static peace or absorption but a dynamic spiritual action, work is indispensable. As for the Supramental Truth, that is a different matter; it depends only on the descent of the Divine and the action of the Supreme Force and is not bound by any method or rule.

*

Is it possible for sadhaks to realise the Supermind through work?

If they have the right consciousness.

*

The Mother has written: "The illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature." What is meant by illusion here?

Illusion means that they think their action is all important and its egoistic objects are the Truth that must be followed.

*

I have noticed that when I am alone and not doing any work I am full of peace and aspiration but when I come out in the field of work and enter in contact with others, lots of difficulties arise and my peace and aspiration are lost. What is the reason for this?

It is the difficulty of being calm and surrendered in action and movement; when there is no action and one is simply sitting still, it is easy to be quiet.

*

Some people say that a person without literary or artistic capacity cannot progress in sadhana and cannot be an instrument for Divine work. Is this true?

All this is rubbish. Some of those who are progressing most, cannot write well and know no art.

11. Transformation

What are the chief obstacles that stand in the way of transformation?

There are only three fundamental obstacles that can stand in the way:

(1) Absence of faith or insufficient faith.

(2) Egoism — the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to a true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits.

(3) Some inertia or fundamental resistance in the consciousness, not willing to change because it is too much of an effort or because it does not want to believe in its capacity or the power of the Divine — or for some other more subconscious reason. You have to see for yourself which of these it is.

*

What is meant by "the physical adhering to its own habits" in the above answer?

For instance, the body clinging to its own preferences about food or preferring its own habit and convenience to the proper discharge of the work — these are instances of the physical habit.

*

What is "the other subconscious reason" which you mention as a chief obstacle to transformation?

That I cannot say here — it takes a hundred different forms.

*

How to remove "inertia" and "fundamental resistance in the consciousness" which stand in the way of transformation?

There is only one rule for all these things — to look at oneself closely so as to detect these things always when they show themselves, to reject them always and persistently when seen, to aspire always for their removal, to call always the Force of the Mother to help to remove them. But the most entirely effective thing is if you can feel the Force of the Mother working in you and support its action always.

*

What is meant by supporting the action of the Mother's Force which you say is the most effective way of removing inertia or other resistance in the consciousness?

To support its action means that one must recognise the Mother's Force when it acts and distinguish it from other egoistic or ignorant forces and give assent to the one and refuse the others. It is again a general rule — its application each sadhak has to see for himself.

*

How to distinguish the Mother's Force from other egoistic or ignorant forces?

One has only to be perfectly sincere, not to justify one's own desires and faults by the mind's reasonings, to look impartially and quietly at oneself and one's movements and to call on the Mother's Light — then gradually one will begin to discern everything in that light. Even if it cannot be done perfectly at once, the judgment and feeling will get clearer and surer and a right consciousness of these things will be established.

*

If a sadhak cannot fully discriminate between the Mother's Force and the egoistic and ignorant forces and cannot reject them, what will be his condition?

All these questions are met by my answer. One cannot be perfect in discrimination at once or in rejection either. The one indispensable thing is to go on trying sincerely till there comes the full success. So long as there is complete sincerity, the Divine Grace will be there and assist at every moment on the way.

*

You wrote that egoism is one of the chief obstacles in sadhana and described it as "the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits". What is meant by "true surrender" and when does a sadhak realise it fully?

When he is able to get rid of these things — accept the Knowledge from above in place of his own ideas, the will of the Divine in place of his own desires, the movements of the Truth in place of his physical habits — and as a result is able to live wholly for the Divine.

*

How can I know what is the Mother's Will? If in doing something I get a feeling of inconvenience does it mean that it is against her Will?

How can your convenience or inconvenience be the indication of the Mother's Will? You have to develop the psychic feeling which distinguishes the truth from the falsehood, the divine from the undivine.

*

When does transformation begin in a sadhak?

There is no fixed "when".

*

How can a sadhak know that transformation is going on in him?

If it is happening he will feel it. There is no question of how.

*

When the nature is purified, is it an indication of transformation?

Transformation is made possible by purification.

*

What is the real meaning of purification?

Purification from desire, ego, falsehood and ignorance.

*

Is it possible to have a partial realisation of the highest Truth without complete purification?

Yes.

*

In what way is it possible?

By openness to the Divine.

*

Is it true that a sadhak will be able to receive the Divine Grace and Truth in proportion to his progress in opening to the Divine and transforming himself?

The more he progresses, the greater the force of the Truth upon him — the more he is transformed, the more he will be able to feel the Divine influence.

*

If a sadhak gets rid of his lower nature, will he realise complete transformation?

If he gets rid of the lower nature, that would mean getting rid of the Ignorance (ego, desire, etc.); so it would necessarily be a complete transformation.

*

How can one become conscious of the defects of one's nature which remain hidden and become an obstacle to transformation? How can one offer these defects to the Divine for transformation?

One has to be vigilant and watch and also to call down the Mother's Light so that it will show whatever in one is hidden from the mind.

You have only to be perfectly sincere and aspire for purification and reject whatever is wrong in you. The Divine Force will then act and do the rest. That is the simple and true way.

*

When a sadhak turns his lower nature to the Mother by discrimination, is it called transformation?

No, certainly not. It is only a condition for transformation.

*

If a sadhak through lack of sufficient discrimination cannot wholly turn his nature to the Mother, does it become very difficult for the Mother's Force to transform him?

If his discrimination is constant and true and his turning complete, transformation can proceed very rapidly.

*

Is it not possible that a sadhak's nature can be turned to the Mother and transformed by Her Grace without any personal effort on his part?

If there is no personal effort, if the sadhak is too indolent and Tamasic to try, why should the Grace act?

*

Will a sadhak who is only partially transformed not be able to reach the highest Truth?

It is likely.

*

Is it true that transformation is not possible without getting spiritual experiences?

Some change may come — not the transformation of the whole being. How can that happen without any spiritual experiences?

*

When a sadhak gets dreams signifying some spiritual truth, does it not indicate that his nature is getting transformed?

Not necessarily. It shows that he has more consciousness than ordinary people, but dreams do not transform the nature.

12. Difficulties and Progress

How long the difficulties and obstacles remain in sadhana?

It depends on the sadhaks.

*

In what sense does it depend on them? Does it mean that the difficulty remains so long as they wish to keep it?

Yes, or so long as something in them gives cause for the difficulties.

*

How is it that the more sincerely we try to face and overcome the difficulties of our nature the more they tend to increase?

It is the opposing or adverse forces that attack because they are afraid of their control over men being taken from them by the success of the sadhana.

*

Whenever I find myself inwardly in a good condition and make a sincere effort to progress I find that the difficulties tend to increase. Why does it happen like this?

It is not you alone who feel that; everybody has that experience.

*

Does this prove that I am incapable of doing Yoga?

In that case it would prove that everybody is incapable — for everybody has the same experience.

*

If a sadhak finds it difficult to make any progress in his sadhana and is constantly faced with difficulties, how will he be able to stay in the Ashram?

I don't understand the question. Those who want to stay and are sincere in the sadhana, can always stay whatever the difficulties.

*

Is it a fact that the sadhaks, so long as they do not overcome the defects of their nature, have to undergo various tests imposed by the Divine?

It is not a test, it is only the natural law that they have to overcome these things before they can realise the aim of Yoga.

*

Is it true that the hostile forces attack and create disturbances in sadhana in order to test the strength of the sadhaks?

The hostile forces make it their function to attack and disturb the sadhaks, but if there were no wrong movement and no imperfection and weakness, they would not be disturbed.

*

How can I know whether I am progressing in sadhana and the transformation of my being by the Mother's Force and Grace?

If it is being done, you will be conscious of it.

*

Some sadhaks in the Ashram say that they do not know if they are making any progress at all because they do not get any feeling indicating progress. What is the reason for this?

It simply shows that they are unconscious.

*

But can it be said that they are really progressing even though they are not feeling any indications of it?

One may have experiences without fully understanding them; but if they feel nothing, then they cannot be said to be progressing.

*

When a sadhak begins to get experiences, does it mean that he is progressing?

It shows that he is progressing.

*

If a sadhak thinks constantly about his weaknesses and remains unhappy, is it a hindrance in his progress?

Yes. He has to think more of the Divine and less of himself.

*

Nowadays all kinds of memories of my past life are pressing upon my mind. What is the reason?

They must be coming up from the subconscious in order to be got rid of.

*

What is the way to get rid of the pressure of these memories?

Clear them out as they come and let nothing in the being accept or interest itself in them any more.

*

Most of the difficulties and depressions in my sadhana come from the fact that I have a narrow and undeveloped mind. What is the best thing to do to remove this defect?

It is through the psychic that the Yoga develops; the mind is not the chief thing.

*

Is it not a fact that difficulties and depressions come because of the narrow and undeveloped mind?

More through the vital's dissatisfaction or the physical consciousness and its ignorance and tamas.

*

What is the swiftest and most effective way to remove "tamas" or inertia from all the parts of the system?

To call down the Divine Force to act there.

*

Why do I feel my body so inert and dull?

It depends on whether it is in tune with the vital or not. The nature of the body is tamasic — it is the vital which makes it move and uses it as an instrument. If the vital is enlightened then the Divine Force can act throughout in the body.

*

When can the vital be said to be enlightened?

The vital must not only reject all lower movements, but open and receive the light from above so that it may receive and know the Divine Will and its impulsion — it can then be called enlightened.

*

In "Conversations", the Mother says: "The true vital movement is the most beautiful and magnificent of movements." What is this true vital movement?

A movement of the vital in its original divine nature, not full of egoism and selfish passion and desire as it is usually in man.

*

How can I get rid of the difficulties that arise in action and in contact with others?

By rejecting ego and desire and living and working for the Divine alone.

*

When a sadhak is trying to rise to the higher consciousness, how can he prevent the influences of his surroundings from pulling him down?

By indifference to the surroundings and concentration on what is above.

*

Do our thoughts (good or bad) about others affect them in any way?

Yes, there is an influence.

*

Is it possible that the desires, doubts, etc. of one person can pass on to another?

Anything can pass from one to another. It is happening all the time throughout the world.

*

How can one know that the desire or doubt he is having has come from another person?

You have to become conscious.

*

Is it not very harmful to observe the faults of others and criticise them? Does not this habit become a great obstacle in the progress of sadhana?

Yes, all that is true. The lower vital takes a mean and petty pleasure in picking out the faults of others and thereby one hampers both one's own progress and that of the subject of the criticism.

*

Is gossiping an obstacle in sadhana?

It can be and very often is. A gossiping spirit is always an obstacle.

*

Is it true that if a sadhak does anything wrong inwardly or outwardly, others in the Ashram have to suffer for it?

It creates a wrong influence in the atmosphere of the Ashram and opens the gates to the hostile Powers.

*

Is it true that when the sadhaks feel uneasiness or disturbance, it is due to their having acted contrary to the Divine's Will?

It comes from that or it comes from imperfections in their nature.

*

When the sadhaks have overcome all the difficulties and obstacles, why do they not go away from the world also for ever?

Why should they? If the sadhaks really overcome all the difficulties, then the higher consciousness gets partly established on the earth — but what of the rest of the world and their imperfect evolution?

*

How can a sadhak remain free from illness?

It is only by the conquest of the material nature that illness can cease altogether to come.

*

If a sadhak gets illnesses for one reason or another, how can he throw them away swiftly?

Most of them can be got rid of almost at once by faith and calling in the Force. Those that are chronic are more difficult but they too can be got rid of by the same means if persistently used.

*

When a sadhak gets an illness, can he make use of physical means like medicines to get over it?

Physical means can be used whenever necessary; but behind the physical means there must be the Divine Force. The physical means are to be used with discrimination and in case of necessity.

*

Is it true that illnesses can come to a sadhak because of want of faith in the Divine?

They come from various causes — what you speak of is a condition that helps them to come and stands in the way of cure.

13. Sex—Food—Sleep

Is it true that sexual desire is the greatest obstacle in Yoga?

One of the greatest, at least.

*

Does sexual desire increase by taking more food and decrease by taking less?

It is rather certain kinds of food that are supposed to increase it — e.g., meat, onions, chillies, etc.

*

Are greed, anger, jealousy etc., the companions of sexual desire?

They usually go with sexual desire, though not always.

*

The Mother has said "the strength of such impulses as those of the sex lies usually in the fact that the people take too much notice of them ". What is meant by a person taking too much notice of these impulses?

If he is always thinking of them and struggling with them, that is taking too much notice.

*

What should he do to avoid taking too much notice?

He has to detach himself from them, think less of sex and more of the

Divine.

*

The Mother has also said in regard to sexual thoughts that it is wrong to "endeavour to control them by coercion, hold them within and sit upon them ". How does a person hold these thoughts within and sit upon them?

The words convey their own explanation. If you remain full of sexual thoughts and try to prevent them from manifesting in some kind of action, that is holding them within and sitting on them. It is the same with anger or any other passion. They have to be thrown away, not kept in you.

*

You have said that control of a wrong movement merely suppresses it and that to remove it completely it has to be rejected. What is the utility then of controlling movements of sex, anger, fear, etc.

If your rejection is not successful, you have to control. The control at least prevents you from being the slave of your vital impulses. Once you have the control, it is easier to reject successfully. Absence of control does not bring successful rejection.

*

What is the process of turning the sexual energy into 'ojas'?

If it is to be done by a process, it will have to be by Tapasya (self-control of mind, speech, act) and a drawing upward of the seminal energy through the will. But it can be better done by the descent of the Force and its working on the sex-centre and consequent transformation, as with all other things in this Yoga.

*

Is fasting a help in our sadhana?

This sadhana is not helped by fasting.

*

Is taking very little food helpful in controlling the senses?

No, it simply exasperates them — to take a moderate amount is best. People who fast easily get exalted and may lose their balance.

*

If one takes only vegetarian food, does it help in controlling the senses?

It avoids some of the difficulties which the meat-eaters have, but it is not sufficient by itself.

*

Is sleep necessary for a sadhak who has reached the higher consciousness?

So long as one has a body that is not altogether transformed in all its functionings, sleep is necessary.

*

Why are the mind and vital so active at night? How could one control their activity at night?

It is their function. So long as one is not perfectly conscious in sleep, they will act.

*

In the first and middle part of my sleep there is a great mental and vital activity but in the last part this activity subsides and I get various kinds of symbolic dreams and intimations of higher knowledge. What is the reason for this?

In sleep one very commonly passes from consciousness to deeper consciousness in a long succession until one reaches the psychic and rests there or else from higher to higher consciousness until one reaches rest in some silence and peace. The few minutes one passes in this rest are the real sleep which restores, — if one does not get it, there is only a half rest. It is when you come near to either of these domains of rest that you begin to see these higher kinds of dreams.

*

What is the way to pass into the psychic or the higher consciousness in sleep and rest there?

It is done unconsciously as it is. If one wants to do it consciously and regulate it, one has first to become conscious in sleep.

*

How to make a heavy subconscious sleep light?

By calling in more consciousness.

*

I have noticed that even half an hour's sleep during day-time refreshes me more than five or six hours' sleep at night. What is the reason for this?

It must be because it is a different kind of sleep in the daytime, less

heavy, with less time spent in the subconscious.

*

Some people say that they have dreamless sleep for the whole night. Is this possible?

They simply mean that when they come back, they are not conscious of having dreamed. In the sleep the consciousness goes into other planes and has experiences there and when these are translated perfectly or imperfectly by the physical mind, they are called dreams. All the time of sleep such dreams take place, but sometimes one remembers and at other times does not at all remember. Sometimes also one goes low down into the subconscious and the dreams are there, but so deep down that when one comes out there is not even the consciousness that one had dreamed.

*

Have dreams any significance? Is there any meaning in the dreams of the subconscious?

A dream, when it is not from the subconscious, is either symbolic or else an experience of some supraphysical plane or a formation therein by some mental or vital or other force or in rare cases an indication of some event actual or probable in the past, present or future. A dream from the subconscious plane has no meaning; it is simply a kichadi of impressions and memories left in the subconscious from the past.

*

In dream I saw some people climbing up a mountain with great difficulty. I was also climbing with them. After a time I got tired, so I gave up climbing and began to think what was to be done. Then I felt that a force lifted me up lightly and carried me to the top of the mountain. On

reaching the top, I saw that there were many beautiful houses of different colours and lights. Then I woke up. What does this dream signify?

It is a symbol of the two methods — one of self-effort, the other of the action of the Mother's Force carrying the sadhak.

*

During sleep I often get bad dreams of the vital plane. How to prevent this?

You can do it by having a will in the waking state against these things coming in the dream, before you go to sleep for instance. It will not succeed at once but it will in the end. Or else you must aspire to grow more conscious in sleep.

*

Sometimes when I have an attack in dream, I can get rid of it by repeating the Mother's name. Does this mean that even the Mother's name has power in it?

Yes, certainly, there is always a power in the Name.

14. Some Explanations

Are not religious practices like doing japa, reading holy scriptures, doing puja, etc. signs of aspiration for the Divine life? Are they not a help for reaching the highest Truth?

It depends on the spirit in which they are done. A man can do all these things and yet remain an unspiritual man or even an Asura.

*

Is there any spiritual value in going for pilgrimage to holy places and worshipping many gods and goddesses? Does it help in realising the Divine Truth?

It has nothing to do with the Truth; it is a religious exercise for the ordinary consciousness.

*

What is the spiritual utility of 'samkirtan which is common amongst Vaishnavas?

It has a power of raising devotion, especially in the vital parts.

*

I have read in some religious books that if one member of a family has a spiritual realisation, all the other members get Mukti by his influence. How far is this true?

It is not true. Each has his own destiny and his entering into a particular family in one life is only an incident.

*

Ramakrishna used to say that if a person remembers God and utters His name before another person even for a while in any way, it will bear fruit one day and bring about a spiritual change in that person. Can it happen like this?

It can no more be done in that way than you can change a mouse into a lion by saying to it "lion, lion".

*

Is there any possibility of fully turning towards God for people who remain wholly engrossed in worldly life and remember God only in times of difficulty and calamity?

There is a future possibility for every one, even for the atheist or the one who never thinks of God.

*

If even the atheist or one who never thinks of God has a future possibility of fully turning to God, then why should anyone enter the spiritual life and face its difficulties?

The future possibility may only realise after ten thousand years and even then it can only come by practising Yoga.

*

Ordinary people call for the action of the Divine Grace in times of calamity but afterwards forget the Divine. Does the Grace act in the life of people only in this way?

It is only with the ordinary people that it is like that, not with those who

seek after the Divine. The special Grace of the Divine is for the seekers of the Divine — for the others it is a Cosmic Will acting through their Karma.

*

*Is there any difference between the Divine Will and the Divine Grace?
Are they not the same?*

The Divine Will works on all things — it may work out anything whatever. The Divine Grace comes in to help and save.

*

Can it be said that a sadhak who in his present life could not fully open himself to the Divine, will in his next birth again take up the Yogic life and continue his sadhana?

Yes, it is fairly certain that he will, unless he has to exhaust first the adverse elements that come in his way before he starts again.

*

Can it be said that those who in their present life follow the worldly pursuits with only a partial turning to the Divine, will in their next life take wholly to spiritual life?

There is no rigid rule for that — they will follow their evolution according to what they have been, are and are aspiring to be.

*

There is a belief that if a person, who never thought of God during his whole life, were only to utter His name or to remember Him at the time of his last breath on his death-bed, he will get mukti in his next life. Is

there any truth in this belief?

No — that is all superstition. If mukti were so easy, everybody could do what he liked all his life and simply by the trick of remembering "God" at the end, reach the supreme state. It is an idiotic idea.

*

The Puranas speak of many higher worlds or 'lokas'. Do people after death rise to these 'lokas' and live there?

They only pass through certain, not through all.

*

People believe that a person who leads a good life or a religious life goes to Heaven after death. Is this true?

He has some happy state for a time after death, that is all.

*

The Puranas also say that in the next world there are thousands of Hells and that people who do evil actions in this life have to go and live there after their death. Is this true?

That is a superstition. People after death pass through certain vital and mental worlds or through certain psychological states which are the results of their nature and action in life; afterwards they go to the psychic world and return to earth at a later time.

*

Sometimes in dream I meet and talk to my relatives who died long ago. Why does this happen?

They keep in the vital world the ideas and characteristics of the physical life. It is in the vital that you meet them.

*

Is it possible for a dead relative of a sadhak to come in his way and disturb his sadhana?

Only if the sadhak allows it.

*

Has Astrology no place in Yoga?

Astrology is an occult science — it is not a part of the Yoga except as anything can be made a part of the Yoga — if done in the right spirit.

*

Can one get any help for spiritual life from Astrology?

No.

*

What should be one's attitude towards Astrology?

As any other art or science.

*

What is the place of occult power in Yoga?

To know and use the subtle forces of the supraphysical planes is part of

the Yoga.

*

What is the meaning of occult endeavour and power?

It depends on the context. Usually it would mean power to use the secret forces of Nature and an endeavour by means of these forces. But 'occult' may mean something else in another context.

*

Has every Yogi to pass through occult endeavour?

No, everyone has not the capacity. Those who do not have it, must wait till it is given to them.

*

Is Divine Shakti the same as Yogic Shakti — the powers which Yogis develop by tapasya?

That kind of Yogic Shakti is not the same as the Divine Shakti. Even the Asura and the Rakshasa have powers. The real Yoga Shakti is that which comes from contact or union with the Divine consciousness and its workings.

*

Do miracles happen in a sadhak's life?

What do you mean by a miracle? What people call miracle is only something done in a striking way by a process unknown to them which their minds cannot follow.

*

Does Yogic siddhi mean the power to do something miraculously? Is there anything wrong in using such a power if a sadhak has realised it?

I have explained that there is no such thing as a miracle. If a higher consciousness opens a higher power in him, the sadhak has to use it as part of the new consciousness but in the right way without egoism, selfishness, vanity or pride.



Letters
on
Savitri
Sri Aurobindo



Letters on Savitri

Sri Aurobindo

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Table of Contents

Introduction to Letters on Savitri

Part I

Part II

Part III

Part IV

Part V

Part VI

Introduction to Letters on Savitri

These letters are published at the end of Savitri for their rare value as a great poet's informal self-commentary. Apropos that value, a few facts of deep personal interest may be mentioned about the coming of this poem to its close.

Some months before his passing, Sri Aurobindo, as if in foreknowledge of the event, said: "I want to finish Savitri soon." The words took by utter surprise the disciple, his scribe, who has been used to the grandly patient way in which so far it had been composed and frequently retouched and amplified. Even when, in the past, composition had been extraordinarily swift - once four to five hundred lines needing hardly any change were dictated in succession - there had been no hurry in the poet's attitude to his work. But now he increased immensely the general tempo of composition and revision. There seemed a race with time. And it was almost towards the end that, after rapidly revising the long second canto of the Book of Fate, he paused with some satisfaction. Then he inquired what still remained to be written. On being told about the Book of Death and Epilogue entitled The Return to Earth, which were yet to be caught up into a larger utterance, he remarked: "Oh, that? We shall see about that afterwards." Savitri, as the footnote to the Book of Death indicates, was not completed in the common meaning of the term and indeed Sri Aurobindo's original plan was to give this part of the poem as well as the Epilogue a thorough recasting. But his strange remark suggests that later, for reasons of his own, he was not anxious about them and that what he had thought necessary had been done. So it is impossible to say definitely that he did not wish Savitri to be, on the whole, just as he had left it after making corrections and additions in the Canto already mentioned of the Book of Fate.

These corrections and additions were the last things he wrote in this epic of twenty-three thousand [eight hundred and thirty seven (4th edition, 1993] lines, over which he spent so many years. Among them, in view of subsequent circumstances, three newly written passages in the speech of Narad stand out most significantly. The first is about the

sacrifice the God-Man gives in history:

*He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.*

The second dwells on the inner meaning with which Satyavan's departure from the earth is packed:

*His death is a beginning of greater life...
A vast intention has brought two souls close
And love and death conspire towards one great end.
For out of danger and pain heaven-bliss shall come,
Time's unforeseen event, God's secret plan.*

The third is the passage of seventy-two lines, absolutely the last piece of poetry dictated by Sri Aurobindo, in which, with a sound as of massive repeating bells, Narad admonishes King Aswapathy's wife when she protests against the fate of loneliness that will be her daughter's Savitri's in consequence even as it appeared to be that of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual co-worker, the Mother, at the time the Master of the "Integral Yoga" withdrew from his body. Some lines may be quoted:

*As a star, uncompanioned, moves in heaven
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone.
A God-given might of being is their force,
A ray from self's solitude of light the guide;
The soul that can live alone with itself meets God;
Its lonely universe is their rendezvous.
A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge,*

*Alone with death and close to extinction's edge.
Must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man.
In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
Alone with her self and death and destiny
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.
No human aid can reach her in that hour,
No armoured god stand shining at her side.
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
For this the silent Force came missioned down;
In her the conscious Will took human shape:
She only can save herself and save the world.
O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene,
Come not between her and her hour of Fate.
Her hour must come and none can intervene:
Think not to turn her from her heaven-sent task,
Strive not to save her from her own high will.
Thou hast no place in that tremendous strife;
Thy love and longing are not arbiters there;
Leave the world's fate and her to God's sole guard.
Even if he seems to leave her to her lone strength,
Even though all falters and falls and sees an end
And the heart fails and only are death and night,
God-given her strength can battle against doom
Even on a brink where Death alone seems close
And no human strength can hinder or can help.
Think not to intercede with the hidden Will,
Intrude not twixt her spirit and its force
But leave her to her mighty self and Fate."*

Part I

There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a "*magnum opus*" at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame.

No, I do not work at the poem once a week; I have other things to do. Once a month perhaps, I look at the new form of the first book and make such changes as inspiration points out to me — so that nothing shall fall below the minimum height which I have fixed for it.

—1931

* * *

Savitri... is blank verse without enjambment (except rarely) — each line a thing by itself and arranged in paragraphs of one, two, three, four, five lines (rarely a longer series), in an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement, so far as that is a possibility in English. You can't take that as a model — it is too difficult a rhythm-structure to be a model. I shall myself know whether it is a success or not, only when I have finished two or three books. But where is the time now for such a work? When the supramental has finished coming down, then perhaps.

—1932

* * *

Don't make prophecies. How do you know that *Savitri* is or is going to be supramental poetry? It is not, in fact — it is only an attempt to render into poetry a symbol of things occult and spiritual.

—1933

* * *

Possibly¹ — but in this world certainties are few. Anyhow in the effort to quote I have succeeded in putting the first few hundred lines into something like a final form — which is a surprising progress and very gratifying to me even if it brings no immediate satisfaction to you.

—1933

* * *

What you write about your inspiration is very interesting. There is no invariable how — except that I receive from above my head and receive changes and corrections from above without any initiation by myself or labour of the brain. Even if I change a hundred times, the mind does not work at that, it only receives. Formerly it used not to be so, the mind was always labouring at the stuff of an unshaped formation... . The poems come as a stream beginning at the first line and ending at the last—only some remain with one or two changes, others have to be recast if the first inspiration was an inferior one. Savitri is a work by itself unlike all the others. I made some eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection — but I have hardly any time now for such work.

—1934

* * *

That is very simple² . I used Savitri as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. Moreover I was particular — if part seemed to

[1] Sri Aurobindo was asked: "Will you be able after all to give quotations from Savitri? I really wish you could."

[2] The question was: "We have been wondering why you should have to write and rewrite your poetry — for instance, Savitri ten or twelve times — when you have all the inspiration at your command and do not have to receive it with the difficulty that faces budding Yogi like us."

me to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint. In fact Savitri has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative. I did not rewrite Rose of God or the sonnets except for two or three verbal alterations made at the moment.

—1936

* * *

Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts. Part I Earth and Part II Beyond (these two parts are still extant in the scheme³) each of four books — or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue. Twelve books to an epic is a classical superstition, but the new *Savitri* may extend to ten books — if much is added in the final version it may be even twelve⁴. The first book has been lengthening and lengthening out till it must be over 2000 lines, but I shall break up the original first four into five, I think — in fact I have already started doing so. These first five will be, as I conceive them now, the Book of Birth, the Book of Quest, the Book of Love, the Book of Fate, the Book of Death. As for the second Part, I have not touched it yet. There was no climbing of planes there in the first version — rather *Savitri* moved through the worlds of Night, of Twilight, of Day — all of course in a spiritual sense — and ended by calling down the power of the Highest Worlds of Sachchidananda. I had no idea of what the supramental World could be like at that time, so it could not enter into the scheme. As for expressing the supramental inspiration, that is a matter of the future.

—1936

* * *

[3] In the present version, there are three parts

[4] As is actually the case now

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother... This incarnation is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to "hew the ways of Immortality".

—1936

* * *

The poem was originally written from a lower level, a mixture perhaps of the inner mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening. Most of the stuff of the first book is new or else the old so altered as to be no more what it was; the best of the old has sometimes been kept almost intact because it had already the higher inspiration. Moreover, there have been made several successive revisions each trying to lift the general level higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry. As it now stands there is a general Overmind influence, I believe, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the other higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to its highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence or vital towards them.

—1936

* * *

I don't think about the technique because thinking is no longer in my line. But I see and feel for it when the lines are coming through and afterwards in revision of the work. I don't bother about details while writing, because that would only hamper the inspiration. I let it come through without interference; only pausing if there is an obvious inadequacy felt, in which case I conclude that it is a wrong inspiration or inferior level that has cut across the communication. If the inspiration is the right one, then I have not to bother about the technique then or afterwards, for there comes through the perfect line with the perfect rhythm inextricably intertwined or rather fused into an inseparable and single unity; if there is anything wrong with the expression that carries with it an imperfection in the rhythm, if there is a flaw in the rhythm, the

expression also does not carry its full weight, is not absolutely inevitable. If on the other hand the inspiration is not throughout the right one, then there is an after examination and recasting of part or whole. The things I lay most stress on then are whether each line in itself is the inevitable thing not only as a whole but in each word; whether there is the right distribution of sentence lengths (an immensely important thing in this kind of blank verse); whether the lines are in their right place, for all the lines may be perfect, but they may not combine perfectly together — bridges may be needed, alterations of position so as to create the right development and perspective etc., etc. Pauses hardly exist in this kind of blank verse; variations of rhythm as between the lines, of caesura, of the distribution of long and short, clipped and open syllables, manifold constructions of vowel and consonant sounds, alliteration, assonances, etc., distribution into one line, two line, three or four or five line, many line sentences, care to make each line tell by itself in its own mass and force and at the same time form harmonious whole sentence - these are the important things. But all that is usually taken care of by the inspiration itself, for as I know and have the habit of the technique, the inspiration provides what I want according to standing orders. If there is a defect I appeal to headquarters, till a proper version comes along or the defect is removed by a word or phrase substitute that flashes — with the necessary sound and sense. These things are not done by thinking or seeking for the right thing — the two agents are sight and call. Also feeling — the solar plexus has to be satisfied and, until it is, revision after revision has to continue. I may add that the technique does not go by any set mental rule for the object is not perfect technical elegance according to precept but sound — significance filling out the word — significance. If that can be done by breaking rules, well, so much the worse for the rule.

—1936

* * *

I can never be certain of newly written stuff (I mean in this Savitri) until I have looked at it again after an interval. Apart from the quality of new lines, there is the combination with others in the whole which I have modified more than anything else in my past revisions.

—1936

* * *

Allow me to point out that whatever I did in a jiffy would not be any more than provisionally final. It is not a question of making a few changes in individual lines, that is a very minor problem; the real finality only comes when all is felt as a perfect whole, no line jarring with or falling away from the level of the whole though some may rise above it and also all the parts in their proper place making the right harmony. It is an inner feeling that has to decide that... . Unfortunately the mind can't arrange these things, one has to wait till the absolutely right thing comes in a sort of receptive self-opening and calling-down condition. Hence the months.

—1936

* * *

I have done an enormous amount of work with Savitri. The third section has been recast — not rewritten — so as to give it a more consistent epic swing and amplitude and elevation of level. The fourth section, the Worlds, is undergoing transformation. The "Life"; part is in a way finished, though I shall have to go over the ground perhaps some five or six times more to ensure perfection of detail. I am now starting a recasting of the "Mind" part of which I had only made a sort of basic rough draft. I hope that this time the work will stand as more final and definitive.

—1938

* * *

I have been kept too occupied with other things to make much headway with the poem — except that I have spoiled your beautiful neat copy of the "Worlds" under the oestrus of the restless urge for more and more perfection; but we are here for World — improvement, so I hope that is excusable.

—1938

* * *

I have not been able to make any headway with *Savitri* — owing to lack of time and also to an appalled perception of the disgraceful imperfection of all the sections after the first two. But I have tackled them again as I think I wrote to you and have pulled up the third section to a higher consistency of level; the "Worlds" have fallen into a state of manuscript chaos, corrections upon corrections, additions upon additions, rearrangements on rearrangements out of which perhaps some cosmic beauty will emerge!

—1938

* * *

You will see when you get the full typescript [of the first three books) that *Savitri* has grown to an enormous length so that it is no longer quite the same thing as the poem you saw then. There are now three books in the first part. The first, the Book of Beginnings, comprises five cantos which cover the same ground as what you typed but contains also much more that is new. The small passage about Aswapati and the other worlds has been replaced by a new book, the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, in fourteen cantos with many thousand lines. There is also a third sufficiently long book, the Book of the Divine Mother. In the new plan of the poem there is a second part consisting of five books: two of these, the Book of Birth and Quest and the Book of Love, have been completed and another, the Book of Fate, is almost complete. Two others, the Book of Yoga and the Book of Death, have still to be written, though a part needs only a thorough recasting. Finally, there is the third part consisting of four books, the Book of Eternal Night, the Book of the Dual Twilight, the Book of Everlasting Day and the Return to Earth, which have to be entirely recast and the third of them largely rewritten. So it will be a long time before *Savitri* is complete.

In the new form it will be a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life much profounder in its substance and vaster in its scope than was intended in the original poem. I am trying of course to keep it at a very high level of inspiration, but in so large a plan covering most subjects of philosophical thought and vision and many aspects of

spiritual experience there is bound to be much variation of tone: but that is, I think, necessary for the richness and completeness of the treatment.

—1946

* * *

I am not at all times impervious to criticism; I have accepted some of yours and changed my lines accordingly; I have also though not often accepted some adverse criticisms from outside and remoulded a line or a passage from the [poem] here and there. But your criticisms are based upon an understanding appreciation of the poem, its aim, meaning, method, the turn and quality of its language and verse technique. In your friend's judgments I find an entire absence of any such understanding and accordingly I find his criticisms to be irrelevant and invalid. What one does not understand or perceive its meaning and spirit, one cannot fruitfully criticise.

—1947

* * *

I am afraid I am too much preoccupied with the constant clashes with the world and the devil to write anything at length even about your new poems [The Adventure of the Apocalypse]: a few lines must suffice. In fact as I had to explain the other day to Dilip, my only other regular correspondent, my push to write letters or to new literary production has dwindled almost to zero — this apart from Savitri and even Savitri has very much slowed down and I am only making the last revisions of the First Part already completed; the other two parts are just now in cold storage.

—1948

Part II

As to the many criticisms⁵ contained in your letter I have a good deal to say; some of them bring forward questions of the technique of mystic poetry about which I wanted to write in an introduction to *Savitri* when it is published, and I may as well say something about that here.

...Rapid transitions from one image to another are a constant feature in *Savitri* as in most mystic poetry. I am not here⁶ building a long sustained single picture of the Dawn with a single continuous image or variations of the same image. I am describing a rapid series of transitions, piling one suggestion upon another. There is first a black quietude, then the persistent touch, then the first "beauty and wonder" leading to the magical gate and the "lucent corner". Then comes the failing of the darkness, the simile used ("a falling cloak") suggesting the rapidity of the change. Then as a result the change of what was once a rift into a wide luminous gap, — if you want to be logically consistent you can look at the rift as a slit in the "cloak" which becomes a big tear. Then all changes into a "brief perpetual sign", the iridescence, then the blaze and the magnificent aura. In such a race of rapid transitions you cannot bind me down to a logical chain of figures or a classical

[5] The nature of these criticisms must not be misunderstood. Just as the merits of *Savitri* were appreciated to the utmost, whatever seemed a shortcoming no matter how slight and negligible in the midst of the abundant excellence was pointedly remarked upon so that Sri Aurobindo might not overlook anything in his work towards what he called "perfect perfection" before the poem came under the scrutiny of non-Aurobindonian critics at the time of publication. The commentator was anxious that there should be no spots on Savitri's sun. The purpose was also to get important issues cleared up in relation to the sort of poetry Sri Aurobindo was writing and some of his disciples aspired to write. Knowing the spirit and aim of the criticisms Sri Aurobindo welcomed them, even asked for them. On many occasions — and these provide most of the matter collected here — he vigorously defended himself, but on several he willingly agreed to introduce small changes. Once he is reported to have smiled and said: "Is he satisfied now?" Unfortunately, the opportunity to discuss every part of the poem did not arise and we have, therefore, only a limited number of psychological and technical elucidations by him of his art.

[6] Pp. 3, 4.

monotone. The mystic Muse is more of an inspired Bacchante of the Dionysian wine than an orderly housewife.

...Again, do you seriously want me to give an accurate scientific description of the earth half in darkness and half in light so as to spoil my impressionist symbol⁷ or else to revert to the conception of earth as a flat and immobile surface? I am not writing a scientific treatise, I am selecting certain ideas and impressions to form a symbol of a partial and temporary darkness of the soul and Nature which seems to a temporary feeling of that which is caught in the Night as if it were universal and eternal. One who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light; to him all is Night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness. If I sacrifice this impressionism and abandon the image of the earth wheeling through dark space I might as well abandon the symbol altogether, for this is a necessary part of it. As a matter of fact in the passage itself earth in its wheeling does come into the dawn and pass from darkness into the light. You must take the idea as a whole and in all its transitions and not press one detail with too literal an insistence. In this poem I present constantly one partial view of life or another temporarily as if it were the whole in order to give full value to the experience of those who are bound by that view, as for instance, the materialist conception and experience of life, but if any one charges me with philosophical inconsistency, then it only means that he does not understand the technique of the Overmind interpretation of life.

...I come next to the passage which you so violently attack, about the Inconscient waking Ignorance. In the first place, the word "formless" is indeed defective, not so much because of any repetition but because it is not the right word or idea and I was not myself satisfied with it. I have changed the passage as follows:

*Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;
A nameless movement, an unthought Idea
Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,
Something that wished but knew not how to be,*

*Teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance.*⁸

But the teasing of the Inconscient remains and evidently you think that it is bad poetic taste to tease something so bodiless and unreal as the Inconscient. But here several fundamental issues arise. First of all, are words like Inconscient and Ignorance necessarily an abstract technical jargon? If so, do not words like consciousness, knowledge etc, undergo the same ban? Is it meant that they are abstract philosophical terms and can have no real or concrete meaning, cannot represent things that one feels and senses or must often fight as one fights a visible foe? The Inconscient and the Ignorance may be mere empty abstractions and can be dismissed as irrelevant jargon if one has not come into collision with them or plunged into their dark and bottomless reality. But to me they are realities, concrete powers whose resistance is present everywhere and at all times in its tremendous and boundless mass. In fact, in writing this line I had no intention of teaching philosophy or forcing in an irrelevant metaphysical idea, although the idea may be there in implication. I was presenting a happening that was to me something sensible and, as one might say, psychologically and spiritually concrete. The Inconscient comes in persistently in the cantos of the First Book of *Savitri*; e.g.

*Opponent of that glory of escape,
The black Inconscient swung its dragon tail
Lashing a slumbrous Infinite by its force
Into the deep obscurities of form.*⁹

There too a metaphysical idea might be read into or behind the thing seen. But does that make it technical jargon or the whole thing an illegitimate mixture? It is not so to my poetic sense. But you might say, "It is so to the non-mystical reader and it is that reader whom you have

[8] Pp. 1-2.

[9] P. 79.

to satisfy, as it is for the general reader that you are writing and not for yourself alone." But if I had to write for the general reader I could not have written Savitri at all. It is in fact for myself that I have written it and for those who can lend themselves to the subject-matter, images, technique of mystic poetry.

This is the real stumbling-block of mystic poetry and specially mystic poetry of this kind. The mystic feels real and present, even ever present to his experience, intimate to his being, truths which to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstractions or metaphysical speculations. He is writing of experiences that are foreign to the ordinary mentality. Either they are unintelligible to it and in meeting them it flounders about as if in an obscure abyss or it takes them as poetic fancies expressed in intellectually devised images. That was how a critic in the Hindu condemned such poems as *Nirvana* and *Transformation*. He said that they were mere intellectual conceptions and images and there was nothing of religious feeling or spiritual experience. Yet *Nirvana*¹⁰ was as close a transcription of a major experience as could be given in language coined by the human mind of a realisation in which the mind was entirely silent and into which no intellectual conception could at all enter. One has to use words and images in order to convey to the mind some perception, some figure of that which is beyond thought. The critic's non-understanding was made worse by such a line as:

Only the illimitable Permanent

[10] *All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.
Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
Replaces all, — what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.*

Is here.

Evidently he took this as technical jargon, abstract philosophy. There was no such thing; I felt with an overpowering vividness the illimitability or at least something which could not be described by any other term and no other description except the "Permanent" could be made of That which alone existed. To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event. To me, for instance, consciousness is the very stuff of existence and I can feel it everywhere enveloping and penetrating the stone as much as man or the animal. A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to me an image but a fact. If I wrote "His anger climbed against me in a stream", it would be to the general reader a mere image, not something that was felt by me in a sensible experience; yet I would only be describing in exact terms what actually happened once, a stream of anger, a sensible and violent current of it rising up

*All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done
Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
Replaces all, — what once was I, in it
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with luminous seas of the Infinite.*

from downstairs and rushing upon me as I sat in the veranda of the Guest-House, the truth of it being confirmed afterwards by the

confession of the person who had the movement. This is only one instance, but all that is spiritual or psychological in Savitri is of that character. What is to be done under these circumstances? The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer.

Another question is the place of philosophy in poetry or whether it has any place at all. Some romanticists seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. This accusation has been brought against me by many that I think too much and that when I try to write in verse, thought comes in and keeps out poetry. I hold, to the contrary, that philosophy has its place and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the Gita¹¹. All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power.

The theory which discourages the poet from thinking or at least from thinking for the sake of the thought proceeds from an extreme romanticist temper, it reaches its acme on one side in the question of the surrealist, "Why do you want poetry to mean anything?" and on the other in Housman's exaltation of pure poetry which he describes paradoxically as a sort of sublime nonsense which does not appeal at all to the mental intelligence but knocks at the solar plexus and awakes a vital and physical rather than intellectual sensation and response. It is of course not that really but a vividness of imagination and feeling which disregards the mind's positive view of things and its logical sequences; the centre or centres it knocks at are not the brain-mind, not even the

[11] This dictum about the role of thought should not be taken as contradicting any implication of the sentence in an earlier letter; "Thinking is no longer in my line." What comes from "overhead" through the mystic's silent mind, as in Sri Aurobindo's later poetry, can very well assume a philosophical form. It is the presence of thought-form in poetry that is spoken of here, not the source from which it ultimately derives or the process by which it enters a poem.

poetic intelligence but the subtle physical, the nervous, the vital or the psychic centre. The poem he quotes from Blake is certainly not nonsense, but it has no positive and exact meaning for the intellect or the surface mind, it expresses certain things that are true and real, not nonsense but a deeper sense which we feel powerfully with a great stirring of some inner emotion, but any attempt at exact intellectual statement of them sterilises their sense and spoils their appeal. This is not the method of Savitri. Its expression aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or belong to an untrodden domain or domains or enter into a field of occult experience: it is not because there is any attempt at a dark or vague profundity or at an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity.

It may be noted that the greater romantic poets did not shun thought; they thought abundantly, almost endlessly. They have their characteristic view of life, something that one might call their philosophy, their world-view, and they express it. Keats was the most romantic of poets, but he could write "To philosophise I dare not yet"; he did not write "I am too much of a poet to philosophise." To philosophise he regarded evidently as mounting on the admiral's flagship and flying an almost royal banner. The philosophy of Savitri is different but it is persistently there; it expresses or tries to express a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Whatever language, whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience it uses without scruple or admitting any mental rule of what is or is not poetic. It does not hesitate to employ terms which might be considered as technical when these can be turned to express something direct, vivid and powerful. That need not be an introduction of technical jargon, that is to say, I suppose, special and artificial language, expressing in this case only abstract ideas and generalities without any living truth or reality in them. Such jargon cannot make good literature, much less good poetry. But there is a 'poeticism' which establishes a sanitary cordon against

words and ideas which it considers as prosaic but which properly used can strengthen poetry and extend its range. That limitation I do not admit as legitimate.

I have been insisting on these points in view of certain criticisms that have been made by reviewers and others' — some of them very capable, suggesting or flatly stating that there was too much thought in my poems or that I am even in my poetry a philosopher rather than a poet. I am justifying a poet's right to think as well as to see and feel, his right to "dare to philosophise". I agree with the modernists in their revolt against the romanticist's insistence on emotionalism and his objection to thinking and philosophical reflection in poetry. But the modernist went too far in his revolt. In trying to avoid what I may call poeticism he ceased to be poetic; wishing to escape from rhetorical writing, rhetorical pretension to greatness and beauty of style, he threw out true poetic greatness and beauty, turned from a deliberately poetic style to a colloquial tone and even to very flat writing; especially he turned away from poetic rhythm to a prose or half-prose rhythm or to no rhythm at all. Also he has weighed too much on thought and hastiest the habit of intuitive sight; by turning emotion out of its intimate chamber in the house of Poetry, he has had to bring in to relieve the dryness of much of his thought too much exaggeration of the lower vital and sensational reactions untransformed or else transformed only by exaggeration. Nevertheless he has perhaps restored to the poet the freedom to think as well as to adopt a certain straightforwardness and directness of style.

Now I come to the law prohibiting repetition. This rule aims at a certain kind of intellectual elegance which comes into poetry when the poetic intelligence and the call for a refined and classical taste begin to predominate. It regards poetry as a cultural entertainment and amusement of the highly civilised mind; it interests by a faultless art of words, a constant and ingenious invention, a sustained novelty of ideas, incidents, word and phrase. An unfailing variety or the outward appearance of it is one of the elegances of this art. But all poetry is not of this kind: its rule does not apply to poets like Homer or Valmiki or other early writers. The Veda might almost be described as a mass of repetitions: so might the work of Vaishnava poets and the poetic

literature of devotion generally in India. Arnold has noted this distinction when speaking of Homer; he mentioned especially that there is nothing objectionable in the close repetition of the same word in the Homeric way of writing. In many things Homer seems to make a point of repeating himself. He has stock descriptions, epithets always reiterated, lines even which are constantly repeated again and again when the same incident returns in his narrative: e.g. the line,

Doupesen de peson arabese de teuche' ep' autoi¹²,
"Down with a thud he fell and his armour clangoured upon him."

He does not hesitate also to repeat the bulk of a line with a variation at the end, e.g.

Be de kat' Oulumpio karenon choomenos ker.¹³

And again the

Be de kat' Oulumpio karenon aixasa¹⁴.

"Down from the peaks of Olympus he came, wrath vexing his heart-strings" and again, "Down from the peaks of Olympus she came impetuously darting." He begins another line elsewhere with the same word and a similar action and with the same nature of a human movement physical and psychological In a scene of Nature, here a man's silent sorrow listening to the roar of the ocean:

[12] Iliad IV.504, V.42, etc

[13] ibid I.44

[14] ibid IV.74

*Be d'akeon para thina poluphloisboio thalasses —¹⁵
"Silent he walked by the shore of the many-rumoured ocean."*

In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable; it is resorted to by many poets, sometimes with insistence. I may cite as an example the constant repetition of the word ham, truth, sometimes eight or nine times in a short poem of nine or ten stanzas and often in the same line. This does not weaken the poem, it gives it a singular power and beauty. The repetition of the same key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, sometimes key lines or half lines is a constant feature. They give an atmosphere, a significant structure, a sort of psychological frame, an architecture. The object here is not to amuse or entertain but the self-expression of an inner truth, a seeing of things and ideas not familiar to the common mind, a bringing out of inner experience. It is the true more than the new that the poet is after. He uses *avrtti*, repetition, as one of the most powerful means of carrying home what has been thought or seen and fixing it in the mind in an atmosphere of light and beauty. This kind of repetition I have used largely in Savitri. Moreover, the object is not only to present a secret truth in its true form and true vision but to drive it home by the finding of the true word, the true phrase, the mot justs, the true image or symbol, if possible the inevitable word; if that is there, nothing else, repetition included, matters much. This is natural when the repetition is intended, serves a purpose; but it can hold even when the repetition is not deliberate but comes in naturally in the stream of the inspiration. I see, therefore, no objection to the recurrence of the same or similar image such as sea and ocean, sky and heaven in one long passage provided each is the right thing and rightly worded in its place. The same rule applies to words, epithets, ideas. It is only if the repetition is clumsy or awkward, too burdensomely insistent, at once unneeded and inexpressive or amounts to a disagreeable and meaningless echo that it must be rejected.

...I think there is none of your objections that did not occur to me as possible from a certain kind of criticism when I wrote or I re-read what I

[15] ibid I.34

had written; but I brushed them aside as invalid or as irrelevant to the kind of poem I was writing. So you must not be surprised at my disregard of them as too slight and unimperative.

—1946

* * *

What you have written as the general theory of the matter seems to be correct and it does not differ substantially from what I wrote. But your phrase about unpurposive repetition might carry a suggestion which I would not be able to accept; it might seem to indicate that the poet must have a "purpose" in whatever he writes and must be able to give a logical account of it to the critical intellect. That is surely not the way in which the poet or at least the mystic poet has to do his work. He does not himself deliberately choose or arrange word and rhythm but only sees it as it comes in the very act of inspiration. If there is any purpose of any kind, it also comes by and in the process of inspiration. He can criticise himself and the work; he can see whether it was a wrong or an Inferior movement, he does not set 'about correcting it by any Intellectual method but waits for the true thing to come in its place.

He cannot always account to the logical intellect for what he has done: he feels or intuits. and the reader or critic has to do the same.

Thus I cannot tell you for what purpose I admitted the repetition of the word "great" in the line about the "great unsatisfied godhead",¹⁶ I only felt that it was the one thing to write In that line as "her greatness" was the only right thing in a preceding line, I also felt that they did not and could not clash and that was enough for me. Again, it might be suggested that the "high" "warm" subtle ether of love was not only the right expression but that repetition of these epithets after they had been used in describing the atmosphere of Savitri's nature was justified and had a reason and purpose because it pointed and brought out the identity of the ether of love with Savitri's atmosphere. But as a matter of fact I have no such reason or purpose. It was the identity which brought spontaneously and inevitably the use of the same epithets and not any

conscious intention which deliberately used the repetition for a purpose.

Your contention that in the lines which I found to be inferior to their original form and altered back to that form, the inferiority was due to a repetition is not valid. In the line about "a vastness like his own"¹⁷ the word "wideness" which had accidentally replaced it would have been inferior even if there had been no "wide" or "wideness" anywhere within a hundred miles and I would still have altered it back to the original word. So too with "sealed depths" and so many others.... These and other alterations were due to inadvertence and not intentional; repetition or non-repetition had nothing to do with the matter. It was the same with "Wisdom nursing Chance":¹⁸ if "nursing" had been the right word and not a slip replacing the original phrase I would have kept it in spite of the word "nurse"; occurring immediately afterwards: only perhaps I would have taken care to so arrange that the repetition of the figure would simply have constituted a two-headed instead of a one-headed evil. Yes, I have changed several places where you objected to repetitions but mostly for other reasons: I' have kept many where there was a repetition and changed others where there was no repetition at all. I have indeed made modifications or changes where repetition came at a short distance at the end of a line; that was because the place made it too conspicuous. Of course where the repetition amounts to a mistake, I would have no hesitation in making a change; for a mistake must always be acknowledged and corrected.

[17] P.16

[18] In an earlier version of p.41 line 16:

Of Wisdom sucking the child-laughter of chance

Part III

Obviously, the Overmind and aesthetics cannot be equated together. Aesthetics is concerned mainly with beauty, but more generally with rasa, the response of the mind, the vital feeling and the sense to a certain "taste" in things which often may be but is not necessarily a spiritual feeling. Aesthetics belongs to the mental range and all that depends upon it; it may degenerate into aestheticism or may exaggerate or narrow itself into some version of the theory of "Art for Art's sake". The Overmind is essentially a spiritual power. Mind in it surpasses its ordinary self and rises and takes its stand on a spiritual foundation. It embraces beauty and sublimates it; it has an essential aesthetics which is not limited by rules and canons; it sees a universal and an eternal beauty while it takes up and transforms all that is limited and particular. It is besides concerned with things other than beauty or aesthetics. It is concerned especially with truth and knowledge or rather with a wisdom that exceeds what we call knowledge; its truth goes beyond truth of fact and truth of thought, even the higher thought which is the first spiritual range of the thinker. It has the truth of spiritual thought, spiritual feeling, spiritual sense and at its highest the truth that comes by the most intimate spiritual touch or by identity. Ultimately, truth and beauty come together and coincide, but in between there is a difference. Overmind in all its dealings puts truth first; it brings out the essential truth (and truths) in things and also its infinite possibilities; it brings out even the truth that lies behind falsehood and error; it brings out the truth of the Inconscient and the truth of the Superconscious and all that lies in between. When it speaks through poetry, this remains its first essential quality; a limited aesthetical artistic aim is not its purpose. It can take up and uplift any or every style or at least put some stamp of itself upon it. More or less all that we have called Overhead poetry has something of this character whether it be from the Overmind or simply intuitive, illumined or strong with the strength of the higher revealing Thought; even when it is not intrinsically Overhead poetry, still some touch can come in. Even Overhead poetry itself does not always deal in what is new or striking or strange; it can take up the obvious, the common, the bare and even the bald, the old, even that which without

it would seem stale and hackneyed and raise it to greatness. Take the lines:

*I spoke as one who ne'er would speak again
And as a dying man to dying men.¹⁹*

The writer is not a poet, not even a conspicuously talented versifier. The statement of the thought is bare and direct and the rhetorical device used is of the simplest, but the Overhead touch somehow got in through a passionate emotion and sincerity and is unmistakable. In all poetry a poetical aesthetics of some kind there must be in the writer and the recipient; but aesthetics is of many kinds and the ordinary kind is not sufficient for appreciating the Overhead element in poetry. A fundamental and universal aesthetics is needed, something also more intense that listens, sees and feels from deep within and answers to what is behind the surface. A greater, wider and deeper aesthetics then which can answer even to the transcendent and feel too whatever of the transcendent or spiritual enters into the things of life, mind and sense.

The business of the critical intellect is to appreciate and judge and here too it must judge; but it can judge and appreciate rightly here only if it first learns to see and sense inwardly and interpret. But it is dangerous for it to lay down its own laws or even laws and rules which it thinks it can deduce from some observed practice of the Overhead inspiration and use that to wall in the inspiration; for it runs the risk of seeing the Overhead inspiration step across its wall and pass on leaving it bewildered and at a loss. The mere critical intellect not touched by a rarer sight can do little here. We can take an extreme case, for in extreme cases certain incompatibilities come out more clearly. What might be called the John-sonian critical method has obviously little or no place in this field, — the method which expects a precise logical

[19] The original lines run:

*I preach'd as never sure to preach again!
And as a dying man to dying men.*

order in thoughts and language and pecks at all that departs from a matter-of-fact or a strict and rational ideative coherence or a sober and restrained classical taste. Johnson himself is plainly out of his element when he deals crudely with one of Gray's delicate trifles and tramples and flounders about in the poet's basin of goldfish breaking it with his heavy and vicious kicks. But also this method is useless in dealing with any kind of romantic poetry. What would the Johnsonian critic say to Shakespeare's famous lines,

*Or take up arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them?*²⁰

He would say, "What a mixture of metaphors and jumble of ideas! Only a lunatic could take up arms against a sea! A sea of troubles is too fanciful a metaphor and, in any case, one can't end the sea by opposing it, it is more likely to end you." Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing; he saw the mixture as well as any critic could and he accepted it because it brought home, with an inspired force which a neater language could not have had, the exact feeling and idea that he wanted to bring out. Still more scared would the Johnsonian be by any occult or mystic poetry. The Veda, for instance, uses with what seems like a deliberate recklessness the mixture, at least the association of disparate images, of things not associated together in the material world which in Shakespeare is only an occasional departure. What would the Johnsonian make of this Rk in the Veda: "That splendour of thee, O Fire, which is in heaven and in the earth and in the plants and in the waters and by which thou hast spread out the wide mid-air, is a vivid ocean of light which sees with a divine seeing"? ¹ He would say, "What is this nonsense? How can there be a splendour of light in plants and in water and how can an ocean of light see divinely or otherwise? Anyhow, what meaning can there be in all this, it is a senseless mystical jargon." But,

[20] The original lines read:

*Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.*

apart from these extremes, the mere critical intellect is likely to feel a distaste or an incomprehension with regard to mystical poetry even if that poetry is quite coherent in its ideas and well-appointed in its language. It is bound to stumble over all sorts of things that are contrary to its reason and offensive to its taste: association of contraries, excess or abruptness or crowding of images, disregard of intellectual limitations in the thought, concretisation of abstractions, the treating of things and forces as-if there were a conscious-ness and a personality in them and a hundred other aberrations from the straight intellectual line. It is not likely either to tolerate departures in technique which disregard the canons of an established order. Fortunately here the modernists with all their errors have broken old bounds and the mystic poet may be more free to invent his own technique.

Here is an instance in point. You refer to certain things I wrote and concessions I made when you were typing an earlier draft of the first books of Savitri. You instance my readiness to correct or do away with repetitions of words or clashes of sound such as "magnificent" in one line and "lucent" in the next. True, but I may observe that at that time I was passing through a transition from the habits of an old inspiration and technique to which I often deferred and the new inspiration that had begun to come. I would still alter this clash because it was a clash, but I would not as in the old days make a fixed rule of this avoidance. If lines like the following were to come to me now,

*His forehead was a dome magnificent,
And there gazed forth two orbs of lucent truth
That made the human air a world of light,*

I would not reject them but accept "magnificent" and "lucent" as entirely in their place. But this would not be an undiscriminating acceptance; for if it had run

*His forehead was a wide magnificent dome
And there gazed forth two orbs of lucent truth*

I would not be so ready to accept it, for the repetition of sound here occurring in the same place in the line would lack the just rhythmical balance. I have accepted in the present version of Savitri several of the freedoms established by the modernists including internal rhyme, exact assonance of syllable, irregularities introduced into the iambic run of the metre and others which would have been equally painful to an earlier taste. But I have not taken this as a mechanical method or a mannerism, but only where I thought it rhythmically justified; for all freedom must have a truth in it and an order, either a rational or an instinctive and intuitive order.

—1946

Part IV

*...the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.²¹*

I am not disposed to change "suns" to "stars" in the line about the creative slumber of the ignorant Force; "stars" does not create the same impression and brings in a different tone in the rhythm and the sense. This line and that which follows it bring in a general subordinate idea stressing the paradoxical nature of the creation and the contrasts which it contains, the drowsed somnambulist as the mother of the light of the suns and the activities of life. It is not intended as a present feature in the darkness of the Night.

—1946

* * *

*As if a childlike finger laid on a cheek
Reminding of the endless need in things
The heedless Mother of the universe,
An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast.²²*

Your objection to the "finger" and the "clutch" moves me only to change "reminding" to "reminded" in the second line. It is not intended that the two images "finger laid" and "clutch" should correspond exactly to each other; for the "void"²³ and the "Mother of the universe" are not the same thing. The "void" is only a mask covering the Mother's cheek or face.

[21] P.1.

[22] P.2.

[23] Sri Aurobindo has somehow come to use "void" instead of the "Vast" that is actually there in the line. It may be mentioned that, in the passage where this line and the other three occur, the Vast is also called the void.

What the "void" feels as a clutch is felt by the Mother only as a reminding finger laid on her cheek. It is one advantage of the expression "as if" that it leaves the field open for such variation. It is intended to suggest without saying it that behind the sombre void is the face of a mother. The two other "as if"s²⁴ have the same motive and I do not find them jarring upon me. The second is at a sufficient distance from the first and it is not obtrusive enough to prejudice the third which more nearly follows... Your suggestion "as though" (for the third) does not appeal to me: it almost makes a suggestion of falsity and in any case it makes no real difference as the two expressions are too much kin to each other to repel the charge of reiteration.

—1946

* * *

*As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.²⁵*

You have made what seems to me a strange confusion as regards the passage about the "errant marvel" owing to the mistake in the punctuation which is now corrected. You took the word "solicited" as a past participle passive and this error seems to have remained fixed in your mind so as to distort the whole building and sense of the passage. The word "solicited" is the past tense and the subject of this verb is "an errant marvel" delayed to the fourth line by the parenthesis "Orphaned etc." This kind of inversion, though longer than usual, is common enough in poetical style and the object is to throw a strong emphasis

[24] As if a soul long dead were moved to live...
As if solicited in an alien world...

[25] P. 3.

and prominence upon the line, "An errant marvel with no place to live." That being explained, the rest about the gesture should be clear enough.

I see no sufficient reason to alter the passage; certainly, I could not alter the line beginning "Orphaned..."; it is indispensable to the total idea and its omission would leave an unfilled gap. If I may not expect a complete alertness from the reader, — but how without it can he grasp the subtleties of a mystical and symbolic poem ? — he surely ought to be alert enough when he reads the second line to see that it is somebody who is soliciting with a timid grace and it can't be somebody who is being grace-fully solicited; also the line "Orphaned etc." ought to suggest to him at once that it is some orphan who is soliciting and not the other way round: the delusion of the past participle passive ought to be dissipated long before he reaches the subject of the verb in the fourth line. The obscurity through-out, if there is any, is in the mind of the hasty reader and not in the grammatical construction of the passage.

—1946

* * *

A slow miraculous gesture dimly came.

Man alive, your proposed emendations²⁶ are an admirable exposition of the art of bringing a line down the steps till my poor "slow miraculous"

[26] The suggested emendations of the original line which belonged to the 1936 version but apropos of which the comments by Sri Aurobindo are very pertinent in general to his art were :

Miraculous and dim

Miraculously dim a gesture came.

Dimly miraculous

Miraculous and slow

The emendations were not suggested as improvements in any way on the line Which was splendid (though Sri Aurobindo himself subsequently altered it to

A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal

above-mind line meant to give or begin the concrete portrayal of an act of some hidden Godhead finally becomes a mere metaphor thrown out from its more facile mint by a brilliantly imaginative poetic intelligence. First of all, you shift my "dimly" out of the way and transfer it to something to which it does not inwardly belong, make it an epithet of the gesture or an adverb qualifying its epithet instead of something that qualifies the atmosphere in which the act of the Godhead takes place. That is a preliminary havoc which destroys what is very important to the action, its atmosphere. I never intended the gesture to be dim, it is a luminous gesture, but forcing its way through the black quietude it comes dimly. Then again the bald phrase "a gesture came" without anything to psychicise it becomes simply something that "happened", "came" being a poetic equivalent for "happened", instead of the expression of the slow coming of the gesture. The words "slow" and "dimly" assure this sense of motion and this concreteness to the word's sense here. Remove one or both whether entirely or elsewhere and you ruin the vision and change altogether its character. That is at least what happens wholly in your penultimate version and as for the last its "came" gets another meaning and one feels that some-body very slowly decided to let out the gesture from himself and it was quite a miracle that it came out at all! "Dimly miraculous" means what precisely or what "miraculously dim" — it was miraculous that it managed to be so dim or there was something vaguely miraculous about it after all? No doubt they try to mean something else — but these interpretations come in their way and trip them over. The only thing that can stand is the first version which is no doubt fine poetry, but the trouble is that it does not give the effect I wanted to give, the effect which is necessary for the dawn's inner significance. Moreover, what becomes of the slow lingering rhythm of my line which is absolutely indispensable?

because of a new interrelation in the final expanded recast of his poem). They were only a hypothetical desperate resort in the interests of a point which is made clear in the footnote at the end of the next item. The object was to see if a certain change in the manner of adjective-use was possible so that a technical variety might be introduced in the passage of which the line in question was a part. The emendations unfortunately involved, among other things, the omission of one or another of the descriptive terms used by Sri Aurobindo. But variants not involving this were also offered for discussion, as the footnote already referred to will show.

* * *

*Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.
A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.*

Can't see the validity of any prohibition of double adjectives in abundance. If a slow wealth-burdened movement is the right thing, as it certainly is here¹ in my judgment, the necessary means have to be used to bring it about — and the double adjective is admirably suited for the purpose.... Do not forget that Savitri is an experiment in mystic poetry, spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure. Done on this rule, it is really a new attempt and cannot be hampered by old ideas of technique except when they are assimilable. Least of all by a standard proper to a mere intellectual and abstract poetry which makes "reason and taste" the supreme arbiters, aims at a harmonised poetic intellectual balanced expression of the sense, elegance in language, a sober and subtle use of imaginative decoration, a restrained emotive element etc. The attempt at mystic spiritual poetry of the kind I am at demands above all a spiritual objectivity, an intense psycho-physical concreteness. I do not know what you mean exactly here by "obvious" and "subtle". According to certain canons, epithets should be used sparingly, free use of them is rhetorical, an "obvious" device, a crowding of images is bad taste, there should be subtlety of art not displayed but severely concealed — Summa ars est celare artem. Very good for a certain standard of poetry, not so good or not good at all for others. Shakespeare kicks over these traces at every step, Aeschylus freely and frequently, Milton whenever he chooses. Such lines as

*With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire²⁷*

or

*Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge²⁸*

(note two double adjectives in three lines in the last) — are not subtle or restrained, or careful to conceal their elements of powerful technique, they show rather a vivid richness or vehemence, forcing language to its utmost power of expression. That has to be done still more in this kind of mystic poetry. I cannot bring out the spiritual objectivity if I have to be miserly about epithets, images, or deny myself the use of all available resources of sound-significance. The double epithets are indispensable here and in the exact order in which they are arranged by me. You say the rich burdened movement can be secured by other means, but a rich burdened movement of any kind is not my primary object, it is desirable only because it is needed to express the spirit of the action here; and the double epithets are wanted because they are the best, not only one way of securing it. The "gesture" must be "slow miraculous" — if it is merely miraculous or merely slow, that does not create a picture of the thing as it is, but of something quite abstract and ordinary or concrete but ordinary — it is the combination that renders the exact nature of the mystic movement, with the "dimly came" supporting it, so that "gesture" is not here a metaphor, but a thing actually done. Equally a pale light or an enchanted light may be very pretty, but it is only the combination that renders the luminosity which is that of the hand acting tentatively in the darkness. That darkness itself is described as a quietude, which

[27] Milton, Paradise Lost, I.46-48

[28] Shakespeare 2 Henry IV, III.i

gives it a subjective spiritual character and brings out the thing symbolised, but the double epithet "inert black" gives it the needed concreteness so that the quietude ceases to be something abstract and becomes something concrete, objective, but still spiritually subjective.... Every word must be the right word, with the right atmosphere, the right relation to all the other words, just as every sound in its place and the whole sound together must bring out the imponderable significance which is beyond verbal expression. One can't chop and change about on the principle that it is sufficient if the same mental sense or part of it is given with some poetical beauty or power. One can only change if the change brings out more perfectly the thing behind that is seeking for expression — brings out in full objectivity and also in the full mystic sense. If I can do that, well, other considerations have to take a backseat or seek their satisfaction elsewhere.²⁹

—1936

* * *

In the passage about Dawn your two suggestions I find unsatisfying. "Windowing hidden things"³⁰ presents a vivid image and suggests what I want to suggest and I must refuse to alter it; "vistaing" brings in a very common image and does not suggest anything except perhaps that there is a long line or wide range of hidden things. But that is quite unwanted and not a part of the thing seen. "Shroud" sounds to me too

[29] The point discussed by Sri Aurobindo is a genuine and important one but it may be mentioned that the question which elicited the discussion gave rise to this precise point by some carelessness of phrasing. As Sri Aurobindo himself was informed later, the slight suspicion of "obviousness of method" referred not to the closely repeated use of double adjectives but to the manner in which two epithets had been thus used — that is, without any separation of one from the other and immediately before a noun. An alternative — "A gesture slow, miraculous, dimly came" — was suggested, but admittedly the revelatory suspense in Sri Aurobindo's line was spoiled by the "gesture" being mentioned too soon. Also, "Miraculous, slow, a gesture dimly came" would blurt out things in its own way. "Yes, that is it," wrote Sri Aurobindo. And his general remark was: "The epithets are inseparable from the noun, they give a single impression which must not be broken up by giving a separate prominence to either noun or epithets."

[30] P. 3.

literary and artificial and besides it almost suggests that what it covers is a corpse which would not do at all; a slipping shroud sounds inapt while "slipped like a falling cloak"³¹ gives a natural and true image. In any case, "shroud" would not be more naturally continuous in the succession of images than "cloak".

—1946

* * *

I am afraid I shall not be able to satisfy your demand for rejection and alteration of the lines about the Inconscient³² and the cloak any more than I could do it with regard to the line about the silence and strength of the gods.³³ I looked at your suggestion about adding a line or two in the first case, but could get nothing that would either improve the passage or set your objection at rest. I am quite unable to agree that there is anything jargonish about the line any more than there is in the lines of Keats,

*Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty — that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.*³⁴

That amounts to a generalised philosophical statement or enunciation and the words "beauty" and "truth" are abstract metaphysical terms to which we give a concrete and emotional value because they are connected in our associations with true. and beautiful things of which our senses or our minds are vividly aware. Men have not learnt yet to recognise the Inconscient on which the whole material world they see is

[31] ibid.

[32] P. 2

[33] P. 16

[34] Ode to a Grecian Urn

built, or the Ignorance of which their whole nature including their knowledge is built; they think that these words are only abstract metaphysical jargon flung about by the philosophers in their clouds or laboured out in long and wearisome books like The Life Divine. But it is not so with me and I take my stand on my own feeling and experience about them as Keats did on his about truth and beauty. My readers will have to do the same if they want to appreciate my poetry, which of course they are not bound to do.

Is it really a fact that even the ordinary reader would not be able to see any difference between the Inconscient and Ignorance unless the difference is expressly explained to him? This is not a matter of philosophical terminology but of common sense and the understood meaning of English words. One would say "even the inconscient stone" but one would not say, as one might of a child, "the ignorant stone". One must first be conscious before one can be ignorant. What is true is that the ordinary reader might not be familiar with the philosophical content of the word Inconscient and might not be familiar with the Vedantic idea of the Ignorance as the power behind the manifested world. But I don't see how I can acquaint him with these things in a single line, even with the most illuminating image or symbol. He might wonder, if he were Johnsonianly minded, how an Inconscient could be teased or how it could wake Ignorance. I am afraid, in the absence of a miracle of inspired poetical exegesis flashing through my mind, he will have to be left wondering. I am not set against adding a line if the miracle comes or if some vivid symbol occurs to me, but as yet none such is making its appearance.³⁵

In the other case also, about the cloak, I maintain my position. Here, however, while I was looking at the passage an additional line occurred to me and I may keep it:

[35] What the commentator wished for was some symbolic suggestion as in other phrases of Sri Aurobindo's that made the Inconscient a black dragon or a black rock. As an alternative he desired a further touch of vividness to drive home the distinction between the Inconscient and Ignorance, as in another line in Savitri:

And the blind Void struggles to live and see.

*The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.*

But this additional line does not obviate your objection and it was not put in with that object. You have, by the way, made a curious misapplication of my image of the careful housewife; you attribute this line to her inspiration.³⁶ A careful housewife is meticulously and methodically careful to arrange everything in a perfect order, to put every object in its place and see that there is no disharmony anywhere; but according to you she has thrust a wrong object into a wrong place, something discordant with the surroundings and inferior in beauty to all that is near it; if so, she is not a careful housewife but a slattern. The Muse has a careful housewife, — there is Pope's, perfect in the classical or pseudo-classical style or Tennyson's, in the romantic or semi-romantic manner, while as a contrast there is Browning's with her energetic and rough-and-tumble dash and clatter.

You ask why in these and similar cases I could not convince you while I did in others. Well, there are several possible explanations. It may be that your first reaction to these lines was very vivid and left the mark of a samskar which could not be obliterated. Or perhaps I was right in the other matters while your criticism may have been right in these, — my partiality for these lines may be due to an unjustified personal attachment founded on the vision which they gave me when I wrote them. Again, there are always differences of poetical appreciation due either to preconceived notions or to different temperamental reactions. Finally, it may be that my vision was true but for some reason you are not able to share it. For instance, you may have seen in the line about the cloak only the objective image in a detailed picture of the dawn where I felt a subjective suggestion in the failure of the darkness and the slipping of the cloak, not an image but an experience. It must be the same with the line,

[36] The line meant is not the additional but the original single one, and the image Sri Aurobindo refers to is in his statement: "The mystic Muse is more of an inspired Bacchante of the Dionysian wine than an orderly housewife."

The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.

You perhaps felt it to be an ordinary line with a superficial significance; perhaps it conveyed to you not much more than the stock phrase about the "strong silent man" admired by biographers, while to me it meant very much and expressed with a bare but sufficient power what I always regarded as a great reality and a great experience.

—1946

* * *

*Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.³⁷*

Your "barely enough", instead of the finer and more suggestive "hardly", falls flat upon my ear; one cannot substitute one word for another in this kind of poetry merely because it means intellectually the same thing; "hardly" is the mot juste in this context and, repetition or not, it must remain unless a word not or only juste but inevitable comes to replace it.... On this point I may add that in certain contexts "barely" would be the right word, as for instance, "There is barely enough food left for two or three meals", where "hardly" would be adequate but much less forceful. It is the other way about in this line.

—1946

* * *

*A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
Almost was flung on the opaque Inane.³⁸*

No word will do except "invisible". I don't think there are too many "I's"

[37] P. 3.

[38] P. 4.

— in fact such multiplications of a vowel or consonant assonance or several together as well as syllabic assonances in a single line or occasionally between line-endings (e.g. face-fate) are an accepted feature of the technique in Savitri. Purposeful repetitions also, or those which serve as echoes or key notes in the theme.

—1936

* * *

*Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven.*³⁹

No, it is because "link twixt", two heavy syllables (heavy because ending with two consonants) with the same vowel, makes an awkward combination which can only be saved by good management of the whole line — but here the line was not written to suit such a combination, so it won't do.

—1936

* * *

*I think you said in a letter that in the line
Our prostrate soil bore the awakening ray*⁴⁰

"soil" was an error for "soul". But "soil" is correct; for I am describing the revealing light falling upon the lower levels of the earth, not on the soul. No doubt, the whole thing is symbolic, but the symbol has to be kept in the front and the thing symbolised has to be concealed or only peep out from behind, it cannot come openly into the front and push aside

[39] P. 4. The question was: I notice that you have changed "twixt" to "between" when substituting "link" for "step" in the line,

Air was a vibrant step twixt earth and heaven.

Is it merely because twelve lines earlier "twixt" has been used ?

[40] P. 5

the symbol.

—1946

* * *

The former pitch⁴¹ continues, as far as I can see, up to Light, then it begins to come down to an intuitivised Higher Mind in order to suit the change of the subject, but it is only occasionally that it is pure Higher Mind — a mixture of the intuitive or illumined is usually there except when some truth has to be stated to the philosophic intelligence in as precise a manner as possible.

—1936

* * *

[“It's passive flower of love and doom it gave”.] Good Heavens! how did Gandhi come in there? Passion-flower, sir — passion, not passive.⁴²

—1936

* * *

*Draped in the leaves' vivid emerald monotone.*⁴³

Five [feet], the first being taken as a dactyl. A little gambol like that must be occasionally allowed in an otherwise correct metrical performance.

—1936

[41] The question referred to the whole shorter and somewhat different 1936 version of the opening of Savitri and sought to compare the planes of two passages concerned solely with the Dawn, in the first of which a direct luminosity was discerned and in the second a shift to the Higher Mind. Sri Aurobindo's answer is quoted because it seems applicable in general where-ever in Savitri the Higher Mind comes into play.

[42] P. 7

[43] P. 13

* * *

Miltonism? Surely not. The Miltonic has a statelier more spreading rhythm and a less direct more loftily arranged language. Miltonically I should have written not

*The Gods above and Nature sole below
Were the spectators of that mighty strife⁴⁴*

but

*Only the Sons of Heaven and that executive
She Watched the arbitrament of the high dispute.*

—1936

* * *

Never a rarer creature bore his shaft.⁴⁵

Yes, like Shakespeare's

*...rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge.*

Mine has only three sonant r's, the others being inaudible — Shakespeare pours himself in a close space.

—1936

* * *

[44] P. 13

[45] P. 14. The question asked was: Is the r-effect deliberate?

*All in her pointed to a nobler kind.*⁴⁶

It is a "connecting" line which prepares for what follows. It is sometimes good technique, as I think, to intersperse lines like that (provided they do not fall below standard), so as to give the intellect the foothold of a clear unadorned statement of the gist of what is coming, before taking a higher flight. This is of course a technique for long poems and long descriptions, not for shorter things or lyrical writing.

—1936

* * *

I refuse entirely to admit that that is poor poetry. It is not only just the line that is needed to introduce what follows but it is very good poetry with the strength and pointed directness, not intellectualised like Pope's, but intuitive, which we often find in the Elizabethans, for instance in Marlowe supporting adequately and often more than adequately his "mighty lines". But the image must be understood, as it was intended, in its concrete sense and not as a vague rhetorical phrase substituted for a plainer wording, — it shows Savitri as the forerunner or first creator of a new race. All poets have lines which are bare and direct statements and meant to be that in order to carry their full force; but to what category their simplicity belongs or whether a line is only passable or more than that depends on various circumstances. Shakespeare's

*To be or not to be, that is the question*⁴⁷

introduces powerfully one of the most famous of all soliloquies and it comes in with a great dramatic force, but in itself it is a bare statement and some might say that it would not be otherwise written in prose and is only saved by the metrical rhythm. The same might be said of the well-known passage in Keats which I have already quoted:

[46] P. 14

[47] Hamlet III.i

*Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty — that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.*

The same might be said of Milton's famous line,

Fall'n Cherub! to be weak is miserable.⁴⁸

But obviously in all these lines there is not only a concentrated force, power or greatness of the thought, but also a concentration of intense poetic feeling which makes any criticism impossible. Then take Milton's lines,

*Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?⁴⁹*

It might be said that the first line has nothing to distinguish it and is merely passable or only saved by the charm of what follows; but there is a beauty of rhythm and a bhava or feeling brought in by the rhythm which makes the line beautiful in itself and not merely passable. If there is not some saving grace like that then the danger of laxity may become possible. I do not think there is much in Savitri which is of that kind. But I can perfectly understand your anxiety that all should be lifted to or towards at least the minimum Overhead level or so near as to be touched by its influence or at the very least a good substitute for it. I do not know whether that is always possible in so long a poem as Savitri dealing with so many various heights and degrees and so much varying substance of thought and feeling and descriptive matter and narrative. But that has been my general aim through-out and it is the reason why I have made so many successive drafts and continual alterations till I felt

[48] Paradise Lost. I,157

[49] Lycidas, 67-69

that I had got the thing intended by the higher inspiration in every line and passage. It is also why I keep myself open to every suggestion from a sympathetic and understanding quarter and weigh it well, rejecting only after due consideration and accepting when I see it to be well-founded. But for that the critic must be one who has seen and felt what is in the thing written, not like your friend who has not seen anything and understood only the word surface and not even always that; he must be open to this kind of poetry, able to see the spiritual vision it conveys, capable too of feeling the Overhead touch when it comes, — the fit reader.

—1947

* * *

*Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflew the ways of Thought to unborn things.
Ardent was her self-poised unstumbling will;
Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond.
Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
Even in earth-stuff and their intense delight
Poured a supernal beauty on metfs lives.
The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell:
Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air
Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath*

*Spiritual that can make all things divine.
For even her gulfs were secracies of light.
At once she was the stillness and the word,
A continent of self-diffusing peace
As ocean of untrembling virgin fire.
In her he met a vastness like his own,
His high warm subtle ether he refound
And moved in her as in his natural home.*

This passage⁵⁰ is, I believe, what I might call the Overmind Intuition at work expressing itself in something like its own rhythm and language. It is difficult to say about one's own poetry, but I think I have succeeded here and in some passages later on in catching that very difficult note; in separate lines or briefer passages (i.e. a few lines at a time) I think it comes in not unoften.⁵¹

—1936

* * *

I am unable to accept the alterations you suggest⁵² because they are romantically decorative and do not convey any impression of directness and reality which is necessary in this style of writing. A "sapphire sky" is too obvious and common and has no significance in connection with the word "magnanimity" or its idea and "boundless" is somewhat

[50] This description of Savitri in whom the God of Love found "his perfect shrine" was subsequently expanded from its original 31 lines of the 1936 version to 51 (pp. 14-16).

[51] The statement was in reply to the question: "Are not these lines which I regard as the ne plus ultra in world-poetry a snatch of the sheer Overmind?" Considering Sri Aurobindo's remark in 1946 about his attitude ten years earlier — "At that time I hesitated to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writing as belonging to this order" — and considering also that several lines of other poets which he had hesitated about were later adjudged by him to be from the Overmind, it seems certain that this passage which he had ascribed to the Overmind Intuition, a plane defined by him as not Overmind itself but an intermediate level, would have been traced by him to the supreme source if he had been privately asked about it again.

meaningless and inapt when applied to sky. The same objections apply to both "opulence" and "amplitude"; but apart from that they have only a rhetorical value and are not the right word for what I want to say. Your "life's wounded wings of dream" and "the wounded wings of life" have also a very pronounced note of romanticism and do not agree with the strong reality of things stressed everywhere in this passage. In the poem I dwell often upon the idea of life as a dream, but here it would bring in a false note. It does not seem to me that magnanimity and greatness are the same thing or that this can be called a repetition. I myself see no objection to "heaven" and "haven"; it is not as if they were in successive lines; they are divided by two lines and it is surely an excessively meticulous ear that can take their similarity of sound at this distance as an offence. Most of your other objections hang upon your over scrupulous law against repetitions....! consider that this law has no value in the technique of a mystic poem of this kind and that repetition of a certain kind can be even part of the technique; for instance, I see no objection to "sea" being repeated in a different context in the same passage or to the image of the ocean being resorted to in a third connection. I cannot see that the power and force or inevitability of these lines is at all diminished in their own context by their relative proximity or that that proximity makes each less inevitable in its place.

Then about the image about the bird and the bosom I understand what you mean, but it rests upon the idea that the whole passage must be kept at the same transcendental level. It is true that all the rest gives the transcendental values in the composition of Savitri's being, while here there is a departure to show how this transcendental greatness contacts the psychic demand of human nature in its weakness and

[52] The alterations were suggested with reference to an additional passage between lines 20 and 21 in the description of Savitri as originally written in 1936. The passage was more or less the same as at present on p. 15, between lines 15 and 34 there, except that after line 21 and before line 28 stood the following:

*As to a sheltering bosom a stricken bird
Escapes with tired wings from a world of storms,
In a safe haven of splendid soft repose
One could restore life's wounded happiness,
Recover the lost habit of delight, ...*

responds to it and acts upon it. That was the purpose of the new passage and it is difficult to accomplish it without bringing in a normal psychic instead of a transcendental tone. The image of the bird and the bosom is obviously not new and original, it images a common demand of the human heart and does it by employing a physical and emotional figure so as to give it a vivid directness in its own kind. This passage was introduced because it brought in something in Savitri's relation with the human world which seemed to me a necessary part of a complete psychological description of her. If it had to be altered, — which would be only if the descent to the psychic level really spoils the consistent integrality of the description and lowers the height of the poetry, — I would have to find something equal and better, and just now I do not find any such satisfying alteration.

As for the line, about the strength and silence of the Gods,

[The strength, the silence of the gods were hers⁵³]

that has a similar motive of completeness. The line about the "stillness" and the "word"

[At once she was the stillness and the word,]

give us the transcendental element in Savitri, for the Divine Savitri is the word that rises from the transcendental stillness; the next two lines

*[A continent of self-diffusing peace,
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire]*

render that element into the poise of the spiritual consciousness; this last line brings the same thing down to the outward character and temperament in life. A union of strength and silence is insisted upon in this poem as one of the most prominent characteristics of Savitri and I have dwelt on it elsewhere, but it had to be brought in here also if this

description other was to be complete. I do not find that this line lacks poetry or power; if I did, I would alter it.

—1946

* * *

I doubt whether I shall have the courage to throw out again the stricken and "too explicit" bird into the cold and storm outside; at most I might change that one line, the first, and make it stronger. I confess I fail to see what is so objectionable in its explicitness; usually, according to my idea, it is only things that are in themselves vague that have to be kept vague. There is plenty of room for the implicit and suggestive, but I do not see the necessity for that where one has to bring home a physical image.

—1946

* * *

I have altered the bird passage and the repetition of "delight"⁵⁴ at the end of a line; the new version runs -

*As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness,
Feel her bright nature's glorious ambiance,
And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule.*

—1946

* * *

[54] An earlier line, not far from the one ending with the word "delight" in the first version of the Bird passage, had been pointed out as ending with the same word -

Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight...

The suggestion you make about the "soul" and the "bird" may have a slight justification, but I do not think it is fatal to the passage.⁵⁵ On the other hand there is a strong objection to the alteration you propose; it is that the image of the soul escaping from a world of storms would be impaired if it were only a physical bird that was escaping: a "world of storms" is too big an expression in relation to the smallness of the bird, it is only with the soul especially mentioned or else suggested and the "bird" subordinately there as a comparison that it fits perfectly well and gets its full value.

The word "one" which takes up the image of the "bird" has a more general application than the "soul" and is not quite identical with it; it means anyone who has lost happiness and is in need of spiritual comfort and revival. It is as if one said: "as might a soul like a hunted bird take refuge from the world in the peace of the Infinite and feel that as its own remembered home, so could one take refuge in her as in a haven of safety and like the tired bird reconstitute one's strength so as to face the world once more."

—1947

* * *

My remarks about the Bird passage are written from the point of view of the change made and the new character and atmosphere it gives: I think the old passage was right enough in its own atmosphere, but not so good as what has replaced it: the alteration you suggest may be as good as that, but the objections to it are valid from the new viewpoint.

—1947

* * *

As to the sixfold repetition of the indefinite article "a" in this passage, one should no doubt make it a general rule to avoid any such excessive

[55] The suggestion was: "Although your new version carries a subtle multiform image more in tune, in my opinion, with the general vision of the rest of the description of Savitri, 'one' who is himself a soul is compared to 'a soul' acting like a bird taking shelter, as if to say: 'A soul who is doing so-and-so is like a soul doing something similar' — a comparison which perhaps brings in some loss of surprise and revelation."

repetition, but all rules have their exception and it might be phrased like this, "Except when some effect has to be produced which the repetition would serve or for which it is necessary." Here I feel that it does serve subtly such an effect; I have used the repetition of this "a" very frequently in the poem with a recurrence at the beginning of each successive line in order to produce an accumulative effect of multiple characteristics or a grouping of associated things or ideas or other similar massings.

—1947

* * *

*Almost they saw who lived within her light
Her playmate in the semipternal spheres
Descended from its unattainable realms
In her attracting advent's luminous wake,
The white-fire dragon bird of endless bliss
Drifting with burning wings above her days.⁵⁶*

Yes; the purpose is to create a large luminous trailing repetitive movement like the flight of the Bird with its dragon tail of white fire.

—1936

* * *

All birds of that region are relatives.⁵⁷ But this is the bird of eternal Ananda, while the Hippogriff is the divinised Thought and the Bird of Fire is the Agni-bird, psychic and tapas. All that however is to mentalize too much and mentalising always takes most of the life out of spiritual things. That is why I say it can be seen but nothing said about it.

[56] P. 16. The question was: "Is an accumulating grandiose effect intended by the repetition of adjective-and-noun in four consecutive line-endings?"

[57] The question was: "In the mystical region is the dragon bird any relation of your Bird of Fire with 'gold-white wings' our your Hippogriff with 'face lustered, pale-blue lined'? And why do you write: 'What to say about him? One can only see'?"

* * *

*But joy cannot endure until the end.
There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note.*⁵⁸

I do not think if is the poetic intelligence any more than Virgil's *Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*⁵⁹, which I think to be the Higher Mind coming through to the psychic and blending with it. So also his *O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.*⁶⁰

Here it may be the intuitive inner mind with the psychic fused together.

—1936

* * *

*One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.*⁶¹

[58] Pp. 16-17. The question was: "Are these lines the poetic intelligence at its deepest, say, like a mixture of Sophocles and Virgil? They may be the pure or the intuitivised higher mind."

[59] Aeneid, I.462. In 1946 Sri Aurobindo put the source of this line's inspiration much higher than he does here. See p.810.

[60] Aeneid, I.199

[61] The context of the line on p.17 is

*One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,
The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.*

Love? It is not Love who meets the burdened great and governs the fate of men! Nor is it Pain. Time also does not do these things — it only provides the field and movement of events. If I had wanted to give a name, I would have done it, but it has purposely to be left nameless because it is indefinable. He may use Love or Pain or Time or any of these powers but is not any of them. You can call him the Master of the Evolution, if you like.

—1936

* * *

The question was: "Who is 'One' here? Is it Love, the godhead mentioned before? If not, does this 'dubious godhead with his torch of pain' correspond to 'the image white and high of god-like Pain' spoken of a little earlier? Or is it Time whose 'snare' occurs in the last line of the preceding passage?"

*Her spirit refused struck from the starry list
To quench in dull despair the God-given light.*

I omitted any punctuation⁶² because it is a compressed construction meant to signify refused to be struck from the starry list and quenched in dull despair etc, — the quenching being the act of consent that would make effective the sentence of being struck from the starry list.

—1936

* * *

[62] A question was put to Sri Aurobindo: "Any punctuation missing? Perhaps a dash after 'refused' as well as after 'list'?" In the final version, (p.19) these lines have been expanded to:

*Her spirit refused to hug the common soil,
Or, finding all life's golden meanings robbed,
Compound with earth, struck from the starry list,
Or quench with black despair the God-given light.*

*This truth broke in in a triumph of fire.*⁶³

The line you object to on account of forced rhythm "in a triumph of fire" has not been so arranged through negligence. It was very deliberately done and deliberately maintained. If it were altered the whole effect of rhythmic meaning and suggestion which I intended would be lost and the alterations you suggest would make a good line perhaps but with an ordinary and inexpressive rhythm. Obviously this is not a "natural rhythm", but there is no objection to its being forced when it is a forcible and violent action that has to be suggested. The rhythm cannot be called artificial, for that would mean something not true and genuine or significant but only patched up and insincere: the rhythm here is a turn of art and not a manufacture. The scansion is iamb, reversed spondee, pyrrhic, trochee, iamb. By reversed spondee I mean a foot with the first syllable long and highly stressed and the second stressed but short or with a less heavy ictus. In the ordinary spondee the greater ictus is on the second syllable while there are equal spondees with two heavy stresses, e.g. "vast space" or in such a line as

He has seized life in his restless hands.

In the first part of the line the rhythm is appropriate to the violent breaking in of the truth while in the second half it expresses a high exultation and exaltation in the inrush. This is brought out by the two long and highly stressed vowels in the first syllable of "triumph" and in the word "fire" (which in the elocution of the line have to be given their full force), coming after a pyrrhic with two short syllables between them. If one slurs over the slightly weighted short syllable in "triumph" where the concluding consonants exercise a certain check and delay in the voice, one could turn this half line into a very clumsy double anapaest, the first a glide and the second a stumble; this would be bad elocution and contrary to the natural movement of the words.

—1946

* * *

Certainly, Milton in the passages you quote⁶⁴ had a rhythmical effect in mind; he was much too careful and conscientious a metrist and much too consummate a master of rhythm to do anything carelessly or without good reason. If he found his inspiration stumbling or becoming slipshod in its rhythmical effects, he would have corrected it.

—1947

* * *

In the two passages ending with the same word "alone"⁶⁵ I think there is sufficient space between them and neither ear nor mind need be offended. The word "sole" would flatten the line⁶⁶ too much and the word "aloof" would here have no atmosphere and it would not express the idea. It is not distance and aloofness that has to be stressed but unaccompanied solitude.

[64] *And they bowed down to the Gods of their wives...
Burned after them to the bottomless pit...*

[65] P. 32

*There knowing herself by her own termless self,
Wisdom supernal, wordless, absolute
Sat unaccompanied in the eternal Calm,
All-seeing, motionless, sovereign and alone.*

With a gap of 61 lines occurs the passage (pp. 33-34)

*The superconscious realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.*

The point raised was that, though "alone" was very fine in both cases, the occurrence of both in the context of a particular single whole of spiritual experience might slightly blunt for the reader the revelatory edge in the second case.

[66] *All-seeing, motionless, sovereign and alone.*

* * *

*Beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities.*⁶⁷

"Spirit' instead of 'spirit's' " might mean something else, the word "spirit" as an epithet is ambiguous—it might be spiritistic and not spiritual.

—1936

* * *

The calm immensities of spirit Space.

The golden plateaus of immortal Fire

The moon-flame oceans of unfallen bliss

"Immensities" was the proper word because it helped to give the whole soul-scape of those worlds — the immensities of space, the plateaus of fire, the oceans of bliss. "Infinities" could just replace it, but now something has to be sacrificed. The only thing I can think of now is

*The calm immunity of spirit Space...*⁶⁸

[67] P. 44. It may be noted that Sri Aurobindo's comment here is related only to a certain type of context, as is evident from the line apropos of which the very next comment is made.

[68] Owing to the close occurrence of the word "immensities" in another line, "immunity" was here used. At present the original word has been restored in a new context (p.47) and the line comes at the end instead of at the beginning of the sequence:

*Still regions of imperishable Light,
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
And calm immensities of spirit Space.*

"Immunities" in the plural is much feebler and philosophically abstract — one begins to think of things like "quantities" — naturally it suggested itself to me as keeping up the plural sequence but it grated on the sense of spiritual objective reality and I had to reject it at once. The calm immunity was a thing I could at once feel. With immunities the mind has to ask: "Well, what are they?"

—1937

* * *

*And of the Timeless the still brooding face,
And the creative eye of Eternity.⁶⁹*

As to the exact metrical identity in the first half of the two lines, it was certainly intentional, if by intention is meant not a manufacture by my personal mind but the spontaneous deliberateness of the inspiration which gave the lines to me and an acceptance in the receiving mind. The first halves of the two lines are metrically identical closely associating together the two things seen as of the same order, the still Timeless and the dynamic creative Eternity both of them together originating the manifest world: the latter halves of the lines diverge altogether, one into the slow massiveness of the "still brooding face", with its strong close, the other into the combination of two high and emphatic syllables with an indeterminate run of short syllables between and after, allowing the line to drop away into some unuttered endlessness rather than cease. In this rhythmical significance I can see no weakness.

—1946

* * *

As if the original Ukase still held back.

I have accented on the first syllable as I have done often with words like

"occult", "divine". It is a Russian word and foreign words in English tend often to get their original accent shifted as far backward as possible. I have heard many do that with "ukase".⁷⁰

—1937

* * *

*Resiled from poor assent to Nature's terms.*⁷¹

It ["resiled"] is a perfectly good English word, meaning originally to leap back, rebound (like an elastic) — so to draw back from, recoil, retreat (in military language it means to fall back from a position gained or to one's original position); but it is specially used for withdrawing from a contract, agreement, previous statement. It is therefore quite the just word here. Human nature has assented to Nature's terms and been kept by her to them, but now Aswapathy resiles from the contract and the assent to it made by humanity to which he belonged. Resiled, resilient, resilience are all good words and in use.

—1937

* * *

*The incertitude of man's proud confident thought.*⁷²

"Uncertainty" would mean that the thought was confident but

[70] This note of Sri Aurobindo's has been entered here for its intrinsic interest. The line in question runs at present (p. 75):

He read the original ukase kept back

[71] P. 77. Sri Aurobindo's note apropos of this line was written when the line occurred in a context no other phrases elaborating its sense. At present a further line follows:

The harsh contract spurned and the diminished lease

[72] P. 78

uncertain of itself, which would be a contradiction. "Incertitude" means that its truth is uncertain in spite of its proud confidence in itself,

—1936

* * *

*Aware of his occult omnipotent source,
Allured by the omniscient Ecstasy,
He felt the invasion and the nameless joy.⁷³*

I certainly won't have "attracted" [in place of "allured"] — there is an enormous difference between the force of the two words and surely "attracted by the Ecstasy" would take away all my ecstasy in the line— nothing so tepid can be admitted. Neither do I want "thrill" [in place of "joy"] which gives a false colour — precisely it would mean that the ecstasy was already touching him with its intensity which is far from intention.

Your statement that "joy" is just another word for "ecstasy" is surprising. "Comfort", "pleasure", "joy", "bliss", "rapture", "ecstasy" would then be all equal and exactly synonymous terms and all distinction of shades and colours or words would disappear from literature. As well say that "flashlight" is just another word for "lightning" — or that glow,

[73] These lines, to a comment on which Sri Aurobindo has replied, are the 1937 version. At present (p.79) the third line joins up with a passage immediately preceding the other two, thus:

*A force came down into his mortal limbs,
A current from eternal seas of Bliss;
He felt the invasion and the nameless joy.*

And the other two begin a new passage which continues after them:

*A living centre of the Illimitable
Widened to equate with the world's circumference,
He turned to his immense spiritual fate.*

But Sri Aurobindo's remarks do not lose their essential pertinence and force or their larger general implications.

gleam, glitter, sheen, blaze are all equivalents which can be employed indifferently in the same place. One can feel allured to the supreme omniscient Ecstasy and feel a nameless joy touching one without that joy becoming itself the supreme Ecstasy. I see no loss of expressiveness by the joy coming in as a vague nameless hint of the immeasurable superior Ecstasy.

—1937

* * *

That ["to blend and blur shades owing to technical exigencies"] might be all right for mental poetry — it won't do for what I am trying to create — in that, one word won't do for the other. Even in mental poetry I consider it an inferior method. "Gleam" and "glow" are two quite different things and the poet who uses them indifferently has constantly got his eye upon words rather than upon the object.

—1937

* * *

*And driven by a pointing hand of Light
Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes.⁷⁴*

I take upon myself the right to coin new words. "Immensitudes" is not any more fantastic than "infinitudes" to pair "infinity".

["Would you also use 'eternitudes' ?"] Not likely! I would think of the French eternuer and sneeze.

—1936

* * *

The body and the life no more were all.

[74] P. 80. The word "immensitude" occurs also on pp. 237 and 524;

*A little gift comes from the Immensitudes...
In their immensitude signing infinity...*

I still consider the line a very good one and it did perfectly express what I wanted to say. I don't see how I could have said it otherwise without diminishing or exaggerating the significance. As for "baldness", an occasionally bare and straightforward line without any trailing of luminous robes is not an improper element. E.g.

*This was the day when Satyavan must die,*⁷⁵

which I would not remove from its position even if you were to give me the crown and income of the Kavi Samrat for doing it. If I have changed here, it is because the alteration all round it made the line no longer in harmony with its immediate environment.

Not at all ["bareness for bareness's sake"]. It was bareness for expression's sake, which is a different matter... It was "juste1" for expressing what I had to say then in a certain context. The context being entirely changed in its sense, bearing and atmosphere, it was no longer juste in that place. Its being an interloper in a new house does not show that it was an interloper in an old one. The colours and the spaces being heightened and widened this tint which was appropriate and needed in the old design could not remain in the new one. These things are a question of design; a line has to be seen not only in its own separate value but with a view to its just place in the whole.⁷⁶

—1937

[75] P. 10

[76] The passage originally stood:

*A cosmic vision looked at things through light:
Atomic now the shapes that loomed so large.
Illusion lost her aggrandising lens:
The body and the life no more were all,
The mind itself was only an outer court,
His soul the tongue of an unmeasured fire.*

The passage then became;

* * *

As to the title of the three cantos about the Yoga of the King,⁷⁷ I intended the repetition of the word "Yoga" to bring out and emphasise the fact that this part of Aswapathy's spiritual development consisted of two Yogic movements, one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power. The omission which you suggest would destroy this significance and leave only something more abstract. In the second of these three cantos there is a pause between the two movements and a description of the secret know-ledge to which he is led and of which the results are described in the last canto, but there is no description of the Yoga itself or of the steps by which this knowledge came. That is only indicated, not narrated; so, to bring in "The Yoga of the King" as the title of this canto would not be very apposite. Aswapathy's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the Second Book: but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine

A cosmic vision looked at things through light:
Illusion lost her aggrandising lens,
Atomic were her shapes that loomed so large
And from her failing hand her measures fell:
In the enormous spaces of the Self.
The living form seemed now a wandering shell;
Earth was one room in his million-mansioned house,
The mind a many-frescoed outer court,
His soul the tongue of an unmeasured fire.

At present some of the lines have changed places in the poem and the passage as it stands on page 82 is not quite the same.

[77] Book I. Canto 3: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release.
Canto 4: The Secret Knowledge.
Canto 5: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness.

Mother.

—1946

* * *

*Largior hie campos aether et lumine vestit
Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.⁷⁸*

I don't know ["what plane is spoken of by Virgil"], but purple is a light of the Vital. It may have been one of the vital heavens he was thinking of. The ancients saw the vital heavens as the highest and most of the religions also have done the same. I have used the suggestion of Virgil to insert a needed line.

And griefless countries under purple suns.⁷⁹

—1936

* * *

*Here too the gracious mighty Angel poured
Her splendour and her swiftness and her thrill,
Hoping to fill this new fair world with her joy.⁸⁰*

No, that ["pours" instead of "poured"] would take away all meaning from "new fair world" — it is the attempted conquest of earth by life when earth had been created — a past event though still continuing in its sequel and result.

—1936

[78] "Here an ampler ether spreads over the plains and clothes them in purple light, and they have a sun of their own and their own stars."

[79] P. 120

[80] An earlier version of P. 130. lines 4-6

* * *

The Mask is mentioned not twice but four times in this opening passage⁸¹ and it is purposely done to keep up the central connection of the idea running through the whole. The ambassadors wear this grey Mask, so your criticism cannot stand since there is no separate mask coming as part of a new idea but a very pointed return to the principal note indicating the identity of the influence throughout. It is not a random recurrence but a purposeful touch carrying a psychological meaning.

—1948

* * *

*And overcast with error, grief and pain
The soul's native will for truth and joy and light.⁸²*

The 'two trios are not intended to be exactly correspondent; "joy" answers to both "grief" and "pain" while "light" is an addition in the second trio indicating the conditions for "truth" and "joy".

—1948

* * *

All evil starts from that ambiguous face.

Here again the same word "face" occurs a second time at the end of a line⁸³ but it belongs to a new section and a new turn of ideas. I am not

[81] Pp. 202-203

[82] P. 203

[83] P. 205. line 21 The first occurrence is ten lines earlier

All beauty ended in an aging face.

attracted by your suggestion; the word "mien" here is an obvious literary substitution and not part of a straight and positive seeing: as such it sounds deplorably weak. The only thing would be to change the image, as for instance,

All evil creeps from that ambiguous source.

But this is comparatively weak. I prefer to keep the "face" and insert a line before it so as to increase a little the distance between the two faces:

Its breath is a subtle poison in men's hearts.

—1948

* * *

As to the two lines with "no man's land"⁸⁴ there can be no capital in the first line because there it is a description while the capital is needed in the other line, because the phrase has acquired there the force of a name or appellation. I am not sure about the hyphen; it could be put but the no hyphen might be better as it suggests that no one in particular has as yet got possession.

—1948

* * *

The cliche you object to...'he quoted Scripture and Law' was put in there with fell purpose and was necessary for the effect I wanted to produce, the more direct its commonplace the better. However, I defer to your objection and have altered it to

He armed untruth with Scripture and the Law.⁸⁵

[84] Pp. 206, 211

[85] P. 207

I don't remember seeing the sentence about

Agreeing on the right to disagree

anywhere in a newspaper or in any book either; colloquial it is and perhaps for that reason only out of harmony in this passage. So I substitute

*Only they agreed to differ in Evil's paths.*⁸⁶

—1946

* * *

Often a familiar visage studying...

His vision warned by the spirit's inward eye

*Discovered suddenly Hell's trade-mark there.*⁸⁷

It is a reference to the beings met in the vital world, that seem like human beings but, if one looks closely, they are seen to be Hostiles; often assuming the appearance of a familiar face they try to tempt or attack by surprise, and betray the stamp of their origin — there is also a hint that on earth too they take up human bodies or possess them for their own purpose.

—1936

* * *

*Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible.*⁸⁸

[86] P. 208

[87] P. 215

[88] P. 221

Neither of your scensions can stand. The best way will be to spell "fallen" "fall'n" as is occasionally done and treat "bliss into" as a dactyl.

—1948

* * *

*Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible,
Coiled back to itself and God's eternal joy
Through a false poignant figure of grief and pain
Still dolorously nailed upon a cross
Fixed in the soil of a dumb insentient world
Where birth was a pang and death an agony,
Lest all too soon should change again to bliss.*

This has nothing to do with Christianity or Christ but only with the symbol of the cross used here to represent a seemingly eternal world-pain which appears falsely to replace the eternal bliss. It is not Christ but the world-soul which hangs here.

—1948

* * *

Performed the ritual of her Mysteries.⁸⁹

It is "Mysteries" with capital M and means "mystic symbolic rites" as in the Orphic and Eleusinian "Mysteries". When written with capital M it does not mean secret mysterious things, but has this sense, e.g. a "Mystery play".

—1936

* * *

An evolution from the Inconscient⁹⁰ need not be a painful one if there is no resistance; it can be a deliberately slow and beautiful efflorescence of the Divine. One ought to be able to see how beautiful outward Nature can be and usually is, although it is itself apparently "inconscient" — why should the growth of consciousness in inward Nature be attended by so much ugliness and evil spoiling the beauty of the outward creation? Because of a perversity born from the Ignorance, which came in with Life and increased in Mind — that is the Falsehood, the Evil that was born because of the starkness of the Inconscient's sleep separating its action from the secret luminous Conscience that is all the time within it. But it need not have been so except for the overriding Will of the Supreme which meant that the possibilities of Perversion by inconscience and ignorance should be manifested in order to be eliminated through being given their chance, since all possibility has to manifest somewhere: once it is eliminated the Divine Manifestation in Matter will be greater than it otherwise could be because it will combine all the possibilities involved in this difficult creation and not some of them as in an easier and less strenuous creation might naturally happen.

—1937

* * *

"From beauty to greater beauty, from joy to intenser joy, by a special adjustment of the senses" — yes, that would be the normal course of a divine manifestation, however gradual, in Matter. "Discordant sound and offensive odour" are creations of a disharmony between consciousness and Nature and do not exist in themselves, they would not be present in a liberated and harmonised consciousness for they

[90] The question was in reference to a passage in the 1936 version which in the present one is much enlarged and runs from "It was the gate of a false infinite" to "None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell" (pp. 221-227): "The passage suggests that there was an harmonious original plan of the Overmind Gods for earth's evolution, but that it was spoiled by the intrusion of the Rakshasic worlds. I should, however, have thought that an evolution, arising from the stark inconscious's sleep and the mute void, would hardly be an harmonious plan. The Rakshasas only shield themselves with the covering 'Ignorance', they don't create it. Do you mean that, if they had not interfered, there wouldn't have been resistance and conflict and suffering? How can they be called the artificers of Nature's fall and pain?"

would be foreign to its being, nor would they afflict a rightly developing harmonised soul and Nature. Even the "belching volcano, crashing thunderstorm and whirling typhoon" are in themselves grandiose and beautiful things and only harmful or terrible to a consciousness unable to meet or deal with them or make a pact with the spirits of Wind and Fire. You are assuming that the manifestation from the Inconscient must be what it is now and here and that no other kind of world of Matter was possible, but the harmony of material Nature in itself shows that it need not necessarily be a discordant, evil, furiously perturbed and painful creation — the psychic being if allowed to manifest from the first in Life and Mind and lead the evolution instead of being re-legated behind the veil would have been the principle of a harmony out-flowing; everyone who has felt the psychic at work within him, free from the vital intervention, can at once see that this would be its effect because of its unerring perception, true choice, harmonic action. If it has not been so, it is because the dark Powers have made life a claimant instead of an instrument. The reality of the Hostiles and the nature of their role and trend of their endeavour cannot be doubted by any one who has had his inner vision unsealed and made their unpleasant acquaintance.

—1937

* * *

And the articles of the bound soul's contract.⁹¹

Liberty is very often taken with the last foot nowadays and usually it is just the liberty I have taken here. This liberty I took long ago in my earlier poetry.

—1948

* * *

They wouldn't be heavens if they were not immune⁹² — a heaven with fear in it would be no heaven. The Life-Heavens have an influence on earth and so have the Life-Hells, but it does not follow that they

influence each other in their own domain. Overmind can influence earth, so can the hostile Powers, but it does not follow that hostile Powers can penetrate the Overmind — they can't: they can only spoil what it sends to the earth. Each power of the Divine (life like mind and matter is a power of the Divine) has its own harmony inherent in the purity of its own principle — it is only if it is disturbed or perverted that it produces disorder. That is another reason why the evolution could have been a progressing harmony, not a series of discords through which harmony of a precarious and wounded kind has to be struggled for at each step; for the Divine Principle is there within. Each plane therefore has its heavens; there are the subtle physical heavens, the vital heavens, the mental heavens. If Powers of disharmony got in, they would cease to be heavens.

—1937

* * *

*There Love fulfilled her gold and roseate dreams
And Strength her crowned and mighty reveries.⁹³*

"Gold and roseate dreams" cannot be changed. "Muse" would make it at once artificial. "Dreams" alone is the right word there. "Reveries" also cannot be changed, especially as it is not any particular "reverie" that is meant. Also, "dream" at the beginning of a later line1 departs into another idea and is appropriate in its place; I see no objection to this purposeful repetition. Anyway the line cannot be altered. The only concession I can make to you is to alter the first.⁹⁴

—1948

[92] The question apropos of the canto called "The Paradise of the Life-Gods", pp. 233-37, ran: "Is the plane of the Life-Heavens perfectly immune? Is there no attack at times from the Life-Hells, no visitor from them thrusting in? The Life-Heavens do have an influence on earth, don't they? And as the Life-Hells too have, don't they ever clash in the subtle worlds?... And what exactly is the basis of the vital harmony? On the Overhead planes there is the consciousness of the One everywhere, but that can't happen here."

[93] P. 235

* * *

*All reeled into a world of Kali's dance.*⁹⁵

It is "world", not "whirl". It means "all reeling in a clash and confusion became a world of Kali's dance."

—1948

* * *

*Knowledge was rebuilt from cells of inference
Into a fixed body flasque and perishable.*⁹⁶

"Flasque" is a French word meaning "slack", "loose", "flaccid" etc. I have more than once tried to thrust in a French word like this, for instance, "A harlot empress in a bouge" — somewhat after the manner of Eliot and Ezra Pound.

—1946

* * *

*For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.
A thousand icons they have made of her
And find her in the idols they adore;
But she remains herself and infinite.*⁹⁷

[94] *Adoring blue heaven with their happy dreams.*

This line on the same page 234 ends now with the word "hymn".

[95] P. 255

[96] P. 267

[97] P. 276

"They" means nobody in particular but corresponds to the French "On dit" meaning vaguely "people in general". This is a use permissible in English; for instance, "They say you are not so scrupulous as you should be."

—1948

* * *

"Depths" will not do,⁹⁸ since the meaning is not that it took no part in what came from the depths but did take part in what came from the shallows; the word would be merely a rhetorical nourish and take away the real sense. It would be easy in several ways to avoid the two "it's coming together but the direct force would be lost. I think a comma at "it" and the slight pause it would bring in the reading would be sufficient. For instance, one could Write "no part it took", instead of "it took no part", but the direct force I want would be lost.

—1948

* * *

*Travestied with a fortuitous sovereignty.*⁹⁹

I am unable to follow your criticism. I find nothing pompous or bombastic in the line unless it is the resonance of the word "fortuitous" and the many closely packed "t's that give you the impression. But "fortuitous" cannot be sacrificed as it exactly hits the meaning I want. Also I fail to see what is abstract and especially mental in it. Neither a travesty nor sovereignty are abstract things and the images here are all concrete, as they should be to express the inner vision's sense of concreteness of subtle things. The whole passage is of course about mental movements and mental powers, therefore about what the

[98] P. 283. The reply is to: "Would it be an improvement if one of the two successive 'it's in In the world which sprang from it it took no part is avoided? Why not put something like 'its depths' for the first 'it'?"

intellect sees as abstractions, but the inner vision does not feel them as that. To it mind has a substance and its energies and actions are very real and substantial things. Naturally there is a certain sense of scorn in this passage, for what the Ignorance regards as its sovereignty and positive truth has been exposed by the "sceptic ray" as fortuitous and unreal,

—1948

* * *

*That clasped him in from day and night's pursuit.*¹⁰⁰

I do not realise what you mean by "stickiness", since there are only two hard labials and some nasals; is it that combination which makes you feel sticky, or does the addition of some hard dentals also help? Anyhow, sticky or not, I am unwilling to change anything.

I do not want to put "day's" and "night's"; I find it heavy and unnecessary. It ought to be clear enough to the reader that "day and night" are here one double entity or two hounds in a leash pursuing a common prey.

—1948

* * *

"Lulling" will never do. It is too ornamental and romantic and tender. I have put "slumber" in its place.¹⁰¹

[100] P. 289

[101] P. 294. The suggestion offered to Sri Aurobindo was:

"Your line,

In a stillness of the voices of the world,

is separated by twenty lines from

In the formless force and the still fixity.

* * *

So there is no fault here in 'stillness', but an added poetic quality might come if 'stillness' were avoided and some such word as 'lulling' used, especially as the line before runs:

*A Panergy that harmonised all life.*¹⁰²

I do not think the word "Panergy" depends for its meaning on the word "energies" in a previous line. The "Panergy" suggested is a self-existent total power which may carry the cosmic energies in it and is their cause but is not constituted by them.

—1948

* * *

I have wholly failed to feel the poetic flatness of which you accuse the line

All he had been and all that now he was.

No doubt, the diction is extremely simple, direct and unadorned but that can be said of numberless good lines in poetry and even of some great lines. If there is style, if there is a balanced rhythm (rhyme is not necessary) and a balanced language and significance (for these two elements combined always create a good style), and if the line or the passage in which it occurs has some elevation or profundity or other poetic quality in the idea which it expresses, then there cannot be any flatness nor can any such line or passage be set aside as prosaic.

[102] P. 300 The point raised was: "That 'Panergy' is a fine coinage, but, by following the word 'energies' in the third line before it, does it not become a little bit obvious, losing its mysterious suggestion? I dare say 'energies' helps to make it clear, but is it necessary to pre-prepare it? Will not a better effect be produced by springing it suddenly upon the reader, preparing it only indirectly by using some synonym for 'energies' in the other line?"

* * *

Your new objection to the line,

All he had been and all that now he was,

is somewhat self-contradictory. If a line has a rhythm and expressive turn which makes it poetic, then it must be good poetry; but I suppose what you mean is fine or elevated poetry. I would say that my line is good poetry and is further uplifted by rising towards its subsequent context which gives it its full poetic meaning and suggestion, the evolution of the inner being and the abrupt end or failure of all that had been done unless it could suddenly transcend itself and become something greater. I do not think that this line in its context is merely passable, but I admit that it is less elevated and intense than what precedes or what follows. I do not see how that can be avoided without truncating the thought significance of the whole account by the omission of something necessary to its evolution or else overpitching the expression where it needs to be direct or clear and bare in its lucidity. In any case the emended version — "All he had been and all towards which he grew"¹⁰³ — cures any possibility of the line being merely passable as it raises both the idea and the expression through the vividness of image which makes us feel and not merely think the living evolution in Aswapathy's inner being.

—1946

Part V

You have asked me to comment on your friend X's comments on my poetry and especially on *Savitri*.¹⁰⁴ But, first of all, it is not usual for a poet to criticise the criticisms of his critics though a few perhaps have done so; the poet writes for his own satisfaction, his own delight in poetical creation or to express himself and he leaves his work for the world, and rather for posterity than for the contemporary world, to recognise or to ignore, to judge and value according to its perception or its pleasure. As for the con-temporary world he might be said rather to throw his poem in its face and leave it to resent this treatment as an unpleasant slap, as a contemporary world treated the early poems of Wordsworth and Keats, or to accept it as an abrupt but gratifying attention, which was ordinarily the good fortune of the great poets in ancient Athens and Rome and of poets like Shakespeare and Tennyson in modern times. Posterity does not always confirm the contemporary verdict, very often it reverses it, forgets or depreciates the writer enthroned by contemporary fame, or raises up to a great height work little appreciated or quite ignored in its own time. The only safety for the poet is to go his own way careless of the blows and caresses of the critics; it is not his business to answer them. Then you ask me to right the wrong turn your friend's critical mind has taken; but how is it to be determined what is the right and what is the wrong turn, since a critical judgment depends usually on a personal reaction determined by the critic's temperament or the aesthetic trend in him or by values, rules or canons which are settled for his intellect and agree with the viewpoint from which his mind receives whatever comes to him for judgment; it is that which is right for him though it may seem wrong to a different temperament, aesthetic intellectuality or mental viewpoint. Your friend's judgments, according to his own account of them, seem to be

[104] The critic's comments were made apropos of the article "Sri Aurobindo — A New Age of Mystical Poetry", by K.D. Sethna (Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1946). Passages from *Savitri* appeared in print for the first time in this article, in which a few of Sri Aurobindo's shorter poems were also discussed. The full text of Sri Aurobindo's letter, from which relevant portions are quoted here, is to be found in *On Himself*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 26, pp. 238-63.

determined by a sensitive temperament finely balanced in its own poise but limited in its appreciations, clear and open to some kinds of poetic creation, reserved towards others, against yet others closed and cold or excessively depreciative. This sufficiently explains his very different reactions to the two poems, Descent and Flame-Wind,¹⁰⁵ which he unreservedly admires and to Savitri. However, since you have asked me, I will answer, as between ourselves, in some detail and put forward my own comments on his comments and my own judgments on his judgments. It may be rather long; for if such things are done, they may as well be clearly and thoroughly done. I may also have something to say about the nature and intention of my poem and the technique necessitated by the novelty of the intention and nature.

Let me deal first with some of the details he stresses so as to get them out of the way. His detailed intellectual reasons for his judgments seem to me to be often arbitrary and fastidious, sometimes based on a misunderstanding and therefore invalid or else valid perhaps in other fields but here inapplicable. Take, for instance, his attack upon my use of the prepositional phrase. Here, it seems to me, he has fallen victim to a grammatical obsession and lumped together under the head of the prepositional twist a number of different turns some of which do not belong to that category at all. In the line,¹⁰⁶

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me

there is no such twist; for I did not mean at all "on my calm summits", but intended straightforwardly to convey the natural, simple meaning of the word. If I write "the fields of beauty" or "walking on the paths of truth" I do not expect to be supposed to mean "in beautiful fields" or "in truthful paths"; it is the same with "summits of calm", I mean "summits of calm" and nothing else; it is a phrase like "He rose to high peaks of

[105] Collected Poems, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 5, pp 563, 559 The poems and translations referred to in this letter were previously published in Collected Poems and Plays (1942) Vol II

[106] Not in Savitri but in Trance of Waiting (Collected Poems, p 558)

vision" or "He took his station on the highest summits of knowledge". The calm is the calm of the highest spiritual consciousness to which the soul has ascended, making those summits its own and looking down from their highest heights on all below: in spiritual experience, in the occult vision or feeling that accompanies it, this calm is not felt as an abstract quality or a mental condition but as something concrete and massive, a self-existent reality to which one reaches, so that the soul standing on its peak is rather a tangible fact of experience than a poetical image. Then there is the phrase "A face of rapturous calm"¹⁰⁷ : he seems to think it is a mere trick of language, a substitution of a prepositional phrase for an epithet, as if I had intended to say "a raptuously calm face" and I said instead "a face of rapturous calm" in order to get an illegitimate and meaningless rhetorical effect. I meant nothing of the kind, nothing so tame and poor and scanty in sense: I meant a face which was an expression or rather a living image of the rapturous calm of the supreme and infinite consciousness, — it is indeed so that it can well be "Infinity's centre". The face of the liberated Buddha as presented to us by Indian art is such an expression or image of the calm of Nirvana and could, I think, be quite legitimately described as a face of Nirvanic calm, and that would be an apt and live phrase and not an ugly artifice or twist of rhetoric. It should be remembered that the calm of Nirvana or the calm of the supreme Consciousness is to spiritual experience something self-existent, impersonal and eternal and not dependent on the person — or the face — which manifests it. In these two passages I take then the liberty to regard X's criticism as erroneous at its base and therefore invalid and inadmissible.

Then there are the lines from the Songs of the Sea:

*The rains of deluge flee, a storm-tossed shade,
Over thy breast of gloom...*¹⁰⁸

[107] Savitri, p. 4:

*Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm
Parted the eternal lids that open heaven.*

"Thy breast of gloom" is not used here as a mere rhetorical and meaning-less variation of "thy gloomy breast"; it might have been more easily taken as that if it had been a human breast, though even then, it could have been entirely defensible in a fitting context; but it is the breast of the sea, an image for a vast expanse supporting and reflecting or subject to the moods or movements of the air and the sky. It is intended, in describing the passage of the rains of deluge over the breast of the sea, to present a picture of a storm-tossed shade crossing a vast gloom: it is the gloom that has to be stressed and made the predominant idea and the breast or expanse is only its support and not the main thing: this could not have been suggested by merely writing "thy gloomy breast". A prepositional phrase need not be merely an artificial twist replacing an adjective; for instance, "a world of gloom and terror" means something more than "a gloomy and terrible world", it brings forward the gloom and terror as the very nature and constitution, the whole content of the world and not merely an attribute. So also if one wrote "Him too wilt thou throw to thy sword of sharpness" or "cast into thy pits of horror", would it merely mean "thy sharp sword" and "thy horrible pits" ? and would not the sharpness and the horror rather indicate or represent formidable powers of which the sword is the instrument and the pits the habitation or lair? That would be rhetoric but it would be a rhetoric not meaningless but having in it meaning and power. Rhetoric is a word with which we can batter something we do not like; but rhetoric of one kind or another has been always a great part of the world's best literature; Demosthenes, Cicero, Bossuet and Burke are rhetoricians, but their work ranks with the greatest prose styles that have been left to us. In poetry the accusation of rhetoric might be brought against such lines as Keats'

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down...¹⁰⁹*

[108] Translations, Sri Aurobindos Birth Centenary Library Vol 8, pp 366

[109] Ode to a Nightingale

To conclude, there is "the swords of sheen" in the translation of Bande Mataram.¹¹⁰ That might be more open to the critic's stricture, for the expression can be used and perhaps has been used in verse as merely equivalent to "shining swords"; but for any one with an alert imagination it can mean in certain contexts something more than that, swords that emit brilliance and seem to be made of light. X says that to use this turn in any other than an adjectival sense is unidiomatic, but he admits that there need be no objection provided that it creates a sense of beauty, but he finds no beauty in any of these passages. But the beauty can be perceived only if the other sense is seen, and even then we come back to the question of personal reaction; you and other readers may feel beauty where he finds none. I do not myself share his sensitive abhorrence of this prepositional phrase; it may be of course because there are coarser rhetorical threads in my literary taste. I would not, for instance, shrink from a sentence like this in a sort of free verse, "Where is thy wall of safety? Where is thy arm of strength? Whither has fled thy vanished face of glory?" Rhetoric of course, but it has in it an element which can be attractive, and it seems to me to bring in a more vivid note and mean more than "thy strong arm" or "thy glorious face" or than "the strength of thy arm" and "the glory of thy face".

I come next to the critic's trenchant attack on that passage in my symbolic vision of Night and Dawn in which there is recorded the conscious adoration of Nature when it feels the passage of the omniscient Goddess of eternal Light. Trenchant, but with what seems to me a false edge; or else if it is a sword of Damascus that would cleave the strongest material mass of iron he is using it to cut through subtle air, the air closes behind his passage and remains unsevered. He finds here only poor and false poetry, unoriginal in imagery and void of true wording and true vision, but that is again a matter of personal reaction and everyone has a right to his own, you to yours as he to his. I was not seeking for originality but for truth and the effective poetical expression of my vision. He finds no vision there, and that may be because I could not express myself with any power; but it may also be because of his temperamental failure to feel and see what I felt and saw. I can only

[110] Translations, p. 310

answer to the intellectual reasonings and judgments which turned up in him when he tried to find the causes of his reaction. These seem to me to be either fastidious and unsound or founded on a mistake of comprehension and therefore invalid or else inapplicable to this kind of poetry. His main charge is that there is a violent and altogether illegitimate transference of epithet in the expression "the wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind".¹¹¹ A transference of epithet is not necessarily illegitimate, especially if it expresses something that is true or necessary to convey a sound feeling and vision of things: for instance, if one writes in an Ovidian account of the *denouement* of a lovers' quarrel

*In spite of a reluctant sullen heart
My willing feet were driven to thy door,*

it might be said that it was something in the mind that was willing and the ascription of an emotion or state of mind to the feet is an illegitimate transfer of epithet; but the lines express a conflict of the members, the mind reluctant, the body obeying the force of the desire that moves it and the use of the epithet is therefore perfectly true and legitimate. But here no such defence is necessary because there is no transfer of epithets. The critic thinks that I imagined the wind as having a winged body and then took away the wings from its shoulders and clapped them on to its voice or hymn which could have no body. But I did nothing of the kind; I am not bound to give wings to the wind. In an occult vision the breath, sound, movement by which we physically know of a wind is not its real being but only the physical manifestation of the wind-god or the spirit of the air, as in the Veda the sacrificial fire is only a physical birth, temporary body or manifestation of the god of Fire, Agni. The gods of the Air and other godheads in the Indian tradition have no wings, the Maruts or storm-gods ride through the skies in their galloping chariots with their flashing golden lances, the beings of the middle world in the Ajanta frescoes are seen moving through the air not with wings but with a gliding natural motion proper

[111] Savitri, p. 4.

to ethereal bodies. The epithet "wide-winged" then does not belong to the wind and is not transferred from it, but is proper to the voice of the wind which takes the form of a conscious hymn of aspiration and rises ascending from the bosom of the great priest, as might a great-winged bird released into the sky and sinks and rises again, aspires and fails and aspires again on the "altar hills". One can surely speak of a voice or a chant of aspiration rising on wide wings and I do not see how this can be taxed as a false or unpoetic image. Then the critic objects to the expression "altar hills" on the ground that this is superfluous as the imagination of the reader can very well supply this detail for itself from what has already been said: I do not think this is correct, a very alert reader might do so but most would not even think of it, and yet the detail is an essential and central feature of the thing seen and to omit it would be to leave a gap in the middle of the picture by dropping out something which is indispensable to its totality. Finally he finds that the line about the high boughs praying in the revealing sky does not help but attenuates, instead of more strongly etching the picture. I do not know why, unless he has failed to feel and to see. The picture is that of a conscious adoration offered by Nature and in that each element is conscious in its own way, the wind and its hymn, the hills, the trees. The wind is the great priest of this sacrifice of worship, his voice rises in a conscious hymn of aspiration, the hills offer themselves with the feeling of being an altar of the worship, the trees lift their high boughs towards heaven as the worshippers, silent figures of prayer, and the light of the sky into which their boughs rise reveals the Beyond towards which all aspires. At any rate this "picture" or rather this part of the vision is a complete rendering of what I saw in the light of the inspiration and the experience that came to me. I might indeed have elaborated more details, etched out at more length but that would have been superfluous and unnecessary; or I might have indulged in an ampler description but this would have been appropriate only if this part of the vision had been the whole. This last line¹¹² is an expression of an experience which I often had whether in the mountains or on the plains of Gujarat or looking from my window in Pondicherry not only in the dawn but at other times and I am unable to find any feebleness either in

[112] *The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky.*

the experience or in the words that express it. If the critic or any reader does not feel or see what I so often felt and saw, that may be my fault, but that is not sure, for you and others have felt very differently about it; it may be a mental or a temperamental failure on their part and it will be then my or perhaps even the critic's or reader's misfortune.

I may refer here to X's disparaging characterisation of my epithets. He finds that their only merit is that they are good prose epithets, not otiose but right words in their right place and exactly descriptive but only descriptive without any suggestion of any poetic beauty or any kind of magic. Are there then prose epithets and poetic epithets and is the poet debarred from exact description using always the right word in the right place, the mot justed I am under the impression that all poets, even the greatest, use as the bulk of their adjectives words that have that merit, and the difference from prose is that a certain turn in the use of them accompanied by the power of the rhythm in which they are carried lifts all to the poetic level. Take one of the passages I have quoted from Milton,¹¹³

On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues...

Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides

And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old,

here the epithets are the same that would be used in prose, the right word in the right place, exact in statement, but all lies in the turn which makes them convey a powerful and moving emotion and the rhythm which gives them an uplifting passion and penetrating insistence. In more ordinary passages such as the beginning of Paradise Lost the epithets "forbidden tree" and "mortal taste" are of the same kind, but can we say that they are merely prose epithets, good descriptive adjectives and have no other merit? If you take the lines about Nature's worship in Savitri, I do not see how they can be described as prose epithets; at any rate I would never have dreamt of using in prose unless I wanted to write poetic prose such expressions as "wide-winged hymn"

[113] The reference is to the more general but earlier letter appearing here in the next section. See pp 814-815

or "a great priestly wind" or "altar hills" or "revealing sky"; these epithets belong in their very nature to poetry alone whatever may be their other value or want of value. He says they are obvious and could have been supplied by any imaginative reader; well, so are Milton's in the passages quoted and perhaps there too the very remarkable imaginative reader whom X repeatedly brings in might have supplied them by his own unfailing poetic verve. Whether they or any of them prick a hidden beauty out of the picture is for each reader to feel or judge for himself; but perhaps he is thinking of such things as Keats' "magic casements" and "foam of perilous seas" and "fairy lands forlorn", but I do not think even in Keats the bulk of the epithets are of that unusual character.

I have said that his objections are sometimes inapplicable. I mean by this that they might have some force with regard to another kind of poetry but not to a poem like Savitri. He says, to start with, that if I had had a stronger imagination, I would have written a very different poem and a much shorter one. Obviously, and to say it is a truism; if I had had a different kind of imagination, whether stronger or weaker, I would have written a different poem and perhaps one more to his taste; but it would not have been Savitri. It would not have fulfilled the intention or had anything of the character, meaning, world-vision, description and expression of spiritual experience which was my object in writing this poem. Its length is an indispensable condition for carrying out its purpose and everywhere there is this length, critics may say an "unconscionable length" — I am quoting the Times¹¹⁴ reviewer's description in his otherwise eulogistic criticism of The Life Divine — in every part, in every passage, in almost every canto or section of a canto. It has been planned not on the scale of Lycidas or Comus or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epic narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor Ramayana, it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world-vision or world-interpretation. One artistic method is to select a limited subject and even on that to say only what is indispensable, what is centrally suggestive and leave the rest to the imagination or understanding of the reader. Another method which I hold to be equally artistic or, if you like, architectural is to give a large

[114] The Times' Literary Supplement, January 17, 1942.

and even a vast, a complete interpretation, omitting nothing that is necessary, fundamental to the completeness: that is the method I have chosen in Savitri. But X has understood nothing of the significance or intention of the passages he is criticising, least of all, their inner sense — that is not his fault, but is partly due to the lack of the context and partly to his lack of equipment and you have there an unfair advantage over him which enables you to understand and see the poetic intention. He sees only an outward form of words and some kind of surface sense which is to him vacant and merely ornamental or rhetorical or something pretentious without any true meaning or true vision in it: inevitably he finds the whole thing false and empty, unjustifiably ambitious and pompous without deep meaning or, as he expresses it, pseudo and phoney. His objection of longueur would be perfectly just if the description of the night and the dawn had been simply of physical night and physical dawn; but here the physical night and physical dawn are, as the title of the canto clearly suggests, a symbol, although what may be called a real symbol of an inner reality and the main purpose is to describe by suggestion the thing symbolised; here it is a relapse into Inconscience broken by a slow and difficult return of consciousness followed by a brief but splendid and prophetic outbreak of spiritual light leaving behind it the "day" of ordinary human consciousness in which the prophecy has to be worked out. The whole of Savitri is, according to the title of the poem, a legend that is a symbol and this opening canto is, it may be said, a key beginning and announcement. So understood there is nothing here otiose or unnecessary; all is needed to bring out by suggestion some aspect of the thing symbolised and so start adequately the working out of the significance of the whole poem. It will of course seem much too long to a reader who does not understand what is written or, understanding, takes no interest in the subject; but that is unavoidable.

To illustrate the inapplicability of some of his judgments one might take his objection to repetition of the cognates "sombre Vast", "unsounded Void", "opaque Inane", "vacant Vasts¹¹⁵" and his clinching condemnation of the inartistic inelegance of their occurrence in the

same place at the end of the line. I take leave to doubt his statement that in each place his alert imaginative reader, still less any reader without that equipment, could have supplied these descriptions and epithets from the context, but let that pass. What was important for me was to keep constantly before the view of the reader, not imaginative but attentive to seize the whole truth of the vision in its totality, the ever-present sense of the Inconscience in which everything is occurring. It is the frame as well as the background without which all the details would either fall apart or stand out only as separate incidents. That necessity lasts until there is the full outburst of the dawn and then it disappears; each phrase gives a feature of this Inconscience proper to its place and context. It is the entrance of the "lonely splendour" into an otherwise unconscious obstructing and unreceptive world that has to be brought out and that cannot be done without the image of the "opaque Inane" of the Inconscience which is the scene and cause of the resistance. There is the same necessity for reminding the reader that the "tread" of the Divine Mother was an intrusion on the vacancy of the Inconscience and the herald of deliverance from it. The same reasoning applies to the other passages. As for the occurrence of the phrases in the same place each in its line, that is a rhythmic turn helpful, one might say necessary to bring out the intended effect, to emphasise this reiteration and make it not only understood but felt. It is not the result of negligence or an awkward and inartistic clumsiness, it is intentional and part of the technique. The structure of the pentameter blank verse in Savitri is of its own kind and different in plan from the blank verse that has come to be ordinarily used in English poetry. It dispenses with enjambment or uses it very sparingly and only when a special effect is intended; each line must be strong enough to stand by itself, while at the same time it fits harmoniously into the sentence or paragraph like stone added to stone; the sentence consists usually of one, two, three or four lines, more rarely five or six or seven: a strong close for the line and a strong close for the sentence are almost indispensable except when some kind of inconclusive cadence is desirable; here must be no laxity or diffusiveness in the rhythm or in the metrical flow anywhere,—there must be a flow but not a loose flux. This gives an added importance to what comes at the close of the line and this placing is used very often to give emphasis and prominence to a key phrase or a key idea, especially

those which have to be often reiterated in the thought and vision of the poem so as to recall attention to things that are universal or fundamental or otherwise of the first consequence — whether for the immediate subject or in the total plan. It is this use that is served here by the reiteration at the end of the line.

I have not anywhere in Savitri written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect; what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced; if, for instance, I indulge in the wealth-burdened line or passage, it is not merely for the pleasure of the indulgence, but because there is that burden, or at least what I conceive to be that, in the vision or the experience. When the expression has been found, I have to judge, not by the intellect or by any set poetical rule, but by an intuitive feeling, whether it is entirely the right expression and, if it is not, I have to change and go on changing until I have received the absolutely right inspiration and the right transcription of it and must never be satisfied with any *à peu près* or imperfect transcription even if that makes good poetry of one kind or another. This is what I have tried to do. The critic or reader will judge for himself whether I have succeeded or failed; but if he has seen nothing and understood nothing, it does not follow that his adverse judgment is sure to be the right and true one, there is at least a chance that he may so conclude, not because there is nothing to see and nothing to understand, only poor pseudo-stuff or a rhetorical emptiness but because he was not equipped for the vision or the understanding. Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences. You must not expect appreciation or understanding from the general public or even from many at the first touch; as I have pointed out, there must be a new extension of consciousness and aesthesis to appreciate a new kind of mystic poetry. Moreover if it is really new in kind, it may employ a new technique, not perhaps absolutely new, but new in some or many of its elements: in that case old rules and canons and standards may be quite inapplicable; evidently, you cannot justly apply to the poetry of Whitman the principles of technique which are proper to the old metrical verse or the

established laws of the old traditional poetry; so too when we deal with a modernist poet. We have to see whether what is essential to poetry is there and how far the new technique justifies itself by new beauty and perfection, and a certain freedom of mind from old conventions is necessary if our judgment is to be valid or rightly objective.

Your friend may say as he has said in another connection that all this is only special pleading or an apology rather than an apologia. But in that other connection he was mistaken and would be so here too, for in neither case have I the feeling that I had been guilty of some offence or some short-coming and therefore there could be no place for an apology or special pleading such as is used to defend or cover up what one knows to be a false case. I have enough respect for truth not to try to cover up an imperfection; my endeavour would be rather to cure the recognised imperfection; if I have not poetical genius, at least I can claim a sufficient, if not an infinite capacity for painstaking: that I have sufficiently shown by my long labour on Savitri. Or rather, since it was not labour in the ordinary sense, not a labour of painstaking construction, I may describe it as an infinite capacity for waiting and listening for the true inspiration and rejecting all that fell short of it, however good it might seem from a lower standard until I got that which I felt to be absolutely right. X was evidently under a misconception with regard to my defence of the wealth-burdened line; he says that the principle enounced by me was sound but what mattered was my application of the principle, and he seems to think that I was trying to justify my application although I knew it to be bad and false by citing passages from Milton and Shakespeare as if my use of the wealth-burdened style were as good as theirs. But I was not defending the excellence of my practice, for the poetical value of my lines was not then in question; the question was whether it did not violate a valid law of a certain chaste economy by the use of too many epithets massed together: against this I was asserting the legitimacy of a massed richness, I was defending only its principle, not my use of the principle. Even a very small poet can cite in aid of his practice examples from greater poets without implying that his poetry is on a par with theirs. But he further asserts that I showed small judgment in choosing

my citations, because Milton's passage^[116] is not at all an illustration of the principle and Shakespeare's^[117] is inferior in poetic value, lax and rhetorical in its richness and belongs to an early and inferior Shakespearean style. He says that Milton's astounding effect is due only to the sound and not to the words. That does not seem to me quite true: the sound, the rhythmic resonance, the rhythmic significance is undoubtedly the predominant factor; it makes us hear and feel the crash and clamour and clangour of the downfall of the rebel angels: but that is not all, we do not merely hear as if one were listening to the roar of ruin of a collapsing bomb-shattered house, but saw nothing, we have the vision and the full psychological commotion of the "hideous" and flaming ruin of the down-fall, and it is the tremendous force of the words that makes us see as well as hear. X's disparagement of the Shakespearean passage on "sleep" and the line on the sea considered by the greatest critics and not by myself only as ranking amongst the most admired and admirable things in Shakespeare is surprising and it seems to me to illustrate a serious limitation in his poetic perception and temperamental sympathies. Shakespeare's later terse and packed style with its more powerful dramatic effects can surely be admired without disparaging the beauty and opulence of his earlier style; if he had never written in that style, it would have been an unspeakable loss to the sum of the world's aesthetic possessions. The lines I have quoted are neither lax nor merely rhetorical, they have a terseness or at least a compactness of their own, different in character from the lines, let us say, in the scene of Antony's death or other memorable passages written in his great tragic style but none the less at every step packed with pregnant meanings and powerful significances which would not be possible if it were merely a loose rhetoric. Anyone writing such lines would deserve to rank by them alone among the great and even the

[116] *With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire.*

[117] *Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?*

greatest poets...

As regards your friend's appraisal of the mystical poems, I need say little. I accept his reservation that there is much inequality as between the different poems: they were produced very rapidly — in the course of a week, I think — and they were not given the long reconsideration that I have usually given to my poetic work before publication; he has chosen the best, though there are others also that are good, though not so good; in others, the metre attempted and the idea and language have not been lifted to their highest possible value. I would like to say a word about his hesitation over some lines in *Thought the Paraclete*¹¹⁸ which describe the spiritual planes. I can understand this hesitation; for these lines have not the vivid and forceful precision of the opening and the close and are less pressed home, they are general in description and therefore to one who has not the mystic experience may seem too large and vague. But they are not padding; a precise and exact description of these planes of experience would have made the poem too long, so only some large lines are given, but the description is true, the epithets hit the reality and even the colours mentioned in the poem, "gold-red feet" and "crimson-white mooned oceans", are faithful to experience. Significant colour, supposed by intellectual criticism to be symbolic but there is more than that, is a frequent element in mystic vision; I may mention the powerful and vivid vision in which Ramakrishna went up into the higher planes and saw the mystic truth behind the birth of Vivekananda. At least, the fact that these poems have appealed so strongly to your friend's mind may perhaps be taken by me as a sufficient proof that in this field my effort at interpretation of spiritual things has not been altogether a failure.

But how then are we to account for the same critic's condemnation or small appreciation of Savitri which is also a mystic and symbolic poem al-though cast into a different form and raised to a different pitch, and what value am I to attach to his criticism ? Partly, perhaps, it is this very difference of form and pitch which accounts for his attitude and, having regard to his aesthetic temperament and its limitations, it was inevitable. He him-self seems to suggest this reason when he compares

this difference to the difference of his approach as between Lycidas and Paradise Lost. His temperamental turn is shown by his special appreciation of Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore and his response to Descent and Flame-Wind and the fineness of his judgment when speaking of the Hound of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, its limitation by his approach towards Paradise Lost. I think he would be naturally inclined to regard any very high-pitched poetry as rhetorical and unsound and declamatory, wherever he did not see in it something finely and subtly true coexisting with the high-pitched expression,—the combination we find in Thompson's later poem and it is this he seems to have missed in Savitri. For Savitri does contain or at least I intended it to contain what you and others have felt in it but he has not been able to feel because it is something which is outside his own experience and to which he has no access. One who has had the kind of experience which Savitri sets out to express or who, not having it, is prepared by his temperament, his mental turn, his previous intellectual knowledge or psychic training, to have some kind of access to it, the feeling of it if not the full understanding, can enter into the spirit and sense of the poem and respond to its poetic appeal; but without that it is difficult for an unprepared reader to respond, — all the more if this is, as you contend, a new poetry with a new law of expression and technique.

Lycidas is one of the finest poems in any literature, one of the most consistently perfect among works of an equal length and one can apply to it the epithet "exquisite" and it is to the exquisite that your friend's aesthetic temperament seems specially to respond. It would be possible to a reader with a depreciatory turn to find flaws in it, such as the pseudo-pastoral setting, the too powerful intrusion of St. Peter and puritan theological controversy into that incongruous setting and the image of the hungry sheep which someone not in sympathy with Christian feeling and traditional imagery might find even ludicrous or at least odd in its identification of pseudo-pastoral sheep and theological human sheep: but these would be hypercritical objections and are flooded out by the magnificence of the poetry. I am prepared to admit the very patent defects of Paradise Lost'. Milton's heaven is indeed unconvincing and can be described as grotesque and so too is his

gunpowder battle up there, and his God and angels are weak and unconvincing figures, even Adam and Eve, our first parents, do not effectively fill their part except in his outward description of them; and the later narrative falls far below the grandeur of the first four books but those four books stand for ever among the greatest things in the world's poetic literature. If Lycidas with its beauty and perfection had been the supreme thing done by Milton even with all the lyrical poetry and the sonnets added to it, Milton would still have been a great poet but he would not have ranked among the dozen greatest; it is Paradise Lost that gives him that place. There are deficiencies if not failures in almost all the great epics, the Odyssey and perhaps the Divina Commedia being the only exceptions, but still they are throughout in spite of them great epics. So too is Paradise Lost. The grandeur of his verse and language is constant and unsinking to the end and makes the presentation always sublime. We have to accept for the moment Milton's dry Puritan theology and his all too human picture of the celestial world and its denizens and then we can feel the full greatness of the epic. But the point is that this greatness in itself -seems to have less appeal to X's aesthetic temperament; it is as if he felt less at home in its atmosphere, in an atmosphere of grandeur and sublimity than in the air of a less sublime but a fine and always perfect beauty. It is the difference between a magic hill-side woodland of wonder and a great soaring mountain climbing into a vast purple sky: to accept fully the greatness he needs to find in it a finer and subtler strain as in Thompson's Kingdom of God. On a lower scale this, his sentence about it seems to suggest, is the one fundamental reason for his complete pleasure in the mystical poems and his very different approach to Savitri. The pitch aimed at by Savitri, the greatness you attribute to it, would of itself have discouraged in him any abandonment to admiration and compelled from the beginning a cautious and dubious approach; that soon turned to lack of appreciation or a lowered appreciation even of the best that may be there and to depreciation and censure of the rest.

But there is the other reason which is more effective. He sees and feels nothing of the spiritual meaning and the spiritual appeal which you find in Savitri; it is for him empty of anything but an outward

significance and that seems to him poor, as is natural since the outward meaning is only a part and a surface and the rest is to his eyes invisible. If there had been what he hoped or might have hoped to find in my poetry, a spiritual vision such as that of the Vedantin, arriving beyond the world towards the In-effable, then he might have felt at home as he does with Thompson's poetry or might at least have found it sufficiently accessible. But this is not what *Savitri* has to say or rather it is only a small part of it and, even so, bound up with a cosmic vision and an acceptance of the world which in its kind is unfamiliar to his mind and psychic sense and foreign to his experience. The two passages with which he deals do not and cannot give any full presentation of this way of seeing things since one is an unfamiliar symbol and the other an incidental and, taken by itself apart from its context, an isolated circumstance. But even if he had had other more explicit and clearly revealing passages at his disposal, I do not think he would have been satisfied or much illuminated; his eyes would still have been fixed on the surface and caught only some intellectual meaning or outer sense. That at least is what we may suppose to have been the cause of his failure, if we maintain that there is anything at all in the poem; or else we must fall back on the explanation of a fundamental personal incompatibility and the rule *de gustibus non est disputandum*, or to put it in the Sanskrit form *nanarucirhi lokah*. If you are right in maintaining that *Savitri* stands as a new mystical poetry with a new vision and expression of things, we should expect, at least at first, a widespread, perhaps, a general failure even in lovers of poetry to understand it or appreciate; even those who have some mystical turn or spiritual experience are likely to pass it by if it is a different turn from theirs or outside their range of experience. It took the world something like a hundred years to discover Blake; it would not be improbable that there might be a greater time-lag here, though naturally we hope for better things. For in India at least some understanding or feeling and an audience few and fit may be possible. Perhaps by some miracle there may be before long a larger appreciative audience.

At any rate this is the only thing one can do, especially when one is attempting a new creation, to go on with the work with such light and power as is given to one and leave the value of the work to be

determined by the future. Contemporary judgments we know to be unreliable; there are only two judges whose joint verdict cannot easily be disputed, the World and Time. The Roman proverb says, *securus judicat orbis ten-arum*; but the world's verdict is secure only when it is confirmed by Time. For it is not the opinion of the general mass of men that finally decides, the decision is really imposed by the judgment of a minority and elite which is finally accepted and settles down as the verdict of posterity; in Tagore's phrase it is the universal man, *Viswa Manava*, or rather something universal using the general mind of man, we might say the Cosmic Self in the race that fixes the value of its own works. In regard to the great names in literature this final verdict seems to have in it something of the absolute, — so far as anything can be that in a temporal world of relativities in which the Absolute reserves itself hidden behind the veil of human ignorance. It is no use for some to contend that Virgil is a tame and elegant writer of a wearisome work in verse on agriculture and a tedious pseudo-epic written to imperial order and Lucretius the only really great poet in Latin literature or to deprecate Milton for his Latin English and inflated style and the largely uninteresting character of his two epics; the world either refuses to listen or there is a temporary effect, a brief fashion in literary criticism, but finally the world returns to its established verdict. Lesser reputations may fluctuate, but finally whatever has real value in its own kind settles itself and finds its just place in the durable judgment of the world. Work which was neglected and left aside like Blake's or at first admired with reservation and eclipsed like Donne's is singled out by a sudden glance of Time and its greatness recognised; or what seemed buried slowly emerges or re-emerges; all finally settles into its place. What was held as sovereign in its own time is rudely dethroned but afterwards recovers not its sovereign throne but its due position in the world's esteem; Pope is an example and Byron who at once burst into a supreme glory and was the one English poet, after Shakes-peare, admired all over Europe but is now depreciated, may also recover his proper place. Encouraged by such examples, let us hope that these violently adverse judgments may not be final and absolute and decide that the waste paper basket is not the proper place for Savitri. There may still be a place for a poetry which seeks to enlarge the field of poetic creation and find for the inner spiritual life of man and his now occult or mystical knowledge and

experience of the whole hidden range of his and the world's being, not a corner and a limited expression such as it had in the past, but a wide space and as manifold and integral an expression of the boundless and innumerable riches that lie hidden and unexplored as if kept apart under the direct gaze of the Infinite as has been found in the past for man's surface and finite view and experience of himself and the material world in which he has lived striving to know himself and it as best he can with a limited mind and senses. The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man's inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire.

I had intended as the main subject of this letter to say something about technique and the inner working of the intuitive method by which Savitri was and is being created and of the intention and plan of the poem. X's idea of its way of creation, an intellectual construction by a deliberate choice of words and imagery, badly chosen at that, is the very opposite of the real way in which it was done. That was to be the body of the letter and the rest only a preface. But the preface has become so long that it has crowded out the body. I shall have to postpone it to a later occasion when I have more time.

Part VI

Something more might need to be said in regard to the Overhead note in poetry and the Overmind aesthesia; but these are exactly the subjects on which it is difficult to write with any precision or satisfy the intellect's demand for clear and positive statement.

I do not know that it is possible for me to say why I regard one line or passage as having the Overhead touch or the Overhead note while another misses it. When I said that in the lines about the dying man¹¹⁹ the touch came in through some intense passion and sincerity in the writer, I was simply mentioning the psychological door through which the thing came. I did not mean to suggest that such passion and sincerity could of itself bring in the touch or that they constituted the Overhead note in the lines. I am afraid I have to say what Arnold said about the grand style; it has to be felt and cannot be explained or accounted for. One has an intuitive feeling, a recognition of something familiar to one's experience or one's deeper perception in the substance and the rhythm or in one or the other which rings out and cannot be gainsaid. One might put forward a theory or a description of what the Overhead character of the line consists in, but it is doubtful whether any such mentally constructed definition could be always applicable. You speak, for instance, of the sense of the Infinite and the One which is pervasive in the Overhead planes; that need not be explicitly there in the Overhead poetic expression or in the substance of any given line: it can be expressed indeed by Overhead poetry as no other can express it, but this poetry can deal with quite other things. I would certainly say that Shakespeare's lines

*Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain*¹²⁰

[119] See p. 747

[120] Hamlet V.ii

have the Overhead touch in the substance, the rhythm and the feeling; but Shakespeare is not giving us here the sense of the One and the Infinite. He is, as in the other lines of his which have this note, dealing as he always does with life, with vital emotions and reactions or the thoughts that spring out in the life-mind under the pressure of life. It is not any strict adhesion to a transcendental view of things that constitutes this kind of poetry, but something behind not belonging to the mind or the vital and physical consciousness and with that a certain quality or power in the language and the rhythm which helps to bring out that deeper something. If I had to select the line in European poetry which most suggests an almost direct descent from the Overmind consciousness there might come first Virgil's line about "the touch of tears in mortal things":

*Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.*¹²¹

Another might be Shakespeare's

*In the dark backward and abyss of Time*¹²²

or again Milton's

*Those thoughts that wander through eternity.*¹²³

We might also add Wordsworth's line

*The winds come to me from the fields of sleep.*¹²⁴

[121] Aeneid, I.462

[122] The Tempest I.ii

[123] Paradise Lost II.148

There are other lines ideative and more emotional or simply descriptive which might be added, such as Marlowe's

*Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?*¹²⁵

If we could extract and describe the quality and the subtle something that mark the language and rhythm and feeling of these lines and underlie their substance we might attain hazardously to some mental understanding of the nature of Overhead poetry.

The Overmind is not strictly a transcendental consciousness — that epithet would more accurately apply to the supramental and to the Sachchidananda consciousness — though it looks up to the transcendental and may receive something from it and though it does transcend the ordinary human mind and in its full and native self-power, when it does not lean down and become part of mind, is superconscient to us. It is more properly a cosmic consciousness, even the very base of the cosmic as we perceive, understand or feel it. It stands behind every particular in the cosmos and is the source of all our mental, vital or physical actualities and possibilities which are diminished and degraded derivations and variations from it and have not, except in certain formations and activities of genius and some intense self-exceeding, anything of the native Overmind quality and power. Nevertheless, because it stands behind as if covered by a veil, something of it can break through or shine through or even only dimly glimmer through and that brings the Overmind touch or note. We cannot get this touch frequently unless we have torn the veil, made a gap in it or rent it largely away and seen the very face of what is beyond, lived in the light of it or established some kind of constant intercourse. Or we can draw upon it from time to time without ever ascending into it if we have established a line of communication between the higher and the ordinary

[124] Ode on the Initiations of Immortality, iii

[125] Doctor Faustus V.i

consciousness. What comes down may be very much diminished but it has something of that. The ordinary reader of poetry who has not that experience will usually not be able to distinguish but would at the most feel that here is something extraordinarily fine, profound, sublime or unusual, — or he might turn away from it as something too high-pitched and excessive; he might even speak depreciatingly of "purple passages", rhetoric, exaggeration or excess. One who had the line of communication open could on the other hand feel what is there and distinguish even if he could not adequately characterise or describe it. The essential character is perhaps that there is something behind of which I have already spoken and which comes not primarily from the mind or the vital emotion or the physical seeing but from the cosmic self and its consciousness standing behind them all and things then tend to be seen not as the mind or heart or body sees them but as this greater consciousness feels or sees or answers to them. In the direct Overmind transmission this something behind is usually forced to the front or close to the front by a combination of words which carries the suggestion of a deeper meaning or by the force of an image or, most of all, by an intonation and a rhythm which carry up the depths in their wide wash or long march or mounting surge. Sometimes it is left lurking behind and only suggested so that a subtle feeling of what is not actually expressed is needed if the reader is not to miss it. This is oftenest the case when there is just a touch or note pressed upon something that would be otherwise only of a mental, vital or physical poetic value and nothing of the body of the Overhead power shows itself through the veil, but at most a tremor and vibration, a gleam or a glimpse. In the lines I have chosen there is always an unusual quality in the rhythm, as prominently in Virgil's line, often in the very building and constantly in the intonation and the association of the sounds which meet in the line and find themselves linked together by a sort of inevitable felicity. There is also an inspired selection or an unusual bringing together of words which has the power to force a deeper sense on the mind as in Virgil's

Sunt lacrimae rerum.

One can note that this line if translated straight into English would sound awkward and clumsy as would many of the finest lines in Rig Veda; that is precisely because they are new and felicitous turns in the original language, discoveries of an unexpected and absolute phrase; they defy translation. If you note the combination of words and sounds in Shakespeare's line

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

so arranged as to force on the mind and still more on the subtle nerves and sense the utter absoluteness of the difficulty and pain of living for the soul that has awakened to the misery of the world, you can see how this technique works. Here and elsewhere the very body and soul of the thing seen or felt come out into the open. The same dominant characteristic can be found in other lines which I have not cited, — in Leopardi's

*Insano indegno mistero delle cose*¹²⁶
(The insane and ignoble mystery of things)

or in Wordsworth's

*Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.*¹²⁷

Milton's line lives by its choice of the word "wander" to collocate with "through eternity"; if he had chosen any other word, it would no longer have been an Overhead line, even if the surface sense had been exactly

[126] Le Ricordanze, 71-72. Leopardi's original has one different word and is spread over parts of two lines:

*l'acerbo indegno
Misteo delle cose...*

[127] The Prelude, III.63

the same. On the other hand, take Shelley's stanza -

*We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.*¹²⁸

This is perfect poetry with the most exquisite melody and beauty of wording and an unsurpassable poignancy of pathos, but there is no touch or note of the Overhead inspiration: it is the mind and the heart, the vital emotion, working at their highest pitch under the stress of a psychic inspiration. The rhythm is of the same character, a direct, straightforward, lucid and lucent movement welling out limpidly straight from the psychic source. The same characteristics are found in another short lyric of Shelley's which is perhaps the purest example of the psychic inspiration in English poetry:

*I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not, -
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?*¹²⁹

We have again extreme poetic beauty there, but nothing of the Overhead note.

In the other lines I have cited it is really the Overmind language and rhythm that have been to some extent transmitted; but of course all

[128] To a Skylark

[129] One word is too often profaned

Overhead poetry is not from the Overmind, more often it comes from the Higher Thought, the Illumined Mind or the pure Intuition. This last is different from the mental intuition which is frequent enough in poetry that does not transcend the mental level. The language and rhythm from these other Overhead levels can be very different from that which is proper to the Overmind; for the Overmind thinks in a mass; its thought, feeling, vision is high or deep or wide or all these things together: to use the Vedic expression about fire, the divine messenger, it goes vast on its way to bring the divine riches, and it has a corresponding language and rhythm. The Higher Thought has a strong tread often with bare unsandalled feet and moves in a clear-cut light: a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character. The outflow of the Illumined Mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. The Intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke. These, however, are only general or dominant characters; any number of variations is possible. There are besides mingled inspirations, several levels meeting and combining or modifying each other's notes, and an Overmind transmission can contain or bring with it all the rest, but how much of this description will be to the ordinary reader of poetry at all intelligible or clearly identifiable?

There are besides in mental poetry derivations or substitutes for all these styles. Milton's "grand style" is such a substitute for the manner of the Higher Thought. Take it anywhere at its ordinary level or in its higher elevation, there is always or almost always that echo there:

*Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree*¹³⁰

[130] Paradise Lost I,1-2

or

On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues¹³¹

or

*Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.¹³²*

Shakespeare's poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the Illumined Mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined Overhead inspiration itself as in the lines I have more than once quoted:

*Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?¹³³*

But the rest of that passage falls away in spite of its high-pitched language and resonant rhythm far below the Overhead strain. So it is easy for the mind to mistake and take the higher for the lower inspiration or vice versa. Thus Milton's lines might at first sight be taken because of a certain depth of emotion in their large lingering rhythm as having the Overhead complexion, but this rhythm loses something of its sovereign right because there are no depths of sense behind it. It conveys nothing but the noble and dignified pathos of the blindness and old age of a great personality fallen into evil days. Milton's

[131] ibid VII.26

[132] ibid. III, 35-36

[133] Henry IV, III i

architecture of thought and verse is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers: the occult things in man's being are foreign to his intelligence, — for it is in the light of the poetic intelligence that he works. He does not stray into "the mystic cavern of the heart", does not follow the inner fire entering like a thief with the Cow of Light into the secrecy of secracies. Shakespeare does sometimes get in as if by a splendid psychic accident in spite of his preoccupation with the colours and shows of life.

I do not know therefore whether I can speak with any certainty about the lines you quote; I would perhaps have to read them in their context first, but it seems to me that there is just a touch, as in the lines about the dying man. The thing that is described there may have happened often enough in times like those of the recent wars and upheavals and in times of violent strife and persecution and catastrophe, but the greatness of the experience does not come out or not wholly, because men feel with the mind and heart and not with the soul; but here there is by some accident of wording and rhythm a suggestion of something behind, of the greatness of the soul's experience and its courageous acceptance of the tragic, the final, the fatal—and its resistance; it is only just a suggestion, but it is enough: the Overhead has touched and passed back to its heights. There is something very different but of the same essential calibre in the line you quote:

Sad eyes watch for feet that never come.

It is still more difficult to say anything very tangible about the Overmind aesthesis. When I wrote about it I was thinking of the static aesthesis that perceives and receives rather than of the dynamic aesthesis which creates; I was not thinking at all of superior or inferior grades of poetic greatness or beauty. If the complete Overmind power or even that of the lower Overhead planes could come down into the mind and entirely trans-form its action, then no doubt there might be greater poetry written than any that man has yet achieved, just as a greater superhuman life might be created if the Supermind could come down wholly into life and lift life wholly into itself and transform it. But

what happens at present is that something comes down and accepts to work under the law of the mind and with a mixture of the mind and it must be judged by the laws and standards of the mind. It brings in new tones, new colours, new elements, but it does not change radically as yet the stuff of the consciousness with which we labour.

Whether it produces great poetry or not depends on the extent to which it manifests its power and overrides rather than serves the mentality which it is helping. At present it does not do that sufficiently to raise the work to the full greatness of the worker.

And then what do you mean exactly by greatness in poetry ? One can say that Virgil is greater than Catullus and that many of Virgil's lines are greater than anything Catullus ever achieved. But poetical perfection is not the same thing as poetical greatness. Virgil is perfect at his best, but Catullus too is perfect at his best: even each has a certain exquisiteness of perfection, each in his own kind. Virgil's kind is large and deep, that of Catullus sweet and intense. Virgil's art reached or had from its beginning a greater and more constant ripeness than that of Catullus. We can say then that Virgil was a greater poet and artist of word and rhythm but we cannot say that his poetry, at his best, was more perfect poetry and that of Catullus less perfect. That renders futile many of the attempts at comparison like Arnold's comparison of Wordsworth's Skylark with Shelley's. You may say that Milton was a greater poet than Blake, but there can always be people, not aesthetically insensitive, who would prefer Blake's lyrical work to Milton's grander achievement, and there are certainly things in Blake which touch deeper chords than the massive hand of Milton could ever reach. So all poetic superiority is not summed up in the word greatness. Each kind has its own best which escapes from comparison and stands apart in its own value.

Let us then leave for the present the question of poetic greatness or superiority aside and come back to the Overmind aesthesis. By aesthesis is meant a reaction of the consciousness, mental and vital and even bodily, which receives a certain element in things, something that can be called their taste, Rasa, which, passing through the mind or sense or both, awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste, Bhoga, and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and

more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit's delight of existence, Ananda. Poetry, like all art, serves the seeking for these things, this aesthesis, this Rasa, Bhoga, Ananda; it brings us a Rasa of word and sound but also of the idea and, through the idea, of the things expressed by the word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or some-times the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even, if the poet is strong enough, of their world-essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things. Poetry may do more than this, but this at least it must do to however small an extent or it is not poetry. Aesthesia therefore is of the very essence of poetry, as it is of all art. But it is not the sole element and aesthesis too is not confined to a reception of poetry and art; it extends to everything, in the world: there is nothing we can sense, think or in any way experience to which there cannot be an aesthetic reaction of our conscious being. Ordinarily, we suppose that aesthesis is concerned with beauty, and that indeed is its most prominent concern: but it is concerned with many other things also. It is the universal Ananda that is the parent of aesthesis and the universal Ananda takes three major and original forms, beauty, love and delight, the delight of all existence, the delight in things, in all things. Universal Ananda is the artist and creator of the universe witnessing, experiencing and taking joy in its creation. In the lower conscious-ness it creates its opposites, the sense of ugliness as well as the sense of beauty, hate and repulsion and dislike as well as love and attraction and liking, grief and pain as well as joy and delight; and between these dualities or as a grey tint in the background there is a general tone of neutrality and indifference born from the universal insensibility into which the Ananda sinks in its dark negation in the Inconscicnt. All this is the sphere of aesthesis, its dullest reaction is indifference, its highest is ecstasy. Ecstasy is a sign of a return towards the original or supreme Ananda: that art or poetry is supreme which can bring us something of the supreme tone of ecstasy. For as the consciousness sinks from the supreme levels through various degrees towards the Inconscience the general sign of this descent is an always diminishing power of its intensity, intensity of being, intensity of consciousness, intensity offeree, intensity of the delight in things and the delight of existence. So too as we ascend towards the supreme level, these intensities increase. As we

climb beyond Mind, higher and wider values replace the values of our limited mind, life and bodily consciousness. Aesthesia shares in this intensification of capacity. The capacity for pleasure and pain, for liking and disliking is comparatively poor on the level of our mind and life; our capacity for ecstasy is brief and limited; these tones arise from a general ground of neutrality which is always dragging them back towards itself. As it enters the Overhead planes the ordinary aesthesia turns into a pure delight and becomes capable of a high, a large or a deep abiding ecstasy. The ground is no longer a general neutrality, but a pure spiritual ease and happiness upon which the special tones of the aesthetic consciousness come out or from which they arise. This is the first fundamental change.

Another change in this transition is a turn towards universality in place of the isolations, the conflicting generalities, the mutually opposing dualities of the lower consciousness. In the Overmind we have a first firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight. These things can come on the mental and vital plane even before those planes are directly touched or influenced by the spiritual consciousness; but they are there a temporary experience and not permanent or they are limited in their field and do not touch the whole being. They are a glimpse and not a change of vision or a change of nature. The artist for instance can look at things only plain or shabby or ugly or even repulsive to the ordinary sense and see in them and bring out of them beauty and the delight that goes with beauty. But this is a sort of special grace for the artistic consciousness and is limited within the field of his art. In the Overhead consciousness, especially in the Overmind, these things become more and more the law of the vision and the law of the nature. Wherever the Overmind spiritual man turns he sees a universal beauty touching and uplifting all things, expressing itself through them, moulding them into a field or objects of its divine aesthesia; a universal love goes out from him to all beings; he feels the Bliss which has created the worlds and upholds them and all that is expresses to him the universal delight, is made of it, is a manifestation of it and moulded into its image. This universal aesthesia of beauty and delight does not ignore or fail to understand the differences and oppositions, the gradations, the

harmony and disharmony obvious to the ordinary consciousness; but, first of all, it draws a Rasa from them and with that comes the enjoyment, Bhoga, and the touch or the mass of the Ananda. It sees that all things have their meaning, their value, their deeper or total significance which the mind does not see, for the mind is only concerned with a surface vision, surface contacts and its own surface reactions. When something expresses perfectly what it was meant to express, the completeness brings with it a sense of harmony, a sense of artistic perfection; it gives even to what is discordant a place in a system of cosmic concordances and the discords become part of a vast harmony, and wherever there is harmony, there is a sense of beauty. Even in form itself, apart from the significance, the Overmind consciousness sees the object with a totality which changes its effect on the percipient even while it remains the same thing. It sees lines and masses and an underlying design which the physical eye does not see and which escapes even the keenest mental vision. Every form becomes beautiful to it in a deeper and larger sense of beauty than that commonly known to us. The Overmind looks also straight at and into the soul of each thing and not only at its form or its significance to the mind or to the life; this brings to it not only the true truth of the thing but the delight of it. It sees also the one spirit in all, the face of the Divine everywhere and there can be no greater Ananda than that; it feels oneness with all, sympathy, love, the bliss of the Brahman. In a highest, a most integral experience it sees all things as if made of existence, consciousness, power, bliss, every atom of them charged with and constituted of Sachchidananda. In all this the Overmind aesthesis takes its share and gives its response; for these things come not merely as an idea in the mind or a truth-seeing but as an experience of the whole being and a total response is not only possible but above a certain level imperative.

I have said that aesthesis responds not only to what we call beauty and beautiful things but to all things. We make a distinction between truth and beauty; but there can be an aesthetic response to truth also, a joy in its beauty, a love created by its charm, a rapture in the finding, a passion in the embrace, an aesthetic joy in its expression, a satisfaction of love in the giving of it to others. Truth is not merely a dry statement

of facts or ideas to or by the intellect; it can be a splendid discovery, a rapturous revelation, a thing of beauty that is a joy for ever. The poet also can be a seeker and lover of truth as well as a seeker and lover of beauty. He can feel a poetic and aesthetic joy in the expression of the true as well as in the expression of the beautiful. He does not make a mere intellectual or philosophical statement of the truth; it is his vision of its beauty, its power, his thrilled reception of it, his joy in it that he tries to convey by an utmost perfection in word and rhythm. If he has the passion, then even a philosophical statement of it he can surcharge with this sense of power, force, light, beauty. On certain levels of the Overmind, where the mind element predominates over the element of gnosis, the distinction between truth and beauty is still valid. It is indeed one of the chief functions of the Overmind to separate the main powers of the consciousness and give to each its full separate development and satisfaction, bring out its utmost potency and meaning, its own soul and significant body and take it on its own way as far as it can go. It can take up each power of man and give it its full potentiality, its highest characteristic development. It can give to intellect its austerest intellectuality and to logic its most sheer unsparing logicality. It can give to beauty its most splendid passion of luminous form and the consciousness that receives it a supreme height and depth of ecstasy. It can create a sheer and pure poetry impossible for the intellect to sound to its depths or wholly grasp, much less to mentalise and analyse. It is the function of Overmind to give to every possibility its full potential, its own separate kingdom. But also there is another action of Overmind which sees and thinks and creates in masses, which reunites separated things, which reconciles opposites. On that level truth and beauty not only become constant companions but become one, involved in each other, inseparable: on that level the true is always beautiful and the beautiful is always true. Their highest fusion perhaps only takes place in the Supermind; but Overmind on its summits draws enough of the supramental light to see what the Supermind sees and do what the Supermind does though in a lower key and with a less absolute truth and power. On an inferior level Overmind may use the language of the intellect to convey as far as that language can do it its own greater meaning and message but on its summits Overmind uses its own native language and gives to its truths their own supreme utterance, and no

intellectual speech, no mentalised poetry can equal or even come near to that power and beauty. Here your intellectual dictum that poetry lives by its aesthetic quality alone and has no need of truth or that truth must depend upon aesthetics to become poetic at all, has no longer any meaning. For there truth itself is highest poetry and has only to appear to be utterly beautiful to the vision, the hearing, the sensibility of the soul. There dwells and from there springs the mystery of the in-itable word, the supreme immortal rhythm, the absolute significance and the absolute utterance.

I hope you do not feel crushed under this avalanche of metaphysical psychology; you have called it upon yourself by your questioning about the Overmind's greater, larger and deeper aesthesis. What I have written is indeed very scanty and sketchy, only some of the few essential things that have to be said; but without it I could not try to give you any glimpse of the meaning of my phrase. This greater aesthesis is inseparable from the greater truth, it is deeper because of the depth of that truth, larger by all its immense largeness. I do not expect the reader of poetry to come any-where near to all that, he could not without being a Yogi or at least a sadhak: but just as the Overhead poetry brings some touch of a deeper power of vision and creation into the mind without belonging itself wholly to the higher reaches, so also the full appreciation of all its burden needs at least some touch of a deeper response of the mind and some touch of a deeper aesthesis. Until that becomes general the Overhead or at least the Overmind is not going to do more than to touch here and there, as it did in the past, a few lines, a few passages, or perhaps as things advance, a little more, nor is it likely to pour into our utterance its own complete power and absolute value.

I have said that Overhead poetry is not necessarily greater or more perfect than any other kind of poetry. But perhaps a subtle qualification may be made to this statement. It is true that each kind of poetical writing can reach a highest or perfect perfection in its own line and in its own quality and what can be more perfect than a perfect perfection or can we say that one kind of absolute perfection is "greater" than another kind? What can be more absolute than the absolute? But then what do we mean by the perfection of poetry? There is the perfection of the language and there is the perfection of the word-music and the rhythm,

beauty of speech and beauty of sound, but there is also the quality of the thing said which counts for something. If we consider only word and sound and what in themselves they evoke, we arrive at the application of the theory of art for art's sake to poetry. On that ground we might say that a lyric of Anacreon is as good poetry and as perfect poetry as anything in Aeschylus or Sophocles or Homer. The question of the elevation or depth or intrinsic beauty of the thing said cannot then enter into our consideration of poetry; and yet it does enter, with most of us at any rate, and is part of the aesthetic reaction even in the most "aesthetic" of critics and readers. From this point of view the elevation from which the inspiration comes may after all matter, provided the one who receives it is a fit and powerful instrument; for a great poet will do more with a lower level of the origin of inspiration than a smaller poet can do even when helped from the highest sources. In a certain sense all genius comes from Overhead; for genius is the entry or inrush of a greater consciousness into the mind or a possession of the mind by a greater power. Every operation of genius has at its back or infused within it an intuition, a revelation, an inspiration, an illumination or at the least a hint or touch or influx from some greater power or level of conscious being than those which men ordinarily possess or use. But this power has two ways of acting: in one it touches the ordinary modes of mind and deepens, heightens, intensifies or exquisitely refines their action but without changing its modes or transforming its normal character; in the other it brings down into these normal modes something of itself, something supernormal, something which one at once feels to be extraordinary and suggestive of a superhuman level. These two ways of action when working in poetry may produce things equally exquisite and beautiful, but the word "greater" may perhaps be applied, with the necessary qualifications, to the second way and its too rare poetic creation.

The great bulk of the highest poetry belongs to the first of these two orders. In the second order there are again two or perhaps three levels; sometimes a felicitous turn or an unusual force of language or a deeper note of feeling brings in the Overhead touch. More often it is the power of the rhythm that lifts up language that is simple and common or a feeling or idea that has often been expressed and awakes something

which is not ordinarily there. If one listens with the mind only or from the vital centre only, one may have a wondering admiration for the skill and beauty of woven word and sound or be struck by the happy way or the power with which the feeling or idea is expressed. But there is something more in it than that; it is this that a deeper, more inward strand of the consciousness has seen and is speaking, and if we listen more profoundly we can get something more than the admiration and delight of the mind or Housman's thrill of the solar plexus. We can feel perhaps the Spirit of the universe lending its own depth to our mortal speech or listening from behind to some expression of itself, listening perhaps to its memories of

*Old, unhappy, far-off things
And battles long ago*¹³⁴

or feeling and hearing, it may be said, the vast oceanic stillness and the cry of the cuckoo

*Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides*¹³⁵

or it may enter again into Vyasa's

*"A void and dreadful forest ringing with the crickets' cry"
Vanam pratibhayam sunyam jhillikaganandditam.*¹³⁶

or remember its call to the soul of man,

[134] Wordsworth, The Solitary Reaper

[135] ibid

[136] Mahabharata, Vana parva, 64.1.

Anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam¹³⁷

"Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and worship Me."

There is a second level on which the poetry draws into itself a fuller language of intuitive inspiration, illumination or the higher thinking and feeling. A very rich or great poetry may then emerge and many of the most powerful passages in Shakespeare, Virgil or Lucretius or the Mahabharata and Ramayana, not to speak of the Gita, the Upanishads or the Rig Veda, have this inspiration. It is a poetry "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold" or welling up in a stream of passion, beauty and force. But sometimes there comes down a supreme voice, the Overmind voice and the Overmind music and it is to be observed that the lines and passages where that happens rank among the greatest and most admired in all poetic literature. It would be therefore too much to say that the Overhead inspiration cannot bring in a greatness into poetry which could surpass the other levels of inspiration, greater even from the purely aesthetic point of view and certainly greater in the power of its substance.

A conscious attempt to write Overhead poetry with a mind aware of the planes from which this inspiration comes and seeking always to ascend to those levels or bring down something from them, would probably result in a partial success; at its lowest it might attain to what I have called the first order, ordinarily it would achieve the two lower levels of the second order and in its supreme moments it might in lines and in sustained passages achieve the supreme level, something of the highest summit of its potency. But its greatest work will be to express adequately and constantly what is now only occasionally and inadequately some kind of utterance of the things above, the things beyond, the things behind the apparent world and its external or superficial happenings and phenomena. It would not only bring in the occult in its larger and deeper ranges but the truths of the spiritual heights, the spiritual depths, the spiritual intimacies and vastnesses as also the truths of the inner mind, the inner life, an inner or subtle

[137] Bhagavadgita 9.33.

physical beauty and reality. It would bring in the concreteness, the authentic image, the inmost soul of identity and the heart of meaning of these things, so that it could never lack in beauty. If this could be achieved by one possessed, if not of a supreme, still of a sufficiently high and wide poetic genius, something new could be added to the domain of poetry and there would be no danger of the power of poetry beginning to fade, to fall into decadence, to fail us. It might even enter into the domain of the infinite and inexhaustible, catch some word of the Ineffable, show us revealing images which bring us near to the Reality that is secret in us and in all, of which the Upanishad speaks,

*Anejad ekam manaso javiyo nainad deva apnuvan purvam arsat...
Tad ejati tan naijati tad dure tad u antike.*¹³⁸

*"The One unmoving is swifter than thought, the gods cannot overtake
It, for It travels ever in front;
It moves and It moves not. It is far away from us and It is very close."*

The gods of the Overhead planes can do much to bridge that distance and to bring out that closeness, even if they cannot altogether overtake the Reality that exceeds and transcends them.

—1946



Sri Aurobindo's Letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi

Sri Aurobindo's letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi

With letters to his Father-in-Law

Sri Aurobindo

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	4
Note on the Text.....	5
Sri Aurobindo's letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi.....	6
Sri Aurobindo's letters to his father-in-law.....	24
Reminiscences of Bhupal Chandra Bose.....	27

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*Krishna/Vladnesh,
"Auro e-Books" Founder*

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Sri Aurobindo's letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi

The complete set of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his wife Mrinalini Devi. These letters are significant for they reveal little known but important aspects of Sri Aurobindo's personality.

All these letters are translated from the Bengali except the one dated 20th August 1902, which was originally in English.

Sri Aurobindo's letters to his father-in-law

Two letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose (1861– 1937). The first letter, dated 8 June 1906, was written during the early days of Sri Aurobindo's political career and the second letter, dated 19 February 1919, was penned shortly after the death of Sri Aurobindo's wife Mrinalini Devi in December 1918. These letters are indeed very special for they reveal the unknown aspects of Sri Aurobindo's personality.

Reminiscences of Bhupal Chandra Bose

A brief statement made by Bhupal Chandra Bose, Sri Aurobindo's father-in-law on 26 August 1931 where he has recorded his reminiscences of his daughter Mrinalini Devi who was married to Sri Aurobindo in April 1901.

Bhupal Chandra Bose had visited Pondicherry in the early 1930s and had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE MRINALINI DEVI

* * *

[1]

**c/o K.B. Jadhav, Esq.
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
25th June 1902**

Dearest Mrinalini,

I was very sorry to learn of your fever. I hope since then you have begun to look after your health a little more. It is a cold place, so you must be careful not to catch cold. I am sending ten rupees today. Buy some medicine and take it daily. Don't forget. I have heard of a medicine that will cure you of your disease. You don't have to take it daily. One or two doses will cure you; but it won't be possible to take it in Assam. You'll be able to take it in Deoghur. I'll write Sarojini about what is to be done.

Sarojini is in Deoghur. Baudidi [elder brother's wife] has left Darjeeling for Calcutta. Darjeeling did not suit her. Sarojini writes to say that she will remain in Bengal until winter. Grandmother is putting a lot of pressure on her. She hopes Baudidi will be able to arrange a marriage for Sarojini. I don't think there is much hope. If Sarojini gives up her excessive demands in regard to looks and attainments, there will be some chance.

'Kencho' went to the Lonavala Hills. He called me there too. He called

me because he wanted to write a document. It was written but he did not send it. At the last minute he suddenly changed his mind. Another very big and secret work came up. I had to do it. When he saw my work 'Kencho' was very satisfied and he promised to raise my salary. Who knows whether he will do it or not. 'Kencho's' word is not worth very much. But he may give the raise. It seems to me that the day of 'Kencho's' downfall is coming. All of the signs are bad.

I am staying now in Khaserao's house. When you come we will go to the "Navalakha". There probably will not be much rain this year. If there is no rain, there certainly will be a terrible famine. In that case your visit here will have to be cancelled. If you come it will only mean a lot of trouble – trouble as regards food, water and prices. It is not hot in Baroda this summer. A beautiful breeze is blowing, but this beautiful breeze has blown away the hope of rain. Now only ten or twelve days remain. If we have good rain within ten or twelve days we may yet be saved from the stroke of a great misfortune.

I will send your photo soon. Jotin Banerji is staying with us. Today I will go to see him and select the best photo.

Give my respects to your father and your mother. You will understand all that I leave unexpressed.

Your husband

* * *

[2]

C/o Rai Bahadur

K.B. Jadhav,

Baroda.

July 2nd 1902.

Dearest Mrinalini,

... You said you have got a horoscope; send it to me. Jotin Banerjee is here and I wish to show it to him. I have faith in astrology ten years' experience confirmed. But also amongst a thousand, nine hundred know nothing about it. Few know but more make mistakes, e.g. non-performance of the coronation ceremony of the English King this year was declared several months ago causes even. If there be evil consequences then there are means of knowing them beforehand as they can be cured often. If horoscope can't be found, exact time of birth will do, but even the very minute must be correct....

Your husband

* * *

[3]

**C/o K.B. Jadhav, Esq.
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
20th August 1902**

Dearest Mrinalini,

I have not written to you for a long time because I have not been in very good health and had not the energy to write. I went out of Baroda to see whether change and rest would set me up, and your telegram came when I was not here. I feel much better now, and I suppose there was nothing really the matter with me except overwork. I am sorry I made you so anxious; there was no real cause to be so, for you know I never get seriously ill. Only when I feel out of sorts, I find writing letters

almost impossible.

The Maharajah has given me Rs. 90 promotion this will raise my pay to Rs. 450. In the order he has made me a lot of compliments about my powers, talent, capacity, usefulness etcetera, but also made a remark on my want of regularity and punctual habits. Besides he has shown his intention of taking the value of the Rs. 90 out of me by burdening me with overwork, so I don't feel very grateful to him. He says that if convenient, my services can be utilized in the College. But I don't see how it will be convenient, just now at least; for it is nearly the end of the term. Even if I go to the College, he has asked the Dewan to use me for writing Annual Reports etc. I suppose this means that he does not want me to get my vacations. However, let us see what happens.

If I join the College now and am allowed the three months' vacation, I shall of course go to Bengal and to Assam for a short visit. I am afraid it will be impossible for you to come to Baroda just now. There has been no rain here for a month, except a short shower early this morning. The wells are all nearly dried up; the water of the Ajwa reservoir which supplies Baroda is very low and must be quite used up by next November; the crops in the fields are all parched and withering. This means that we shall not only have famine but there will be no water for bathing and washing up, or even, perhaps for drinking. Besides if there is famine, it is practically sure that all the officers will be put on half-pay. We are hoping, rather than expecting, that there may be good rain before the end of August. But the signs are against it, and if it comes, it will only remove the water difficulty or put it off for a few months. For you to come to Baroda and endure all the troubles and sufferings of such a state of things is out of the question. You must decide for yourself whether you will stay with your father or at Deoghur. You may as well stay in Assam till October, and then if I can go to Bengal, I will take you to Deoghur where you can stop for the winter at least. If I cannot come then, I will, if you like, try and make some arrangement for you to be taken there.

I am glad your father will be able to send me a cook when you come.

I have got a Maratha cook, but he can prepare nothing properly except meat dishes. I don't know how to get over the difficulty about the maid-servant. Sarojini wrote something about a Mahomedan ayah, but that would never do. After being so recently readmitted to Hindu society, I cannot risk it; it is all very well for Khaserao and others whose social position is so strong that they may do almost anything they like. As soon as I see any prospect of being able to get you here, I shall try my best to arrange about a maid-servant. It is no use doing it now.

I hope you are able to read and understand this letter; if you can't, I hope it will make you more anxious to learn English than you have been up to now. I could not manage to write a Bengali letter just now – so I thought I had better write in English rather than put off writing.

Do not be too much disappointed by the delay in coming to Baroda; it cannot be avoided. I should like you to spend some time in Deogurh, if you do not mind, Assam somehow seems terribly far off; and besides I should like you to form a closer intimacy with my relatives, at least those among them whom I especially love.

Your loving husband

* * *

[4]

30th Aug. 1905

Dearest Mrinalini,

I have received your letter of the 24th August. I am sorry to learn that the same affliction has fallen once more upon your parents. You have not written which of the boys has passed away from here. But then what can be done if the affliction comes. This is a world in which when you seek happiness you find grief in its heart, sorrow always clinging to joy.

That rule touches not only the desire of children, but all worldly desires. To offer, with a quiet heart, all happiness and grief at the feet of God is the only remedy.

I read ten rupees instead of twenty and so I said I would send ten rupees. If you need fifteen rupees I will send fifteen. This month I sent money for the clothes Sarojini bought for you in Darjeeling. How was I to know that you had borrowed money to stay there? I am sending fifteen rupees you need. If you need three or four rupees I will send it next month. I will send twenty rupees at that time.

Now I will write the other thing of which I spoke before. I think you have understood by now that the man with whose fate yours has been linked is a man of a very unusual character. Mine is not the same field of action, the same purpose in life, the same mental attitude as that of the people of today in this country. I am in every respect different from them and out of the ordinary. Perhaps you know what ordinary men say of an extraordinary view, an extraordinary endeavour, an extraordinary ambition. To them it is madness; only, if the madman is successful in his work then he is called no longer a madman but a great genius. But how many are successful in their life's endeavour? Among a thousand men there are five or six who are out of the ordinary and out of the five or six one perhaps successful. Not to speak of success I have not yet even entirely entered my field of work. There is nothing then for you but to consider me mad. And it is an evil thing for a woman to fall into the hands of a mad fellow. For woman's expectations are all bound up in worldly happiness and sorrow. A madman will not make his wife happy, he can only make her miserable.

The founders of the Hindu religion understood this very well. They loved extraordinary characters, extraordinary endeavours, extraordinary ambitions. Madman or genius, they respected the extraordinary man. But all this means a terrible plight for the wife, and how could the difficulty be solved? The sages fixed on this solution; they told the woman, "Know that the only mantra for womankind is this: 'The husband is the supreme guru.' The wife shares the dharma of her

husband. She must help him, counsel him, encourage him in whatever work he accepts as his dharma. She should regard him as her god, take joy in his joy, and feel sorrow in his unhappiness. It is for a man to choose his work; the woman's part is to give help and encouragement."

Now the point is this. Are you going to choose the path of the Hindu religion or follow the ideal of the new culture? Your marriage to a madman is the result of bad karma in your previous lives. It is good to come to terms with one's fate, but what sort of terms will they be? Will you also dismiss your husband as a madman on the strength of what other people think? A madman is bound to run after his mad ways. You cannot hold him back; his nature is stronger than yours. Will you then do nothing but sit in a corner and weep? Or will you run along with him; try to be the mad wife of this madman, like the queen of the blind king who played the part of the blind woman by putting a bandage across her eyes? For all your education in a Brahmo school you are still a woman from a Hindu home. The blood of Hindu ancestors flows in your veins. I have no doubt that you will choose the latter course.

I have three madnesses. The first one is this. I firmly believe that the accomplishments, genius, higher education and learning and wealth that God has given me are His. I have a right to spend for my own purposes only what is needed for the maintenance of the family and is otherwise absolutely essential. The rest must be returned to God. If I spend everything for myself, for my pleasure and luxury, I am a thief. The Hindu scriptures say that one who receives wealth from God and does not give it back to Him is a thief. So far I have given two annas to God and used the other fourteen annas for my own pleasure; this is the way I have settled the account, remaining engrossed in worldly pleasures. Half my life has been wasted – even the beast finds fulfilment in stuffing his own belly and his family's and catering to their happiness.

I have realized that I have been acting all this time as an animal and a thief. Now I realize this and I am filled with remorse and disgusted with myself. No more of all this. I renounce this sin once and for all. What

does giving to God mean? It means to spend on good works. The money I gave to Usha or to Sarojini causes me no regret. To help others is a sacred duty; to give protection to those who seek refuge is a yet greater sacred duty. But the account is not settled by giving only to one's brothers and sisters. I have three hundred million brothers and sisters in this country. Many of them are dying of starvation and the majority just manage to live, racked by sorrow and suffering. They too must be helped.

What do you say, will you come along with me and share my ideal in this respect: We will eat and dress like ordinary people, buying only what is truly needed and offering the rest to God: this is what I propose to do. My purpose can be fulfilled, once you give your approval, once you are able to accept the sacrifice. You have been saying, "I have made no progress." Here I have shown you a path towards progress. Will you take this path?

My second madness has only recently seized me. It is this: by whatever means I must have the direct vision of God. Religion these days means repeating the name of God at any odd hour, praying in public, showing off how pious one is. I want nothing of this. If God exists, there must be some way to experience His existence, to meet Him face to face. However arduous this path is, I have made up my mind to follow it. The Hindu religion declares that the way lies in one's own body, in one's own mind. It has laid down the rules for following the way, and I have begun to observe them. Within a month I have realized that what the Hindu religion says is not false. I am experiencing in myself the signs of which it speaks. Now I want to take you along this way. You will not be able to keep step with me, for you do not have the requisite knowledge. But there is nothing to prevent you from following behind me. All can attain perfection on this path, but to enter it depends on one's own will. Nobody can drag you on to it. If you consent to this, I shall write more about it.

My third madness is that while others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter – a few meadows and fields, forests and hills and

rivers – I look upon Her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner, amuse himself with his wife and children, or would he rush out to deliver his mother? I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength – I am not going to fight with sword or gun – but it is the strength of knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable. After listening to what my aunt said you formed the idea that some wicked people had dragged your simple and innocent husband on to the bad path. But it was this innocent husband of yours who brought those people and hundreds of others on to that path, be it bad or good, and will yet bring thousands of others on to that same path. I do not say that the work will be accomplished during my lifetime, but it certainly will be done.

Now I ask you, what are you going to do in this connection? The wife is the shakti, the strength of her husband. Will you be Usha's disciple and go on repeating the mantras of Sahib-worship? Will you diminish the strength of your husband by indifference or redouble it by your sympathy and encouragement? You will say, "What can an ordinary woman like me do in these great matters? I have no strength of mind, no intelligence, I am afraid to think about these things." But there is an easy way out. Take refuge in God. And if you can put your trust in me, if you can listen to me alone and not to all and sundry, I can give you my own strength; that will not diminish my strength but increase it. We say that the wife is the husband's shakti, his strength. This means that the husband's strength is redoubled when he sees his own image in his wife and hears an echo of his own high aspirations in her.

Will you remain like this for ever: "I shall put on fine clothes, have nice things to eat, laugh and dance and enjoy all the pleasures"? Such an attitude cannot be called progress. At the present time the life of

women in this country has taken this narrow and contemptible form. Give up all this and follow after me. We have come to this world to do God's work; let us begin it.

You have one defect in your nature. You are much too simple. You listen to anything anyone might say. Thus your mind is for ever restless, your intelligence cannot develop, you cannot concentrate on any work. This has to be corrected. You must acquire knowledge by listening to one person only. You must have a single aim and accomplish your work with a resolute mind. You must ignore the calumny and the ridicule of others and hold fast to your devotion.

There is another defect, not so much of your personal nature, as of the times. The times are such in Bengal that people are incapable of listening to serious things in a serious manner. Religion, philanthropy, noble aspirations, high endeavour, the deliverance of the country, all that is serious, all that is high and noble it wants to ridicule. People want to laugh everything away. At your Brahmo school, you picked up a little of this fault. Bari[Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose] also had it; all of us are tainted by this defect to some extent. It has grown up in surprising measure among the people of Deoghar. This attitude must be rejected with a firm mind. You will be able to do it easily. And once you get into the habit of thinking, your true nature will blossom forth. You have a natural turn towards doing good for others and towards self-sacrifice. The one thing you lack is strength of mind. You will get that through worship of God.

This is the secret of mine I wanted to tell you. Do not divulge it to anybody. Ponder calmly over these matters. There is nothing to be frightened of, but there is much to think about. To start with, you need do nothing but meditate on the Divine each day for half an hour, expressing to him an ardent desire in the form of a prayer. The mind will get prepared gradually. This is the prayer you are to make to Him: "May I not be an obstacle in the way of my husband's life, his aim, his endeavour to realize God. May I always be his helper and his instrument." Will you do this?

* * *

[5]

Dearest,

For the last fifteen days the college examinations have been going on. Besides that a Swadeshi samiti is being established. I have been so busy with these two things that I haven't had a chance to write you. But I haven't had a letter from you for quite some time. I hope all of you are well. The college closes tomorrow. Certainly my work will continue, but I won't have to put in more than an hour a day.

I am sending twenty rupees with this letter. You may give ten rupees to the clerks of Burn Company or else you may spend it on some other good purpose. I can't understand what this Burn Company affair is all about. No clear account is given in the newspapers. Nowadays it is not an easy thing to keep up this sort of strike. Almost always the poor lose, the rich win. It will be a great day for India when the Indian middle class gives up its desire for petty posts and goes into business on its own. I can't send you any more money because I have to send 60 to 70 rupees for Sarojini's Darjeeling expenses and Madhavrao has been sent abroad for some special work. Much money has to be given for the Swadeshi movement and besides that I'm trying to start another movement and I will need no end of money for that. I can't put anything away.

I have sent the Floriline. I hope you got it. Dhanji was not here, then he came but Lakshmanrao was busy with the examinations and so was I, both of us forgot. I shall send the prescription soon.

Why do you want to read the "Seeker"? It is an old poem. I knew nothing about religion then. The poem is very pessimistic. I don't know the Bengali word for "pessimistic". In Marathi they say nirashavadi. Now I have realized that pessimism is just a form of ignorance.

The other day I went over to Khaserao's. Anandrao has grown quite tall. He is going to be a big swindler.

Shri

* * *

[6]

[This letter, apparently written in Bengali, survives only in the form of a court translation, which has been transcribed verbatim.]

22 October 1905

My dearest Mrinalini,

I am in receipt of your letter. I have not written you since a long time. Do not take it amiss. Why are you so much anxious about my health. I never suffer you know, except for cough and cold. Bari is here. He is in an exceedingly bad state of health. His fever is often accompanied by complications but with all his ailments, his energy never flags. He never sits quiet. As soon as he gets a little better, he goes out in the service of his country. He will never take up service. I will of course not write Sarojini about these matters, nor should you do so. She would then get mad with anxiety. I hope I will go to Calcutta in November. Then I have many things to do.

That long letter of yours gave me no reason to despair. I was rather glad. If Sarojini learns to practice self-denial like you, it will help me much in my future (plan of) work. But this is not to be. Her desire for future happiness is very strong. I know not whether she will ever be able to overcome it. God's will be done. Your letter is lost amongst a heap of papers. I will write again as soon as I have found it out. It is time for evening prayer. I stop here for the day. I am well, you should not give

way to anxiety even if you do not hear from me. What ailment will overtake me (that you are afraid of)? I hope you are all quite well.

Yours

*What need have you for my name.
Will not this dash do? —*

* * *

[7]

c/o Babu Subodh Chandra Mullick

12, Wellington Square

Calcutta

[1905 December]

Dearest Mrinalini

I have received your letter. I was sorry to read it. I wrote you a letter from Bombay in which I expressed my intention to go to Bengal. In addition I spoke about many other important matters. I did not inform anyone else of my going to Bengal. There was no reason why I did not inform others. Now I realize that you did not receive that letter. Either it was not posted or it was lost in the post office. In any case it is unfortunate that you get impatient so quickly. For I say again, you are not the wife of an ordinary worldly man. You must have a great deal of patience and strength. A time may come when you will be without news of me not for a month or a month and a half but for as much as six months. So you will have to learn a little patience; otherwise there will be endless sorrow for you in the future.

I had written about many important matters. I don't have time to write about all that again. I will write a little later. Very soon I will go to Benares. From Benares I will go to Baroda. Once I arrive I will take leave

and return to Bengal. But if Clarke has not come back there will be some difficulty.

Bari is in Deoghar. He is always getting fever. If I do not get leave he may come back to Baroda.

A.G

* * *

[8]

2 March 1906

Dearest Mrinalini

Today I will leave for Calcutta. I was due to go long ago. The leave was sanctioned but the big men in Baroda couldn't find time to sign it, so I have lost ten days for nothing. At any rate I shall reach Calcutta on Monday. I don't know where I will stay. It may not be possible to stay at Na-mashi's. I have given up fish and meat. I may not eat them again in my life. But why should Na-mashi listen to that? Besides it would not be good if I could not find a secluded place. I have to do a number of things alone for an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a half in the evening. All that cannot be done in front of others.¹² Wellington Square was quite suitable for me, but Hem Mallick has just died, so I can't go there now. But I will receive letters addressed to me there.

I will try to go to Assam as you ask. But once I set foot in Calcutta everyone catches hold of me. I will have a thousand things to do. I won't get time to visit my relatives. If I do go to Assam I will only be able to stay three or four days. Bari can very well bring you. I can send Ranchhod along with him. If I go, it probably won't be this month. I'll see when I get to Calcutta. Another possibility is that if Sarojini wants to go to Calcutta, Bari can take her there and I can bring her back a month

later when I go. I'll fix things up when I get to Calcutta.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose

* * *

[9]

6th December, 1907

Dear Mrinalini,

I received your letter the day before yesterday. The shawl was sent the very same day. I do not understand why you did not get it...

Here [in Calcutta] I do not have a minute to spare. I am in charge of the writing; I am in charge of the Congress work; I have to settle the Bande Mataram affair. I am finding it difficult to cope with it all. Besides, I have my own work to do; that too cannot be neglected.

Will you listen to one request of mine? This is a time of great anxiety for me. There are pulls from every side that are enough to drive one mad. If at this time you also get restless, it can only increase my worry and anxiety. But if you could write encouraging and comforting letters, that would give me great strength. I should then be able to overcome all fears and dangers with a cheerful heart. I know it is hard for you to live alone at Deoghar. But if you keep your mind firm and have faith, your sorrows will not be able to overcome you to such an extent. As you have married me, this kind of sorrow is inevitable for you. Occasional separations cannot be avoided, for, unlike the ordinary Bengali, I cannot make the happiness of family and relatives my primary aim in life. Under these circumstances there is no way out for you except to consider my ideal as your ideal and find your happiness in the success of my appointed work. One thing more. Many of those with whom you are living at present are our elders. Do not get angry with them even if they

say harsh or unfair things. And do not believe that everything they say is what they mean or is intended to hurt you. Words often come out in anger, without thought. It is no good holding on to them. If you find it absolutely impossible to stay on, I shall tell Girish Babu; your grandfather can come and stay with you while I am at the Congress.

I am going to Midnapur today. On my return I shall make the necessary arrangements here, and then proceed to Surat. That will probably be on the 15th or 16th. I shall be back on the 2nd of January.

Yours

* * *

[10]

23 Scott's Lane,

Calcutta,

17th Feb. [1908]

Dear Mrinalini,

I have not written to you for a long time. This is my eternal failing; if you do not pardon me out of your own goodness, what shall I do? What is ingrained in one does not go out in a day. Perhaps it will take me the whole of this life to correct this fault.

I was to come on the 8th January, but I could not. This did not happen of my own accord. I had to go where God took me. This time I did not go for my own work; it was for His work that I went. The state of my mind has undergone a change. But of this I shall not speak in this letter. Come here, and I shall tell you what is to be told. But there is only one thing which must be said now and that is that from now on I no longer am the master of my own will. Like a puppet I must go wherever

God takes me; like a puppet I must do whatever He makes me do. It will be difficult for you to grasp the meaning of these words just now, but it is necessary to inform you, otherwise my movements may cause you regret and sorrow. You may think that in my work I am neglecting you, but do not do so. Already I have done you many wrongs and it is natural that this should have displeased you. But I am no longer free. From now on you will have to understand that all I do depends not on my will but is done at the command [adesh] of God. When you come here, you will understand the meaning of my words. I hope that God will show you the Light He has shown me in His infinite Grace. But that depends on His Will. If you wish to share my life and ideal you must strive to your utmost so that, on the strength of your ardent desire. He may in His Grace reveal the path to you also. Do not let anyone see this letter, for what I have said is extremely secret. I have not spoken about this to anyone but you; I am forbidden to do so. This much for today.

Your husband

P.S. I have written to Sarojini about household matters. When you see the letter you will understand that it is unnecessary to write to you separately about them.

* * *

[11]

23 Scott's Lane,

Calcutta,

21-2-08

Dearest Mrinalini,

As there will be a delay in my obtaining my salary from the College I have borrowed Rs 50 from Radha Kumud Mukherjee and am sending it. I asked Abinash to have it sent. He ought to have sent it by wire, but he forgot to send it in your name. Take the rent money from this and after keeping aside something for mother, pay off some of the debt. Next month I will get my salary for February and January, three hundred rupees. Then we can pay off the rest of the debt.

I will not say anything of what I wrote in my last letter. I will tell you everything when you come. I have got permission and cannot avoid speaking. Enough for today.

Your husband

* * *

[12]

I have not written you a letter for a long time. I believe there may soon be a great change in our life. If so, if that happens we will be free from all want. We wait on the will of the Mother. Within me as well the final transformation is taking place. The Mother's inspiration has become very compact. Once this transformation is complete, the descent stable, our separation cannot continue any more. For the day of the yogasiddhi is coming near. After that will be the How of the entire body. Tomorrow or the day after a sign will manifest itself. After that I will be able to see you.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS TO HIS FATHER-IN-LAW

Two letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose (1861– 1937). The first letter, dated 8 June 1906, was written during the early days of Sri Aurobindo's political career and the second letter, dated 19 February 1919, was penned shortly after the death of Sri Aurobindo's wife Mrinalini Devi in December 1918. These letters are indeed very special for they reveal the unknown aspects of Sri Aurobindo's personality.

* * *

[1]

Calcutta

June 8th 1906.

My dear father-in-law,

I could not come over to Shillong in May, because my stay in Eastern Bengal was unexpectedly long. It was nearly the end of May before I could return to Calcutta, so that my programme was necessarily changed. I return to Baroda today. I have asked for leave from the 12th, but I do not know whether it will be sanctioned so soon. In any case I shall be back by the end of the month. If you are anxious to send Mrinalini down, I have no objection whatever. I have no doubt my aunt will gladly put her up until I can return from Baroda and make my arrangements.

I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it. Of course that is no

excuse for my culpability in not writing letters,— a fault I am afraid I shall always be quicker to admit than to reform. I can easily understand that to others it may seem to spring from a lack of the most ordinary affection. It was not so in the case of my father from whom I seem to inherit the defect. In all my fourteen years in England I hardly got a dozen letters from him, and yet I cannot doubt his affection for me, since it was the false report of my death which killed him. I fear you must take me as I am with all my imperfections on my head.

Barin¹ has again fallen ill, and I have asked him to go out to some healthier place for a short visit. I was thinking he might go to Waltair, but he has set his heart on going to Shillong— I don't quite know why, unless it is to see a quite new place and at the same time make acquaintance with his sister-in-law's family. If he goes, I am sure you will take good care of him for the short time he may be there. You will find him, I am afraid, rather wilful and erratic,— the family failing. He is especially fond of knocking about by himself in a spasmodic and irregular fashion when he ought to be sitting at home and nursing his delicate health, but I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect; if checked, he is likely to go off at a tangent & makes things worse. He has, however, an immense amount of vitality which allows him to play these tricks with impunity in a good climate, and I think a short stay at Shillong ought to give him another lease of health.

*Your affectionate
son-in-law
Aurobindo Ghose*

* * *

[2]

Pondicherry

¹ Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's youngest brother and a noted revolutionary.

19 February 1919

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you with regard to this fatal event in both our lives; words are useless in face of the feelings it has caused, if even they can ever express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irreparable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Mrinalini would have desired, should be done, and I have no doubt this is what she would have approved of. I consent to the chudis [gold bangles] being kept by her mother; but I should be glad if you would send me two or three of her books, especially if there are any in which her name is written. I have only of her her letters and a photograph.

Aurobindo

REMINISCENCES OF BHUPAL CHANDRA BOSE

I. Her father and mother both belong to the Jessore district. The ancestral home of the Basu family is situated in a village named Meherpore on the left bank of the Kapadaka river, 24 miles to the south of the district town of Jessore. Mrinalini's father, Bhupal Chandra Basu (born 1861) – the writer of this short note – graduated from the Calcutta University (1881) and received an agricultural training as a State scholar at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, in England, and after his return to India, served for two years as a teacher in the Bangabasi School and College of which he was a joint founder with his lifelong friend Srijut Girish Chandra Bose, entered Government service in 1888 and after serving as an Agricultural Officer for 28 years in Bengal and Assam, retired in 1916 and settled down at Ranchi soon after his retirement.

During service his headquarters were for a year (1888-89) at Ranchi, then in Calcutta (1889-97) and finally for nineteen years at Shillong (1897-1916), and Mrinalini spent portions of her life at all these places. This note would be incomplete without a special mention of the very intimate and affectionate relations which have existed ever since the year 1883 between her father and his family on the one hand and Sj. Girish Chandra Bose and his family on the other. So much so that to most of their acquaintances Mrinalini's father is known as a younger brother of the latter. Mrinalini spent considerable periods of her life under her uncle Girish Babu's roof and was regarded as a daughter of his house. It was Girish Chandra who looked after her education while she was a boarder at the Brahmo Girls' School in Calcutta. It was he who negotiated her marriage and did everything in connection with that ceremony and it was under his roof that Mrinalini passed away in December 1918.

II. Mrinalini, the eldest child of her father, saw the light of day on the... 1887² in Calcutta in a house in Eden Hospital Street (or lane), which with the entire lane was demolished after a year or two and merged in the extension grounds of the Calcutta Medical College.

III. Mrinalini spent her early childhood in Calcutta. She was at first educated under a private teacher, and soon after her father's transfer to Shillong, she was sent down to Calcutta and lived as a boarder for nearly three years at the Brahmo Girls' School until the time of her marriage in April 1901. She evinced no exceptional abilities or tendencies at this age, indeed at no stage of her life.

There was nothing remarkable about her short school career. She however contracted two notable friendships during this time. One of the two was Miss Swarnalata Das, M.A., eldest daughter of a very intimate friend of her father Sj. Raj Mohan Das, a distinguished Officer of the Assam Police, who after his retirement, devoted his heart and soul to the work of uplifting the depressed classes in East Bengal, and is now living a retired life at Dacca. Swarnalata was several years her senior in age and acted towards her as an elder sister during her school life. After graduating in Calcutta Swarnalata was sent to England for higher training in the art of teaching and after her return worked as a senior teacher of the Brahmo Girls' School of which she acted for a time as the Lady Superintendent. She was cut off in the prime of life leaving behind a memory which for purity and sweetness cannot be excelled. Mrinalini's second friend was Miss Sudhira Bose, a classmate of hers with whom she lived in closest intimacy till the day of her death. Sudhira was a younger sister of late Devabrata Bose, an associate of Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case, who after his acquittal at the trial, turned a Sannyasin and joined the Ramakrishna Mission. Miss Sudhira too joined the same Mission and worked as a teacher of the Sister Nivedita School,

² The portion was kept blank by the author but the date of Mrinalini Devi's birth is 6 March 1887.

of which, after Sister Christine left for America shortly before the war, she became the head. Sudhira too was not destined to live long. She fell a victim to a sad railway accident at Benares in December 1920, thus surviving her friend by exactly two years.

Mrinalini, though she was surrounded by Brahmo friends and was a boarder in a Brahmo School never evinced any special interest in the Brahmo movement nor in any of the social reforms associated with that movement. The whole religious bent of the later years of her life was in the direction of the Hindu revival movement inspired by Paramhansa Ramakrishna and his great disciple Swami Vivekananda.

IV. There was no relationship, nor even acquaintance between the Boses and the Ghose family, except that Mrinalini's father once came in contact with Sri Aurobindo's father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, while he was stationed as Civil Surgeon at Khulna. It must have been about the year 1890 when Sri Aurobindo was preparing himself in England for the I.C.S. examination.

Sri Aurobindo first met Mrinalini at the house of her uncle Sj. Girish Chandra Bose in Calcutta in the course of his search for a mate to share his life, and chose her at first sight as his destined wife. Their marriage took place shortly afterwards in April 1901. It is not possible for the writer or for anybody else to say what psychical affinity existed between the two, but certain it is that as soon as he saw the girl, he made up his mind to marry her. The customary negotiations were carried on by Girish Babu on the bride's side. Sri Aurobindo was at the time employed either as a Professor or as Vice-Principal of the Gaekwar's College at Baroda. He was then 28 years 9 months old, and his wife was only 14 years and 3 months, the difference in age being over 14 years.

V. The writer knows next to nothing about the married life of the couple at Baroda. After Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal and during the stormy years that followed, Mrinalini had little or no opportunity of living a

householder's life in the quiet company of her husband. Her life during this period was one of continuous strain and suffering which she bore with the utmost patience and quietude. She spent the greater period of the time either with Sri Aurobindo's maternal relatives at Deoghar or with her parents at Shillong. She was present with her husband at the time of his arrest at 48, Grey Street in May 1908 and received a frightful mental shock of which the writer and others saw a most painful evidence in the delirium of her last illness ten years later.

The writer is unable to say from his own knowledge how far Mrinalini agreed with and helped her husband in his public activities, but he can say this much for certain that she never stood in the way of his work. She never evinced any aspiration for public work.

VI. The famous letter of Sri Aurobindo to his wife bears the date 30th August without mention of the year. There is a reference in the letter to the death of a brother of hers (a second bereavement to her parents) from which the writer makes out the year to be 1905. It was the month of the declaration of the Bengal Boycott. Sri Aurobindo was apparently then at Baroda, and Mrinalini with her parents at Shillong.

The writer has never seen any of Mrinalini's letters to her husband and is therefore unable to say whether they contained anything noteworthy.

VII. The writer cannot throw any light on the mutual relations between Mrinalini and her husband, except that they were characterised by a sincere though quiet affection on the side of the husband and a never questioning obedience from the wife. One can gather much in this respect from Sri Aurobindo's published letters. After Sri Aurobindo left Bengal, the two never met again, but all who knew her could see how deeply she was attached to her husband and how she longed to join him at Pondicherry. The fates however decreed it otherwise.

During the first 3 or 4 years of his exile, Sri Aurobindo lulled her with the hope that some day (which we thought could not be very distant) he would return to Bengal. His letters to his wife as well as to the writer were few and far between, but they gave ample grounds for such a hope. At last Sri Aurobindo ceased to write at all, possibly because of his exclusive preoccupation with Yoga, but to the last day of her life Mrinalini never ceased to hope.

VIII. There was no issue of the marriage. During Sri Aurobindo's trial at Alipore which lasted a full twelve months Mrinalini lived with her parents at Shillong or with her uncle Girish Babu in Calcutta. She paid several visits to her husband at Alipore Central Jail in the company of her father. She never evinced any visible agitation during those exciting times, but kept quiet and firm throughout.

IX. Sri Aurobindo disappeared from Calcutta at the end of February or beginning of March 1910. Mrinalini was living at the time in Calcutta. We did not know his whereabouts, until several weeks later it was announced in the papers that he had escaped to Pondicherry to get out of the reach of the British Courts.

Sri Aurobindo never called his wife to Pondicherry for Sadhana. They never met again. Her father made a serious attempt after his retirement from Government service in 1916 to take her to Pondicherry but the attitude of Government at the time prevented him from realising this wish.

These long years of separation (1910-18) she spent with her parents at Shillong and Ranchi, paying occasional visits to Calcutta. She devoted these years almost exclusively to meditation and the reading of religious literatures which consisted for the most part of the writings of Swami Vivekananda and the teachings of his Great Master.

The writer believes she perused all the published writings of the

Swami and all the publications of the Udbodhan Office. Of these she has left behind an almost complete collection.

Mrinalini often visited Sri Ma (widow of Paramhansa Dev) at the Udbodhan Office in Bagbazar, who treated her with great affection, calling her Bau-Ma (the normal Bengali appellation for daughter-in-law) in consideration of the fact that the Holy Mother regarded Sri Aurobindo as her son.

Mrinalini desired at one time to receive diksha from one of the Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission. Her father wrote to Sri Aurobindo for the necessary permission but the latter in reply advised her not to receive initiation from any one else and he assured her that he would send her all the spiritual help she needed. She was content therefore to remain without any outward initiation.

X. Mrinalini passed away in Calcutta in the 32nd year of her life on the 17th of December 1918, a victim of the fell scourge of influenza which swept over India in that dreaded year.

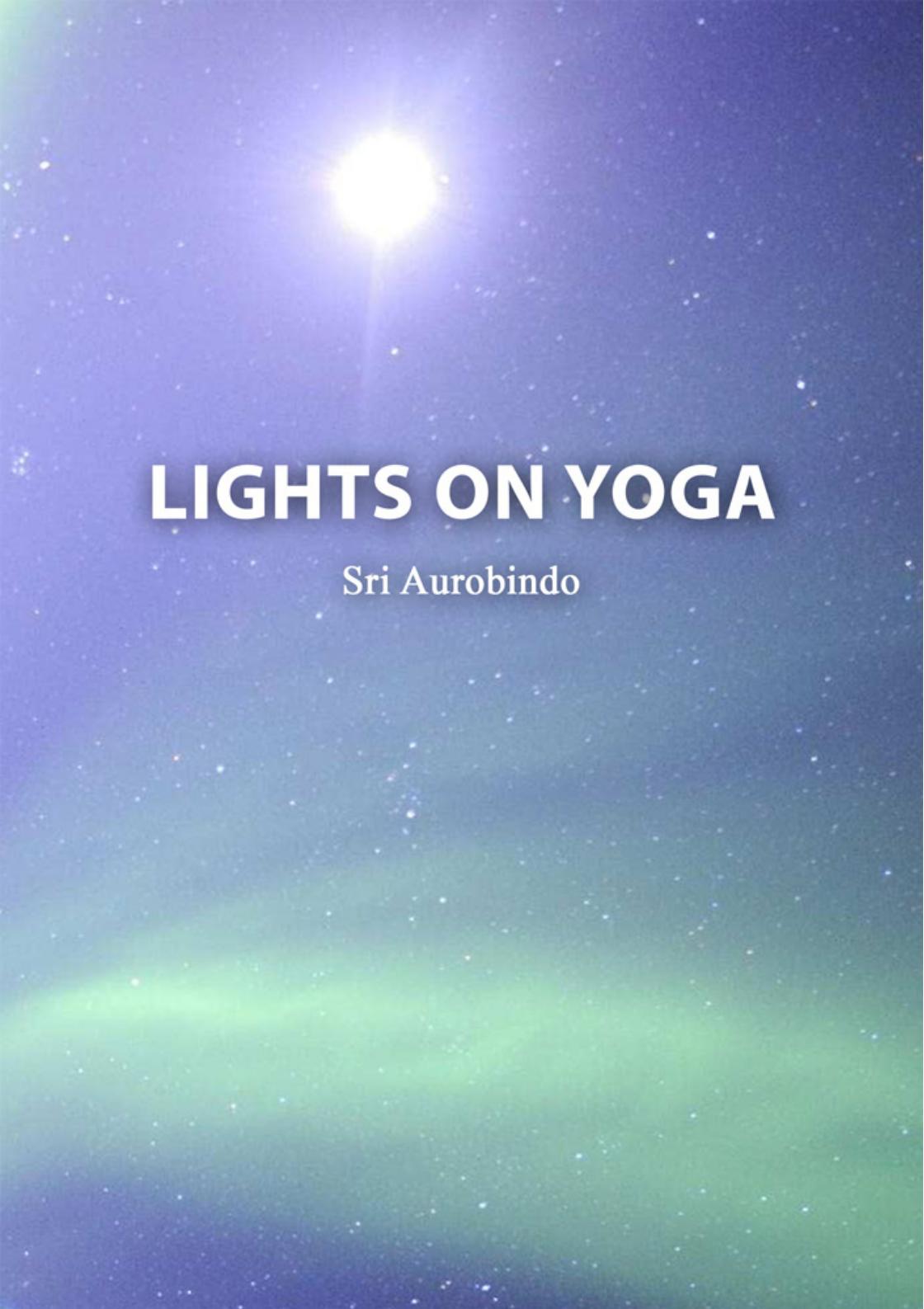
There was nothing notable about her death. In fact but for the fate which united her for a part of her short life to one of the most remarkable and forceful personalities of the age, her life had nothing extraordinary about it.

Nothing happens in the world without serving some purpose of the Divine Mother, and no doubt she came and lived to fulfil a Divine purpose which we may guess but can never know.

For sometime before she passed away, she had been selling her ornaments and giving away the proceeds in charity and what remained unsold, she left with her friend Miss Sudhira Bose, at the time Lady Superintendent of the Sister Nivedita School. Soon after her death Sudhira sold off the ornaments and the whole of the proceeds, some two thousand rupees was, with Sri Aurobindo's permission, made over to the Ramakrishna Mission and constituted into an endowment named

after Mrinalini, out of the interest of which a girl student is maintained at the Sister Nivedita School.

XI. Mrinalini in the Mother – the writer would rather say nothing about this. If the facts relating to the descent of Mrinalini's spirit in the Mother which the writer heard from the Mother herself are to be published, it is proper that the Mother's permission be taken by the publisher and she be approached for an authentic and firsthand account of the incident. The writer is greatly afraid that he might be guilty of grave mistakes if he were to narrate it from his own memory.

The background of the image is a dark blue night sky filled with numerous small white stars. A single, extremely bright, yellowish-white light source, resembling a moon or sun, is positioned in the upper left quadrant. At the bottom of the frame, there is a horizontal band of a vibrant green color, suggesting a distant horizon or a reflection on water.

LIGHTS ON YOGA

Sri Aurobindo



LIGHTS ON YOGA

Sri Aurobindo

Table of Contents

THE GOAL

PLANES AND PARTS OF THE BEING

SURRENDER AND OPENING

WORK

GLOSSARY

First Edition: 1935 Ninth Edition: 1981 Sixth Impression: 2005

This collection consists of illuminating extracts from Sri Aurobindo's letters to disciples.

"This Yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work. This means an inner discipline far more exacting and difficult than mere ethical and physical austerities. One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of Yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end."

Sri Aurobindo

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Publishers' Note

This booklet was first published in 1935 with the following note:

These are extracts from letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples in answer to their queries. They have been put together and arranged so as to be of help to some aspirants for the understanding and practice of the Yoga.

The extracts were compiled by Sri Aurobindo's secretary. Sri Aurobindo approved the arrangement and lightly revised the texts.

It has recently been found that the notes on purity, faithfulness and sincerity on pages 23 and 24 were written by the Mother. They remain here in their original places in the compilation.

THE GOAL

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

The Sadhana of this Yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.

*

The only creation for which there is any place here is the supramental, the bringing of the divine Truth down on the earth, not only into the mind and vital but into the body and into Matter. Our object is not to remove all “limitations” on the expansion of the ego or to give a free field and make unlimited room for the fulfilment of the ideas of the human mind or the desires of the ego-centred life-force. None of us are here to “do as we like”, or to create a world in which we shall at last be able to do as we like; we are here to do what the Divine wills and to create a world in which the Divine Will can manifest its truth no longer deformed by human ignorance or perverted and mistranslated by vital desire. The work which the Sadhak of the supramental Yoga has to do is

not his own work for which he can lay down his own conditions, but the work of the Divine which he has to do according to the conditions laid down by the Divine. Our Yoga is not for our own sake but for the sake of the Divine. It is not our own personal manifestation that we are to seek, the manifestation of the individual ego freed from all bounds and from all bonds, but the manifestation of the Divine. Of that manifestation our own spiritual liberation, perfection, fullness is to be a result and a part, but not in any egoistic sense or for any ego-centred or self-seeking purpose. This liberation, perfection, fullness too must not be pursued for our own sake, but for the sake of the Divine.

*

This Yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work. This means an inner discipline far more exacting and difficult than mere ethical and physical austerities. One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of Yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end.

*

In the former Yogas it was the experience of the Spirit which is always free and one with the Divine that was sought. The nature had to change only enough to prevent its being an obstacle to that knowledge and experience. The complete change down to the physical was only sought for by a few and then more as a "siddhi" than anything else, not as the manifestation of a new Nature in the earth-consciousness.

*

All the consciousness in the human being who is the mental embodied in living Matter has to rise so as to meet the higher consciousness; the higher consciousness has also to descend into mind, into life, into Matter. In that way the barriers will be removed and the higher consciousness will be able to take up the whole lower nature and transform it by the power of the supermind.

The earth is a material field of evolution. Mind and Life, Supermind, Sachchidananda are in principle involved there in the earth-consciousness; but only Matter is at first organised; then life descends from the life plane and gives shape and organisation and activity to the life principle in Matter, creates the plant and animal; then mind descends from the mind plane, creating man. Now Supermind is to descend so as to create a supramental race.

*

In order to get the dynamic realisation it is not enough to rescue the Purusha from subjection to Prakriti; one must transfer the allegiance of the Purusha from the lower Prakriti with its play of ignorant Forces to the Supreme Divine Shakti, the Mother.

It is a mistake to identify the Mother with the lower Prakriti and its mechanism of forces. Prakriti here is a mechanism only which has been put forth for the working of the evolutionary ignorance. As the ignorant mental, vital or physical being is not itself the Divine, although it comes from the Divine – so the mechanism of Prakriti is not the Divine Mother. No doubt something of her is there in and behind this mechanism maintaining it for the evolutionary purpose; but what she is in herself is not a Shakti of Avidya, but the Divine Consciousness, Power, Light, Para Prakriti to whom we turn for the release and the divine fulfilment.

The realisation of the Purusha consciousness calm, free, observing the play of forces but not attached or involved in them is a means of liberation. The calm, the detachment, a peaceful strength and joy (*ātmarati*) must be brought down into the vital and physical as well as into the mind. If this is established, one is no longer a prey to the turmoil of the vital forces. But this calm, peace, silent strength and joy is only the first descent of the Power of the Mother into the Adhar. Beyond that is a Knowledge, an executive Power, a dynamic Ananda which is not that of the ordinary Prakriti even at its best and most Sattvic, but Divine in its nature.

First, however, the calm, the peace, the liberation is needed. To try to bring down the dynamic side too soon is not advisable, for then it would be a descent into a troubled and impure nature unable to assimilate it and serious perturbations might be the consequence.

*

If the Supermind were not to give us a greater and completer truth than any of the lower planes, it would not be worth while trying to reach it. Each plane has its own truths. Some of them are no longer true on a higher plane; e.g., desire and ego were truths of the mental, vital and physical Ignorance – a man there without ego or desire would be a Tamasic automaton. As we rise higher, ego and desire appear no longer as truths, they are falsehoods disfiguring the true person and the true will. The struggle between the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness is a truth here – as we ascend above, it becomes less and less of a truth and in the supermind it has no truth at all. Other truths remain but change their character, importance, place in the whole. The difference or contrast between the Personal and Impersonal is a truth of the Overmind – there is no separate truth of them in the Supermind, they are inseparably one. But one who has not mastered and lived the truths of Overmind cannot reach the supramental Truth. The incompetent pride of man's mind makes a sharp distinction and wants to call all else untruth and leap at once to the highest truth whatever it may be – but that is an ambitious and arrogant error. One has to climb the stairs and rest one's feet firmly on each step in order to reach the summit.

*

It is a mistake to dwell too much on the lower nature and its obstacles, which is the negative side of the Sadhana. They have to be seen and purified, but preoccupation with them as the one important thing is not helpful. The positive side of experience of the descent is the more important thing. If one waits for the lower nature to be purified entirely and for all time before calling down the positive experience, one might have to wait for ever. It is true that the more the lower nature is purified, the easier is the descent of the higher Nature, but it is also and more true that the more the higher Nature descends, the more the lower is purified. Neither the complete purification nor the permanent and perfect manifestation can come all at once, it is a matter of time and patient progress. The two (purification and manifestation) go on progressing side by side and become more and more strong to play into each other's hands – that is the usual course of the Sadhana.

*

Intensities like that do not remain so long as the consciousness is not transformed – there has to be a period of assimilation. When the being is unconscious, the assimilation goes on behind the veil or below the surface and meanwhile the surface consciousness sees only dullness and loss of what it had got; but when one is conscious, then one can see the assimilation going on and one sees that nothing is lost, it is only a quiet settling in of what has come down.

The vastness, the overwhelming calm and silence in which you feel merged is what is called the Atman or the silent Brahman. It is the whole aim of many Yogas to get this realisation of Atman or silent Brahman and live in it. In our Yoga it is only the first stage of the realisation of the Divine and of that growing of the being into the higher or divine Consciousness which we call transformation.

*

The true being may be realised in one or both of two aspects – the Self or Atman and the soul or Antaratman, psychic being, Chaitya Purusha. The difference is that one is felt as universal, the other as individual supporting the mind, life and body. When one first realises the Atman one feels it separate from all things, existing in itself and detached, and it is to this realisation that the image of the dry coconut fruit may apply. When one realises the psychic being, it is not like that; for this brings the sense of union with the Divine and dependence upon It and sole consecration to the Divine alone and the power to change the nature and discover the true mental, the true vital, the true physical being in oneself. Both realisations are necessary for this Yoga.

The “I” or the little ego is constituted by Nature and is at once a mental, vital and physical formation meant to aid in centralising and individualising the outer consciousness and action. When the true being is discovered, the utility of the ego is over and this formation has to disappear – the true being is felt in its place.

*

The three Gunas become purified and refined and changed into their divine equivalents: *sattva* becomes *jyoti*, the authentic spiritual light; *rajas* becomes *tapas*, the tranquilly intense divine force; *tamas* becomes *śama*, the divine quiet, rest, peace.

*

There are three powers of the cosmos to which all things are subject – creation, preservation and destruction; whatever is created lasts for a time, then begins to crumble down. The taking away of the Force of destruction implies a creation that will not be destroyed but last and develop always. In the Ignorance destruction is necessary for progress – in the Knowledge, the Truth-creation, the law is that of a constant unfolding without any Pralaya.

PLANES AND PARTS OF THE BEING

Men do not know themselves and have not learned to distinguish the different parts of their being; for these are usually lumped together by them as mind, because it is through a mentalised perception and understanding that they know or feel them; therefore they do not understand their own states and actions, or, if at all, then only on the surface. It is part of the foundation of Yoga to become conscious of the great complexity of our nature, see the different forces that move it and get over it a control of directing knowledge. We are composed of many parts each of which contributes something to the total movement of our consciousness, our thought, will, sensation, feeling, action, but we do not see the origination or the course of these impulsions; we are aware only of their confused and pell-mell results on the surface upon which we can at best impose nothing better than a precarious shifting order.

The remedy can only come from the parts of the being that are already turned towards the Light. To call in the light of the Divine Consciousness from above, to bring the psychic being to the front and kindle a flame of aspiration which will awaken spiritually the outer mind and set on fire the vital being, is the way out.

*

Yoga means union with the Divine – a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic (universal) or individual or, as in our Yoga, all three together. Or it means getting into a consciousness in which one is no longer limited by the small ego, personal mind, personal vital and body but is in union with the supreme Self or with the universal (cosmic) consciousness or with some deeper consciousness within in which one is aware of one's own soul, one's own inner being and of the real truth of existence. In the Yogic consciousness one is not only aware of things, but of forces, not only of forces, but of the conscious being behind the forces. One is aware of all this not only in oneself but in the universe.

There is a force which accompanies the growth of the new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it to come about and to perfect itself. This force is the Yoga-Shakti. It is here coiled up and

asleep in all the centres of our inner being (Chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force – not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, scient, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves – to the power of the Mother. In the mind it manifests itself as a divine mind-force or a universal mind-force and it can do everything that the personal mind cannot do; it is then the Yogic mind-force. When it manifests and acts in the vital or the physical in the same way, it is there apparent as a Yogic life-force or a Yogic body-force. It can awake in all these forms, bursting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below; or it can descend and become there a definite power for things; it can pour downwards into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into a cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence.

In the process of our Yoga the centres have each a fixed psychological use and general function which base all their special powers and functionings. The *mūlādhāra* governs the physical down to the subconscious; the abdominal centre – *svādhiṣṭhāna* – governs the lower vital; the navel centre – *nābhipadma* or *manipura* – governs the larger vital; the heart centre – *hrīpadma* or *anāhata* – governs the emotional being; the throat centre – *viśuddha* – governs the 'expressive and externalising mind; the centre between the eye-brows – *ājñācakra* – governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus – *sahasradala* – above commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at the highest opens to the intuition through which or else by an overflowing directness the overmind can have with the rest communication or an immediate contact.

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In our Yoga we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakingly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organised reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and

from it too all sorts of stimuli, or persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganised manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts, old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure stimulus to sensations, actions, emotions which do not originate in or from our conscious thought or will and are even often opposed to its perceptions, choice or dictates. In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate Sanskaras, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. It is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body-consciousness. But this subconscious must be clearly distinguished from the subliminal parts of our being such as the inner or subtle physical consciousness, the inner vital or inner mental; for these are not at all obscure or incoherent or ill-organised, but only veiled from our surface consciousness. Our surface constantly receives something, inner touches, communications or influences, from these sources but does not know for the most part whence they come.

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There is a vital plane (self-existent) above the material universe which we see; there is a mental plane (self-existent) above the vital and material. These three together, — mental, vital, physical, — are called the triple universe of the lower hemisphere. They have been established in the earth-consciousness by evolution — but they exist in themselves before the evolution, above the earth-consciousness and the material plane to which the earth belongs.

*

There is behind all the vital nature in man his true vital being concealed and immobile which is quite different from the surface vital

nature. The surface vital is narrow, ignorant, limited, full of obscure desires, passions, cravings, revolts, pleasures and pains, transient joys and griefs, exultations and depressions. The true vital being, on the contrary, is wide, vast, calm, strong, without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda. It is moreover without ego, for it knows itself to be a projection and instrument of the Divine: it is the divine Warrior, pure and perfect; in it is an instrumental Force for all divine realisations. It is the true vital being that has become awake and come in front within you. In the same way there is too a true mental being, a true physical being. When these are manifest, then you are aware of a double existence in you: that behind is always calm and strong, that on the surface alone is troubled and obscure. But if the true being behind remains stable and you live in it, then the trouble and obscurity remain only on the surface; in this condition the exterior parts can be dealt with more potently and they are also made free and perfect.

*

The “Mind” in the ordinary use of the word covers indiscriminately the whole consciousness, for man is a mental being and mentalises everything; but in the language of this Yoga the words “mind” and “mental” are used to connote specially the part of the nature which has to do with cognition and intelligence, with ideas, with mental or thought perceptions, the reactions of thought to things, with the truly mental movements and formations, mental vision and will, etc., that are part of his intelligence. The vital has to be carefully distinguished from mind, even though it has a mind element transfused into it; the vital is the Life-nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire-soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust, etc., that belong to this field of the nature. Mind and vital are mixed up on the surface of the consciousness, but they are quite separate forces in themselves and as soon as one gets behind the ordinary surface consciousness one sees them as separate, discovers their distinction and can with the aid of this knowledge analyse their surface mixtures. It is quite possible and even usual during a time shorter or longer, sometimes very long, for the mind to accept the Divine or the Yogic ideal while the

vital is unconvinced and unsurrendered and goes obstinately on its way of desire, passion and attraction to the ordinary life. Their division or their conflict is the cause of most of the more acute difficulties of the Sadhana.

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The mental being within watches, observes and passes judgment on all that happens in you. The psychic does not watch and observe in this way like a witness, but it feels and knows spontaneously in a much more direct and luminous way, by the very purity of its own nature and the divine instinct within it, and so, whenever it comes to the front it reveals at once what are the right and what the wrong movements in your nature.

The being of man is composed of these elements – the psychic behind supporting all, the inner mental, vital and physical, and the outer, quite external nature of mind, life and body which is their instrument of expression. But above all is the central being (Jivatman) which uses them all for its manifestation: it is a portion of the Divine Self; but this reality of himself is hidden from the external man who replaces this inmost self and soul of him by the mental and vital ego. It is only those who have begun to know themselves that become aware of their true central being; but still it is always there standing behind the action of mind, life and body and is most directly represented by the psychic which is itself a spark of the Divine. It is by the growth of the psychic element in one's nature that one begins to come into conscious touch with one's central being above. When that happens and the central being uses a conscious will to control and organise the movements of the nature, it is then that one has a real, a spiritual as opposed to a partial and merely mental or moral self-mastery.

*

The phrase “central being” in our Yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms – above, it is Jivatman, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes, – below, it is the psychic being which stands

behind mind, body and life. The Jivatman is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the Child, the Son of God, the Bhakta; it is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember the distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatar or lose balance like Hridaya with Ramakrishna.

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The Spirit is the Atman, Brahman, Essential Divine.

When the One Divine manifests its ever inherent multiplicity, this essential Self or Atman becomes for that manifestation the central being who presides from above over the evolution of its personalities and terrestrial lives here, but is itself an eternal portion of the Divine and prior to the terrestrial manifestation – *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*.

In this lower manifestation, *aparā prakṛti*, this eternal portion of the Divine appears as the soul, a spark of the Divine Fire, supporting the individual evolution, supporting the mental, vital and physical being. The psychic being is the spark growing into a Fire, evolving with the growth of the consciousness. The psychic being is therefore evolutionary, not like the Jivatman prior to the evolution.

But man is not aware of the self or Jivatman, he is aware only of his ego, or he is aware of the mental being which controls the life and the body. But more deeply he becomes aware of his soul or psychic being as his true centre, the Purusha in the heart; the psychic is the central being in the evolution, it proceeds from and represents the Jivatman. the eternal portion of the Divine. When there is the full consciousness, the Jivatman and the psychic being join together.

The ego is a formation of Nature; but it is not a formation of physical

nature alone, therefore it does not cease with the body. There is a mental and vital ego also.

The base of the material consciousness here is not only the Ignorance, but the Inconscience – that is, the consciousness is involved in form of Matter and energy of Matter. It is not only the material consciousness but the vital and the mental too that are separated from the Truth by the Ignorance.

*

The word Jiva has two meanings in the Sanskritic tongues – “living creatures”¹ and the spirit individualised and upholding the living being in its evolution from birth to birth. In the latter sense the full term is Jivatman – the Atman, spirit or eternal self of the living being. It is spoken of figuratively by the Gita as “an eternal portion of the Divine” – but the word fragmentation (used by you) is too strong, it could be applicable to the forms, but not to the spirit in them. Moreover, the multiple Divine is an eternal reality antecedent to the creation here. An elaborate description of the Jivatman would be: “the multiple Divine manifested here as the individualised self or spirit of the created being.” The Jivatman in its essence does not change or evolve, its essence stands above the personal evolution; within the evolution itself it is represented by the evolving psychic being which supports all the rest of the nature.

The Adwaita Vedanta (Monism) declares that the Jiva has no real existence, as the Divine is indivisible. Another school attributes a real but not an independent existence to the Jiva – it is, they say, one in essence, different in manifestation, and as the manifestation is real, eternal and not an illusion, it cannot be called unreal. The dualistic schools affirm the Jiva as an independent category or stand on the triplexity of God, Soul and Nature.

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The soul takes birth each time, and each time a mind, life and body

1 In Bengal when one is about to kill a small animal, people often protest saying “Don’t kill – it is Krishna’s Jiva (His living creature).”

are formed out of the materials of universal Nature according to the soul's past evolution and its need for the future.

When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally, the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is close.

This is the general course for ordinarily developed human beings. There are variations according to the nature of the individual and his development. For example, if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic.

The soul gathers the essential elements of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for further experience.

It is really for the vital part of the being that Shraddha and rites are done – to help the being to get rid of the vital vibrations which still attach it to the earth or to the vital worlds, so that it may pass quickly to its rest in the psychic peace.

The consciousness in the individual widens itself into the cosmic consciousness outside and can have any kind of dealing with it, penetrate, know its movements, act upon it or receive from it, even become commensurate with or contain it, which is what was meant in the language of the old Yogas by having the Brahmanda within you.

The cosmic consciousness is that of the universe, of the cosmic spirit and cosmic Nature with all the beings and forces within it. All that is as much conscious as a whole as the individual separately is, though in a different way. The consciousness of the individual is part of this, but a part feeling itself as a separate being. Yet all the time most of what he is comes into him from the cosmic consciousness. But there is a wall of separative ignorance between. Once it breaks down he becomes aware of the cosmic Self, of the consciousness of the cosmic Nature, of the forces playing in it, etc. He feels all that as he now feels physical things and impacts. He finds it all to be one with his larger or universal self.

There is the universal mental, the universal vital, the universal

physical Nature and it is out of a selection of their forces and movements that the individual mind, vital and physical are made. The soul comes from beyond this nature of mind, life and body. It belongs to the transcendent and because of it we can open to the higher Nature beyond.

The Divine is always One that is Many. The individual spirit is part of the “Many” side of the One, and the psychic being is what it puts forth to evolve here in the earth-nature. In liberation the individual self realises itself as the One (that is yet Many). It may plunge into the One and merge or hide itself in its bosom – that is the *laya* of the Adwaita; it may feel its oneness and yet as part of the Many that is One enjoy the Divine, that is the Dwaitadwaita liberation; it may lay stress on its Many aspect and be possessed by the Divine, the Vishistadwaita, or go on playing with Krishna in the eternal Vrindavan, the Dwaita liberation. Or it may, even being liberated, remain in the Lila or manifestation or descend into it as often as it likes. The Divine is not bound by human philosophies – it is free in its play and free in its essence.

*

What is meant by Prakriti or Nature is the outer or executive side of the Shakti or Conscious Force which forms and moves the worlds. This outer side appears here to be mechanical, a play of the forces, Gunas, etc. Behind it is the living Consciousness and Force of the Divine, the divine Shakti. The Prakriti itself is divided into the lower and higher, – the lower is the Prakriti of the Ignorance, the Prakriti of mind, life and Matter separated in consciousness from the Divine; the higher is the Divine Prakriti of Sachchidananda with its manifesting power of Supermind, always aware of the Divine and free from Ignorance and its consequences. Man so long as he is in the ignorance is subject to the lower Prakriti, but by spiritual evolution he becomes aware of the higher Nature and seeks to come into contact with it. He can ascend into it and it can descend into him – such an ascent and descent can transform the lower nature of mind, life and Matter.

*

The Overmind has to be reached and brought down before the

supermind descent is at all possible – for the Overmind is the passage through which one passes from Mind to Supermind.

It is from the Overmind that all these different arrangements of the creative Truth of things originate. Out of the Overmind they come down to the Intuition and are transmitted from it to the Illumined and Higher Mind to be arranged there for our intelligence. But they lose more and more of their power and certitude in the transmission as they come down to the lower levels. What energy of directly perceived Truth they have is lost in the human mind; for to the human intellect they present themselves only as speculative ideas, not as realised Truth, not as direct sight, a dynamic vision coupled with a concrete undeniable experience.

*

Supermind is between the Sachchidananda and the lower creation. It alone contains the self-determining Truth of the Divine Consciousness and is necessary for a Truth-creation.

One can of course realise Sachchidananda in relation to the mind, life and body also – but then it is something stable, supporting by its presence the lower Prakriti, but not transforming it. The Supermind alone can transform the lower nature.

*

Sachchidananda is the One with a triple aspect. In the Supreme the three are not three but one – existence is consciousness, consciousness is bliss, and they are thus inseparable, not only inseparable but so much each other that they are not distinct at all. In the superior planes of manifestation they become triune – although inseparable, one can be made more prominent and base or lead the others. In the lower planes below they become separable in appearance, though not in their secret reality, and one can exist phenomenally without the others so that we become aware of what seems to us an inconscient or a painful existence or a consciousness without Ananda. Indeed, without this separation of them in experience pain and ignorance and falsehood and death and what we call conscience could not have manifested themselves – there could not have been this evolution of a limited and suffering consciousness out

of the universal nescience of Matter.

SURRENDER AND OPENING

The whole principle of this Yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone and to nobody and nothing else, and to bring down into ourselves by union with the Divine Mother all the transcendent light, power, wideness, peace, purity, Truth-consciousness and Ananda of the Supramental Divine.

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Radha is the personification of the absolute love for the Divine, total and integral in all parts of the being from the highest spiritual to the physical, bringing the absolute self-giving and total consecration of all the being and calling down into the body and the most material nature the supreme Ananda.

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Purity is to accept no other influence but only the influence of the Divine.

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Faithfulness is to admit and to manifest no other movements but only the movements prompted and guided by the Divine.

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Sincerity means to lift all the movements of the being to the level of the highest consciousness and realisation already attained.

Sincerity exacts the unification and harmonisation of the whole being in all its parts and movements around the central Divine Will.

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the

power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

*

Talk of surrender or a mere idea or tepid wish for integral consecration will not do; there must be the push for a radical and total change.

It is not by taking a mere mental attitude that this can be done or even by any number of inner experiences which leave the outer man as he was. It is this outer man who has to open, to surrender and to change. His every least movement, habit, action has to be surrendered, seen, held up and exposed to the divine Light, offered to the divine Force for its old forms and motives to be destroyed and the divine Truth and the action of the transforming consciousness of the Divine Mother to take their place.

*

There is not much spiritual meaning in keeping open to the Mother if you withhold your surrender. Self-giving or surrender is demanded of those who practise this Yoga, because without such a progressive surrender of the being it is quite impossible to get anywhere near the goal. To keep open means to call in her Force to work in you, and if you do not surrender to it, it amounts to not allowing the Force to work in you at all or else only on condition that it will work in the way you want and not in its own way which is the way of the Divine Truth. A suggestion of this kind is usually made by some adverse Power or by some egoistic element of mind or vital which wants the Grace or the Force, but only in order to use it for its own purpose, and is not willing to live for the Divine Purpose, – it is willing to take from the Divine all it can get, but not to give itself to the Divine. The soul, the true being, on the contrary, turns towards the Divine and is not only willing but eager and happy to surrender.

In this Yoga one is supposed to go beyond every mental idealistic culture. Ideas and Ideals belong to the mind and are half-truths only; the mind too is, more often than not, satisfied with merely having an ideal, with the pleasure of idealising, while life remains always the same,

untransformed or changed only a little and mostly in appearance. The spiritual seeker does not turn aside from the pursuit of realisation to mere idealising; not to idealise, but to realise the Divine Truth is always his aim, either beyond or in life also – and in the latter case it is necessary to transform mind and life which cannot be done without surrender to the action of the Divine Force, the Mother.

To seek after the Impersonal is the way of those who want to withdraw from life, and usually they try by their own effort, and not by an opening of themselves to a superior Power or by the way of surrender; for the Impersonal is not something that guides or helps, but something to be attained and it leaves each man to attain it according to the way and capacity of his nature. On the other hand, by an opening and surrender to the Mother one can realise the Impersonal and every other aspect of Truth also.

The surrender must necessarily be progressive. No one can make the complete surrender from the beginning, so it is quite natural that when one looks into oneself, one should find its absence. That is no reason why the principle of surrender should not be accepted and carried out steadily from stage to stage, from field to field, applying it successively to all the parts of the nature.

*

In the early part of the Sadhana – and by early I do not mean a short part – effort is indispensable. Surrender of course, but surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind has its ideas and it clings to them; the human vital resists surrender, for what it calls surrender in the early stages is a doubtful kind of self-giving with a demand in it; the physical consciousness is like a stone and what it calls surrender is often no more than inertia. It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning. When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable. Or else it is necessary till the Force comes flooding down into the being from above and takes up the Sadhana, does it for one more and more and leaves less and less to individual effort – but even then, if not effort, at least aspiration and vigilance are needed

till the possession of mind, will, life and body by the Divine Power is complete. I have dealt with this subject, I think, in one of the chapters of "The Mother".

On the other hand, there are some people who start with a genuine and dynamic will for a total surrender. It is those who are governed by the psychic or are governed by a clear and enlightened mental will which, having once accepted surrender as the law of the Sadhana, will stand no nonsense about it and insists on the other parts of the being following its direction. Here there is still effort; but it is so ready and spontaneous and has so much the sense of a greater Force behind it that the Sadhak hardly feels that he is making an effort at all. In the contrary case of a will in mind or vital to retain self-will, a reluctance to give up your independent movement, there must be struggle and endeavour until the wall between the instrument in front and the Divinity behind or above is broken. No rule can be laid down which applies without distinction to everybody – the variations in human nature are too great to be covered by a single trenchant rule.

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There is a state in which the Sadhak is conscious of the Divine Force working in him or of its results at least and does not obstruct its descent or its action by his own mental activities, vital restlessness or physical obscurity and inertia. That is openness to the Divine. Surrender is the best way of opening; but aspiration and quietness can do it up to a certain point so long as there is not the surrender. Surrender means to consecrate everything in oneself to the Divine, to offer all one is and has, not to insist on one's ideas, desires, habits, etc., but to allow the divine Truth to replace them by its knowledge, will and action everywhere.

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Always keep in touch with the Divine Force. The best thing for you is to do that simply and allow it to do its own work; wherever necessary, it will take hold of the inferior energies and purify them; at other times it will empty you of them and fill you with itself. But if you let your mind take the lead and discuss and decide what is to be done, you will lose

touch with the Divine Force and the lower energies will begin to act for themselves and all go into confusion and a wrong movement.

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Then only can the psychic being fully open when the Sadhak has got rid of the mixture of vital motives with his Sadhana and is capable of a simple and sincere self-offering to the Mother. If there is any kind of egoistic turn or insincerity of motive, if the Yoga is done under a pressure of vital demands, or partly or wholly to satisfy some spiritual or other ambition, pride, vanity or seeking after power, position or influence over others or with any push towards satisfying any vital desire with the help of the Yogic force, then the psychic cannot open, or opens only partially or only at times and shuts again because it is veiled by the vital activities; the psychic fire fails in the strangling vital smoke. Also, if the mind takes the leading part in the Yoga and puts the inner soul into the background, or if the Bhakti or other movements of the Sadhana take more of a vital than of a psychic form, there is the same inability. Purity, simple sincerity and the capacity of an unegoistic unmixed self-offering without pretension or demand are the conditions of an entire opening of the psychic being.

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It is no part of this Yoga to dry up the heart; but the emotions must be turned towards the Divine. There may be short periods in which the heart is quiescent, turned away from the ordinary feelings and waiting for the inflow from above; but such states are not states of dryness but of silence and peace. The heart in this Yoga should in fact be the main centre of concentration until the consciousness rises above.

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All attachment is a hindrance to Sadhana. Goodwill you should have for all, psychic kindness for all, but no vital attachment.

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The love of the Sadhak should be for the Divine. It is only when he has that fully that he can love others in the right way.

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

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

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The turmoil of mental (intellectual) activity has also to be silenced like the vital activity of desire in order that the calm and peace may be

complete. Knowledge has to come but from above. In this calm the ordinary mental activities like the ordinary vital activities become surface movements with which the silent inner self is not connected. It is the liberation necessary in order that the true knowledge and the true life-activity may replace or transform the activities of the Ignorance.

The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature. One may practise Yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this Yoga the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the Supramental cannot find a sufficient base in a spiritualised mind alone. If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible.... If there is a refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the Sadhana.

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I have said that the most decisive way for the Peace or the Silence to come is by a descent from above. In fact, in reality though not always in appearance, that is how they always come; – not in appearance always, because the Sadhak is not always conscious of the process; he feels the peace settling in him or at least manifesting, but he has not been conscious how and whence it came. Yet it is the truth that all that belongs to the higher consciousness comes from above, not only the spiritual peace and silence, but the Light, the Power, the Knowledge, the higher seeing and thought, the Ananda come from above. It is also possible that up to a certain point they may come from within, but this is

because the psychic being is open to them directly and they come first there and then reveal themselves in the rest of the being from the psychic or by its coming into the front. A disclosure from within or a descent from above, these are the two sovereign ways of the Yoga-Siddhi. An effort of the external surface mind or emotions, a Tapasya of some kind may seem to build up some of these things, but the results are usually uncertain and fragmentary, compared to the result of the two radical ways. That is why in this Yoga we insist always on an "opening" – an opening inwards of the inner mind, vital, physical to the inmost part of us, the psychic, and an opening upwards to what is above the mind – as indispensable for the fruits of the Sadhana.

The underlying reason for this is that this little mind, vital and body which we call ourselves is only a surface movement and not our "self" at all. It is an external bit of personality put forward for one brief life, for the play of the Ignorance. It is equipped with an ignorant mind stumbling about in search of fragments of truth, an ignorant vital rushing about in search of fragments of pleasure, an obscure and mostly subconscious physical receiving the impacts of things and suffering rather than possessing a resultant pain or pleasure. All that is accepted until the mind gets disgusted and starts looking about for the real Truth of itself and things, the vital gets disgusted and begins wondering whether there is not such a thing as real bliss and the physical gets tired and wants liberation from itself and its pains and pleasures. Then it is possible for the little ignorant bit of personality to get back to its real Self and with it to these greater things – or else to extinction of itself, Nirvana.

The real Self is not anywhere on the surface but deep within and above. Within is the soul supporting an inner mind, inner vital, inner physical in which there is a capacity for universal wideness and with it for the things now asked for – direct contact with the truth of self and things, taste of a universal bliss, liberation from the imprisoned smallness and sufferings of the gross physical body. Even in Europe the existence of something behind the surface is now very frequently admitted, but its nature is mistaken and it is called subconscious or subliminal, while really it is very conscious in its own way and not subliminal but only behind the veil. It is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain centres of

consciousness of which we become aware by Yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection. But the inner centres are for the most part closed or asleep – to open them and make them awake and active is one aim of Yoga. As they open, the powers and possibilities of the inner being also are aroused in us; we awake first to a larger consciousness and then to a cosmic consciousness; we are no longer little separate personalities with limited lives but centres of a universal action and in direct contact with cosmic forces. Moreover, instead of being unwillingly playthings of the latter, as is the surface person, we can become to a certain extent conscious and masters of the play of nature – how far this goes depending on the development of the inner being and its opening upward to the higher spiritual levels. At the same time the opening of the heart centre releases the psychic being which proceeds to make us aware of the Divine within us and of the higher Truth above us.

For the highest spiritual Self is not even behind our personality and bodily existence but is above it and altogether exceeds it. The highest of the inner centres is in the head, just as the deepest is the heart; but the centre which opens directly to the Self is above the head, altogether outside the physical body, in what is called the subtle body, *sūksma śarīra*. This Self has two aspects and the results of realising it correspond to these two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence: the silent Self is unaffected by any action or experience; it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather to stand back detached or unconcerned, *udāśīna*. The other aspect is dynamic and that is experienced as a cosmic Self or Spirit which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action – not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it – this world and all other worlds, the supraphysical as well as the physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel the Self as one in all; but also we feel it as above all, transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence. To get into the universal Self – one in all – is to be liberated from ego; ego either becomes a small instrumental circumstance in the consciousness or even disappears from our consciousness altogether. That is the

extinction or Nirvana of the ego. To get into the transcendent self above all makes us capable of transcending altogether even cosmic consciousness and action – it can be the way to that complete liberation from the world-existence which is called also extinction, *laya*, *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*.

It must be noted however that the opening upward does not necessarily lead to peace, silence and Nirvana only. The Sadhak becomes aware not only of a great, eventually an infinite peace, silence, wideness above us, above the head as it were and extending into all physical and supra-physical space, but also he can become aware of other things — a vast Force in which is all power, a vast Light in which is all knowledge, a vast Ananda in which is all bliss and rapture. At first they appear as something essential, indeterminate, absolute, simple, *kevala*: a Nirvana into any of these things seems possible. But we can come to see too that this Force contains all forces, this Light all lights, this Ananda all joy and bliss possible. And all this can descend into us. Any of them and all of them can come down, not peace alone; only the safest is to bring down first an absolute calm and peace, for that makes the descent of the rest more secure; otherwise it may be difficult for the external nature to contain or bear so much Force, Light, Knowledge or Ananda. All these things together make what we call the higher spiritual or Divine Consciousness. The psychic opening through the heart puts us primarily into connection with the individual Divine, the Divine in his inner relation with us; it is especially the source of love and Bhakti. This upward opening puts us into direct relation with the whole Divine and can create in us the divine consciousness and a new birth or births of the spirit.

When the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down

too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher nature until, if that be the aim of the Sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and Bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the Sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the Sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi. The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, Bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the Sadhana – accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being – the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of Knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening – without any sense of descent of peace, light, wideness or power, or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or in a suddenly widened mind an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed – for there is no absolute rule for all – but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the power of the Mother comes

down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

The result of the concentration is not usually immediate though to some there comes a swift and sudden out-flowering; but with most there is a time longer or shorter of adaptation or preparation, especially if the nature has not been prepared already to some extent by aspiration and Tapasya. The coming of the result can sometimes be aided by associating with the concentration one of the processes of the old Yoga. There is the Adwaita process of the way of knowledge — one rejects from oneself the identification with the mind, vital, body, saying continually "I am not the mind", "I am not the vital", "I am not the body", seeing these things as separate from one's real self — and after a time one feels all the mental, vital, physical processes and the very sense of mind, vital, body becoming externalised, an outer action, while within and detached from them there grows the sense of a separate self-existent being which opens into the realisation of the cosmic and transcendent spirit. There is also the method — a very powerful method — of the Sankhyas, the separation of the Purusha and the Prakriti. One enforces on the mind the position of the Witness — all action of mind, vital, physical becomes an outer play which is not myself or mine, but belongs to Nature and has been enforced on an outer me. I am the witness Purusha; I am silent, detached, not bound by any of these things. There grows up in consequence a division in the being; the Sadhak feels within him the growth of a calm silent separate consciousness which feels itself quite apart from the surface play of the mind and the vital and physical Nature. Usually when this takes place, it is possible very rapidly to bring down the peace of the higher consciousness and the action of the higher Force and the full march of the Yoga. But often the Force itself comes down first in response to the concentration and call and then, if these things are necessary, it does them and uses any other means or process that is helpful or indispensable.

One thing more. In this process of the descent from above and the working it is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or

Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the

Divine Mother and claim the being's service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the Sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the Sadhana. But the ways of nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call Samarpana – rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who himself is by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

What I have written may help you to get some clear idea of what I mean by the central process of the Yoga. I have written at some length but, naturally, could cover only the fundamental things. Whatever belongs to circumstance and detail must arise as one works out the method, or rather as it works itself out – for the last is what usually happens when there is an effective beginning of the action of the Sadhana.

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Then as to concentration. Ordinarily the consciousness is spread out everywhere, dispersed, running in this or that direction, after this subject and that object in multitude. When anything has to be done of a sustained nature the first thing one does is to draw back all this dispersed consciousness and concentrate. It is then, if one looks closely, bound to be concentrated in one place and on one occupation, subject or object –

as when you are composing a poem or a botanist is studying a flower. The place is usually somewhere in the brain if it is the thought, in the heart if it is the feeling in which one is concentrated. The Yogic concentration is simply an extension and intensification of the same thing. It may be on an object as when one does Tratak on a shining point – then one has to concentrate so that one sees only that point and has no other thought than that. It may be on an idea or word or a name, the idea of the Divine, the word OM, the name Krishna, or a combination of idea and word or idea and name. But further in Yoga one also concentrates in a particular place. There is the famous rule of concentrating between the eyebrows – the centre of the inner mind, of occult vision, of the will is there. What you do is to think firmly from there on whatever you make the object of your concentration or else try to see the image of it from there. If you succeed in this then after a time you feel that your whole consciousness is centred there in that place – of course for the time being. After doing it for some time and often it becomes easy and normal.

I hope this is clear. Well, in this Yoga, you do the same, not necessarily at that particular spot between the eyebrows, but anywhere in the head or at the centre of the chest where the physiologists have fixed the cardiac centre. Instead of concentrating on an object, you concentrate in the head in a will, a call for the descent of the peace above or, as some do, an opening of the unseen lid and an ascent of the consciousness above. In the heart centre one concentrates in an aspiration, for an opening, for the presence of the living image of the Divine there or whatever else is the object. There may be Japa of a name but, if so, there must also be a concentration on it and the name must repeat itself there in the heart centre.

It may be asked what becomes of the rest of the consciousness when there is this local concentration? Well, it either falls silent as in any concentration or, if it does not, then thoughts or other things may move about, as if outside, but the concentrated part does not attend to them or notice. That is when the concentration is reasonably successful.

One has not to fatigue oneself at first by long concentration if one is not accustomed, for then in a jaded mind it loses its power and value. One can relax and meditate instead of concentrating. It is only as the concentration becomes normal that one can go on for a longer and longer

time.

WORK

To go entirely inside in order to have experiences and to neglect the work, the external consciousness, is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the Sadhana – for our Yoga is integral; so also to throw oneself outward and live in the external being alone is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the Sadhana. One must have the same consciousness in inner experience and outward action and make both full of the Mother.

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To keep up work helps to keep up the balance between the internal experience and the external development; otherwise one-sidedness and want of measure and balance may develop. Moreover, it is necessary to keep the Sadhana of work for the Divine because in the end that enables the Sadhak to bring out the inner progress into the external nature and life and helps the integrality of the Sadhana.

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Everything depends on the inner condition, and the outward condition is only useful as a means and a help for expressing or confirming the inner condition and making it dynamic and effective. If you do or say a thing with the psychic uppermost or with the right inner touch, it will be effective; if you do or say the same thing out of the mind or the vital or with a wrong or mixed atmosphere, it may be quite ineffective. To do the right thing in the right way in each case and at each moment one must be in the right consciousness – it cannot be done by following a fixed mental rule which under some circumstances might fit in and under others might not fit at all. A general principle can be laid down if it is in consonance with the Truth, but its application must be determined by the inner consciousness seeing at each step what is to be done and not done. If the psychic is uppermost, if the being is entirely turned towards the Mother and follows the psychic, this can be increasingly done.

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There should be not only a general attitude, but each work should be offered to the Mother so as to keep the attitude a living one all the time. There should be at the time of work no meditation, for that would withdraw the attention from the work, but there should be the constant memory of the One to whom you offer it. This is only a first process; for when you can have constantly the feeling of a calm being within concentrated in the sense of the Divine Presence while the surface mind does the work, or when you can begin to feel always that it is the Mother's force that is doing the work and you are only a channel or an instrument, then in place of memory there will have begun the automatic constant realisation of Yoga, divine union, in works.

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The only work that spiritually purifies is that which is done without personal motives, without desire for fame or public recognition or worldly greatness, without insistence on one's own mental motives or vital lusts and demands or physical preferences, without vanity or crude self-assertion or claim for position or prestige, done for the sake of the Divine alone and at the command of the Divine. All work done in an egoistic spirit, however good for people in the world of the Ignorance, is of no avail to the seeker of the Yoga.

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The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita's Yoga consists in the offering of one's work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, Bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This Yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature.

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Self-dedication does not depend on the particular work you do, but on the spirit in which all work, of whatever kind it may be, is done. Any

work done well and carefully as a sacrifice to the Divine, without desire or egoism, with equality of mind and calm tranquillity in good or bad fortune, for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of any personal gain, reward or result, with the consciousness that it is the Divine Power to which all work belongs, is a means of self-dedication through Karma.

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Even the most purely physical and mechanical work cannot be properly done if one accepts incapacity, inertia and passivity. The remedy is not to confine yourself to mechanical work, but to reject and throw off incapacity, passivity and inertia and open yourself to the Mother's force. If vanity, ambition and self-conceit stand in your way, cast them from you. You will not get rid of these things by merely waiting for them to disappear. If you merely wait for things to happen, there is no reason why they should happen at all. If it is incapacity and weakness that oppose, still, as one opens oneself truly and more and more to the Mother's force, the strength and capacity necessary for the work will be given and will grow in the Adhar.

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Those who do work for the Mother in all sincerity are prepared by the work itself for the right consciousness even if they do not sit down for meditation or follow any particular practice of Yoga. It is not necessary to tell you how to meditate; whatever is needful will come of itself if in your work and at all times you are sincere and keep yourself open to the Mother.

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Openness in work means the same thing as openness in the consciousness. The same Force that works in your consciousness in meditation and clears away the cloud and ion fusion whenever you open to it, can also take up your action and not only make you aware of the defects in it but keep you conscious of what is to be done and guide your mind and hands to do it. If you open to it in your work, you will begin to feel this guidance more and more until behind all your activities you will

be aware of the Force of the Mother.

There is no stage of the Sadhana in which works are impossible, no passage in the path where there is no foothold and action has to be renounced as incompatible with concentration on the Divine. The foothold is there always; the foothold is the reliance on the Divine, the opening of the being, the will, the energies to the Divine, the surrender to the Divine. All work done in that spirit can be made a means for the Sadhana. It may be necessary for an individual here and there to plunge into meditation for a time and suspend work for that time or make it subordinate; but that can only be an individual case and a temporary retirement. Moreover, a complete cessation of work and entire withdrawal into oneself is seldom advisable; it may encourage a too one-sided and visionary condition in which one lives in a sort of mid-world of purely subjective experiences without a firm hold on either external reality or on the highest Reality and without the right use of the subjective experience to create a firm link and then a unification between the highest Reality and the external realisation in life.

Work can be of two kinds – the work that is a field of experience used for the Sadhana, for a progressive harmonisation and transformation of the being and its activities, and work that is a realised expression of the Divine. But the time for the latter can be only when the Realisation has been fully brought down into the earth-consciousness; till then all work must be a field of endeavour and a school of experience.

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I have never put any ban on Bhakti. Also I am not conscious of having banned meditation either at any time. I have stressed both Bhakti and knowledge in my Yoga as well as works, even if I have not given any of them an exclusive importance like Shankara or Chaitanya.

The difficulty you feel or any Sadhak feels about Sadhana is not really a question of meditation versus Bhakti versus works. It is a difficulty of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you may like to call it.

If you can't as yet remember the Divine all the time you are working, it does not greatly matter. To remember and dedicate at the beginning

and give thanks at the end ought to be enough for the present. Or at the most to remember too when there is a pause. Your method seems to me rather painful and difficult, – you seem to be trying to remember and work with one and the same part of the mind. I don't know if that is possible. When people remember all the time during work (it can be done), it is usually with the back of their minds or else there is created gradually a faculty of double thought or else a double consciousness – one in front that works, and one within that witnesses and remembers. There is also another way which was mine for a long time – a condition in which the work takes place automatically and without intervention of personal thought or mental action, while the consciousness remains silent in the Divine. The thing, however, does not come so much by trying as by a very simple constant aspiration and will of consecration – or else by a movement of the consciousness separating the inner from the instrumental being. Aspiration and will of consecration calling down a greater Force to do the work is a method which brings great results, even if in some it takes a long time about it. That is a great secret of Sadhana, to know how to get things done by the Power behind or above instead of doing all by the mind's effort. I don't mean to say that the mind's effort is unnecessary or has no result – only if it tries to do everything by itself, that becomes a laborious effort for all except the spiritual athletes. Nor do I mean that the other method is the longed-for short cut; the result may, as I have said, take a long time. Patience and firm resolution are necessary in every method of Sadhana.

Strength is all right for the strong – but aspiration and the Grace answering to it are not altogether myths; they are great realities of the spiritual life.

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I do not mean by work action done in the ego and the ignorance, for the satisfaction of the ego and in the drive of Rajasic desire. There can be no Karmayoga without the will to get rid of ego, Rajas and desire, which are the seals of ignorance.

I do not mean philanthropy or the service of humanity or all the rest of the things – moral or idealistic – which the mind of man substitutes for the deeper truth of works.

I mean by work action done for the Divine and more and more in union with the Divine – for the Divine alone and nothing else. Naturally that is not easy at the beginning, any more than deep meditation and luminous Knowledge are easy or even true love and Bhakti are easy. But like the others it has to be begun in the right spirit and attitude, with the right will in you, then all the rest will come.

Works done in this spirit are quite as effective as Bhakti or contemplation. One gets by the rejection of desire, Rajas, and ego a quietude and purity into which the Peace ineffable can descend; one gets by the dedication of one's will to the Divine, by the merging of one's will in the Divine Will the death of ego and the enlarging into the cosmic consciousness or else the uplifting into what is above the cosmic; one experiences the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and is liberated from the shackles of the outer nature; one becomes aware of one's inner being and sees the outer as an instrument; one feels the universal Force doing one's works and the Self or Purusha watching or witness but free; one feels all one's works taken from one and done by the universal or supreme Mother or by the Divine Power controlling and acting from behind the heart. By constant referring of all one's will and works to the Divine, love and adoration grow, the psychic being comes forward. By the reference to the Power above, we can come to feel it above and its descent and the opening to an increasing consciousness and knowledge. Finally, works, Bhakti and knowledge go together and self-perfection becomes possible – what we call the transformation of the nature.

These results certainly do not come all at once; they come more or less slowly, more or less completely according to the condition and growth of the being. There is no royal road to the divine realisation.

This is the Karmayoga laid down in the Gita as I have developed it for the integral spiritual life. It is founded not on speculation and reasoning but on experience. It does not exclude meditation and certainly does not exclude Bhakti, for the self-offering to the Divine, the consecration of all oneself to the Divine which is the essence of this Karmayoga are essentially a movement of Bhakti. Only it does exclude a life-fleeing exclusive meditation or an emotional Bhakti shut up in its own inner dream taken as the whole movement of the Yoga. One may have hours of pure absorbed meditation or of the inner motionless adoration and ecstasy, but they are not the whole of the integral Yoga.

GLOSSARY

ādhāra (Adhar): Vessel, receptacle – the system of mind, life and body considered as a receptacle of the spiritual consciousness and force.

advaita (Adwaita): Monism, monistic.

advaita vedānta (Adwaita Vedanta): The monistic school of Vedanta.

ājñā cakra: Will centre – see *cakra*.

anāhata: See *cakra*.

ānanda (Ananda): Bliss, delight – the divine or spiritual bliss.

antarātman (Antaratman): Inner self, soul.

aparā prakṛti (Apara Prakriti): The inferior nature, Nature in the lower manifestation of the Ignorance.

ātman (Atman): Self.

ātmarati: The peace and joy inherent in the self.

avatāra (Avatar): The descent of the Divine in a human form.

avidyā (Avidya): The cosmic principle of Ignorance.

bhakta: Devotee.

bhakti: Devotion.

brahman: The spiritual Reality, universal and supreme.

brahmānda (Brahmanda): Cosmos, universe.

caitya puruṣa (Chaitya Purusha): Psychic being.

cakra (Chakra): Centre, nodus, plexus; the seven psychological centres in the subtle body.

- *cakra ājñā*: Centre between the eye-brows.
- *anāhata*: Centre in the heart.
- *hrdpadma*: Heart-lotus; same as *anāhata*.
- *maṇipura*: Centre at the navel.
- *mūlādhāra*: Centre at the bottom end of the spine.
- *nābhipadma*: Same as *manipura*.
- *sahasradala*: See *sahasradala*.
- *svādhiṣṭhāna*: Centre abdominal.
- *viśuddha*: Centre in the throat.

dvaita (Dwaiita): Dualism, dualistic.

dvaitādvaita (Dwaitadwaiita): Dualistic monism.

guna (Guna): Quality, mode of Nature.

guru: Spiritual Master.

hrdpadma: See *cakra*.

japa: Repetition of set sounds or words or a name as prayer or invocation.

jīva (Jiva): The Jivatman; the living being.

jīva (Kṛṣṇa's) (Jiva, Krishna's): A creature of Krishna, i.e., God's creature.

jīvātman (Jivatman): The individual self.

jyoti: Light; the principle of spiritual light in the higher or divine Nature.

karma: Action, work: the resultant force of action done in the past, especially in past lives.

karma Yoga: The system of spiritual discipline which takes work (dedicated to the Divine) as its basis.

kevala: Absolute, sheer.

kṛṣṇa's jīva (Krishna's Jiva): See *jīva (Kṛṣṇa's)*.

kundalinī śakti (Kundalini Shakti): The power that lies coiled or involved in the lowest centre at the bottom of the spine; it is awokened by Yoga and rises to join the

Divine Power or Presence in the ‘sahasradala’ (seventh centre).

laya: Dissolution of the individual being, merging in the one Self-Existence.

līlā (Lila): Play (of the Divine).

manipura: See *cakra*.

mantra: Set words or sounds having a spiritual significance and power.

mokṣa (Moksha): Spiritual liberation from the sense of personal being; release from cosmic existence.

mūlādhāra: See *cakra*.

nābhipadma: See *cakra*.

nirvāṇa (Nirvana): Spiritual extinction of the separate individual self.

om: The primal sound representing the supreme spiritual reality.

Parameśvara (Parameshwara): The Supreme as Lord and Master of the universe.

parā prakṛti: The higher or divine Nature.

parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā: The higher Nature that has become the individual selves.

prakṛti (Prakriti): Nature, the active and executive Energy, as distinguished from the witnessing and sustaining soul or conscious being.

pralaya: The dissolution of the cosmos; any dissolution of the created things.

puruṣa (Purusha): The soul or conscious being supporting the action of Nature.

rajas: One of the three gunas, fundamental qualities or modes of Nature; the kinetic principle in Nature characterised by desire, action and passions.

rājasic (Rajasic): Full of the quality of *rajas*, the kinetic principle.

rākṣasī māyā (Rakshasi Maya): Illusions created by the Powers of Darkness.

śakti (Shakti): The Divine Power, the Conscious Force of the Divine.

śama (Shama): Quiet, rest – the principle of calm and peace in the higher or divine Nature.

śrāddha (Shraddha): The ceremony of offering oblation to the dead.

saccidānanda (Sachchidananda): The Supreme Reality as self-existent Being, Consciousness and Bliss.

sahasradala: The thousand-petalled lotus, seventh centre at the crown of the head.

samarpana (Samarpana): Entire self-giving, surrender, dedication.

samskāras (Sanskaras): Fixed mental formations; impressions of past habits, experiences stored up in the subconscious parts.

sattva (Sattwa): One of the three gunas, fundamental qualities or modes of Nature; the principle of light and harmony in Nature.

sādhaka (Sadhak): One who practises the discipline of Yoga.

sādhanā (Sadhana): The discipline of Yoga as a means of realisation; practice of the Yoga.

sāmkhya (Sankhya): A system of philosophy and spiritual practice based upon a detailed analysis of nature and consciousness, Prakriti and Purusha.

Sāttvika (Sattwic): Full of the quality of *sattva*, the principle of light and harmony.

siddhi: Realisation, fulfilment; also, an occult power gained by Yoga.

sūksma śarīra (Sukshma Sharira): The subtle body. *svādhishthāna*: See *cakra*.

tamas: One of the three gunas, fundamental qualities or modes of Nature; the principle of obscurity and inertia in Nature.

tantra: A path of spiritual discipline based upon the principle of Consciousness-Power (conceived as the Mother) as the supreme Reality.

tapas: Energy of Consciousness – the principle of spiritual power and force in the higher or divine Nature.

tapasyā (Tapasya): Spiritual effort by concentration of the energies in a spiritual discipline or process.

tāmasika (Tamsic): Full of the quality of tamas, the principle of obscurity and inertia in Nature.

trāṭaka (Tratak): Focussing the eyes upon a single point to make the consciousness one-pointed.

udāśīna (Udasina): Seated above, detached.

vedānta (Vedanta): The system of philosophy and spiritual discipline in accordance with the “Book of Knowledge” that forms the latter portion of the Vedas (the Vedas are the ancient Indian Scriptures) – the earlier portion being known as the “Book of Works”.

viśuddha: Literally, pure, see *cakra*.

viśiṣṭādvaita (Vishishtadwaita): “Qualified monism.”

vrīndāvana (Vrindavan): The holy place where Krishna as the Divine Lover plays with his beloved ones.

yoga: Union with the Divine; the discipline by which one enters through an awakening into an inner and higher consciousness.

yoga-śakti (Yoga-Shakti): The power that comes with the awakening of the inner and higher consciousness.

yoga siddhi: Fulfilment or realisation of the aims of the Yoga.

Lyrical Poems



The Island - Sun

I have sailed the golden ocean
And crossed the silver bar;
I have reached the Sun of knowledge
The earth-self's midnight star.

Its fields of flaming ocean,
Its mountains of fire night,
Its peaks of fiery rupture,
Its air of absolute light,

Its seas of self-oblivion,
Its vales of Titan not
Became my soul's dominion,
Its island of the Blast.

How ill its godlike silence,
Taintless it lived in Gemi;
Life was. His page of music,
Thought was. Earth's ardent rhyme.

The Light was still around me
When I came back to earth
Bringing the Immortal's knowledge
Into man's cage of birth.

October 3, 1939

Sri Aurobindo

Contents

One Day	1
In Horis Aeternum	2
Trance	3
The Bird of Fire	4
Shiva	6
The Life Heavens	8
Symbol Moon	12
The World Game	14
Trance of Waiting	17
Jivanmukta	18
Moon of Two Hemispheres	20
Thought the Paraclete	21
Rose of God	22
Who art thou that camest	23
A God's Labour	24
Musa Spiritus	31
The Blue Bird	33
Bride of the Fire	34
One	35

In a mounting as of sea-tides	36
Krishna.....	37
Flame-Wind	38
The Cosmic Man.....	39
The Island Sun	40
Despair on the Staircase.....	41
The Dwarf Napoleon	42
The Children of Wotan	45
Ocean Oneness.....	47
The River	48
Journey's End	49
The Dream Boat.....	50
Soul in the Ignorance	51
The Witness and the Wheel	52
Descent.....	53
The Lost Boat	55
Renewal	57
Soul's Scene.....	58
Ascent	59
The Tiger and the Deer	62

The Mother of God	63
The End?	64
Silence is all	66
Notes on the Text	67
Index of Titles	74
Index of First Lines	77

One Day¹

The Little More

One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.

In Horis Aeternum²

A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,
A world of power hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly;
Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play
Follows its curve, — a blazing eye of Time watching the motionless day.

Here or elsewhere, — poised on the unreachable abrupt snow-solitary ascent
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases broken and spent,
Or on the glowing expanse, arid, fiery and austere, of the desert's hungry soul, —
A breath, a cry, a glimmer from Eternity's face, in a fragment the mystic Whole.

Trance³

A naked and silver-pointed star
 Floating near the halo of the moon;
A storm-rack, the pale sky's fringe and bar,
 Over waters stilling into swoon.

My mind is awake in stirless trance,
 Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,
 Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation pure and free,
 Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,
Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,
 Ocean-self enraptured and alone!

The Bird of Fire ⁴

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went glimmering
over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a soundless
wayless burning sea.

Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour returning drift
through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of the waters
of Eternity.

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow have you come
from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me
Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or His crimson
passion of love divine, —
White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats brimming with
light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time from his
sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature wide, an intimate
guest of His solitude,
But golden above it the body of One in her diamond sphere with Her halo
of star-bloom and passion-ray!
Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing the hard crag-teeth
world, wounded and nude,

A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase of moon-edged
night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower held by the
finite's gods to the Infinite,
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the unbarred lids that
look beyond all space,
One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind and life,
arrives at its luminous term thy flight;
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire thou frontest eyes
in a timeless Face.

Shiva⁵

The Inconscient Creator

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks
 Grand and still; its lines white and austere
Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks
 Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair
 Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head
In its solitude huge of lifeless air
 Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead, blue and pale,
 Stretched afar its finger of chill light
Illumining emptiness. Stern and male
 Mask of peace indifferent in might!

But out from some Infinite born now came
 Over giant snows and the still face
A quiver and colour of crimson flame,
 Fire-point in immensities of space.

Light-spear-tips revealed the mighty shape,
 Tore the secret veil of the heart's hold;
In that diamond heart the fires undrape,
 Living core, a brazier of gold.

This was the closed mute and burning source
Whence were formed the worlds and their star-dance;
Life sprang a self-rapt inconscient Force,
Love, a blazing seed, from that flame-trance.

The Life Heavens⁶

A life of intensities wide, immune
 Floats behind the earth and her life-fret,
A magic of realms mastered by spell and rune,
 Grandiose, blissful, coloured, increase.

A music there wanders mortal ear
 Hears not, seizing, intimate, remote,
Wide-winged in soul-spaces, fire-clear,
 Heaping note on enrapturing new note.

Forms deathless there triumph, hues divine
 Thrill with nets of glory the moved air;
Each sense is an ecstasy, love the sign
 Of one outblaze of godhead that two share.

The peace of the senses, the senses' stir
 On one harp are joined mysteries; pain
Transmuted is ravishment's minister,
 A high note and a fiery refrain.

All things are a harmony faultless, pure;
 Grief is not nor stain-wound of desire;
The heart-beats are a cadence bright and sure
 Of Joy's quick steps, too invincible to tire.

A Will there, a Force, a magician Mind
 Moves, and builds at once its delight-norms,
The marvels it seeks for surprised, outlined,
 Hued, alive, a cosmos of fair forms,

Sounds, colours, joy-flamings. Life lies here
 Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal,
In the clasp of a Power that entrals to sheer
 Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul.

My spirit sank drowned in the wonder surge:
 Screened, withdrawn was the greatness it had sought;
Lost was the storm-stress and the warrior urge,
 Lost the titan winging of the thought.

It lay at ease in a sweetness of heaven-sense
 Delivered from grief, with no need left to aspire,
Free, self-dispersed in voluptuous innocence,
 Lulled and borne into roseate cloud-fire.

But suddenly there soared a dateless cry,
 Deep as Night, imperishable as Time;
It seemed Death's dire appeal to Eternity,
 Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime.

“O high seeker of immortality,
Is there not, ineffable, a bliss
Too vast for these finite harmonies,
Too divine for the moment’s unsure kiss?

“Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
An unwalled mind dissolved in the Infinite,
Force one with unimaginable rest?

“I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,
A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven; —
My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

“By me the last finite, yearning, strives
To reach the last infinity’s unknown,
The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone.”

Dissolving the kingdoms of happy ease
Rocked and split and faded their dream-chime.
All vanished; ungrasped eternities
Sole survived and Timelessness seized Time.

Earth's heart was felt beating below me still,
Veiled, immense, unthinkable above
My consciousness climbed like a topless hill,
Crossed seas of Light to epiphanies of Love.

Symbol Moon⁷

Once again thou hast climbed, O moon, like a white fire on the glimmering edge,
 Floating up, floating up from the haunted verge of a foam-tremulous sea,
Mystic-horned here crossing the grey-hued listless nights and days,
 Spirit-silver craft from the ports of eternity.

Overhead with thy plunging and swaying prow thou fleetest, O ship of the gods,
Glorifying the clouds with thy halo, but our hearts with a rose-red rapture
shed from the secret breasts of love;
Almost thou seemest the very bliss that floats in opaline air over heaven's
golden roads,
Embodyed here to capture our human lives like a nectar face of light in the
doubtful blue above.

Bright and alone in a white-foam-glinted delicate dim-blue ocean of sky,
 Ever thou runst and thou floatest as a magic drifting bowl
Flung by the hand of a drunken god in the river of Time goes tossing by,

O icon and chalice of spiritual light whose spots are like Nature's shadow
stains on a white and immaculate soul.

How like one frail and hunted thou com'st, O white moon, at my lonely call from
thy deep sky-covert heights,
A voyager carrying through the myriad-isled archipelago of the
spear-pointed questioning stars
The circle of the occult argent Yes of the Invisible to the dim query of the
yearning witness lights
That burn in the dense vault of Matter's waking mind — innumerable,
solitary and sparse.

A disk of a greater Ray that shall come, a white-fire rapture and girdling
rose of love,
Timelessly thou driftest, O soundless silver boat that set out from
the far Unknown,
Moon-crystal of silver or gold of some spirit joy spun by Time in his dense
aeonic groove,
A messenger and bearer of an unembodied beauty and unseized bliss
advancing over our life's wan sea — significant, bright and alone.

The World Game ⁸

(The Ishwara to the Ishwari)

In god-years yet unmeasured by a man's thought or by the earth's dance
or the moon's spin

I have guarded the law of the Invisible for the sake of thy smile, O sweet;
While lives followed innumerable winged lives, as if birds crossing a wide sea,
I have watched on the path of the centuries for the light of thy running feet.

The earth's dancing with the sun in his fire-robes, was it not thou circling
my flame-soul,
The gazings of the moon in its nectar-joy were my look questing for
thee through Space?
The world's haste and the racing of the tense mind and the long gallop of fleet years
Were my speed to arrive through the flux of things and to neighbor
at last thy face.

The earth's seeking is mine and the immense scope of the slow aeons my heart's way;
For I follow a secret and sublime Will and the steps of thy Mother-might.
In the dim brute and the peering of man's brain and the calm sight in a god's eyes
It is I questing in Life's broken ways for thy laughter and love and light.

When Time moved not nor yet Space was unrolled wide, for thy game of
the worlds I gave
Myself to thy delightful hands of power to govern me and move and drive;

To earth's dumbness I fell for thy desire's sport weaving my spirit stuff
In a million pattern-shapes of souls made with me alive.

The worlds are only a playfield of Thou-I and a hued masque of the Two-One,
I am in thee as thou art in me, O Love; we are closer than heart and breast;
From thee I leaped forth struck to a spirit spark, I mount back in the soul's fire;
To our motion the stars whirl in the swing of Time, our oneness is Nature's rest.

Trance of Waiting⁹

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,
Murmurs of silence that steep mind in a luminous sleep,
Whispers from things beyond thought in the Secrecy flame-white for ever,
Unscanned heights that reply seek from the inconscient deep.
Distant below me the ocean of life with its passionate surges
Pales like a pool that is stirred by the wings of a shadowy bird.
Thought has flown back from its wheelings and stoopings, the nerve-beat of living
Stills; my spirit at peace bathes in a mighty release.
Wisdom supernal looks down on me, Knowledge mind cannot measure
Light that no vision can render garments the silence with splendour.
Filled with a rapturous Presence the crowded spaces of being
Tremble with the Fire that knows, thrill with the might of repose.
Earth is now girdled with trance and Heaven is put round her for vesture.
Wings that are brilliant with fate sleep at Eternity's gate.
Time waits, vacant, the Lightning that kindles, the Word that transfigures;
Space is a stillness of God building his earthly abode.
All waits hushed for the fiat to come and the tread of the Eternal;
Passion of a bliss yet to be sweeps from Infinity's sea.

Jivanmukta ¹⁰

There is a silence greater than any known
To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul
That has become Eternity's foothold,
Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;
Revealed it wakens when God's stillness
Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,
A single might of luminous quiet
Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,
An absolute high-seated immortal rapture
Possesses, sealing love to oneness
In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.

Moon of Two Hemispheres ¹¹

A gold moon-raft floats and swings slowly
And it casts a fire of pale holy blue light
On the dragon tail aglow of the faint night

That glimmers far, — swimming,
The illumined shoals of stars skimming,
Overspreading earth and drowning the heart in sight
With the ocean depths and breadths of the Infinite.

A gold moon-ship sails or drifts ever
In our spirit's skies and halts never, blue-keeled,
And it throws its white-blue fire on this grey field,

Night's dragon loop, — speeding,
The illumined star-thought sloops leading
To the Dawn, their harbour home, to the Light unsealed,
To the sun-face Infinite, the Untimed revealed.

Thought the Paraclete ¹²

As some bright archangel in vision flies
Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,
Past the long green crests of the seas of life,
Past the orange skies of the mystic mind
Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God.
Sleepless wide great glimmering wings of wind
Bore the gold-red seeking of feet that trod
Space and Time's mute vanishing ends. The face
Lusted, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff,
Eremite, sole, daring the bournelless ways,
Over world-bare summits of timeless being
Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss
Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing,
Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss
Drew its vague heart-yearning with voices sweet.
Hungering large-souled to surprise the unconned
Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,
Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,
Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.
Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

Rose of God ¹³

Rose of God, vermillion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!
Leap up in our heart of humankind, O miracle, O flame,
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,
Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!
Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,
Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!
Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;
Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time.

Rose of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

Who art thou that camest ¹⁴

Who art thou that camest
Bearing the occult Name,
Wings of regal darkness,
Eyes of an unborn flame?

Like the august uprising
Of a forgotten sun
Out of the caverned midnight
Fire-trails of wonder run.

Captured the heart renouncing
Tautness of passion-worn strings
Allows the wide-wayed sweetness
Of free supernal things.

A God's Labour ¹⁵

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I dare not rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
“Thy hope is Chimera’s head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

“Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life’s iron doom?

“This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god’s desires?

“Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace.”

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, “Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate.”

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gauds of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.

I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stairway wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness' end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

Musa Spiritus ¹⁶

O Word concealed in the upper fire,
Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
Descend from thy rapt white desire,
Plunging through gold eternities.

Into the gulfs of our nature leap,
Voice of the spaces, call of the Light!
Break the seals of Matter's sleep,
Break the trance of the unseen height.

In the uncertain glow of human mind,
Its waste of unharmonied thronging thoughts,
Carve thy epic mountain-lined
Crowded with deep prophetic grots.

Let thy hue-winged lyrics hover like birds
Over the swirl of the heart's sea.
Touch into sight with thy fire-words
The blind indwelling deity.

O Muse of the Silence, the wideness make
In the unplumbed stillness that hears thy voice;
In the vast mute heavens of the spirit awake
Where thy eagles of Power flame and rejoice.

Out, out with the mind and its candle flares,
Light, light the suns that never die.
For my ear the cry of the seraph stars
And the forms of the Gods for my naked eye!

Let the little troubled life-god within
Cast his veils from the still soul,
His tiger-stripes of virtue and sin,
His clamour and glamour and thole and dole;

All make tranquil, all make free.
Let my heart-beats measure the footsteps of God
As He comes from His timeless infinity
To build in their rapture His burning abode.

Weave from my life His poem of days,
His calm pure dawns and His noons of force.
My acts for the grooves of His chariot-race,
My thoughts for the tramp of His great steeds' course!

The Blue Bird ¹⁷

I am the bird of God in His blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the god's and the seraph's ear.

I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth
Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire-seeds of ecstasy.

My pinions soar beyond Time and Space
Into unfading Light;
I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face
And the boon of the Spirit's sight.

I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;
I have perched on Wisdom's tree
Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise
By the streams of Eternity.

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will.

Bride of the Fire ¹⁸

Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, —
Bride of the Fire!
I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,
I have slain desire.

Beauty of the Light, surround my life, —
Beauty of the Light!
I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,
I can bear thy delight.

Image of ecstasy, thrill and enlace, —
Image of bliss!
I would see only thy marvellous face,
Feel only thy kiss.

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart, —
Call of the One!
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
O living Sun.

One ¹⁹

The mind of a man
And the mind in a stone.
But the Mind of minds
Sits bright and alone.

The life of a tree,
The life in a clod,
To the Life of all life
That men call God.

The heart of a beast
And a seraph's heart, —
But the Heart of all hearts
Throbs ever apart.

A body beloved
And a body slain.
Yet both were the bodies
Of One in their pain.

In a mounting as of sea-tides²⁰

In a mounting as of sea-tides, in a rippling as of invisible waters,
On a cry in me my soul is uplifted, in a passion of my nature
My heart climbs up towards thee, O unimaginable Wonder and Resplendence,
In a striving for the caress of thy Light and for the embrace of thy Presence.

If once given were but a touch of thy feet on the thrilled bosom of my longing,
But a glance of thy eyes mingling with mine in the recesses and the silence,
Such a rapture would envelop me, such a fire of transfiguring effulgence,
I could never again be as a man upon this earth, but one immortal.

For my mind would be dissolved in a sun-glory of God-vision and of knowledge,
And my heart would be made suddenly more pure and illumined and self-tranquil,
And my nerves and my body would transmute into an ethereal divineness,
A fit vesture for the godhead thou buildst in me, for the immortal thy adorer.

O thou Life of my life and the unseen heart of its ecstasy and its beating,
O Face that was disclosed in the beginning of the worlds amid the immenseness,
Let thy Flame-wisdom leap down upon the coilings of our python unconsciousness,
Let the Love-wine be poured out in thy chalice, let me be drunk with it for ever.

I shall meet thee in the ocean of thy stillness, in the ether of thy splendour,
Thy Force shall be in my veins like the ichor in the Unaging who are deathless;
My soul shall be as one breath with thy soul and thy infinity around thee,
And shall quiver with the vision of thy beauty and the marvel of thy sweetness.

Krishna ²¹

(Cretics)

O immense Light and thou, O spirit-wide boundless Space,
Whom have you clasped and hid, deathless limbs, gloried face?
Vainly lie Space and Time, “Void are we, there is none.”
Vainly strive Self and World crying “I, I alone.”
One is there, Self of self, Soul of Space, Fount of Time,
Heart of hearts, Mind of minds, He alone sits, sublime.
Oh no void Absolute self-absorbed, splendid, mute,
Hands that clasp hold and red lips that kiss blow His flute.
All He loves, all He moves, all are His, all are He;
Many limbs sate His whims, bear His sweet ecstasy.
Two in One, Two who know difference rich in sense,
Two to clasp, One to be, this His strange mystery.

Flame-Wind ²²

A flame-wind ran from the gold of the east,
Leaped on my soul with the breath of a sevenfold noon.
Wings of the angel, gallop of the beast!
Mind and body on fire, but the heart in swoon.

O flame, thou bringest the strength of the noon,
But where are the voices of morn and the stillness of eve?
Where the pale-blue wine of the moon?
Mind and life are in flower, but the heart must grieve.

Gold in the mind and the life-flame's red
Make of the heavens a splendour, the earth a blaze,
But the white and rose of the heart are dead.
Flame-wind, pass! I will wait for Love in the silent ways.

The Cosmic Man²³

The Island Sun ²⁴

I have sailed the golden ocean
And crossed the silver bar;
I have reached the Sun of knowledge,
The earth-self's midnight star.

Its fields of flaming vision,
Its mountains of bare might,
Its peaks of fiery rapture,
Its air of absolute light,

Its seas of self-oblivion,
Its vales of Titan rest,
Became my soul's dominion,
Its Island of the Blest.

Alone with God and silence,
Timeless it lived in Time;
Life was His fugue of music,
Thought was Truth's ardent rhyme.

The Light was still around me
When I came back to earth
Bringing the Immortal's knowledge
Into man's cave of birth.

Despair on the Staircase ²⁵

Mute stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,
An image of magnificent despair;
The grandeur of a sorrowful surmise
Wakes in the largeness of her glorious eyes.
In her beauty's dumb significant pose I find
The tragedy of her mysterious mind.
Yet is she stately, grandiose, full of grace.
A musing mask is her immobile face.
Her tail is up like an unconquered flag;
Its dignity knows not the right to wag.
An animal creature wonderfully human,
A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat,
Is now the problem I am wondering at.

The Dwarf Napoleon²⁶

(Hitler. October 1939)

Behold, by Maya's fantasy of will
A violent miracle takes sudden birth,
The real grows one with the incredible.
In the control of her magician wand
The small achieves things great, the base things grand.
This puny creature would stride the earth
Even as the immense colossus of the past.
Napoleon's mind was swift and bold and vast,
His heart was calm and stormy like the sea,
His will dynamic in its grip and clasp.
His eye could hold a world within its grasp
And see the great and small things sovereignly.
A movement of gigantic depth and scope
He seized and gave coherence to its hope.
Far other this creature of a nether clay,
Void of all grandeur, like a gnome at play,
Iron and mud his nature's mingled stuff,
A little limited visionary brain
Cunning and skilful in its narrow vein,
A sentimental egoist poor and rough,
Whose heart was never sweet and fresh and young,
A headlong spirit driven by hopes and fears,

Intense neurotic with his shouts and tears,
Violent and cruel, devil, child and brute,
This screaming orator with his strident tongue,
This prophet of a scanty fixed idea,
Plays now the leader of our human march;
His might shall build the future's triumph arch.
Now is the world for his eating a ripe fruit.
His shadow falls from London to Corea.
Cities and nations crumble in his course.
A terror holds the peoples in its grip:
World-destiny waits upon that foaming lip.
A Titan Power upholds this pigmy man,
The crude dwarf instrument of a mighty Force.
Hater of the free spirit's joy and light,
Made only of strength and skill and giant might,
A Will to trample humanity into clay
And unify earth beneath one iron sway,
Insists upon its fierce enormous plan.
Trampling man's mind and will into one mould
Docile and facile in a dreadful hold,
It cries its demon slogans to the crowd.
But if its tenebrous empire were allowed,
That mastery would prepare the dismal hour
When the Inconscient shall regain its right,
And man who emerged as Nature's conscious power,
Shall sink into the deep original night

Sharing like all her forms that went before
The doom of the mammoth and the dinosaur.
It is the shadow of the Titan's robe
That looms across the panic-stricken globe.
In his high villa on the fatal hill
Alone he listens to that sovereign Voice,
Dictator of his action's sudden choice,
The tiger leap of a demoniac skill.
An energy his body cannot invest, —
Too small and human for that dreadful guest,
A tortured channel, not a happy vessel, —
Drives him to think and act and cry and wrestle.
Thus driven he must stride on conquering all,
Threatening and clamouring, brutal, invincible,
Until he meets upon his storm-swept road
A greater devil — or thunderstroke of God.

The Children of Wotan²⁷

1940

“Where is the end of your armoured march, O children of Wotan?
Earth shudders with fear at your tread, the death-flame laughs in your eyes.”
“We have seen the sign of Thor and the hammer of new creation,
A seed of blood on the soil, a flower of blood in the skies.
We march to make of earth a hell and call it heaven.
The heart of mankind we have smitten with the whip of the sorrows seven;
The Mother of God lies bleeding in our black and gold sunrise.”

“I hear the cry of a broken world, O children of Wotan.”
“Question the volcano when it burns, chide the fire and bitumen!
Suffering is the food of our strength and torture the bliss of our entrails.
We are pitiless, mighty and glad, the gods fear our laughter inhuman.
Our hearts are heroic and hard; we wear the belt of Orion:
Our will has the edge of the thunderbolt, our acts the claws of the lion.
We rejoice in the pain we create as a man in the kiss of a woman.”

“Have you seen your fate in the scales of God, O children of Wotan,
And the tail of the Dragon lashing the foam in far-off seas?”
“We mock at God, we have silenced the mutter of priests at his altar.
Our leader is master of Fate, medium of her mysteries.
We have made the mind a cypher, we have strangled Thought with a cord;
Dead now are pity and honour, strength only is Nature’s lord.
We build a new world-order; our bombs shout Wotan’s peace.

“We are the javelins of Destiny, we are the children of Wotan,
We are the human Titans, the supermen dreamed by the sage.
A cross of the beast and demoniac with the godhead of power and will,
We were born in humanity’s sunset, to the Night is our pilgrimage.
On the bodies of perishing nations, mid the cry of the cataclysm coming,
To a presto of bomb and shell and the aeroplane’s fatal humming,
We march, lit by Truth’s death-pyre, to the world’s satanic age.”

Ocean Oneness²⁸

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;
White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;
A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,
Azure on azure, is mutely gazing.

Identified with silence and boundlessness
My spirit widens clasping the universe
Till all that seemed becomes the Real,
One in a mighty and single vastness.

Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,
Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite,
And, sole in a still eternal rapture,
Gathers all things to his heart for ever.

The River²⁹

Wild river in thy cataract far-rumoured and rash rapids to sea hastening,
Far now is that birth-place mid abrupt mountains and slow dreaming of lone valleys
Where only with blue heavens was rapt converse or green orchards with fruit leaning
Stood imaged in thy waves and, content, listened to thy rhapsody's long murmur.

Vast now in a wide press and a dense hurry and mass movement of thronged waters
Loud-thundering, fast-galloping, might, speed is the stern message of thy spirit,
Proud violence, stark claim and the dire cry of the heart's hunger on God's barriers
Self-hurled, and a void lust of unknown distance, and pace reckless and free grandeur.

Calm yet shall release thee; an immense peace and a large streaming of white silence,
Broad plains shall be thine, greenness surround thee, and wharfed cities and

Journey's End ³⁰

The day ends lost in a stretch of even,
A long road trod — and the little farther.
 Now the waste-land, now the silence;
A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.

The Dream Boat³¹

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,
“Do you come now? is the heart’s fire ready?”

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered.
It recalled all that the life’s joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.

Now within the hollowness of the world’s breast inhabits —
For the love died and the old joy ended —
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.

Soul in the Ignorance ³²

Soul in the Ignorance, wake from its stupor.
Flake of the world-fire, spark of Divinity,
Lift up thy mind and thy heart into glory.
Sun in the darkness, recover thy lustre.

One, universal, ensphering creation,
Wheeling no more with inconscient Nature,
Feel thyself God-born, know thyself deathless.
Timeless return to thy immortal existence.

The Witness and the Wheel³³

Who art thou in the heart comrade of man who sitst
August, watching his works, watching his joys and griefs,
Unmoved, careless of pain, careless of death and fate?
Witness, what hast thou seen watching this great blind world
Moving helpless in Time, whirled on the Wheel in Space,
That yet thou with thy vast Will biddest toil our hearts,
Mystic, — for without thee nothing can last in Time?
We too, when from the urge ceaseless of Nature turn
Our souls, far from the breast casting her tool, desire,
Grow like thee. In the front Nature still drives in vain
The blind trail of our acts, passions and thoughts and hopes;
Unmoved, calm, we look on, careless of death and fate,
Of grief careless and joy, — signs of a surface script
Without value or sense, steps of an aimless world.
Something watches behind, Spirit or Self or Soul,
Viewing Space and its toil, waiting the end of Time.
Witness, who then art thou, one with thee who am I,
Nameless, watching the Wheel whirl across Time and Space?

Descent³⁴

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,
Light and still more light like an ocean billows
Over me, round me.

Rigid, stonelike, fixed like a hill or statue,
Vast my body feels and upbears the world's weight;
Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters
Limbs that are mortal.

Voiceless, thronged, Infinity crowds upon me;
Presses down a glory of power eternal;
Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness;
Stilled are earth's murmurs.

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's;
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
Ecstasy's chariots.

All the world is changed to a single oneness;
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,
 Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal, —
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
 Clasping for ever.

The Lost Boat ³⁵

At the way's end when the shore raised up its dim line and remote lights
from the port glimmered,
Then a cloud darkened the sky's brink and the wind's scream was the shrill laugh
of a loosed demon
And the huge passion of storm leaped with its bright stabs and the long crashing
of death's thunder;
As if haled by an unseen hand fled the boat lost on the wide homeless forlorn ocean.

Is it Chance smites? is it Fate's irony? dead workings or blind purpose of
brute Nature?
Or man's own deeds that return back on his doomed head with a stark justice,
a fixed vengeance?
Or a dread Will from behind Life that regards pain and salutes death with
a hard laughter?
Is it God's might or a Force rules in this dense jungle of events, deeds and our
thought's strivings?

Yet perhaps sank not the bright lives and their glad venturings foiled, drowned
in the grey ocean,
But with long wandering they reached an unknown shore and a strange sun
and a new azure,
Amid bright splendour of beast glories and birds' music and deep hues,
an enriched Nature

And a new life that could draw near to divine meanings and touched close
the concealed purpose.

In a chance happening, fate's whims and the blind workings or dead drive
of a brute Nature,
In her dire Titan caprice, strength that to death drifts and to doom, hidden
a Will labours.

Not with one moment of sharp close or the slow fall of a dim curtain the play ceases:
Yet is there Time to be crossed, lives to be lived out, the unplayed acts of
the soul's drama.

Renewal ³⁶

When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling
 Things that were once and again can be never,
When the bow falls and the drawn string is broken,
 Hands that were clasped, yet for ever are parted,

When the soul passes to new births and bodies,
 Lands never seen and meetings with new faces,
Is the bow raised and the fall'n arrow fitted,
 Acts that were vain rewedded to the Fate-curve?

To the lives sundered can Time bring rejoining,
 Love that was slain be reborn with the body?
In the mind null, from the heart's chords rejected,
 Lost to the sense, but the spirit remembers!

Soul's Scene ³⁷

The clouds lain on forlorn spaces of sky, weary and lolling,
Watch grey waves of a lost sea wander sad, reckless and rolling,
A bare anguish of bleak beaches made mournful with the breath of
the Northwind

And a huddle of melancholy hills in the distance.

The blank hour in some vast mood of a Soul lonely in Nature
On earth's face puts a mask pregnantly carved, cut to misfeature,
And man's heart and his stilled mind react hushed in a spiritual passion
Imitating the contours of her desolate waiting.

Impassible she waits long for the sun's gold and the azure,
The sea's song with its slow happy refrain's plashes of pleasure, —
As man's soul in its depths waits the outbreaking of the light and the godhead
And the bliss that God felt when he created his image.

Ascent³⁸

(1)

The Silence

Into the Silence, into the Silence,
Arise, O Spirit immortal,
Away from the turning Wheel, breaking the magical Circle.
Ascend, single and deathless:
Care no more for the whispers and the shoutings in the darkness,
Pass from the sphere of the grey and the little,
Leaving the cry and the struggle,
Into the Silence for ever.

Vast and immobile, formless and marvellous,
Higher than Heaven, wider than the universe,
In a pure glory of being,
In a bright stillness of self-seeing,
Communing with a boundlessness voiceless and intimate,
Make thy knowledge too high for thought, thy joy too deep for emotion;
At rest in the unchanging Light, mute with the wordless self-vision,
Spirit, pass out of thyself; Soul, escape from the clutch of Nature.
All thou hast seen cast from thee, O Witness.
Turn to the Alone and the Absolute, turn to the Eternal:
Be only eternity, peace and silence,

O world-transcending nameless Oneness,
Spirit immortal.

(2)

Beyond the Silence

Out from the Silence, out from the Silence,
Carrying with thee the ineffable Substance,
Carrying with thee the splendour and wideness,
Ascend, O Spirit immortal.

Assigning to Time its endless meaning,
Blissful enter into the clasp of the Timeless.

Awake in the living Eternal, taken to the bosom of love of the Infinite,
Live self-found in his endless completeness,
Drowned in his joy and his sweetness,
Thy heart close to the heart of the Godhead for ever.

Vast, God-possessing, embraced by the Wonderful,
Lifted by the All-Beautiful into his infinite beauty,
Love shall envelop thee endless and fathomless,
Joy unimaginable, ecstasy illimitable,
Knowledge omnipotent, Might omniscient,
Light without darkness, Truth that is dateless.
One with the Transcendent, calm, universal,
Single and free, yet innumerably living,

The Tiger and the Deer³⁹

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the noise of its
steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept
and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,
Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank
Unsuspecting at the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,
And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep woodland,—
Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature.
But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more in the
dangerous heart of the forest,
As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;
Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great pools
in the leaves' shadow.
The mighty perish in their might;
The slain survive the slayer.

The Mother of God ⁴⁰

A conscious and eternal Power is here
Behind unhappiness and mortal birth
And the error of Thought and blundering trudge of Time.
The mother of God, his sister and his spouse,
Daughter of his wisdom, of his strength the mate,
She has leapt from the Transcendent's secret breast
To build her rainbow worlds of mind and life.
Between the superconscious absolute Light
And the Inconscient's vast unthinking toil,
In the rolling and routine of Matter's sleep
And the somnambulist motion of the stars
She forces on the cold unwilling Void
Her adventure of life, the passionate dreams of her heart.
Amid the work of darker Powers she is here
To heal the evils and mistakes of Space
And change the tragedy of the ignorant world
Into a Divine Comedy of joy
And the laughter and the rapture of God's bliss.
The Mother of God is mother of our souls;
We are the partners of his birth in Time,
Inheritors we share his eternity.

The End? ⁴¹

Is this the end of all that we have been,
And all we did or dreamed, —
A name unremembered and a form undone, —
Is this the end?

A body rotting under a slab of stone
Or turned to ash in fire,
A mind dissolved, lost its forgotten thoughts, —
Is this the end?

Our little hours that were and are no more,
Our passions once so high
Dying mocked by the still earth and calm sunshine, —
Is this the end?

Our yearnings for the human Godward climb
Passing to other hearts
Deceived, while sinks towards death and hell the world, —
Is this the end?

Fallen is the harp; shattered it lies and mute;
Is the unseen player dead?
Because the tree is felled where the bird sang,
Must the song too hush?

One in the mind who planned and willed and thought,
Worked to reshape earth's fate,
One in the heart who loved and yearned and hoped,
Does he too end?

The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;
An artist Godhead here
Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,
Unwilling to cease

Till all is done for which the stars were made,
Till the heart discovers God
And soul knows itself. And even then
There is no end.

Silence is all⁴²

1

Silence is all, say the sages.
Silence watches the work of the ages;
In the book of Silence the cosmic Scribe has written his cosmic pages:
Silence is all, say the sages.

2

What then of the word, O speaker?
What then of the thought, O thinker?
Thought is the wine of the soul and the word is the beaker;
Life is the banquet-table as the soul of the sage is the drinker.

3

What of the wine, O mortal?
I am drunk with the wine as I sit at Wisdom's portal,
Waiting for the Light beyond thought and the Word immortal.
Long I sit in vain at Wisdom's portal.

4

How shalt thou know the Word when it comes, O seeker?
How shalt thou know the Light when it breaks, O witness?
I shall hear the voice of the God within me and grow wiser and meeker;
I shall be the tree that takes in the light as its food, I shall drink its
nectar of sweetness.

Notes on the Text

Sri Aurobindo once wrote that he wanted his short poems published in two separate books, one of sonnets and one of “(mainly) lyrical poems”.

This book contains all of Sri Aurobindo’s short poems, other than sonnets, composed between 1930 and 1950, with the exception of poems written solely as metrical experiments, nonsense poems written as parodies of surrealist verse, and incomplete or fragmentary poems. Most of the poems included are “lyrical” in the technical sense: they are short and express the writer’s personal thoughts and feelings. Unlike most other examples of the genre, however, their lyricism is spiritual and psychic. Along with the later sonnets and the epic *Savitri*, they represent Sri Aurobindo’s highest achievement in spiritual or yogic poetry.

Twenty-eight of the forty-two poems in this book were published by Sri Aurobindo during his lifetime in the following volumes: *Six Poems* (1934), *Poems* (1941), *On Quantitative Metre* (1942), and *Poems Past and Present* (1946). The other fourteen poems are taken from his manuscripts from the same period. Most of them were revised more than once, but some exist only in a single handwritten draft.

The editors have arranged the poems by date of composition. If this is not known, other factors, such as location of manuscript and style of handwriting, have been evaluated to determine chronological position.

- 1. One Day.** Circa 1932. Sri Aurobindo wrote the first draft of this poem in the notebook, which Nolini Kanta Gupta uncovered and sent to him in 1932. This draft was lightly revised and later included in *Poems Past and Present*. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript.
- 2. In Horis Aeternum.** 19 April 1932. Sri Aurobindo began this poem while corresponding with Arjava (J. A. Chadwick, a British disciple) about English prosody. He wrote the first stanza in a letter to Arjava and the full poem in a subsequent letter (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 231 – 34). There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts. One of the typed manuscripts is dated “19.4.32”.
- 3. Trance.** 16 October 1933. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, which is dated “16.10.33”. In the same letter in which Sri Aurobindo wrote about the composition of “The Bird of Fire” (see below), he noted that “Trance” was written “at one sitting — it took only a few minutes”.
- 4. The Bird of Fire.** 17 October 1933. No handwritten manuscripts of this poem survive. There are three typed manuscripts, two of which are dated 17 October 1933. In a letter written shortly afterwards, Sri Aurobindo said that “Bird of Fire” was “written on two consecutive days — and afterwards revised”. He also wrote that this poem and “Trance” (see above) were completed the same day.
- 5. Shiva.** 6 November 1933. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, which is dated “6.11.33”.
- 6. The Life Heavens.** 15 November 1933. There are four handwritten and three typed manuscripts. The typed manuscripts are dated “15.11.33”.

7. Symbol Moon. Circa 1934. Three handwritten and two typed manuscripts. On 7 August 1934, Sri Aurobindo asked his secretary to type the first drafts of “Symbol Moon”, “The World Game”, “Transformation” and “The Other Earths” from the notebook in which he wrote these and other poems.

8. The World Game. Circa 1934. Three handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

9. Trance of Waiting. Circa 1934. The first draft of this poem was written around the same time as “Jivanmukta”, which is dated 1934. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work in 1942.

10. Jivanmukta. 13 April 1934. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts. The typed manuscripts are dated “13.4.34”. The poem was published in the *Calcutta Review* in June 1934.

11. Moon of Two Hemispheres. July 1934. Like “Thought the Paraclete”, this poem originated in an attempt to duplicate a Bengali metre proposed by Dilip Kumar Roy. Replying to Dilip, Sri Aurobindo began: “After two days of wrestling I have to admit that I am beaten by your last metre. I have written something, but it is a fake.” He then wrote out the first stanza of the poem, pointing out where he had failed to meet Dilip’s specifications. He closed by saying: “I have some idea of adding a second stanza”, though “it may never take birth at all” (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 235 – 36). He did write a second stanza later. The poem was published in the “Sri Aurobindo Number” (volume 2, number 5) of the Calcutta fortnightly journal *Onward* in August 1934. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem.

12. Thought the Paraclete. 31 December 1934 (this is the date on a typed manuscript; the handwritten manuscripts were probably written in June 1934). This poem originated as a

metrical experiment, in which Sri Aurobindo tried to match a Bengali metrical model submitted to him by his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy. There are at least three handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem. A printed text was produced sometime before 1941, but apparently was never published.

13. Rose of God. 29 – 30 December 1934. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript of this poem. The typed manuscript is dated 31 December 1934; however Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter to a disciple that “Rose of God” was ready “on the 30th having been written on that and the previous day”. On 31 December, he wrote to his secretary that the just-typed “Rose of God” could be “circulated first as a sort of New Year invocation”. On 2 March 1935, his secretary wrote to him saying that the editor of a quarterly journal had asked for a poem to be published, and asking whether “Rose of God” could be sent. Sri Aurobindo replied: “I feel squeamish about publishing the ‘Rose of God’ in a magazine or newspaper. It seems to me the wrong place altogether.”

14. Who art thou that camest. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934 – 36. One handwritten manuscript, written in a notebook used otherwise for *Savitri*.

15. A God’s Labour. 1935 – 36. A late draft of this poem is dated as follows: “31.7.35 / Last 4 stanzas 1.1.36”. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

16. Musa Spiritus. 1935. An early draft of this poem occurs between drafts of “A God’s Labour” and “The Blue Bird” (see below). Sri Aurobindo wrote the date “31.7.35” at the end of a later draft. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript of this poem.

17. The Blue Bird. 1935. The first draft of this poem is dated 11 November 1935. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

- 18. Bride of the Fire.** 1935. The first draft of this poem is dated 11 November 1935. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts.
- 19. One.** 14 March 1936. One handwritten manuscript, written on a sheet of a small “Bloc-Memo” pad.
- 20. In a mounting as of sea-tides.** No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936 – 37. One handwritten manuscript.
- 21. Krishna.** Circa 1936 – 37. One handwritten manuscript.
- 22. Flame-Wind.** 1937. A handwritten draft of this poem is dated 1937. This draft is entitled “Dream Symbols”. Three other handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work in 1942.
- 23. The Cosmic Man.** 15 September 1938. One handwritten manuscript.
- 24. The Island Sun.** 13 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.
- 25. Despair on the Staircase.** October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.
- 26. The Dwarf Napoleon.** 16 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.
- 27. The Children of Wotan.** 30 August 1940. Two handwritten manuscripts.
- 28. Ocean Oneness.** 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts, both entitled “Brahman”, precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 29. The River.** 1942. Three handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

- 30. Journey's End.** 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 31. The Dream Boat.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 32. Soul in the Ignorance.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 33. The Witness and the Wheel.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 34. Descent.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 35. The Lost Boat.** 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 36. Renewal.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 37. Soul's Scene.** 1942. Three handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 38. Ascent.** 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.
- 39. The Tiger and the Deer.** 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

40. The Mother of God. One handwritten manuscript, undated, but in the handwriting of the mid 1940s.

41. The End? 3 June 1945. One handwritten manuscript.

42. Silence is all. No title in the manuscript. 14 January 1947. (The manuscript is dated “January 14, 1946”, but this is probably a slip, as the rest of the contents of the notebook in which the poem is written are from 1947.) One handwritten manuscript.

Index of Titles

A God's Labour.....	24
Ascent.....	59
Bride of the Fire.....	34
Descent.....	53
Despair on the Staircase.....	41
Flame-Wind.....	38
In a mounting as of sea-tides.....	36
In Horis Aeternum.....	2
Jivanmukta.....	18
Journey's End.....	49
Krishna.....	37
Moon of Two Hemispheres.....	20
Musa Spiritus.....	31
Ocean Oneness.....	47
One.....	35
One Day.....	1
Renewal.....	57
Rose of God.....	22

Shiva.....	6
Silence is all.....	66
Soul in the Ignorance.....	51
Soul's Scene.....	58
Symbol Moon.....	12
The Bird of Fire.....	4
The Blue Bird.....	33
The Children of Wotan.....	45
The Cosmic Man.....	39
The Dream Boat.....	50
The Dwarf Napoleon.....	42
The End?.....	64
The Island Sun.....	40
The Life Heavens.....	8
The Lost Boat.....	55
The Mother of God.....	63
The River.....	48
The Tiger and the Deer.....	62
The Witness and the Wheel.....	52
The World Game.....	14

Thought the Paraclete.....	21
Trance.....	3
Trance of Waiting.....	17
Who art thou that camest.....	23

Index of First Lines

A conscious and eternal Power is here.....	63
A face on the cold dire mountain peaks.....	6
A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,.....	2
A flame-wind ran from the gold of the east,.....	38
A gold moon-raft floats and swings slowly.....	20
A life of intensities wide, immune.....	8
A naked and silver-pointed star.....	3
All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,.....	53
As some bright archangel in vision flies.....	21
At the way's end when the shore raised up its dim line and remote lights from the port glimmered,.....	55
Behold, by Maya's fantasy of will.....	42
Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, —.....	34
Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,.....	62
Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,.....	4
I am the bird of God in His blue;.....	33
I have gathered my dreams in a silver air.....	24

I have sailed the golden ocean.....	40
I look across the world and no horizon walls my gaze;.....	39
In a mounting as of sea-tides, in a rippling as of invisible waters,.....	36
In god-years yet unmeasured by a man's thought or by the earth's dance or the moon's spin.....	14
Into the Silence, into the Silence,.....	59
Is this the end of all that we have been,.....	64
Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,.....	17
Mute stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,.....	41
O immense Light and thou, O spirit-wide boundless Space,.....	37
O Word concealed in the upper fire,.....	31
Once again thou hast climbed, O moon, like a white fire on the glimmering edge,.....	12
One day, and all the half-dead is done,.....	1
Rose of God, vermillion stain on the sapphires of heaven,.....	22
Silence is all, say the sages.....	66
Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;.....	47
Soul in the Ignorance, wake from its stupor.....	51
The clouds lain on forlorn spaces of sky, weary and lolling,.....	58
The day ends lost in a stretch of even,.....	49
The mind of a man.....	35

There is a silence greater than any known.....	18
When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling.....	57
“Where is the end of your armoured march, O children of Wotan?.....	45
Who art thou in the heart comrade of man who sitst.....	52
Who art thou that camest.....	23
Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,.....	50
Wild river in thy cataract far-rumoured and rash rapids to sea hastening,.....	48

SRI AUROBINDO

THE FUTURE
EVOLUTION
OF MAN

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THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF MAN

The Divine Life upon Earth

COMPILED WITH A SUMMARY AND NOTES BY
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Contents

Preface.....	1
Summary.....	2
1. The Human Aspiration.....	13
2. The Place of Man in Evolution.....	18
3. The Present Evolutionary Crisis.....	28
4. Standards of Conduct and Spiritual Freedom.....	56
5. The Development of The Spiritual Man.....	68
6. The Triple Transformation.....	82
7. The Ascent Towards Supermind.....	100
8. The Gnostic Being.....	120
9. The Divine Life Upon Earth.....	148
Bibliography.....	166

PREFACE

Man today is becoming poignantly aware of his power to influence for good or evil his own destiny. At this critical moment when he questions his future, we believe it important to present to the public the most significant passages from those books of Sri Aurobindo which deal with this problem, the future evolution of humanity.

The quotations contained in this small volume are taken from the three following works:

- THE LIFE DIVINE
- THE HUMAN CYCLE
- THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA

At the end of the volume are given a few notes explaining the terms used by Sri Aurobindo and a bibliography.

Our aim will be accomplished if the reader is induced to turn to the original works.

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Pondicherry, India
August 15, 1962*

Summary

I. THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

Man's highest aspiration – his seeking for perfection, his longing for freedom and mastery, his search after pure truth and unmixed delight – is in flagrant contradiction with his present existence and normal experience.

Such contradiction is part of Nature's general method; it is a sign that she is working towards a greater harmony. The reconciliation is achieved by an evolutionary progress.

Life evolves out of Matter, Mind out of Life, because they are already involved there: Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Mind. May not Mind be a form and veil of a higher power, the Spirit, which would be supramental in its nature? Man's highest aspiration would then only indicate the gradual unveiling of the Spirit within, the preparation of a higher life upon earth.

II. THE PLACE OF MAN IN EVOLUTION

An evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence. The evolutionary working of Nature has a double process: an evolution of forms, an evolution of the soul.

Man occupies the crest of the evolutionary wave. With him occurs the passage from an unconscious to a conscious evolution.

At each step one receives an intimation of what the following step will be.

The nature of the next step is indicated by the deep aspirations awakening in the human race.

A change of consciousness is the major fact of the next

evolutionary transformation, and the consciousness itself, by its own mutation, will impose and effect any necessary mutation of the body.

There is no reason to suppose that this transformation is impossible on earth. In fact, it would give the truest meaning to earthly existence.

Man's urge towards spirituality is an undeniable indication of the inner drive of the Spirit within towards emergence, its insistence towards the next step of its manifestation.

III. THE PRESENT EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS

It is often claimed that reason is the highest faculty of man and that it has enabled him to master himself and to master Nature. Has reason really succeeded?

When reason applies itself to life and action it becomes partial and passionate and the servant of other forces than the pure truth.

Why does man have faith in reason? Because reason has a legitimate function to fulfil, for which it is perfectly adapted; and this is to justify and illumine for man his various experiences and to give him faith and conviction in holding on to the enlarging of his consciousness.

But reason cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace their totality. It deals with the finite, the separate and has no measure for the all and the infinite.

The limitations of reason become very strikingly apparent when it is confronted with the religious life.

What is religion really and essentially and why is it outside the realm of reason?

Can religion then be the guide of human life? It is a fact that in ancient times society gave a pre-eminent place to religion.

But, on the other hand, humanity – and in particular that portion of humanity which was the standard-bearer of progress – has revolted against the predominance of religion.

Very often the accredited religions have opposed progress and sided with the forces of obscurity and oppression. And it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. This would not have been so if religion were the true and sufficient guide of the whole of human life.

If religion has failed, it is because it has confused the essential with the adventitious. True religion is spiritual religion, it is a seeking after God, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. Dogmas, cults, moral codes are aids and props; they may be offered to man but not imposed on him.

Moreover, religion often considers spiritual life as made up of renunciation and mortification. Religion thus becomes a force that discourages life and it cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life.

In spirituality then, restored to its true sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonizing law.

On the other hand, modern man has not solved the problem of the relation of the individual to the society. What are their respective roles in the spiritual progress of mankind?

It is wrong to demand that the individual subordinate himself to the collectivity or merge in it, because it is by its most advanced individuals that the collectivity progresses and they can really

advance only if they are free. But it is true that as the individual advances spiritually, he finds himself more and more united with the collectivity and the All.

The present evolutionary crisis comes from a disparity between the limited faculties of man – mental, ethical and spiritual – and the technical and economical means at his disposal.

Without an inner change man can no longer cope with the gigantic development of the outer life.

The exaltation of the collectivity, of the State, only substitutes the collective ego for the individual ego.

If humanity is to survive, a radical transformation of human nature is indispensable.

IV. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Since perfection is progressive, good and evil are shifting quantities and change from time to time their meaning and value.

Four main principles successively govern human conduct. The first two are personal need and the good of the collectivity.

A conflict is born of the opposition of the two instinctive tendencies which govern human action: the individualist and the gregarious.

In order to settle this conflict, a new principle comes in, other and higher than the two conflicting instincts, and aiming both to override and to reconcile them. This third principle is the ethical ideal.

But conflicts do not subside; they seem rather to multiply. Moral laws are arbitrary and rigid; when applied to life, they are obliged to come to terms with it and end in compromises which deprive

them of all power.

Behind the ethical law, which is a false image, a greater truth of a vast consciousness without fetters unveils itself, the supreme law of our divine nature. It determines perfectly our relations with each being and with the totality of the universe, and it also reveals the exact rhythm of the direct expression of the Divine in us. It is the fourth and supreme principle of action, which is at the same time imperative law and absolute freedom.

V. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Spirituality is something else than intellectuality; its appearance is the sign that a Power greater than mind is striving to emerge in its turn.

Spirituality is a progressive awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body. It is an inner aspiration to know, to enter into contact and union with the greater Reality beyond, which also pervades the universe and dwells in us, and, as a result of that aspiration, that contact and that union, a turning, a conversion, a birth into a new being.

In her attempt to open up the inner being, Nature has followed four main lines – religion, occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realization and experience.

Only spiritual realization and experience can achieve the change of the mental being into a spiritual being.

Mysticism and spirituality have been criticized from two points of view. These criticisms should be examined before proceeding further:

1. The mystic turns away from life.
2. Mystical knowledge is purely subjective.

VI. THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

If the final goal of terrestrial evolution were only to awaken man to the supreme Reality and to release him from ignorance and bondage, so that the liberated soul could find elsewhere a higher state of being or merge into this supreme Reality, the task would be accomplished with the advent of the spiritual man. But there is also in us an aspiration for the mastery of Nature and her transformation, for a greater perfection in the earthly existence itself.

To be established permanently, this new order of existence demands a radical change of the entire human nature. In this transformation, there are three phases.

The first phase of this transformation can be called psychic: the soul, or psychic being, has to come forward and take the lead of the whole being.

In the course of evolution, the soul, in order to emerge successfully and turn the being towards the supreme Reality, uses three dynamic images of this supreme Reality: Truth, Beauty and Good. Three ways thus open before the seeker.

1. The way of the intellect or of knowledge.
2. The way of the heart or of emotion.
3. The way of the will or of action.

These three ways, combined and followed concurrently, have a most powerful effect.

A shifting of the consciousness, a withdrawal within, becomes imperative at this stage, in order to reach the central being, the true Soul, and to allow it to become the guide and sovereign of the nature.

Two principal results follow this emergence: first an effective guidance and mastery which unmask and reject all that is false and obscure or all that opposes the divine realization; then, a spontaneous influx of spiritual experiences of all kinds.

The second phase of the transformation may be called spiritual; it is an opening to an Infinity above us, an eternal Presence, a boundless Self, an infinite Existence, an infinity of Consciousness, an infinity of Bliss, an All-Power.

The spiritual change culminates in a permanent ascension from the lower consciousness to the higher consciousness, followed by an effective permanent descent of the higher nature into the lower.

A new consciousness begins to form with new forces of thought and sight, and a power of direct spiritual realization which is more than thought or sight.

To make this new creation permanent and perfect, the very foundation of our nature of ignorance must be transfigured and a greater power, a supramental Force must intervene to accomplish that transfiguration. This is the third phase: the supramental transformation.

VII. THE ASCENT TOWARDS SUPERMIND

It is difficult to conceive intellectually what the Supermind is; and to describe it, another language would be needed than the poor abstract counters of the mind.

The transition from mind to Supermind is a passage from

Nature into Supernature. For that very reason it cannot be achieved by a mere effort of our mind or our unaided aspiration. Overmind and Supermind are involved and hidden in the earth-nature; but, in order that they may emerge in us, there is needed a pressure of the same powers already formulated in their full natural force on their own superconscious planes. The powers of the Superconscience must descend into us and uplift us and transform our being.

What should be the preparation for the supramental transformation? First, an increasing control of the individual over his own nature and a more and more conscious participation in the action of the Supernature.

A second condition consists in a conscious obedience, a surrender of our whole being, to the light, the truth and force from above.

A third condition is the unification of the whole being around the true self and the opening of the individual to the cosmic consciousness.

Four steps of ascent lead from the human intelligence to the Supermind; these are:

1. Higher Mind.
2. Illumined Mind.
3. Intuitive Mind.
4. Overmind.

The Overmind descent is not sufficient to transform wholly the Inconscience, the Supramental Force alone is capable of achieving this.

VIII. THE GNOSTIC BEING

The difficulty in understanding and describing the supramental nature comes from the fact that in its very essence, it is consciousness and power of the Infinite.

One can, however, describe in a general way the passage from the Overmind to the Supermind and form an idea of the supramental existence in its initial step.

The supramental or gnostic being will be the perfect consummation of the spiritual man.

The law of the Supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity; unity does not imply uniformity.

The supramental being will realize the harmony of his individual self with the cosmic Self, of his individual will and action with the cosmic Will and Action.

The transcendence aspect of the spiritual life is indispensable for the freedom of the Spirit; but it will harmonize with the manifested existence and give it an unshakable foundation. For the gnostic being, to act in the world does not signify a lapse from unity.

The gnostic consciousness will proceed towards an integral knowledge. And that will not be a revelation or a delivery of light out of darkness, but of light out of light.

The joy of an intimate self-revealing diversity of the One, the multitudinous union and happy interaction within the One, will give a fully perfected sense to the gnostic life.

Matter will reveal itself as an instrument of the manifestation of Spirit; a new liberated and sovereign acceptance of material Nature will then be possible.

The body will become a faithful and capable instrument,

perfectly responsive to the Spirit.

Health, strength, duration, bodily happiness and ease, liberation from suffering, are a part of the physical perfection which the gnostic evolution is called upon to realize.

A vast calm and a deep delight of the gnostic existence rise together in a growing intensity and culminate in an eternal ecstasy. In the universal phenomenon is revealed the eternal Bliss, Ananda.

Two questions remain to be examined, which are important for the human conception of life.

1. What is the place of personality in the gnostic being?

In the gnostic consciousness personality and impersonality are not opposing principles; they are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality.

What will be the nature of the gnostic person?

2. If there is a gnostic personality and if it is in some way responsible for its acts, what is the place of the ethical element in the gnostic nature, what is its perfection and its fulfilment?

The gnostic life will reconcile freedom and order. There will be an entire accord between the free expression of the Individual and his obedience to the inherent law of the supreme and universal Truth of things.

All mental standards would disappear because their necessity would cease; the authentic law of identity with the Divine Self would have replaced them.

IX. THE DIVINE LIFE UPON EARTH

To be wholly and integrally conscious of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is what is implied by the perfect emergence of

the individual consciousness, and it is that towards which evolution tends. All being is one, and to be fully conscious means to be integrated with the consciousness of all, with the universal self and force and action.

The plenitude of this consciousness can only be attained by realizing the identity of the individual self with the transcendent Self, the supreme Reality.

This realization demands a turning of the consciousness inward. The ordinary human consciousness is turned outward and sees the surface of things only. It recoils from entering the inner depths which appear dark and where it is afraid of losing itself. Yet the entry into this obscurity, this void, this silence is only the passage to a greater existence.

Indeed, this inward-turning movement is not an imprisonment in the personal self; it is the first step towards a true universality.

The law of the divine life is universality in action, organized by an all-seeing Will, with the sense of the true oneness of all.

New powers of consciousness and new faculties will develop in the gnostic being who will use them in a natural, normal and spontaneous way both for knowledge and for action.

The life of gnostic beings might fitly be characterized as a superhuman or divine life. But it must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood.

It would be a misconception to think that a life in the full light of Knowledge would lose its charm and become an insipid monotony. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest offered to us by the world of Ignorance.

CHAPTER 1

THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

Man's highest aspiration – his seeking for perfection, his longing for freedom and mastery, his search after pure truth and unmixed delight – is in flagrant contradiction with his present existence and normal experience.

THE earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation, – for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment, – is also the highest which his thought can evisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last, – God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.

These persistent ideals of the race are at once the contradiction of its normal experience and the affirmation of higher and deeper experiences which are abnormal to humanity and only to be attained in their organized entirety, by a revolutionary individual effort or an evolutionary general progression. To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite

freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realize the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation, – this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution. To the ordinary material intellect which takes its present organization of consciousness for the limit of its possibilities, the direct contradiction of the unrealized ideals with the realized fact is a final argument against their validity. But if we take a more deliberate view of the world's workings, that direct opposition appears rather as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction.

LD.I, I

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unillumined compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilized, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour. The accordance of active Life with a material of form in which the condition of activity itself seems to be inertia, is one problem of opposites that Nature has solved and seeks always to solve better with greater complexities;

for its perfect solution would be the material immortality of a fully organized mind-supporting animal body.

The accordance of conscious mind and conscious will with a form and a life in themselves not overtly self-conscious and capable at best of a mechanical or subconscious will is another problem of opposites in which she has produced astonishing results and aims always at higher marvels; for there her ultimate miracle would be an animal consciousness no longer seeking but possessed of Truth and Light, with the practical omnipotence which would result from the possession of a direct and perfected knowledge. Not only, then, is the upward impulse of man towards the accordance of yet higher opposites in itself, but it is the only logical completion of a rule and an effort that seem to be a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings.

LD.I, I

Life evolves out of Matter, Mind out of Life, because they are already involved there: Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Mind. May not Mind be a form and veil of a higher power, the Spirit, which would be supramental in its nature? Man's highest aspiration would then only indicate the gradual unveiling of the Spirit within, the preparation of a higher life upon earth.

We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Consciousness.

And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms of Life. As there, so here, the impulse exists more or less obscurely in her different vessels with an ever-ascending series in the power of its will-to-be; as there, so here, it is gradually evolving and bound fully to evolve the necessary organs and faculties. As the impulse towards Mind ranges from the more sensitive reactions of Life in the metal and the plant up to its full organization in man, so in man himself there is the same ascending series, the preparation, if nothing more, of a higher and divine life. The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God? For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realization of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the Rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without are the highest and most

legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.

Thus the eternal paradox and eternal truth of a divine life in an animal body, an immortal aspiration or reality inhabiting a moral tenement, a single and universal consciousness representing itself in limited minds and divided egos, a transcendent, indefinable, timeless and spaceless Being who alone renders time and space and cosmos possible, and in all these the higher truth realizable by the lower term, justify themselves to the deliberate reason as well as to the persistent instinct or intuition of mankind.

LD.I, I

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF MAN IN EVOLUTION

An evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence. The evolutionary working of Nature has a double process: an evolution of forms, an evolution of the soul.

A SPIRITUAL evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling spirit, is . . . the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence. This significance is concealed at the outset by the involution¹ of the Spirit,² the Divine Reality, in a dense material Inconscience; a veil of Inconscience, a veil of insensibility of Matter hides the universal Consciousness-Force³ which works within it, so that the Energy, which is the first form the Force of creation assumes in the physical universe, appears to be itself inconscient and yet does the works of a vast occult intelligence. The obscure mysterious creatrix ends indeed by delivering the secret consciousness out of its thick and tenebrous prison; but she delivers it slowly, little by little, in minute infinitesimal drops, in thin jets, in small vibrant concretions of energy and substance, of life, of mind, as if that were all she could get out through the crass obstacle, the dull reluctant medium of an inconscient stuff of existence. At first she houses herself in forms of Matter which appear to be altogether unconscious, then struggles towards mentality in the guise of living Matter and attains to it imperfectly in the conscious animal. This consciousness is at first rudimentary, mostly a half subconscious or just conscious instinct; it develops slowly till in more organized forms of living Matter it reaches its climax of intelligence and

exceeds itself in Man, the thinking animal who develops into the reasoning mental being but carries along with him even at his highest elevation the mould of original animality, the dead weight of subconsciousness of body, the downward pull of gravitation towards the original Inertia and Nescience, the control of an inconscient material Nature over his conscious evolution, its power for limitation, its law of difficult development, its immense force for retardation and frustration. This control by the original Inconscience over the consciousness emerging from it takes the general shape of a mentality struggling towards knowledge but itself, in what seems to be its fundamental nature, an Ignorance. Thus hampered and burdened, mental man has still to evolve out of himself the fully conscious being, a divine manhood or a spiritual and supramental supermanhood which shall be the next product of the evolution. That transition will mark the passage from the evolution in the Ignorance to a greater evolution in the Knowledge, founded and proceeding in the light of the Superconscious and no longer in the darkness of the Ignorance and Inconscience.

This terrestrial evolutionary working of Nature from Matter to Mind⁴ and beyond it has a double process: there is an outward visible process of physical evolution with birth as its machinery, — for each evolved form of body housing its own evolved power of consciousness is maintained and kept in continuity by heredity; there is, at the same time, an invisible process of soul evolution with rebirth into ascending grades of form and consciousness as its machinery. The first by itself would mean only a cosmic evolution; for the individual would be a quickly perishing instrument, and the race, a more abiding collective formulation, would be the real step in the progressive manifestation of the cosmic Inhabitant, the universal Spirit: rebirth is an indispensable condition for any long duration and evolution of the individual being in the earth-

existence. Each grade of cosmic manifestation, each type of form that can house the indwelling spirit, is turned by rebirth into a means for the individual soul, the psychic entity,⁵ to manifest more and more of its concealed consciousness; each life becomes a step in a victory over Matter by a greater progression of consciousness in it which shall make eventually Matter itself a means for the full manifestation of the Spirit.

LD.II, 23

Man occupies the crest of the evolutionary wave. With him occurs the passage from an unconscious to a conscious evolution.

It must be observed that the appearance of human mind and body on the earth marks a crucial step, a decisive change in the course and process of the evolution; it is not merely a continuation of the old lines. Up till this advent of a developed thinking mind in Matter evolution had been effected, not by the self-aware aspiration, intention, will or seeking of the living being, but subconsciously or subliminally by the automatic operation of Nature. This was so because the evolution began from the Inconscience and the secret Consciousness had not emerged sufficiently from it to operate through the self-aware participating individual will of its living creature. But in man the necessary change has been made, — the being has become awake and aware of himself; there has been made manifest in Mind its will to develop, to grow in knowledge, to deepen the inner and widen the outer existence, to increase the capacities of the nature. Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of mind and life, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him: he has become conscious of a soul, discovered the self and spirit. In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable

and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour in him is a sure sign of Nature's will for a higher way of fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status.

LD.II, 23

At each step one receives an intimation of what the following step will be.

Already, in what seems to be inconscient in Life, the signs of sensation coming towards the surface are visible; in moving and breathing life the emergence of sensitive mind is apparent and the preparation of thinking mind is not entirely hidden, while in thinking mind, when it develops, there appear at an early stage the rudimentary strivings and afterwards the more developed seekings of a spiritual consciousness. As plant life contains in itself the obscure possibility of the conscious animal, as the animal mind is astir with the movements of feeling and perception and the rudiments of conception that are the first ground for man the thinker, so man the mental being is sublimated by the endeavour of the evolutionary Energy to develop out of him the spiritual man, the fully conscious being, man exceeding his first material self and discoverer of his true self and highest nature.

LD.II, 24

The nature of the next step is indicated by the deep aspirations awakening in the human race.

The action of the evolutionary Nature in a type of being and consciousness is first to develop the type to its utmost capacity by just such a subtilization and increasing complexity till it is ready for her bursting of the shell, the ripened decisive emergence, reversal,

turning over of consciousness on itself that constitutes a new stage in the evolution. If it be supposed that her next step is the spiritual and supramental being, the stress of spirituality in the race may be taken as a sign that that is Nature's intention, the sign too of the capacity of man to operate in himself or aid her to operate the transition. If the appearance in animal being of a type similar in some respects to the ape-kind but already from the beginning endowed with the elements of humanity was the method of the human evolution, the appearance in the human being of a spiritual type resembling mental-animal humanity but already with the stamp of the spiritual aspiration on it would be the obvious method of Nature for the evolutionary production of the spiritual and supramental being.

It is pertinently suggested that if such an evolutionary culmination is intended and man is to be its medium, it will only be a few especially evolved human beings who will form the new type and move towards the new life; that once done, the rest of humanity will sink back from a spiritual aspiration no longer necessary for Nature's purpose and remain quiescent in its normal status. It can equally be reasoned that the human gradation must be preserved if there is really an ascent of the soul by reincarnation through the evolutionary degrees towards the spiritual summit; for otherwise the most necessary of all the intermediate steps will be lacking. It must be conceded at once that there is not the least probability or possibility of the whole human race rising in a block to the supramental level; what is suggested is nothing so revolutionary and astonishing, but only the capacity in the human mentality, when it has reached a certain level or a certain point of stress of the evolutionary impetus, to press towards a higher plane of consciousness and its embodiment in the being. The being will necessarily undergo by this embodiment a change from the normal

constitution of its nature, a change certainly of its mental and emotional and sensational constitution and also to a great extent of the body-consciousness and the physical conditioning of our life and energies; but the change of consciousness will be the chief factor, the initial movement, the physical modification will be a subordinate factor, a consequence. This transmutation of the consciousness will always remain possible to the human being when the flame of the soul, the psychic⁶ kindling, becomes potent in heart and mind and the nature is ready. The spiritual aspiration is innate in man; for he is, unlike the animal, aware of imperfection and limitation and feels that there is something to be attained beyond what he now is: this urge towards self-exceeding is not likely ever to die out totally in the race. The human mental status will be always there, but it will be there not only as a degree in the scale of rebirth, but as an open step towards the spiritual and supramental status.

LD.II, 23

A change of consciousness is the major fact of the next evolutionary transformation, and the consciousness itself, by its own mutation, will impose and effect any necessary mutation of the body.

In the previous stages of the evolution Nature's first care and effort had to be directed towards a change in the physical organization, for only so could there be a change of consciousness; this was a necessity imposed by the insufficiency of the force of consciousness already in formation to effect a change in the body. But in man a reversal is possible, indeed inevitable; for it is through his consciousness, through its transmutation and no longer through a new bodily organism as a first instrumentation that the evolution can and must be effected. In the inner reality of things a change of

consciousness was always the major fact, the evolution has always had a spiritual significance and the physical change was only instrumental; but this relation was concealed by the first abnormal balance of the two factors, the body of the external Inconscience outweighing and obscuring in importance the spiritual element, the conscious being. But once the balance has been righted, it is no longer the change of body that must precede the change of consciousness; the consciousness itself by its mutation will necessitate and operate whatever mutation is needed for the body. It has to be noted that the human mind has already shown a capacity to aid Nature in the evolution of new types of plant and animal; it has created new forms of its environment, developed by knowledge and discipline considerable changes in its own mentality. It is not an impossibility that man should aid Nature consciously also in his own spiritual and physical evolution and transformation. The urge to it is already there and partly effective, though still incompletely understood and accepted by the surface mentality; but one day it may understand, go deeper within itself and discover the means, the secret energy, the intended operation of the Consciousness-Force within which is the hidden reality of what we call Nature.

All these are conclusions that can be arrived at even from the observation of the outward phenomena of Nature's progression, her surface evolution of being and of consciousness in the physical birth and the body. But there is the other, the invisible factor; there is rebirth, the progress of the soul by ascent from grade to grade of the evolving existence, and in the grades to higher and higher types of bodily and mental instrumentation. In this progression the psychic entity is still veiled, even in man the conscious mental being, by its instruments, by mind and life and body; it is unable to manifest fully, held back from coming to the front where it can

stand out as the master of its nature, obliged to submit to a certain determination by the instruments, to a domination of Purusha by Prakriti.⁷ But in man the psychic part of the personality is able to develop with a much greater rapidity than in the inferior creation, and a time can arrive when the soul entity is close to the point at which it will emerge from behind the veil into the open and become the master of its instrumentation in Nature. But this will mean that the secret indwelling spirit, the Daemon, the Godhead within is on the point of emergence; and, when it emerges, it can hardly be doubted that its demand will be, as indeed it already is in the mind itself when it undergoes the inner psychic influence, for a diviner, a more spiritual existence. In the nature of the earth life where the mind is an instrument of the Ignorance, this can only be effected by a change of consciousness, a transition from a foundation in Ignorance to a foundation in Knowledge, from the mental to a supramental consciousness, a supramental instrumentation of Nature.

LD.II, 23

There is no reason to suppose that this transformation is impossible on earth. In fact, it would give the truest meaning to earthly existence.

There is no conclusive validity in the reasoning that because this is a world of Ignorance, such a transformation can only be achieved by a passage to a heaven beyond or cannot be achieved at all and the demand of the psychic entity is itself ignorant and must be replaced by a merger of the soul in the Absolute. This conclusion could only be solely valid if Ignorance were the whole meaning, substance and power of the world-manifestation or if there were no element in World-Nature itself through which there could be an exceeding of the ignorant mentality that still burdens our present status of being.

But the Ignorance is only a portion of this World-Nature; it is not the whole of it, not the original power or creator: it is in its higher origin a self-limiting Knowledge and even in its lower origin, its emergence out of the sheer material Inconscience, it is a suppressed Consciousness labouring to find, to recover itself, to manifest Knowledge, which is its true character, as the foundation of existence. In universal Mind itself there are ranges above our mentality which are instruments of the cosmic truth-cognition, and into these the mental being can surely rise; for already it rises towards them in supernormal conditions or receives from them without yet knowing or possessing them intuitions, spiritual intimations, large influxes of illumination or spiritual capacity. All these ranges are conscious of what is beyond them, and the highest of them is directly open to the Supermind,⁸ aware of the Truth-consciousness which exceeds it. Moreover, in the evolving being itself, those greater powers of consciousness are here, supporting mind-truth, underlying its action which screens them; this Supermind and those Truth-powers uphold Nature by their secret presence: even, truth of mind is their result, a diminished operation, a representation in partial figures. It is, therefore, not only natural but seems inevitable that these higher powers of Existence should manifest here in Mind as Mind itself has manifested in Life and Matter.

LD.II, 23

Man's urge towards spirituality is an undeniable indication of the inner drive of the Spirit within towards emergence, its insistence towards the next step of its manifestation.

If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, if it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has

been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution: he is too imperfect an expression of the spirit, mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation; mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature.

LD.II, 23

CHAPTER III

THE PRESENT EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS

*It is often claimed that reason is the highest faculty of man and that it has enabled him to master himself and to master Nature.
Has reason really succeeded?*

. . . Apart from the stumbling action of the world, there has been a labour of the individual thinker in man and this has achieved a higher quality and risen to a loftier and clearer atmosphere above the general human thought-levels. Here there has been the work of a reason that seeks always after knowledge and strives patiently to find out truth for itself, without bias, without the interference of distorting interests, to study everything, to analyse everything, to know the principle and process of everything. Philosophy, Science, learning, the reasoned arts, all the agelong labour of the critical reason in man have been the result of this effort. In the modern era under the impulsion of Science this effort assumed enormous proportions and claimed for a time to examine successfully and lay down finally the true principle and the sufficient rule of process not only for all the activities of Nature, but for all the activities of man. It has done great things, but it has not been in the end a success. The human mind is beginning to perceive that it has left the heart of almost every problem untouched and illumined only outsides and a certain range of processes. There has been a great and ordered classification and mechanization, a great discovery and practical result of increasing knowledge, but only on the physical surface of things. Vast abysses of Truth lie below in which are concealed the

real springs, the mysterious powers and secretly decisive influences of existence. It is a question whether the intellectual reason will ever be able to give us an adequate account of these deeper and greater things or subject them to the intelligent will as it has succeeded in explaining and canalizing, though still imperfectly, yet with much show of triumphant result, the forces of physical Nature. But these other powers are much larger, subtler, deeper down, more hidden, elusive and variable than those of physical Nature.

The whole difficulty of the reason in trying to govern our existence is that because of its own inherent limitations it is unable to deal with life in its complexity, or in its integral movements; it is compelled to break it up into parts, to make more or less artificial classifications, to build systems with limited data which are contradicted, upset or have to be continually modified by other data, to work out a selection of regulated potentialities which is broken down by the bursting of a new wave of yet unregulated potentialities.

HC. II

When reason applies itself to life and action it becomes partial and passionate and the servant of other forces than the pure truth.

But even if the intellect keeps itself as impartial and disinterested as possible, — and altogether impartial, altogether disinterested the human intellect cannot be unless it is content to arrive at an entire divorce from practice or a sort of large but ineffective tolerantism, eclecticism or sceptical curiosity, — still the truths it discovers or the ideas it promulgates become, the moment they are applied to life, the plaything of forces over which the reason has little control. Science pursuing its cold and even way has made discoveries which

have served on one side a practical humanitarianism, on the other supplied monstrous weapons to egoism and mutual destruction; it has made possible a gigantic efficiency of organization which has been used on one side for the economic and social amelioration of the nations and on the other for turning each into a colossal battering-ram of aggression, ruin and slaughter. It has given rise on the one side to a large rationalistic and altruistic humanitarianism, on the other it has justified a godless egoism, vitalism, vulgar will to power and success. It has drawn mankind together and given it a new hope and at the same time crushed it with the burden of a monstrous commercialism. Nor is this due, as is so often asserted, to its divorce from religion or to any lack of idealism. Idealistic philosophy has been equally at the service of the powers of good and evil and provided an intellectual conviction both for reaction and for progress. Organized religion itself has often enough in the past hounded men to crime and massacre and justified obscurantism and oppression.

The truth is that upon which we are now insisting, that reason is in its nature an imperfect light with a large but still restricted mission and that once it applies itself to life and action it becomes subject to what it studies and the servant and counsellor of the forces in whose obscure and ill-understood struggle it intervenes. It can in its nature be used and has always been used to justify any idea, theory of life, system of society or government, ideal of individual or collective action to which the will of man attaches itself for the moment or through the centuries. In philosophy it gives equally good reasons for monism and pluralism or for any halting-place between them, for the belief in Being or for the belief in Becoming, for optimism and pessimism, for activism and quietism. It can justify the most mystic religionism and the most positive atheism, get rid of God or see nothing else. In aesthetics it

supplies the basis equally for classicism and romanticism, for an idealistic, religious or mystic theory of art or for the most earthy realism. It can with equal power base austerely a strict and narrow moralism or prove triumphantly the thesis of the antinomian. It has been the sufficient and convincing prophet of every kind of autocracy or oligarchy and of every species of democracy; it supplies excellent and satisfying reasons for competitive individualism and equally excellent and satisfying reasons for communism or against communism and for State socialism or for one variety of socialism against another. It can place itself with equal effectivity at the service of utilitarianism, economism, hedonism, aestheticism, sensualism, ethicism, idealism, or any other essential need or activity of man and build around it a philosophy, a political and social system, a theory of conduct and life. Ask it not to lean to one idea alone, but to make an eclectic combination or a synthetic harmony and it will satisfy you; only, there being any number of possible combinations or harmonies, it will equally well justify the one or the other and set up or throw down any one of them according as the spirit in man is attracted to or withdraws from it. For it is really that which decides and the reason is only a brilliant servant and minister of this veiled and secret sovereign.

HC. I2

Why does man have faith in reason? Because reason has a legitimate function to fulfil, for which it is perfectly adapted; and this is to justify and illumine for man his various experiences and to give him faith and conviction in holding on to the enlarging of his consciousness.

This truth is hidden from the rationalist because he is supported by two constant articles of faith, first that his own reason is right and the reason of others who differ from him is wrong, and secondly

that whatever may be the present deficiencies of the human intellect, the collective human reason will eventually arrive at purity and be able to found human thought and life securely on a clear rational basis entirely satisfying to the intelligence. His first article of faith is no doubt the common expression of our egoism and arrogant fallibility, but it is something more; it expresses this truth that it is the legitimate function of the reason to justify to man his action and his hope and the faith that is in him and to give him that idea and knowledge, however restricted, and that dynamic conviction, however narrow and intolerant, which he needs in order that he may live, act and grow in the highest light available to him. The reason cannot grasp all truth in its embrace because truth is too infinite for it; but still it does grasp the something of it which we immediately need, and its insufficiency does not detract from the value of its work, but is rather the measure of its value. For man is not intended to grasp the whole truth of his being at once, but to move towards it through a succession of experiences and a constant, though not by any means perfectly continuous self-enlargement. The first business of reason then is to justify and enlighten to him his various experiences and to give him faith and conviction in holding on to his self-enlargings. It justifies to him now this, now that, the experiences of the moment, the receding light of the past, the half-seen vision of the future. Its inconstancy, its divisibility against itself, its power of sustaining opposite views are the whole secret of its value. It would not do indeed for it to support too conflicting views in the same individual, except at moments of awakening and transition, but in the collective body of men and in the successions of Time that is its whole business. For so man moves towards the infinity of the Truth by the experience of its variety; so his reason helps him to build, change, destroy what he has built and prepare a new construction, in a word, to progress,

grow, enlarge himself in his self-knowledge and world-knowledge and their works.

HC. I2

But reason cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace their totality. It deals with the finite, the separate and has no measure for the all and the infinite.

The second article of faith of the believer in reason is also an error and yet contains a truth. The reason cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace the totality of their secrets; it deals with the finite, the separate, the limited aggregate, and has no measure for the all and the infinite. Nor can reason found a perfect life for man or a perfect society. A purely rational human life would be a life baulked and deprived of its most powerful dynamic sources; it would be a substitution of the minister for the sovereign. A purely rational society could not come into being and, if it could be born, either could not live or would sterilize and petrify human existence. The root powers of human life, its intimate causes are below, irrational, and they are above, suprarational. But this is true that by constant enlargement, purification, openness the reason of man is bound to arrive at an intelligent sense even of that which is hidden from it, a power of passive yet sympathetic reflection of the Light that surpasses it. Its limit is reached, its function is finished when it can say to man. There is a Soul, a Self, a God in the world and in man who works concealed and all is his self-concealing and gradual self-unfolding. His minister I have been, slowly to unseal your eyes, remove the thick integuments of your vision until there is only my own luminous veil between you and him. Remove that and make the

soul of man one in fact and nature with this Divine; then you will know yourself, discover the highest and widest law of your being, become the possessors or at least the receivers and instruments of a higher will and knowledge than mine and lay hold at last on the true secret and the whole sense of a human and yet divine living.

HC. I2

The limitations of reason become very strikingly apparent when it is confronted with the religious life.

Here is a realm at which the intellectual reason gazes with the bewildered mind of a foreigner who hears a language of which the words and the spirit are unintelligible to him and sees everywhere forms of life and principles of thought and action which are absolutely strange to his experience.

The unaided intellectual reason faced with the phenomena of the religious life is naturally apt to adopt one of two attitudes, both of them shallow in the extreme, hastily presumptuous and erroneous. Either it views the whole thing as a mass of superstition, a mystical nonsense, a farrago of ignorant barbaric survivals, — that was the extreme spirit of the rationalist now happily, though not dead, yet much weakened and almost moribund, — or it patronizes religion, tries to explain its origins, to get rid of it by the process of explaining it away; or it labours gently or forcefully to reject or correct its superstitions, crudities, absurdities, to purify it into an abstract nothingness or persuade it to purify itself in the light of the reasoning intelligence; or it allows it a role, leaves it perhaps for the edification of the ignorant, admits its value as a moralizing influence or its utility to the State for keeping the lower classes in order, even perhaps tries to invent that strange chimera, a rational religion.

HC. I3

What is religion really and essentially and why is it outside the realm of reason?

The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God. Its aspiration is to discover the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine, who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being. Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is suprarational. The knowledge of God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against his existence: it is to be gained only by a self-transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and experience. Nor does that experience proceed by anything like rational scientific experiment or rational philosophic thinking. Even in those parts of religious discipline which seem most to resemble scientific experiment, the method is a verification of things which exceed the reason and its timid scope. Even in those parts of religious knowledge which seem most to resemble intellectual operations, the illuminating faculties are not imagination, logic and rational judgment, but revelations, inspirations, intuitions, intuitive discernments that leap down to us from a plane of suprarational light. The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitation and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which passes all understanding. The surrender to God is the surrender of the whole

being to a suprarational light, will, power and love and his service takes no account of the compromises with life which the practical reason of man uses as the best part of its method in the ordinary conduct of mundane existence. Wherever religion really finds itself, wherever it opens itself to its own spirit, — there is plenty of that sort of religious practice which is halting, imperfect, half-sincere, only half-sure of itself and in which reason can get in a word, — its way is absolute and its fruits are ineffable.

HC. I3

Can religion then be the guide of human life? It is a fact that in ancient times society gave a pre-eminent place to religion.

Since the infinite, the absolute and transcendent, the universal, the One is the secret summit of existence and to reach the spiritual consciousness and the Divine the ultimate goal and aim of our being and therefore of the whole development of the individual and the collectivity in all its parts and all its activities, reason cannot be the last and highest guide . . . For reason stops short of the Divine and only compromises with the problems of life . . . Where then are we to find the directing light and the regulating and harmonizing principle?

The first answer which will suggest itself, the answer constantly given by the Asiatic mind, is that we shall find it directly and immediately in religion.

A certain pre-eminence of religion, the overshadowing or at least the colouring of life, an overtopping of all the other instincts and fundamental ideas by the religious instinct and the religious idea is, we may note, not peculiar to Asiatic civilizations, but has always been more or less the normal state of the human mind and of

human societies . . . We must suppose then that in this leading, this predominant part assigned to religion by the normal human collectivity there is some great need and truth of our natural being to which we must always after however long an infidelity return.

HC. I7

But, on the other hand, humanity — and in particular that portion of humanity which was the standard-bearer of progress — has revolted against the predominance of religion.

On the other hand, we must recognize the fact that in a time of great activity, of high aspiration, of deep sowing, of rich fruit-bearing, such as the modern age with all its faults and errors has been, a time especially when humanity got rid of much that was cruel, evil, ignorant, dark, odious, not by the power of religion, but by the power of the awakened intelligence and of human idealism and sympathy, this predominance of religion has been violently attacked and rejected by that portion of humanity which was for that time the standard-bearer of thought and progress, Europe after the Renascence, modern Europe.

HC. I7

Very often the accredited religions have opposed progress and sided with the forces of obscurity and oppression.

And it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. This would not have been so if religion were the true and sufficient guide of the whole of human life.

We need not follow the rationalistic or atheistic mind through all its aggressive indictment of religion. We need not for instance lay a too excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes

even, which Churches and cults and creeds have favoured, admitted, sanctioned, supported or exploited for their own benefit ... As well might one cite the crimes and errors which have been committed in the name of liberty or of order as a sufficient condemnation of the ideal of liberty or the ideal of social order. But we have to note the fact that such a thing was possible and to find its explanation . . . We must observe the root of this evil, which is not in true religion itself, but in its infrarational parts, not in spiritual faith and aspiration, but in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or Church. . . .

The whole root of the historic insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society lies there. Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon Religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men in the passion and darkness of their vital nature had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindliness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as

purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence. As if so mighty and inward a power as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by anything so small as the change of a social form or so outward as a social readjustment! This error in its many shapes has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

HC. I7

If religion has failed, it is because it has confused the essential with the adventitious. True religion is spiritual religion, it is a seeking after God, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. Dogmas, cults, moral codes are aids and props; they may be offered to man but not imposed on him.

It is true in a sense that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of

spirituality, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. On the other hand, it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and there may therefore arise a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life. There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political, or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualized, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of

variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive.

HC. I7

Moreover, religion often considers spiritual life as made up of renunciation and mortification. Religion thus becomes a force that discourages life and it cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life.

But here comes in an ambiguity which brings in a deeper source of divergence. For by spirituality religion seems often to mean something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. It seems to condemn the pursuit of earthly aims as a trend opposed to the turn to a spiritual life and the hopes of man on earth as an illusion or a vanity incompatible with the hopes of man in heaven. The spirit then becomes something aloof which man can only reach by throwing away the life of his lower members. Either he must abandon this nether life after a certain point, when it has served its purpose, or must persistently discourage, mortify and kill it. If that be the true sense of religion, then obviously religion has no positive message for human society in the proper field of social effort, hope and aspiration or for the individual in any of the lower members of his being. For each principle of our nature seeks naturally for perfection in its own sphere and, if it is to obey a higher power, it must be because that power gives it a greater perfection and a fuller satisfaction even in its own field. But if perfectibility is denied to it and therefore the aspiration to perfection taken away by the spiritual urge, then it must either lose faith in itself and the power to pursue the natural expansion of its energies and activities or it

must reject the call of the spirit in order to follow its own bend and law, *dharma*.⁹ This quarrel between earth and heaven, between the spirit and its members becomes still more sterilizing if spirituality takes the form of a religion of sorrow and suffering and austere mortification and the gospel of the vanity of things; in its exaggeration it leads to such nightmares of the soul as that terrible gloom and hopelessness of the Middle Ages in their worst moment when the one hope of mankind seemed to be in the approaching and expected end of the world, an inevitable and desirable *Pralaya*.¹⁰ But even in less pronounced and intolerant forms of this pessimistic attitude with regard to the world, it becomes a force for the discouragement of life and cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life. All pessimism is to that extent a denial of the Spirit, of its fullness and power, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine Wisdom and Will that created the world and for ever guide it. It admits a wrong notion about that supreme Wisdom and Power and therefore cannot itself be the supreme wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine....

The world-shunning monk, the mere ascetic may indeed well find by this turn his own individual and peculiar salvation, the spiritual recompense of his renunciation and *tapasya*,¹¹ as the materialist may find by his own exclusive method the appropriate rewards of his energy and concentrated seeking; but neither can be the true guide of mankind and its law-giver. The monastic attitude implies a fear, an aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations, and one cannot wisely guide that with which one is entirely out of sympathy, that which one wishes to minimize and discourage. The sheer ascetic spirit, if it directed life and human society, could only prepare it to be a means for denying itself and getting away from its

own motives. An ascetic guidance might tolerate the lower activities, but only with a view to persuade them in the end to minimize and finally cease from their own action.

HC. I7

In spirituality then, restored to its true sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonizing law.

But a spirituality which draws back from life to envelop it without being dominated by it does not labour under this disability. The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian idea of the Rishi,¹² one who has lived fully the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within; he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.

In spirituality, then, understood in this sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonizing law, and in religion only in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and power among others, and, even if it be considered the most important and the most powerful, it cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed, an unchangeable law, a particular system, it must be prepared to see them revolting from its control; for although they may accept this impress for a time and greatly profit by it in the end they must move by the law of their being towards a freer activity and an untrammelled movement.

Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul, because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, *dharma*.

HC. I7

On the other hand, modern man has not solved the problem of the relation of the individual to the society. What are their respective roles in the spiritual progress of mankind?

In our human aspiration towards a personal perfection and the perfection of the life of the race the elements of the future evolution are foreshadowed and striven after, but in a confusion of half-enlightened knowledge; there is a discord between the necessary elements, an opposing emphasis, a profusion of rudimentary unsatisfying and ill-accorded solutions. These sway between the three principal preoccupations of our idealism, — the complete single development of the human being in himself, the perfectibility of the individual, a full development of the collective being, the perfectibility of society and, more pragmatically restricted, the perfect or best possible relations of individual with individual and society and of community with community. An exclusive or dominant emphasis is laid sometimes on the individual, sometimes on the collectivity or society, sometimes on a right and balanced relation between the individual and the collective human whole.

In recent times the whole stress has passed to the life of the race, to a search for the perfect society, and latterly to a concentration on the right organization and scientific mechanization of the life of mankind as a whole; the individual now tends more to be regarded only as a member of the collectivity, a unit of the race whose existence must be subordinated to the common aims and total

interest of the organized society, and much less or not at all as a mental or spiritual being with his own right and power of existence. This tendency has not yet reached its acme everywhere, but everywhere it is rapidly increasing and heading towards dominance.

Thus, in the vicissitudes of human thought, on one side the individual is moved or invited to discover and pursue his own self-affirmation, his own development of mind and life and body, his own spiritual perfection; on the other he is called on to efface and subordinate himself and to accept the ideas, ideals, will, instincts, interests of the community as his own. He is moved by Nature to live for himself and by something deep within him to affirm his individuality; he is called upon by society and by a certain mental idealism to live for humanity or for the greater good of the community. The principle of self and its interest is met and opposed by the principle of altruism. The State erects its godhead and demands his obedience, submission, subordination, self-immolation; the individual has to affirm against this exorbitant claim the rights of his ideals, his ideas, his personality, his conscience. It is evident that all this conflict of standards is a groping of the mental Ignorance of man seeking to find its way and grasping different sides of the truth but unable by its want of integrality in knowledge to harmonize them together. A unifying and harmonizing knowledge can alone find the way, but that knowledge belongs to a deeper principle of our being to which oneness and integrality are native. It is only by finding that in ourselves that we can solve the problem of our existence and with it the problem of the true way of individual and communal living.

There is a Reality, a truth of all existence which is greater and more abiding than all its formations and manifestations; to find that truth and Reality and live in it, achieve the most perfect

manifestation and formation possible of it, must be the secret of perfection whether of individual or communal being. This Reality is there within each thing and gives to each of its formations its power of being and value of being. The universe is a manifestation of the Reality, and there is a truth of the universal existence, a Power of cosmic being, an all-self or world-spirit. Humanity is a formation or manifestation of the Reality in the universe, and there is a truth and self of humanity, a human spirit, a destiny of human life. The community is a formation of the Reality, a manifestation of the spirit of man, and there is a truth, a self, a power of the collective being. The individual is a formation of the Reality, and there is a truth of the individual, an individual self, soul or spirit that expresses itself through the individual mind, life and body and can express itself too in something that goes beyond mind, life and body, something even that goes beyond humanity. For our humanity is not the whole of the Reality or its best possible self-formation or self-expression, — the Reality has assumed before man existed an infra-human formation and self-creation and can assume after him or in him a suprahuman formation and self-creation.

LD.II, 28

It is wrong to demand that the individual subordinate himself to the collectivity or merge in it, because it is by its most advanced individuals that the collectivity progresses and they can really advance only if they are free. But it is true that as the individual advances spiritually, he finds himself more and more united with the collectivity and the All.

The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass movement; it has to formulate and express itself

through the individuals to become conscious: its general mass consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop. The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole life: his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence. But the extent to which the power of the individual life or the spiritual Reality within it becomes operative, depends on his own development: so long as he is undeveloped, he has to subordinate in many ways his undeveloped self to whatever is greater than it. As he develops, he moves towards a spiritual freedom, but this freedom is not something entirely separate from all-existence; it has a solidarity with it because that too is the self, the same spirit. As he moves towards spiritual freedom, he moves also towards spiritual oneness. The spiritually realized, the liberated man is preoccupied, says the Gita,¹³ with the good of all beings; Buddha discovering the way of Nirvana¹⁴ must turn back to open that way to those who are still under the delusion of their constructive instead of their real being or non-being; Vivekananda,¹⁵ drawn by the Absolute, feels also the call of the disguised Godhead in humanity and most the call of the fallen and the suffering, the call of the self to the self in the obscure body of the universe. For the awakened individual the realization of his truth of being and his inner liberation and perfection must be his primary seeking, — first, because that is the call of the Spirit within him, but also because it is only by liberation and perfection and realization of the truth of being that man can

arrive at truth of living. A perfected community also can exist only by the perfection of its individuals, and perfection can come only by the discovery and affirmation in life by each of his own spiritual being and the discovery by all of their spiritual unity and a resultant life unity.

LD.II, 28

The present evolutionary crisis comes from a disparity between the limited faculties of man — mental, ethical and spiritual — and the technical and economical means at his disposal.

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organized collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego¹⁶ and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release

from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being: but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonizing light of the spirit, must welter in a universalized confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a

greater harmonic life.

LD.II, 28

Without an inner change man can no longer cope with the gigantic development of the outer life.

A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organization of the activity of mind and use of matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change. An accommodation of the ego-centric human individuality, separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative. But because the burden which is being laid on mankind is too great for the present littleness of the human personality and its petty mind and small life-instincts, because it cannot operate the needed change, because it is using this new apparatus and organization to serve the old infraspiritual and infrarational life-self of humanity, the destiny of the race seems to be heading dangerously, as if impatiently and in spite of itself, under the drive of the vital ego seized by colossal forces which are on the same scale as the huge mechanical organization of life and scientific knowledge which it has evolved, a

scale too large for its reason and will to handle, into a prolonged confusion and perilous crisis and darkness of violent shifting incertitude. Even if this turns out to be a passing phase or appearance and a tolerable structural accommodation is found which will enable mankind to proceed less catastrophically on its uncertain journey, this can only be a respite. For the problem is fundamental and in putting it evolutionary Nature in man is confronting herself with a critical choice which must one day be solved in the true sense if the race is to arrive or even to survive.

LD.II, 28

The exaltation of the collectivity, of the State, only substitutes the collective ego for the individual ego.

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new values and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realize these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialization of a few restricted ideas or

slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanized compression of the elements of life, a mechanized unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The communal ego is idealized as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the community; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscious and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

LD.II, 28

If humanity is to survive, a radical transformation of human nature is indispensable.

But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection — even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute, — by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in

our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardized shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence.

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organized religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge, — sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalize to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself. Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualization of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion: but the human ego and vital nature were

too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance. It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavour too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle. But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a

feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature.

LD.II, 28

CHAPTER IV

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Since perfection is progressive, good and evil are shifting quantities and change from time to time their meaning and value.

IF we are to be free in the Spirit, if we are to be subject only to the supreme Truth, we must discard the idea that our mental or moral laws are binding on the Infinite or that there can be anything sacrosanct, absolute or eternal even in the highest of our existing standards of conduct. To form higher and higher temporary standards as long as they are needed is to serve the Divine in his world march; to erect rigidly an absolute standard is to attempt the erection of a barrier against the eternal waters in their outflow. Once the nature-bound soul realizes this truth, it is delivered from the duality of good and evil. For good is all that helps the individual and the world towards their divine fullness, and evil is all that retards or breaks up that increasing perfection. But since the perfection is progressive, evolutive in Time, good and evil are also shifting quantities and change from time to time their meaning and value. This thing which is evil now and in its present shape must be abandoned was once helpful and necessary to the general and individual progress. That other thing which we now regard as evil may well become in another form and arrangement an element in some future perfection. And on the spiritual level we transcend even this distinction, for we discover the purpose and divine utility of all these things that we call good and evil. Then we have to reject

the falsehood in them and all that is distorted, ignorant and obscure in that which is called good no less than in that which is called evil. For we have then to accept only the true and the divine, but to make no other distinction in the eternal processes.

To those who can act only on a rigid standard, to those who can feel only the human and not the divine values, this truth may seem to be a dangerous concession which is likely to destroy the very foundation of morality, confuse all conduct and establish only chaos. Certainly, if the choice must be between an eternal and unchanging ethics and no ethics at all, it would have that result for man in his ignorance. But even on the human level, if we have light enough and flexibility enough to recognize that a standard of conduct may be temporary and yet necessary for its time and to observe it faithfully until it can be replaced by a better, then we suffer no such loss, but lose only the fanaticism of an imperfect and intolerant virtue. In its place we gain openness and a power of continual moral progression, charity, the capacity to enter into an understanding sympathy with all this world of struggling and stumbling creatures and by that charity a better right and a greater strength to help it upon its way. In the end where the human closes and the divine commences, where the mental disappears into the supramental consciousness and the finite precipitates itself into the infinite, all evil disappears into a transcendent divine Good which becomes universal on every plane of consciousness that it touches.

This, then, stands fixed for us that all standards by which we may seek to govern our conduct are only our temporary, imperfect and evolutive attempts to represent to ourselves our stumbling mental progress in the universal self-realization towards which Nature moves. But the divine manifestation cannot be bound by our little rules and fragile sanctities; for the consciousness behind it is

too vast for these things. Once we have grasped this fact, disconcerting enough to the absolutism of our reason, we shall better be able to put in their right place in regard to each other the successive standards that govern the different stages in the growth of the individual and the collective march of mankind. At the most general of them we may cast a passing glance. For we have to see how they stand in relation to that other standardless, spiritual and supramental mode of working for which Yoga seeks and to which it moves by the surrender of the individual to the divine Will and, more effectively, through his ascent by this surrender to the greater consciousness in which a certain identity with the dynamic Eternal becomes possible.

SY.I, 7

*Four main principles successively govern human conduct.
The first two are personal need and the good of the collectivity.*

There are four main standards of human conduct that make an ascending scale. The first is personal need, preference and desire; the second is the law and good of the collectivity; the third is an ideal ethic; the last is the highest divine law of the nature.

Man starts on the long career of his evolution with only the first two of these four to enlighten and lead him; for they constitute the law of his animal and vital existence, and it is as the vital and physical animal man that he begins his progress. The true business of man upon earth is to express in the type of humanity a growing image of the Divine; whether knowingly or unknowingly, it is to this end that Nature is working in him under the thick veil of her inner and outer processes. But the material or animal man is ignorant of the inner aim of life; he knows only its needs and its desires and he has necessarily no other guide to what is required of

him than his own perception of need and his own stirrings and pointings of desire. To satisfy his physical and vital demands and necessities before all things else and, in the next rank, whatever emotional or mental cravings or imaginations or dynamic notions rise in him must be the first natural rule of his conduct. The sole balancing or overpowering law that can modify or contradict this pressing natural claim is the demand put on him by the ideas, needs and desires of his family, community or tribe, the herd, the pack of which he is a member.

In itself this seemingly larger and overriding law is no more than an extension of the vital and animal principle that governs the individual elementary man; it is the law of the pack or herd. The individual identifies partially his life with the life of a certain number of other individuals with whom he is associated by birth, choice or circumstance. And since the existence of the group is necessary for his own existence and satisfaction, in time, if not from the first, its preservation, the fulfilment of its needs and the satisfaction of its collective notions, desires, habits of living, without which it would not hold together, must come to take a primary place. The satisfaction of personal idea and feeling, need and desire, propensity and habit has to be constantly subordinated, by the necessity of the situation and not from any moral or altruistic motive, to the satisfaction of the ideas and feelings, needs and desires, propensities and habits, not of this or that other individual or number of individuals, but of the society as a whole. This social need is the obscure matrix of morality and of man's ethical impulse.

Man has in him two distinct master impulses, the individualistic and the communal, a personal life and a social life, a personal

motive of conduct and a social motive of conduct. The possibility of their opposition and the attempt to find their equation lie at the very roots of human civilization and persist in other figures when he has passed beyond the vital animal into a highly individualized mental and spiritual progress.

The existence of a social law external to the individual is at different times a considerable advantage and a disadvantage to the development of the divine in man. It is an advantage at first when man is crude and incapable of self-control and self-finding, because it erects a power other than that of his personal egoism through which that egoism may be induced or compelled to moderate its savage demands, to discipline its irrational and often violent movements and even to lose itself sometimes in a larger and less personal egoism. It is a disadvantage to the adult spirit ready to transcend the human formula because it is an external standard which seeks to impose itself on him from outside, and the condition of his perfection is that he shall grow from within and in an increasing freedom, not by the suppression but by the transcendence of his perfected individuality, not any longer by a law imposed on him that trains and disciplines his members but by the soul from within breaking through all previous forms to possess with its light and transmute his members.

SY.I, 7

A conflict is born of the opposition of the two instinctive tendencies which govern human action: the individualist and the gregarious.

In the conflict of the claims of society with the claims of the individual two ideal and absolute solutions confront one another. There is the demand of the group that the individual should

subordinate himself more or less completely or even lose his independent existence in the community, the smaller must be immolated or self-offered to the larger unit. He must accept the need of the society as his own need, the desire of the society as his own desire; he must live not for himself but for the tribe, clan, commune or nation of which he is a member. The ideal and absolute solution from the individual's standpoint would be a society that existed not for itself, for its all-overriding collective purpose, but for the good of the individual and his fulfilment, for the greater and more perfect life of all its members. Representing as far as possible his best self and helping him to realize it, it would respect the freedom of each of its members and maintain itself not by law and force but by the free and spontaneous consent of its constituent persons.

And in the present balance of humanity there is seldom any real danger of exaggerated individualism breaking up the social integer. There is continually a danger that the exaggerated pressure of the social mass by its heavy unenlightened mechanical weight may suppress or unduly discourage the free development of the individual spirit. For man in the individual can be more easily enlightened, conscious, open to clear influences; man in the mass is still obscure, half-conscious, ruled by universal forces that escape its mastery and its knowledge.

SY.I, 7

In order to settle this conflict, a new principle comes in, other and higher than the two conflicting instincts, and aiming both to override and to reconcile them. This third principle is the ethical ideal.

Above the natural individual law which sets up as our one standard of conduct the satisfaction of our individual needs, preferences and desires and the natural communal law which sets up as a superior standard the satisfaction of the needs, preferences and desires of the community as a whole, there has to arise the notion of an ideal moral law which is not the satisfaction of need and desire, but controls and even coerces or annuls them in the interests of an ideal order that is not animal, not vital and physical, but mental, a creation of the mind seeking for light and knowledge and right rule and right movement and true order. The moment this notion becomes powerful in man, he begins to escape from the engrossing vital and material into the mental life ... It is therefore essentially an individual standard; it is not a creation of the mass mind. The thinker is the individual; it is he who calls out and throws into forms that which would otherwise remain subconscious in the amorphous human whole. The moral striver is also the individual; self-discipline, not under the yoke of an outer law, but in obedience to an internal light, is essentially an individual effort. But by positing his personal standard as the translation of an absolute moral ideal the thinker imposes it, not on himself alone, but on all the individuals whom his thought can reach and penetrate. And as the mass of individuals come more and more to accept it in idea if only in an imperfect practice or no practice, society also is compelled to obey the new orientation. It absorbs the ideative influence and tries, not with any striking success, to mould its institutions into new forms touched by these higher ideals. But always its instinct is to translate them into binding law, into pattern forms, into mechanic custom, into an external social compulsion upon its living units.

For, long after the individual has become partially free, a moral organism capable of conscious growth, aware of an inward life,

eager for spiritual progress, society continues to be external in its methods, a material and economic organism, mechanical, more intent upon status and self-preservation than on growth and self-perfection. The greatest present triumph of the thinking and progressive individual over the instinctive and static society has been the power he has acquired by his thought-will to compel it to think also, to open itself to the idea of social justice and righteousness, communal sympathy and mutual compassion, to feel after the rule of reason rather than blind custom as the test of its institutions and to look on the mental and moral assent of its individuals as at least one essential element in the validity of its laws. Ideally at least, to consider light rather than force as its sanction, moral development and not vengeance or restraint as the object even of its penal action, is becoming just possible to the communal mind. The greatest future triumph of the thinker will come when he can persuade the individual integer and the collective whole to rest their life-relation and its union and stability upon a free and harmonious consent and self-adaptation, and shape and govern the external by the internal truth rather than to constrain the inner spirit by the tyranny of the external form and structure.

SY.I, 7

*But conflicts do not subside; they seem rather to multiply.
Moral laws are arbitrary and rigid; when applied to life,
they are obliged to come to terms with it and end in
compromises which deprive them of all power.*

But even this success that he has gained is rather a thing in potentiality than in actual accomplishment. There is always a disharmony and a discord between the moral law in the individual and the law of his needs and desires, between the moral law

proposed to society and the physical and vital needs, desires, customs, prejudices, interests and passions of the caste, the clan, the religious community, the society, the nation. The moralist erects in vain his absolute ethical standard and calls upon all to be faithful to it without regard to consequences.

The first reason is that our moral ideals are themselves for the most part ill-evolved, ignorant and arbitrary, mental constructions rather than transcriptions of the eternal truths of the spirit. Authoritative and dogmatic, they assert certain absolute standards in theory, but in practice every existing system of ethics proves either in application unworkable or is in fact a constant coming short of the absolute standard to which the ideal pretends. If our ethical system is a compromise or a makeshift, it gives at once a principle of justification to the further sterilizing compromises which society and the individual hasten to make with it. And if it insists on absolute love, justice, right with an uncompromising insistence, it soars above the head of human possibility and is professed with lip homage but ignored in practice. Even it is found that it ignores other elements in humanity which equally insist on survival but refuse to come within the moral formula. For just as the individual law of desire contains within it invaluable elements of the infinite whole which have to be protected against the tyranny of the absorbing social idea, the innate impulses too both of individual and of collective man contain in them invaluable elements which escape the limits of any ethical formula yet discovered and are yet necessary to the fullness and harmony of an eventual divine perfection.

Moreover, absolute love, absolute justice, absolute right reason in their present application by a bewildered and imperfect

humanity come easily to be conflicting principles. Justice often demands what love abhors. Right reason dispassionately considering the facts of nature and human relations in search of a satisfying norm or rule is unable to admit without modification either any reign of absolute justice or any reign of absolute love. And in fact man's absolute justice easily turns out to be in practice a sovereign injustice; for his mind, onesided and rigid in its constructions, puts forward a onesided partial and rigorous scheme or figure and claims for it totality and absoluteness and an application that ignores the subtler truth of things and the plasticity of life. All our standards turned into action either waver on a flux of compromises or err by this partiality and unelastic structure. Humanity sways from one orientation to another; the race moves upon a zigzag path led by conflicting claims and, on the whole, works out instinctively what Nature intends, but with much waste and suffering, rather than either what it desires or what it holds to be right or what the highest light from above demands from the embodied spirit.

SY.I, 7

Behind the ethical law, which is a false image, a greater truth of a vast consciousness without fetters unveils itself, the supreme law of our divine nature. It determines perfectly our relations with each being and with the totality of the universe, and it also reveals the exact rhythm of the direct expression of the Divine in us. It is the fourth and supreme principle of action, which is at the same time imperative law and absolute freedom.

The fact is that when we have reached the cult of absolute ethical qualities and erected the categorical imperative of an ideal law, we have not come to the end of our search or touched the truth that delivers . . . And behind the inadequacy of these ethical conceptions

something too is concealed that does attach to a supreme Truth; there is here the glimmer of a light and power that are part of a yet unreached divine Nature. But the mental idea of these things is not that light and the moral formulation of them is not that power. These are only representative constructions of the mind that cannot embody the divine spirit which they vainly endeavour to imprison in their categorical formulas. Beyond the mental and moral being in us is a greater divine being that is spiritual and supramental; for it is only through a large spiritual plane where the mind's formulas dissolve in a white flame of direct inner experience that we can reach beyond mind and pass from its constructions to the vastness and freedom of the supramental realities. There alone can we touch the harmony of the divine powers that are poorly mispresented to our mind or framed into a false figure by the conflicting or wavering elements of the moral law. There alone the unification of the transformed vital and physical and the illumined mental man becomes possible in that supramental spirit which is at once the secret source and goal of our mind and life and body. There alone is there any possibility of an absolute justice, love and right — far other than that which we imagine — at one with each other in the light of a supreme divine knowledge. There alone can there be a reconciliation of the conflict between our members.

In other words there is, above society's external law and man's moral law and beyond them, though feebly and ignorantly aimed at by something within them, a larger truth of a vast unbound consciousness, a law divine towards which both these blind and gross formulations are progressive faltering steps that try to escape from the natural law of the animal to a more exalted light or universal rule. That divine standard, since the godhead in us is our spirit moving towards its own concealed perfection, must be a supreme spiritual law and truth of our nature. Again, as we are

embodied beings in the world with a common existence and nature and yet individual souls capable of direct touch with the Transcendent, this supreme truth of ourselves must have a double character. It must be a law and truth that discovers the perfect movement, harmony, rhythm of a great spiritualized collective life and determines perfectly our relations with each being and all beings in Nature's varied oneness. It must be at the same time a law and truth that discovers to us at each moment the rhythm and exact steps of the direct expression of the Divine in the soul, mind, life, body of the individual creature. And we find in experience that this supreme light and force of action in its highest expression is at once an imperative law and an absolute freedom. It is an imperative law because it governs by immutable Truth our every inner and outer movement. And yet at each moment and in each movement the absolute freedom of the Supreme handles the perfect plasticity of our conscious and liberated nature.

SY.I, 7

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Spirituality is something else than intellectuality; its appearance is the sign that a Power greater than mind is striving to emerge in its turn.

IT is quite true that to a surface view life seems only an operation of Matter, mind an activity of life, and it might seem to follow that what we call the soul or spirit is only a power of mentality, soul a fine form of mind, spirituality a high activity of the embodied mental being. But this is a superficial view of things due to the thought's concentrating on the appearance and process and not looking at what lies behind the process. One might as well on the same lines have concluded that electricity is only a product or operation of water and cloud matter, because it is in such a field that lightning emerges; but a deeper inquiry has shown that both cloud and water have, on the contrary, the energy of electricity as their foundation, their constituent power or energy-substance: that which seems to be a result is — in its reality, though not in its form — the origin; the effect is in the essence pre-existent to the apparent cause, the principle of the emergent activity precedent to its present field of action. So it is throughout evolutionary Nature; Matter could not have become animate if the principle of life had not been there constituting Matter and emerging as a phenomenon of life-in-matter; life-in-matter could not have begun to feel, perceive, think, reason, if the principle of mind had not been there behind life and substance, constituting it as its field of operation and emergent in the phenomenon of a thinking life and body: so too spirituality

emerging in mind is the sign of a power which itself has founded and constituted life, mind and body and is now emerging as a spiritual being in a living and thinking body. How far this emergence will go, whether it will become dominant and transform its instrument, is a subsequent question; but what is necessary first to posit is the existence of spirit as something else than mind and greater than mind, spirituality as something other than mentality and the spiritual being therefore as something distinct from the mental being: spirit is a final evolutionary emergence because it is the original involutionary element and factor. Evolution is an inverse action of the involution: what is an ultimate and last derivation in the involution is the first to appear in the evolution; what was original and primal in the involution is in the evolution the last and supreme emergence.

LD.II, 24

Spirituality is a progressive awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body. It is an inner aspiration to know, to enter into contact and union with the greater Reality beyond, which also pervades the universe and dwells in us, and, as a result of that aspiration, that contact and that union, a turning, a conversion, a birth into a new being.

In the animal mind is not quite distinct from its own life-matrix and life-matter; its movements are so involved in the life movements that it cannot detach itself from them, cannot stand separate and observe them; but in man mind has become separate, he can become aware of his mental operations as distinct from his life operations, his thought and will can disengage themselves from his sensations and impulses, desires and emotional reactions, can

become detached from them, observe and control them, sanction or cancel their functioning : he does not as yet know the secrets of his being well enough to be aware of himself decisively and with certitude as a mental being in a life and body, but he has that impression and can take inwardly that position. So too at first soul in man does not appear as something quite distinct from mind and from mentalised life; its movements are involved in the mind movements, its operations seem to be mental and emotional activities; the mental human being is not aware of a soul in him standing back from the mind and life and body, detaching itself, seeing and controlling and moulding their action and formation: but, as the inner evolution proceeds, this is precisely what can, must and does happen, — it is the long-delayed but inevitable next step in our evolutionary destiny. There can be a decisive emergence in which the being separates itself from thought and sees itself in an inner silence as the spirit in mind, or separates itself from the life movements, desires, sensations, kinetic impulses and is aware of itself as the spirit supporting life, or separates itself from the body sense and knows itself as a spirit ensouling Matter: this is the discovery of ourselves as the Purusha, a mental being or a life-soul or a subtle self supporting the body. This is taken by many as a sufficient discovery of the true self and in a certain sense they are right; for it is the self or spirit that so represents itself in regard to the activities of Nature, and this revelation of its presence is enough to disengage the spiritual element: but self-discovery can go farther, it can even put aside all relation to form or action of Nature. For it is seen that these selves are representations of a divine Entity to which mind, life and body are only forms and instruments: we are then the Soul looking at Nature, knowing all her dynamisms in us, not by mental perception and observation, but by an intrinsic consciousness and its direct sense of things and its intimate exact

vision, able therefore by its emergence to put a close control on our nature and change it. When there is a complete silence in the being, either a stillness of the whole being or a stillness behind unaffected by surface movements, then we can become aware of a Self, a spiritual substance of our being, an existence exceeding even the soul individuality, spreading itself into universality, surpassing all dependence on any natural form or action, extending itself upward into a transcendence of which the limits are not visible. It is these liberations of the spiritual part in us which are the decisive steps of the spiritual evolution in Nature.

When there is the decisive emergence, one sign of it is the status or action in us of an inherent, intrinsic, self-existent consciousness which knows itself by the mere fact of being, knows all that is in itself in the same way, by identity with it, begins even to see all that to our mind seems external in the same manner, by a movement of identity or by an intrinsic direct consciousness which envelops, penetrates, enters into its object, discovers itself in the object, is aware in it of something that is not mind or life or body. There is, then, evidently a spiritual consciousness which is other than the mental, and it testifies to the existence of a spiritual being in us which is other than our surface mental personality. But at first this consciousness may confine itself to a status of being separate from the action of our ignorant surface nature, observing it, limiting itself to knowledge, to a seeing of things with a spiritual sense and vision of existence. For action it may still depend upon the mental, vital, bodily instruments, or it may allow them to act according to their own nature and itself remain satisfied with self-experience and self-knowledge, with an inner liberation, an eventual freedom: but it may also and usually does exercise a certain authority, governance,

influence on thought, life movement, physical action, a purifying uplifting control compelling them to move in a higher and purer truth of themselves, to obey or be an instrumentation of an influx of some diviner Power or a luminous direction which is not mental but spiritual and can be recognized as having a certain divine character, — the inspiration of a greater Self or the command of the Ruler of all being, the Ishwara.¹⁷ Or the nature may obey the psychic entity's intimations, move in an inner light, follow an inner guidance. This is already a considerable evolution and amounts to a beginning at least of a psychic and spiritual transformation. But it is possible to go farther; for the spiritual being, once inwardly liberated, can develop in mind the higher states of being that are its own natural atmosphere and bring down a supramental energy and action which are proper to the Truth-consciousness; the ordinary mental instrumentation, life-instrumentation, physical instrumentation even, could then be entirely transformed and become parts no longer of an ignorance however much illumined, but of a supramental creation which would be the true action of a spiritual truth-consciousness and knowledge.

It must therefore be emphasized that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution, — the beginning of a spiritual

realization, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.

LD.II, 24

In her attempt to open up the inner being, Nature has followed four main lines — religion, occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realization and experience.

There are four main lines which Nature has followed in her attempt to open up the inner being, — religion, occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realization and experience : the three first are approaches, the last is the decisive avenue of entry. All these four powers have worked by a simultaneous action, more or less connected, sometimes in a variable collaboration, sometimes in dispute with each other, sometimes in a separate independence. Religion has admitted an occult element in its ritual, ceremony, sacraments; it has leaned upon spiritual thinking, deriving from it sometimes a creed or theology, sometimes its supporting spiritual philosophy, — the former, ordinarily, is the occidental method, the latter the oriental: but spiritual experience is the final aim and achievement of religion, its sky and summit.

Each of these means or approaches corresponds to something in our total being and therefore to something necessary to the total

aim of her evolution. There are four necessities of man's self-expansion if he is not to remain this being of the surface ignorance seeking obscurely after the truth of things and collecting and systematizing fragments and sections of knowledge, the small limited and half-competent creature of the cosmic Force which he now is in his phenomenal nature. He must know himself and discover and utilize all his potentialities: but to know himself and the world completely he must go behind his own and its exterior, he must dive deep below his own mental surface and the physical surface of Nature. This he can only do by knowing his inner mental, vital, physical and psychic being¹⁸ and its powers and movements and the universal laws and processes of the occult Mind and Life which stand behind the material front of the universe: that is the field of occultism, if we take the word in its widest significance. He must know also the hidden Power or Powers that control the world: if there is a Cosmic Self or Spirit or a Creator, he must be able to enter into relation with It or Him and be able to remain in whatever contact or communion is possible, get into some kind of tune with the master Beings of the universe or with the universal Being and its universal will or a supreme Being and His supreme will, follow the law It gives him and the assigned or revealed aim of his life and conduct, raise himself towards the highest height that It demands of him in his life now or in his existence hereafter; if there is no such universal or supreme Spirit or Being, he must know what there is and how to lift himself to it out of his present imperfection and impotence. This approach is the aim of religion: its purpose is to link the human with the Divine and in so doing sublimate the thought and life and flesh so that they may admit the rule of the soul and spirit. But this knowledge must be something more than a creed or a mystic revelation; his thinking mind must be able to accept it, to correlate it with the principle of things and the observed

truth of the universe: this is the work of philosophy, and in the field of the truth of the spirit it can only be done by a spiritual philosophy, whether intellectual in its method or intuitive. But all knowledge and endeavour can reach its fruition only if it is turned into experience and has become a part of the consciousness and its established operations; in the spiritual field of all this religious, occult or philosophical knowledge and endeavour must, to bear fruition, end in an opening up of the spiritual consciousness, in experiences that found and continually heighten, expand and enrich that consciousness and in the building of a life and action that is in conformity with the truth of the spirit: this is the work of spiritual realization and experience.

LD.II, 24

Only spiritual realization and experience can achieve the change of the mental being into a spiritual being.

But none of these [first] three lines of approach can by themselves entirely fulfil the greater and ulterior intention of Nature; they cannot create in mental man the spiritual being, unless and until they open the door to spiritual experience. It is only by an inner realization of what these approaches are seeking after, by an overwhelming experience or by many experiences building up an inner change, by a transmutation of the consciousness, by a liberation of the spirit from its present veil of mind, life and body that there can emerge the spiritual being. That is the final line of the soul's progress towards which the others are pointing and, when it is ready to disengage itself from the preliminary approaches, then the real work has begun and the turning-point of the change is no longer distant. Till then all that the human mental being has reached is a familiarity with the idea of things beyond him, with the possibility of an other-worldly movement, with the ideal of some

ethical perfection; he may have made too some contact with greater Powers or Realities which help his mind or heart or life. A change there may be, but not the transmutation of the mental into the spiritual being. Religion and its thought and ethics and occult mysticism in ancient times produced the priest and the mage, the man of piety, the just man, the man of wisdom, many high points of mental manhood; but it is only after spiritual experience through the heart and mind began that we see arise the saint, the prophet, the Rishi, the Yogi, the seer, the spiritual sage and the mystic, and it is the religions in which these types of spiritual manhood came into being that have endured, covered the globe and given mankind all its spiritual aspiration and culture.

The last or highest emergence is the liberated man who has realized the Self and Spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and, so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the Power within him working through his human instruments of Nature. The largest formulation of this spiritual change and achievement is a total liberation of soul, mind, heart and action, a casting of them all into the sense of the cosmic Self and the Divine Reality. The spiritual evolution of the individual has then found its way and thrown up its range of Himalayan eminence and its peaks of highest nature. Beyond this height and largeness there opens only the supramental ascent or the incommunicable Transcendence.

LD.II, 24

Mysticism and spirituality have been criticized from two points of view. These criticisms should be examined before proceeding further:

I. The mystic turns away from life.

. . . The mystic in this view is the man who turns aside into the unreal, into occult regions of a self-constructed land of chimeras and loses his way there . . . The mystic either detaches himself from life as the other-worldly ascetic or the aloof visionary and therefore cannot help life, or else he brings no better solution or result than the practical man or the man of intellect and reason.

[To this kind of criticism one can reply that the true task of spirituality] is not to solve human problems on the past or present mental basis, but to create a new foundation of our being and our life and knowledge. The ascetic or other-worldly tendency of the mystic is an extreme affirmation of his refusal to accept the limitations imposed by material Nature: for his very reason of being is to go beyond her; if he cannot transform her, he must leave her. At the same time the spiritual man has not stood back altogether from the life of humanity; for the sense of unity with all beings, the stress of a universal love and compassion, the will to spend the energies for the good of all creatures,¹⁹ are central to the dynamic outflowering of the spirit: he has turned therefore to help, he has guided as did the ancient Rishis or the prophets, or stooped to create and, where he has done so with something of the direct power of the Spirit, the results have been prodigious. But the solution of the problem which spirituality offers is not a solution by external means, though these also have to be used, but by an inner change, a transformation of the consciousness and nature.

If no decisive but only a contributory result, an accretion of some new finer elements to the sum of the consciousness, has been the general consequence and there has been no life-transformation, it is because man in the mass has always deflected the spiritual impulsion, recanted from the spiritual ideal or held it only as a form

and rejected the inward change. Spirituality cannot be called upon to deal with life by a non-spiritual method or attempt to cure its ills by the panaceas, the political, social or other mechanical remedies which the mind is constantly attempting and which have always failed and will continue to fail to solve anything. The most drastic changes made by these means change nothing; for the old ills exist in a new form: the aspect of the outward environment is altered, but man remains what he was; he is still an ignorant mental being misusing or not effectively using his knowledge, moved by ego and governed by vital desires and passions and the needs of the body, unspiritual and superficial in his outlook, ignorant of his own self and the forces that drive and use him. His life constructions have a value as expressions of his individual and collective being in the stage to which they have reached or as a machinery for the convenience and welfare of his vital and physical parts and a field and medium for his mental growth, but they cannot take him beyond his present self or serve as a machinery to transform him; his and their perfection can only come by his farther evolution. Only a spiritual change, an evolution of his being from the superficial mental towards the deeper spiritual consciousness, can make a real and effective difference. To discover the spiritual being in himself is the main business of the spiritual man and to help others towards the same evolution is his real service to the race; till that is done, an outward help can succour and alleviate, but nothing or very little more is possible.

It is true that the spiritual tendency has been to look more beyond life than towards life. It is true also that the spiritual change has been individual and not collective; its result has been successful in the man, but unsuccessful or only indirectly operative in the human mass. The spiritual evolution of Nature is still in process and incomplete, — one might almost say, still only beginning, —

and its main preoccupation has been to affirm and develop a basis of spiritual consciousness and knowledge and to create more and more a foundation or formation for the vision of that which is eternal in the truth of the spirit.

2. Mystical knowledge is purely subjective.

Another objection to the mystic and his knowledge is urged, not against its effect upon life but against his method of the discovery of Truth and against the Truth that he discovers . . . But it is urged that the actual result of this method is not one truth common to all, there are great differences; the conclusion suggested is that this knowledge is not truth at all but a subjective mental formation. But this objection is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of spiritual knowledge. Spiritual truth is a truth of the spirit, not a truth of the intellect, not a mathematical theorem or a logical formula. It is a truth of the Infinite, one in an infinite diversity, and it can assume an infinite variety of aspects and formations: in the spiritual evolution it is inevitable that there should be a many-sided passage and reaching to the one Truth, a many-sided seizing of it; this many-sidedness is the sign of the approach of the soul to a living reality, not to an abstraction or a constructed figure of things that can be petrified into a dead or stony formula. The hard logical and intellectual notion of truth as a single idea which all must accept, one idea or system of ideas defeating all other ideas or systems, or a single limited fact or single formula of facts which all must recognize, is an illegitimate transference from the limited truth of the physical field to the much more complex and plastic field of life and mind and spirit.

This transference has been responsible for much harm; it brings into thought narrowness, limitation, an intolerance of the necessary

variation and multiplicity of view-points without which there can be no totality of truth-finding, and by the narrowness and limitation much obstinacy in error. It reduces philosophy to an endless maze of sterile disputes; religion has been invaded by this misprision and infected with credal dogmatism, bigotry and intolerance. The truth of the spirit is a truth of being and consciousness and not a truth of thought: mental ideas can only represent or formulate some facet, some mind-translated principle or power of it or enumerate its aspects, but to know it one has to grow into it and be it; without that growing and being there can be no true spiritual knowledge. The fundamental truth of spiritual experience is one, its consciousness is one, everywhere it follows the same general lines and tendencies of awakening and growth into spiritual being; for these are the imperatives of the spiritual consciousness. But also there are, based on those imperatives, numberless possibilities of variation of experience and expression: the centralization and harmonization of these possibles, but also the intensive sole following out of any line of experience are both of them necessary movements of the emerging spiritual Conscious-Force within us. Moreover, the accommodation of mind and life to the spiritual truth, its expression in them, must vary with the mentality of the seeker so long as he has not risen above all need of such accommodation or such limiting expression. It is this mental and vital element which has created the oppositions that still divide spiritual seekers or enter into their differing affirmations of the truth that they experience. This difference and variation is needed for the freedom of spiritual search and spiritual growth: to overpass differences is quite possible, but that is most easily done in pure experience; in mental formulation the difference must remain until one can exceed mind altogether and in a highest consciousness integralize, unify and harmonize the many-sided truth of the Spirit.

The supreme Self is one, but the souls of the Self are many and as is the soul's formation of nature, so will be its spiritual self-expression. A diversity in oneness is the law of the manifestation; the supramental unification and integration must harmonize these diversities, but to abolish them is not the intention of the Spirit in Nature.

LD.II, 24

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

If the final goal of terrestrial evolution were only to awaken man to the supreme Reality and to release him from ignorance and bondage, so that the liberated soul could find elsewhere a higher state of being or merge into this supreme Reality, the task would be accomplished with the advent of the spiritual man. But there is also in us an aspiration for the mastery of Nature and her transformation, for a greater perfection in the earthly existence itself.

IF it is the sole intention of Nature in the evolution of the spiritual man to awaken him to the supreme Reality and release him from herself, or from the Ignorance in which she as the Power of the Eternal has masked herself, by a departure into a higher status of being elsewhere, if this step in the evolution is a close and an exit, then in the essence her work has been already accomplished and there is nothing more to be done. The ways have been built, the capacity to follow them has been developed, the goal or last height of the creation is manifest; all that is left is for each soul to reach individually the right stage and turn of its development, enter into the spiritual ways and pass by its own chosen path out of this inferior existence. But we have supposed that there is a farther intention, — not only a revelation of the Spirit, but a radical and integral transformation of Nature. There is a will in her to effectuate a true manifestation of the embodied life of the Spirit, to complete what she has begun by a passage from the Ignorance to the Knowledge, to throw off her mask and to reveal herself as the

luminous Consciousness-Force carrying in her the eternal Existence and its universal Delight of being. It then becomes obvious that there is something not yet accomplished, there becomes clear to view the much that has still to be done . . . there is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the spirit in the material universe. What the evolutionary Power has done is to make a few individuals aware of their souls, conscious of their selves, aware of the eternal being that they are, to put them into communion with the Divinity or the reality which is concealed by her appearances: a certain change of nature prepares, accompanies or follows upon this illumination, but it is not the complete and radical change which establishes a secure and settled new principle, a new creation, a permanent new order of being in the field of terrestrial Nature. The spiritual man has evolved, but not the supramental being who shall thenceforward be the leader of that Nature.

LD.II, 25

To be established permanently, this new order of existence demands a radical change of the entire human nature. In this transformation, there are three phases.

It must become the normal nature of a new type of being; as mind is established here on a basis of Ignorance seeking for Knowledge and growing into Knowledge, so supermind must be established here on a basis of Knowledge growing into its own greater Light. But this cannot be so long as the spiritual-mental being has not risen fully to supermind and brought down its powers into terrestrial existence. For the gulf between mind and supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence . . . There

must first be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconsciousness; last, there must supervene the supramental transmutation, — there must take place as the crowning movement the ascent into the supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature.

LD.II, 25

The first phase of this transformation can be called psychic: the soul, or psychic being, has to come forward and take the lead of the whole being.

At the beginning the soul in Nature, the psychic entity, whose unfolding is the first step towards a spiritual change, is an entirely veiled part of us, although it is that by which we exist and persist as individual beings in Nature. The other parts of our natural composition are not only mutable but perishable; but the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and deprivations of the surface being. It is an ever-pure flame of the divinity in things and nothing that comes to it, nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame. This spiritual stuff is immaculate and luminous and, because it is perfectly luminous, it is immediately, intimately, directly aware of

truth of being and truth of nature; it is deeply conscious of truth and good and beauty because truth and good and beauty are akin to its own native character, forms of something that is inherent in its own substance. It is aware also of all that contradicts these things, of all that deviates from its own native character, of falsehood and evil and the ugly and the unseemly; but it does not become these things nor is it touched or changed by these opposites of itself which so powerfully affect its outer instrumentation of mind, life and body. For the soul, the permanent being in us, puts forth and uses mind, life and body as its instruments, undergoes the envelopment of their conditions, but it is other and greater than its members.

If the psychic entity had been from the beginning unveiled and known to its ministers, not a secluded King in a screened chamber, the human evolution would have been a rapid soul-outflowering, not the difficult, chequered and disfigured development it now is; but the veil is thick and we know not the secret Light within us, the light in the hidden crypt of the heart's innermost sanctuary. Intimations rise to our surface from the psyche, but our mind does not detect their source; it takes them for its own activities because, before even they come to the surface, they are clothed in mental substance ; thus ignorant of their authority, it follows or does not follow them according to its bent or turn at the moment. If the mind obeys the urge of the vital ego, then there is little chance of the psychic at all controlling the nature or manifesting in us something of its secret spiritual stuff and native movement; or, if the mind is over-confident to act in its own smaller light, attached to its own judgment, will and action of knowledge, then also the soul will remain veiled and quiescent and wait for the mind's farther evolution. For the psychic part within is there to support the natural evolution, and the first natural evolution must be the development of body, life and mind, successively, and these must act each in its

own kind or together in their ill-assorted partnership in order to grow and have experience and evolve. The soul gathers the essence of all our mental, vital and bodily experience and assimilates it for the farther evolution of our existence in Nature; but this action is occult and not obtruded on the surface. In the early material and vital stages of the evolution of being there is indeed no consciousness of soul; there are psychic activities, but the instrumentation, the form of these activities are vital and physical — or mental when the mind is active. For even the mind, so long as it is primitive or is developed but still too external, does not recognize their deeper character.

Man is in his self a unique Person, but he is also in his manifestation of self a multiperson; he will never succeed in being master of himself until the Person imposes itself on his multi-personality and governs it: but this can only be imperfectly done by the surface mental will and reason; it can be perfectly done only if he goes within and finds whatever central being is by its predominant influence at the head of all his expression and action. In inmost truth it is his soul that is this central being, but in outer fact it is often one or other of the part beings in him that rules, and this representative of the soul, this deputy self he can mistake for the inmost soul principle.

LD.II, 25

In the course of evolution, the soul, in order to emerge successfully and turn the being towards the supreme Reality, uses three dynamic images of this supreme Reality: Truth, Beauty and Good. Three ways thus open before the seeker.

A first condition of the soul's complete emergence is a direct contact

in the surface being with the spiritual Reality. Because it comes from that, the psychic element in us turns always towards whatever in phenomenal Nature seems to belong to a higher Reality and can be accepted as its sign and character. At first, it seeks this Reality through the good, the true, the beautiful, through all that is pure and fine and high and noble: but although this touch through outer signs and characters can modify and prepare the nature, it cannot entirely or most inwardly and profoundly change it. For such an inmost change the direct contact with the Reality itself is indispensable since nothing else can so deeply touch the foundations of our being and stir it or cast the nature by its stir into a ferment of transmutation. Mental representations, emotional and dynamic figures have their use and value; Truth, Good and Beauty are in themselves primary and potent figures of the Reality, and even in their forms as seen by the mind, as felt by the heart, as realized in the life can be lines of an ascent: but it is in a spiritual substance and being of them and of itself that That which they represent has to come into our experience.

LD.II, 25

I. The way of the intellect or of knowledge.

The soul may attempt to achieve this contact mainly through the thinking mind as intermediary and instrument; it puts a psychic impression on the intellect and the larger mind of insight and intuition intelligence and turns them in that direction. At its highest the thinking mind is drawn always towards the impersonal; in its search it becomes conscious of a spiritual essence, an impersonal Reality which expresses itself in all these outward signs and characters but is more than any formation or manifesting figure. It feels something of which it becomes intimately and

invisibly aware, — a supreme Truth, a supreme Good, a supreme Beauty, a supreme Purity, a supreme Bliss; it bears the increasing touch, less and less impalpable and abstract, more and more spiritually real and concrete, the touch and pressure of an Eternity and Infinity which is all this that is and more. There is a pressure from this Impersonality that seeks to mould the whole mind into a form of itself; at the same time the impersonal secret and law of things becomes more and more visible. The mind develops into the mind of the sage, at first the high mental thinker, then the spiritual sage who has gone beyond the abstractions of thought to the beginnings of a direct experience. As a result the mind becomes pure, large, tranquil, impersonal; there is a similar tranquillizing influence on the parts of life: but otherwise the result may remain incomplete; for the mental change leads more naturally towards an inner status and an outer quietude, but, poised in this purifying quietism, not drawn like the vital parts towards a discovery of new life-energies, does not press for a full dynamic effect on the nature.

A higher endeavour through the mind does not change this balance; for the tendency of the spiritualized mind is to go on upwards and, since above itself the mind loses its hold on forms, it is into a vast formless and featureless impersonality that it enters. It becomes aware of the unchanging Self, the sheer Spirit, the pure bareness of an essential Existence, the formless Infinite and the nameless Absolute. This culmination can be arrived at more directly by tending immediately beyond all forms and figures, beyond all ideas of good or evil or true or false or beautiful or unbeautiful to That which exceeds all dualities, to the experience of a supreme oneness, infinity, eternity or other ineffable sublimation of the mind's ultimate and extreme percept of Self or Spirit. A spiritualized consciousness is achieved and the life falls quiet, the body ceases to need and to clamour, the soul itself merges into the

spiritual silence. But this transformation through the mind does not give us the integral transformation; the psychic transmutation is replaced by a spiritual change on the rare and high summits, but this is not the complete divine dynamization of Nature.

LD.II, 25

2. *The way of the heart or of emotion.*

A second approach made by the soul to the direct contact is through the heart: this is its own more close and rapid way because its occult seat is there, just behind in the heart-centre, in close contact with the emotional being in us; it is consequently through the emotions that it can act best at the beginning with its native power, with its living force of concrete experience. It is through a love and adoration of the All-beautiful and All-blissful, the All-Good, the True, the spiritual Reality of love, that the approach is made; the aesthetic and emotional parts join together to offer the soul, the life, the whole nature to that which they worship. This approach through adoration can get its full power and impetus only when the mind goes beyond impersonality to the awareness of a supreme Personal Being: then all becomes intense, vivid, concrete; the heart's emotion, feeling, spiritualized sense reach their absolute; an entire self-giving becomes possible, imperative. The nascent spiritual man makes his appearance in the emotional nature as the devotee, the *bhakta*;²⁰ if, in addition, he becomes directly aware of his soul and its dictates, unites his emotional with his psychic personality and changes his life and vital parts by purity, God-ecstasy, the love of God and men and all creatures into a thing of spiritual beauty, full of divine light and good, he develops into the saint and reaches the highest inner experience and most considerable change of nature proper to this way of approach to the Divine Being. But for the purpose of an integral transformation this too is not enough; there must be a

transmutation of the thinking mind and all the vital and physical parts of consciousness in their own character.

LD.II, 25

3. The way of the will or of action.

This larger change can be partly attained by adding to the experiences of the heart a consecration of the pragmatic will which must succeed in carrying with it — for otherwise it cannot be effective — the adhesion of the dynamic vital part which supports the mental dynamis and is our first instrument of outer action. This consecration of the will in works proceeds by a gradual elimination of the ego-will and its motive-power of desire; the ego subjects itself to some higher law and finally effaces itself, seems not to exist or exists only to serve a higher Power or a higher Truth or to offer its will and acts to the Divine Being as an instrument. The law of being and action or the light of Truth which then guides the seeker, may be a clarity or power or principle which he perceives on the highest height of which his mind is capable; or it may be a truth of the divine Will which he feels present and working within him or guiding him by a Light or a Voice or a Force or a Divine Person or Presence. In the end by this way one arrives at a consciousness in which one feels the Force or Presence acting within and moving or governing all the actions and the personal will is entirely surrendered or identified with that greater Truth-Will, Truth-Power or Truth-Presence.

LD.II, 25

*These three ways, combined and followed concurrently,
have a most powerful effect.*

A combination of all these three approaches, the approach of the

mind, the approach of the will, the approach of the heart, creates a spiritual or psychic condition of the surface being and nature in which there is a larger and more complex openness to the psychic light within us and to the spiritual Self or the Ishwara, to the Reality now felt above and enveloping and penetrating us. In the nature there is a more powerful and many-sided change, a spiritual building and self-creation, the appearance of a composite perfection of the saint, the selfless worker and the man of spiritual knowledge.

LD.II, 25

*A shifting of the consciousness, a withdrawal within,
becomes imperative at this stage, in order to reach
the central being, the true Soul, and to allow it to
become the guide and sovereign of the nature.*

But, for this change to arrive at its widest totality and profound completeness, the consciousness has to shift its centre and its static and dynamic position from the surface to the inner being; it is there that we must find the foundation for our thought, life and action. For to stand outside on our surface and to receive from the inner being and follow its intimations is not a sufficient transformation; one must cease to be the surface personality and become the inner Person, the Purusha ... It then becomes possible to pass through to the depths of our being and from the depths so reached a new consciousness can be formed, both behind the exterior self and in it, joining the depths to the surface. There must grow up within us or there must manifest a consciousness more and more open to the deeper and the higher being, more and more laid bare to the cosmic Self and Power and to what comes down from the Transcendence, turned to a higher Peace, permeable to a greater light, force and ecstasy, a consciousness that exceeds the small personality and

surpasses the limited light and experience of the surface mind, the limited force and aspiration of the normal life consciousness, the obscure and limited responsiveness of the body.

For this penetration into the luminous crypt of the soul one has to get through all the intervening vital stuff to the psychic centre within us, however long, tedious or difficult may be the process. The method of detachment from the insistence of all mental and vital and physical claims and calls and impulsions, a concentration in the heart, austerity, self-purification and rejection of the old mind movements and life movements, rejection of the ego of desire, rejection of false needs and false habits, are all useful aids to this difficult passage: but the strongest, most central way is to found all such or other methods on a self-offering and surrender of ourselves and of our parts of nature to the Divine Being, the Ishwara. A strict obedience to the wise and intuitive leading of a Guide is also normal and necessary for all but a few specially gifted seekers.

LD.II, 25

Two principal results follow this emergence: first an effective guidance and mastery which unmask and reject all that is false and obscure or all that opposes the divine realization; then, a spontaneous influx of spiritual experiences of all kinds.

As the crust of the outer nature cracks, as the walls of inner separation break down, the inner light gets through, the inner fire burns in the heart, the substance of the nature and the stuff of consciousness refine to a greater subtlety and purity, and the deeper psychic experiences, those which are not solely of an inner mental or inner vital character, become possible in this subtler, purer, finer

substance; the soul begins to unveil itself, the psychic personality reaches its full stature. The soul, the psychic entity, then manifests itself as the central being which upholds mind and life and body and supports all the other powers and functions of the Spirit; it takes up its greater function as the guide and ruler of the nature. A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realization: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, self-deceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonized, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order.

This is the first result, but the second is a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness, a direct touch with cosmic forces and with the occult movements of universal Nature, a psychic sympathy and unity and inner communication and interchanges of all kinds with other beings and with Nature, illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of the sense and the body by higher experience, illuminations of dynamic action in the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the

will and the conduct. These experiences are the result of an opening outward of the inner and inmost being and nature; for then there comes into play the soul's power of unerring inherent consciousness, its vision, its touch on things which is superior to any mental cognition; there is there, native to the psychic consciousness in its pure working, an immediate sense of the world and its beings, a direct inner contact with them and a direct contact with the Self and with the Divine, — a direct knowledge, a direct sight of Truth and of all truths, a direct penetrating spiritual emotion and feeling, a direct intuition of right will and right action, a power to rule and to create an order of the being not by the gropings of the superficial self, but from within, from the inner truth of self and things and the occult realities of Nature.

LD.II, 25

The second phase of the transformation may be called spiritual; it is an opening to an Infinity above us, an eternal Presence, a boundless Self, an infinite Existence, an infinity of Consciousness, an infinity of Bliss, an All-Power.

But all this change and all this experience, though psychic and spiritual in essence and character, would still be, in its parts of life-effectuation, on the mental, vital and physical level . . . A highest spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change; the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence. This can be done by our opening into what is above us, by an ascent of consciousness into the ranges of overmind²¹ and supramental nature in which the sense of self and spirit is ever unveiled and permanent and in which the self-luminous instrumentation of the

self and spirit is not restricted or divided as in our mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature. This also the psychic change makes possible; for as it opens us to the cosmic consciousness now hidden from us by many walls of limiting individuality, so also it opens us to what is now superconscious to our normality because it is hidden from us by the strong, hard and bright lid of mind, — mind constricting, dividing and separative. The lid thins, is slit, breaks asunder or opens and disappears under the pressure of the psycho-spiritual change and the natural urge of the new spiritualized consciousness towards that of which it is an expression here.

If the rift in the lid of mind is made, what happens is an opening of vision to something above us or a rising up towards it or a descent of its powers into our being. What we see by the opening of vision is an Infinity above us, an eternal Presence or an infinite Existence, an infinity of consciousness, an infinity of bliss, — a boundless Self, a boundless Light, a boundless Power, a boundless Ecstasy. It may be that for a long time all that is obtained is the occasional or frequent or constant vision of it and a longing and aspiration, but without anything further, because, although something in the mind, heart or other part of the being has opened to this experience, the lower nature as a whole is too heavy and obscure as yet for more. But there may be, instead of this first wide awareness from below or subsequently to it, an ascension of the mind to heights above: the nature of these heights we may not know or clearly discern, but some consequence of the ascent is felt; there is often too an awareness of infinite ascension and return but no record or translation of that higher state.

LD.II, 25

The spiritual change culminates in a permanent ascension from the lower consciousness to the higher consciousness, followed by an effective permanent descent of the higher nature into the lower.

In time the ascent comes to be made at will and the consciousness brings back and retains some effect or some gain of its temporary sojourn in these higher countries of the spirit. These ascents take place for many in trance, but are perfectly possible in a concentration of the waking consciousness or, where that consciousness has become sufficiently psychic, at any unconcentrated moment by an upward attraction or affinity. But these two types of contact with the superconscious, though they can be powerfully illuminating, ecstatic or liberating, are by themselves insufficiently effective: for the full spiritual transformation more is needed, a permanent ascension from the lower into the higher consciousness and an effectual permanent descent of the higher into the lower nature.

LD.II, 25

A new consciousness begins to form with new forces of thought and sight, and a power of direct spiritual realization which is more than thought or sight.

This experience of descent can take place as a result of the other two movements or automatically before either has happened, through a sudden rift in the lid or a percolation, a downpour or an influx. A light descends and touches or envelops or penetrates the lower being, the mind, the life or the body; or a presence or a power or a stream of knowledge pours in waves or currents, or there is a flood of bliss or a sudden ecstasy; the contact with the superconscious has been established. For such experiences repeat themselves till they

become normal, familiar and well-understood, revelatory of their contents and their significance which may have at first been involved and wrapped into secrecy by the figure of the covering experience. For a knowledge from above begins to descend, frequently, constantly, then uninterruptedly, and to manifest in the mind's quietude or silence; intuitions and inspirations, revelations born of a greater sight, a higher truth and wisdom, enter into the being, a luminous intuitive discrimination works which dispels all darkness of understanding or dazzling confusions, puts all in order; a new consciousness begins to form, the mind of a high wide self-existent thinking knowledge or an illumined or an intuitive or an overmental consciousness with new forces of thought or sight and a greater power of direct spiritual realization which is more than thought or sight, a greater becoming in the spiritual substance of our present being; the heart and the sense become subtle, intense, large to embrace all existence, to see God, to feel and hear and touch the Eternal, to make a deeper and a closer unity of self and the world in a transcendent realization. Other decisive experiences, other changes of consciousness determine themselves which are corollaries and consequences of this fundamental change. No limit can be fixed to this revolution; for it is in its nature an invasion by the Infinite.

For this new consciousness has itself the nature of infinity: it brings to us the abiding spiritual sense and awareness of the infinite and eternal with a great largeness of the nature and a breaking down of its limitations; immortality becomes no longer a belief or an experience but a normal self-awareness; the close presence of the Divine Being, his rule of the world and of our self and natural members, his force working in us and everywhere, the peace of the

infinite, the joy of the infinite are now concrete and constant in the being; in all sights and forms one sees the Eternal, the Reality, in all sounds one hears it, in all touches feels it; there is nothing else but its forms and personalities and manifestations; the joy or adoration of the heart, the embrace of all existence, the unity of the spirit are abiding realities. The consciousness of the mental creature is turning or has been already turned wholly into the consciousness of the spiritual being. This is the second of the three transformations; uniting the manifested existence with what is above it, it is the middle step of the three, the decisive transition of the spiritually evolving nature.

LD.II, 25

To make this new creation permanent and perfect, the very foundation of our nature of ignorance must be transfigured and a greater power, a supramental Force must intervene to accomplish that transfiguration. This is the third phase: the supramental transformation.

As the psychic change has to call in the spiritual to complete it, so the first spiritual change has to call in the supramental transformation to complete it. For all these steps forward are, like those before them, transitional; the whole radical change in the evolution from a basis of Ignorance to a basis of Knowledge can only come by the intervention of the supramental Power and its direct action in earth-existence.

This then must be the nature of the third and final transformation which finishes the passage of the soul through the Ignorance and bases its consciousness, its life, its power and form of manifestation on a complete and completely effective self-knowledge. The Truth-Consciousness, finding evolutionary Nature

ready, has to descend into her and enable her to liberate the supramental principle within her; so must be created the supramental and spiritual being as the first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the Self and Spirit in the material universe.

LD.II, 25

CHAPTER VII

THE ASCENT TOWARDS SUPERMIND

It is difficult to conceive intellectually what the Supermind is; and to describe it, another language would be needed than the poor abstract counters of the mind.

THE psychic transformation and the first stages of the spiritual transformation are well within our conception; their perfection would be the perfection, wholeness, consummated unity of a knowledge and experience which is already part of things realized, though only by a small number of hitman beings. But the supramental change in its process carries us into less explored regions; it initiates a vision of heights of consciousness which have indeed been glimpsed and visited, but have yet to be discovered and mapped in their completeness. The highest of these peaks or elevated plateaus of consciousness, the supramental, lies far beyond the possibility of any satisfying mental scheme or map of it or any grasp of mental seeing and description. It would be difficult for the normal unillumined or untransformed mental conception to express or enter into something that is based on so different a consciousness with a radically different awareness of things; even if they were seen or conceived by some enlightenment or opening of vision, another language than the poor abstract counters used by our mind would be needed to translate them into terms by which their reality could become at all seizable by us. As the summits of human mind are beyond animal perception, so the movements of supermind are beyond the ordinary human mental conception: it is only when we have already had experience of a higher intermediate consciousness

that any terms attempting to describe supramental being could convey a true meaning to our intelligence; for then, having experienced something akin to what is described, we could translate an inadequate language into a figure of what we knew. If the mind cannot enter into the nature of supermind, it can look towards it through these high and luminous approaches and catch some reflected impression of the Truth, the Right, the Vast which is the native kingdom of the free Spirit.

LD.II, 26

The transition from mind to Supermind is a passage from Nature into Supernature. For that very reason it cannot be achieved by a mere effort of our mind or our unaided aspiration. Overmind and Supermind are involved and hidden in the earth-nature; but, in order that they may emerge in us, there is needed a pressure of the same powers already formulated in their full natural force on their own superconscious planes. The powers of the Superconscience must descend into us and uplift us and transform our being.

The transition to Supermind through overmind is a passage from Nature as we know it into Super-Nature. It is by that very fact impossible for any effort of the mere Mind to achieve; our unaided personal aspiration and endeavour cannot reach it: our effort belongs to the inferior power of Nature; a power of the Ignorance cannot achieve by its own strength or characteristic or available methods what is beyond its own domain of nature. All the previous ascensions have been effectuated by a secret Consciousness-Force operating first in Inconscience and then in the Ignorance: it has worked by an emergence of its involved powers to the surface, powers concealed behind the veil and superior to the past formulations of Nature, but even so there is needed a pressure of

the same superior powers already formulated in their full natural force on their own planes; these superior planes create their own foundation in our subliminal parts and from there are able to influence the evolutionary process on the surface. Overmind and Supermind are also involved and occult in earth-Nature, but they have no formations on the accessible levels of our subliminal inner consciousness; there is as yet no overmind being or organized overmind nature, no supramental being or organized supermind nature acting either on our surface or in our normal subliminal parts: for these greater powers of consciousness are superconscient to the level of our ignorance. In order that the involved principles of Overmind and Supermind should emerge from their veiled secrecy, the being and powers of the superconscious must descend into us and uplift us and formulate themselves in our being and powers; this descent is a *sine qua non* of the transition and transformation.

For a real transformation there must be a direct and unveiled intervention from above; there would be necessary too a total submission and surrender of the lower consciousness, a cessation of its insistence, a will in it for its separate law of action to be completely annulled by transformation and lose all rights over our being. If these two conditions can be achieved even now by a conscious call and will in the spirit and a participation of our whole manifested and inner being in its change and elevation, the evolution, the transformation can take place by a comparatively swift conscious change; the supramental Consciousness-Force from above and the evolving Consciousness-Force from behind the veil acting on the awakened awareness and will of the mental human being would accomplish by their united power the momentous transition. There would be no farther need of a slow evolution

counting many millenniums for each step, the halting and difficult evolution operated by Nature in the past in the unconscious creatures of the Ignorance.

LD.II, 26

What should be the preparation for the supramental transformation? First, an increasing control of the individual over his own nature and a more and more conscious participation in the action of the Supernature.

It is a first condition of this change that the mental Man we now are should become inwardly aware and in possession of his own deeper law of being and its processes; he must become the psychic and inner mental being master of his energies, no longer a slave of the movements of the lower Prakriti, in control of it, seated securely in a free harmony with a higher law of Nature.

In human mind there is the first appearance of an observing intelligence that regards what is being done and of a will and choice that have become conscious; but the consciousness is still limited and superficial: the knowledge also is limited and imperfect, it is a partial intelligence, a half understanding, groping and empirical in great part or, if rational, then rational by constructions, theories, formulas. There is not as yet a luminous seeing which knows things by a direct grasp and arranges them with a spontaneous precision according to the seeing, according to the scheme of their inherent truth; although there is a certain element of instinct and intuition and insight which has some beginning of this power, the normal character of human intelligence is an inquiring reason or reflective thought which observes, supposes, infers, concludes, arrives by labour at a constructed truth, a constructed scheme of knowledge, a deliberately arranged action of its own making.

It is only a free and entire intuitive consciousness which would be able to see and to grasp things by direct contact and penetrating vision or a spontaneous truth-sense born of an underlying unity or identity and arrange an action of Nature according to the truth of Nature. This would be a real participation by the individual in the working of the universal Consciousness-Force; the individual Purusha would become the master of his own executive energy and at the same time a conscious partner, agent, instrument of the Cosmic Spirit in the working of the universal Energy: the universal Energy would work through him, but he also would work through her and the harmony of the intuitive truth would make this double working a single action. A growing conscious participation of this higher and more intimate kind must be one accompaniment of the transition from our present state of being to a state of supernature.

Thus the individuality would become more and more powerful and effective in proportion as it realized itself as a centre and formation of the universal and transcendent Being and Nature. For as the progression of the change proceeded, the energy of the liberated individual would be no longer the limited energy of mind, life and body, with which it started; the being would emerge into and put on — even as there would emerge in him and descend into him, assuming him into it — a greater light of Consciousness and a greater action of Force: his natural existence would be the instrumentation of a superior Power, an overmental and supramental Consciousness-Force, the power of the original Divine Shakti. All the processes of the evolution would be felt as the action of a supreme and universal Consciousness, a supreme and universal Force working in whatever way it chose, on whatever level, within whatever self-determined limits, a conscious working of the transcendent and cosmic Being, the action of the omnipotent

and omniscient World-Mother raising the being into herself, into her supernature. In place of the Nature of Ignorance with the individual as its closed field and unconscious or half-conscious instrument, there would be a Super-Nature of the divine Gnosis and the individual soul would be its conscious, open and free field and instrument, a participant in its action, aware of its purpose and process, aware too of its own greater Self, the universal, the transcendent Reality, and of its own Person as inimitably one with that and yet an individual being of Its being, an instrument and a spiritual centre.

A first opening towards this participation in an action of Supernature is a condition of the turn towards the last, the supramental transformation: for this transformation is the completion of a passage from the obscure harmony of a blind automatism with which Nature sets out to the luminous authentic spontaneity, the infallible motion of the self-existent truth of the Spirit. The evolution begins with the automatism of Matter and of a lower life in which all obeys implicitly the drive of Nature, fulfils mechanically its law of being and therefore succeeds in maintaining a harmony of its limited type of existence and action; it proceeds through the pregnant confusion of the mind and life of a humanity driven by this inferior Nature but struggling to escape from her limitations, to master and drive and use her; it emerges into a greater spontaneous harmony and automatic self-fulfilling action founded on the spiritual Truth of things. In this higher state the consciousness will see that Truth and follow the line of its energies with a full knowledge, with a strong participation and instrumental mastery, a complete delight in action and existence. There will be a luminous and enjoyed perfection of unity with all instead of a blind and suffered subjection of the individual to the universal, and at every moment the action of the universal in the individual and the

individual in the universal will be enlightened and governed by the rule of the transcendent Supernature.

LD.II, 26

A second condition consists in a conscious obedience, a surrender of our whole being, to the light, the truth and force from above.

But this highest condition is difficult and must evidently take long to bring about; for the participation and consent of the Purusha to the transition is not sufficient, there must be also the consent and participation of the Prakriti. It is not only the central thought and will that have to acquiesce, but all the parts of our being must assent and surrender to the law of the spiritual Truth; all has to learn to obey the government of the conscious Divine Power in the members. There are obstinate difficulties in our being born of its evolutionary constitution which militate against this assent. For some of these parts are still subject to the unconsciousness and subconsciousness and to the lower automatism of habit or so-called law of the nature, — mechanical habit of mind, habit of life, habit of instinct, habit of personality, habit of character, the ingrained mental, vital, physical needs, impulses, desires of the natural man, the old functionings of all kinds that are rooted there so deep that it would seem as if we had to dig to abysmal foundations in order to get them out . . . At each step of the transition the assent of the Purusha is needed and there must be too the consent of each part of the nature to the action of the higher power for its change. There must be then a conscious self-direction of the mental being in us towards this change, this substitution of Supernature for the old nature, this transcendence. The rule of conscious obedience to the higher truth of the spirit, the surrender of the whole being to the light and power that come from the Supernature, is a second

condition which has to be accomplished slowly and with difficulty by the being itself before the supramental transformation can become at all possible.

It follows that the psychic and the spiritual transformation must be far advanced, even as complete as may be, before there can be any beginning of the third and consummating supramental change; for it is only by this double transmutation that the self-will of the Ignorance can be totally altered into a spiritual obedience to the remoulding truth and will of the greater Consciousness of the Infinite. A long, difficult stage of constant effort, energism, austerity of the personal will, *tapasya*, has ordinarily to be traversed before a more decisive stage can be reached in which a state of self-giving of all the being to the Supreme Being and the Supreme Nature can become total and absolute.

LD.II, 26

A third condition is the unification of the whole being around the true self and the opening of the individual to the cosmic consciousness.

A unification of the entire being by a breaking down of the wall between the inner and outer nature, — a shifting of the position and centration of the consciousness from the outer to the inner self, a firm foundation on this new basis, a habitual action from this inner self and its will and vision and an opening up of the individual into the cosmic consciousness, — is another necessary condition for the supramental change. It would be chimerical to hope that the supreme Truth-consciousness can establish itself in the narrow formulation of our surface mind and heart and life, however turned towards spirituality. All the inner centres²² must have burst open and released into action their capacities; the psychic entity must be

unveiled and in control. If this first change establishing the being in the inner and larger, a Yogic in place of an ordinary consciousness has not been done, the greater transmutation is impossible. Moreover the individual must have sufficiently universalized himself, he must have recast his individual mind in the boundlessness of a cosmic mentality, enlarged and vivified his individual life into the immediate sense and direct experience of the dynamic motion of the universal life, opened up the communications of his body with the forces of universal Nature, before he can be capable of a change which transcends the present cosmic formulation and lifts him beyond the lower hemisphere of universality into a consciousness belonging to its spiritual upper hemisphere. Besides he must have already become aware of what is now to him superconscient; he must be already a being conscious of the higher spiritual Light, Power, Knowledge, Ananda, penetrated by its descending influences, new-made by a spiritual change.

The spiritual evolution obeys the logic of a successive unfolding; it can take a new decisive main step only when the previous main step has been sufficiently conquered: even if certain minor stages can be swallowed up or leaped over by a rapid and brusque ascension, the consciousness has to turn back to assure itself that the ground passed over is securely annexed to the new condition. It is true that the conquest of the spirit supposes the execution in one life or a few lives of a process that in the ordinary course of Nature would involve a slow and uncertain procedure of centuries or even of millenniums: but this is a question of the speed with which the steps are traversed; a greater or concentrated speed does not eliminate the steps themselves or the necessity of their successive surmounting. The increased rapidity is possible only because the conscious participation of the inner being is there and the power of the Supernature is already at work in the half-transformed lower

nature, so that the steps which would otherwise have had to be taken tentatively in the night of Inconscience or Ignorance can now be taken in an increasing light and power of Knowledge.

LD.II, 26

Four steps of ascent lead from the human intelligence to the Supermind; these are:

I. Higher Mind

Our first decisive step out of our human intelligence, our normal mentality, is an ascent into a higher Mind, a mind no longer of mingled light and obscurity or half-light, but a large clarity of the spirit. Its basic substance is a Unitarian sense of being with a powerful multiple dynamization capable of the formation of a multitude of aspects of knowledge, ways of action, forms and significances of becoming, of all of which there is a spontaneous inherent knowledge . . . It is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge. An all-awareness emerging from the original identity, carrying the truths the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously, formulating and by self-power of the Idea effectually realizing its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge.

But here in this greater Thought there is no need of a seeking and self-critical ratiocination, no logical motion step by step towards a conclusion, no mechanism of express or implied deductions and inferences, no building or deliberate concatenation of idea with idea in order to arrive at an ordered sum or outcome of knowledge . . .

This higher consciousness is a Knowledge formulating itself on a basis of self-existent all-awareness and manifesting some part of its integrality, a harmony of its significances put into thought-form. It can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth are not established by logic but pre-exist and emerge already self-seen in the integral whole. There is an initiation into forms of an ever-present but till now inactive knowledge, not a system of conclusions from premisses or data; this thought is a self-revelation of eternal Wisdom, not an acquired knowledge.

This is the Higher Mind in its aspect of cognition; but there is also the aspect of will, of dynamic effectuation of the Truth: here we find that this greater more brilliant Mind works always on the rest of the being, the mental will, the heart and its feelings, the life, the body, through the power of thought, through the idea-force. It seeks to purify through knowledge, to deliver through knowledge, to create by the innate power of knowledge. The idea is put into the heart or the life as a force to be accepted and worked out; the heart and life become conscious of the idea and respond to its dynamisms and their substance begins to modify itself in that sense, so that the feelings and actions become the vibrations of this higher wisdom, are informed with it, filled with the emotion and the sense of it: the will and the life impulses are similarly charged with its power and its urge of self-effectuation; even in the body the idea works so that, for example, the potent thought and will of health replaces its faith in illness and its consent to illness, or the idea²³ of strength calls in the substance, power, motion, vibration of strength; the idea

generates the force and form proper to the idea and imposes it on our substance of mind, life or matter. It is in this way that the first working proceeds; it charges the whole being with a new and superior consciousness, lays a foundation of change, prepares it for a superior truth of existence.

LD.II, 26

2. Illumined Mind

This greater Force is that of the Illumined Mind, a Mind no longer of higher Thought, but of spiritual light. Here the clarity of the spiritual intelligence, its tranquil day-light, gives place or subordinates itself to an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the spirit: a play of lightnings of spiritual truth and power breaks from above into the consciousness and adds to the calm and wide enlightenment and the vast descent of peace which characterize or accompany the action of the larger conceptual-spiritual principle, a fiery ardour of realization and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge. A downpour of inwardly visible Light very usually envelops this action; for it must be noted that, contrary to our ordinary conceptions, light is not primarily a material creation and the sense or vision of light accompanying the inner illumination is not merely a subjective visual image or a symbolic phenomenon: light is primarily a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality illuminative and creative; material light is a subsequent representation or conversion of it into Matter for the purposes of the material Energy. There is also in this descent the arrival of a greater dynamic, a golden drive, a luminous "enthousiasmos" of inner force and power which replaces the comparatively slow and deliberate process of the Higher Mind by a swift, sometimes a vehement, almost a violent impetus of rapid

transformation.

The Illumined Mind does not work primarily by thought, but by vision; thought is here only a subordinate movement expressive of sight. The human mind, which relies mainly on thought, conceives that to be the highest or the main process of knowledge, but in the spiritual order thought is a secondary and a not indispensable process.

A consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought: it is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of Truth and not only her figure; but it outlines the figure also and at the same time catches the significance of the figure, and it can embody her with a finer and bolder revealing outline and a larger comprehension and power of totality than thought-conception can manage.

LD.II, 26

3. Intuitive Mind

But these two stages of the ascent enjoy their authority and can get their own united completeness only by a reference to a third level; for it is from the higher summits where dwells the intuitional being that they derive the knowledge which they turn into thought or sight and bring down to us for the mind's transmutation. Intuition is a power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity; for it is always something that leaps out direct from a concealed identity . . .

This close perception is more than sight, more than conception : it is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in

it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence. A concealed or slumbering identity, not yet recovering itself, still remembers or conveys by the intuition its own contents and the intimacy of its self-feeling and self-vision of things, its light of truth, its overwhelming and automatic certitude.

In the human mind the intuition is even such a truth-remembrance or truth-conveyance, or such a revealing flash or blaze breaking into a great mass of ignorance or through a veil of nescience: but we have seen that it is subject there to an invading mixture or a mental coating or an interception and substitution; there is too a manifold possibility of misinterpretation which comes in the way of the purity and fullness of its action. Moreover, there are seeming intuitions on all levels of the being which are communications rather than intuitions, and these have a very various provenance, value and character. The infrarational 'mystic', so styled, — for to be a true mystic it is not sufficient to reject reason and rely on sources of thought or action of which one has no understanding, — is often inspired by such communications on the vital level from a dark and dangerous source. In these circumstances we are driven to rely mainly on the reason and are disposed even to control the suggestions of the intuition — or the pseudo-intuition, which is the more frequent phenomenon, — by the observing and discriminating intelligence; for we feel in our intellectual part that we cannot be sure otherwise what is the true thing and what the mixed or adulterated article or false substitute. But this largely discounts for us the utility of the intuition: for the reason is not in this field a reliable arbiter, since its methods are different, tentative, uncertain, an intellectual seeking; even though it itself really relies on a camouflaged intuition for its conclusions, — for without that help it could not choose its course or arrive at any assured finding, — it hides this dependence from itself under

the process of a reasoned conclusion or a verified conjecture. An intuition passed in judicial review by the reason ceases to be an intuition and can only have the authority of the reason for which there is no inner source of direct certitude. But even if the mind became predominantly an intuitive mind reliant upon its portion of the higher faculty, the co-ordination of its cognitions and its separated activities, — for in mind these would always be apt to appear as a series of imperfectly connected flashes, — would remain difficult so long as this new mentality has not a conscious liaison with its supranational source or a self-uplifting access to a higher plane of consciousness in which an intuitive action is pure and native.

Intuition is always an edge or ray or outleap of a superior light; it is in us a projecting blade, edge or point of a far-off supermind light entering into and modified by some intermediate truth-mind substance above us and, so modified, again entering into and very much blinded by our ordinary or ignorant mind substance; but on that higher level to which it is native its light is unmixed and therefore entirely and purely veridical, and its rays are not separated but connected or massed together in a play of waves of what might almost be called in the Sanskrit poetic figure a sea or mass of 'stable lightnings'. When this original or native Intuition begins to descend into us in answer to an ascension of our consciousness to its level or as a result of our finding of a clear way of communication with it, it may continue to come as a play of lightning-flashes, isolated or in constant action; but at this stage the judgment of reason becomes quite inapplicable, it can only act as an observer or registrar understanding or recording the more luminous intimations, judgments and discriminations of the higher power. To complete or verify an isolated intuition or discriminate its nature, its application, its limitations, the receiving consciousness

must rely on another completing intuition or be able to call down a massed intuition capable of putting all in place. For once the process of the change has begun, a complete transmutation of the stuff and activities of the mind into the substance, form and power of intuition is imperative; until then, so long as the process of consciousness depends upon the lower intelligence serving or helping out or using the intuition, the result can only be a survival of the mixed Knowledge-Ignorance uplifted or relieved by a higher light and force acting in its parts of Knowledge.

Intuition has a fourfold power. A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth, — these are the fourfold potencies of Intuition. Intuition can therefore perform all the action of reason — including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea, — but by its own superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter.

LD.II, 26

4. *Overmind*

The next step of the ascent brings us to the Overmind; the intuitional change can only be an introduction to this higher spiritual overture. But we have seen that the Overmind, even when it is selective and not total in its action, is still a power of cosmic consciousness, a principle of global knowledge which carries in it a delegated light from the supramental gnosis. It is, therefore, only by

an opening into the cosmic consciousness that the overmind ascent and descent can be made wholly possible: a high and intense individual opening upwards is not sufficient, — to that vertical ascent towards summit Light there must be added a vast horizontal expansion of the consciousness into some totality of the Spirit.

When the overmind descends, the predominance of the centralizing ego-sense is entirely subordinated, lost in largeness of being and finally abolished; a wide cosmic perception and feeling of a boundless universal self and movement replaces it: many motions that were formerly ego-centric may still continue, but they occur as currents or ripples in the cosmic wideness. Thought, for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-waves: all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one's separate self but in the universal knowledge; the feelings, emotions, sensations are similarly felt as waves from the same cosmic immensity breaking upon the subtle and the gross body and responded to in kind by the individual centre of the universality; for the body is only a small support or even less, a point of relation, for the action of a vast cosmic instrumentation. In this boundless largeness, not only the separate ego but all sense of individuality, even of a subordinated or instrumental individuality, may entirely disappear; the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic delight, the play of cosmic forces are alone left: if the delight or the centre of Force is felt in what was the personal mind, life or body, it is not with a sense of personality but as a field of manifestation, and this sense of the delight or of the action of Force is not confined to the person or the body but can be felt at all points in an unlimited consciousness of unity which pervades everywhere.

But there can be many formulations of overmind consciousness and experience; for the overmind has a great plasticity and is a field of multiple possibilities. In place of an uncentred and unplaced diffusion there may be the sense of the universe in oneself or as oneself: but there too this self is not the ego; it is an extension of a free and pure essential self-consciousness or it is an identification with the All, — the extension or the identification constituting a cosmic being, a universal individual . . . In the transition towards the supermind this centralizing action tends towards the discovery of a true individual replacing the dead ego, a being who is in his essence one with the supreme Self, one with the universe in extension and yet a cosmic centre and circumference of the specialized action of the Infinite.

The overmind change is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation; it is the highest possible status-dynamis of the spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. It takes up all that is in the three steps below it and raises their characteristic workings to their highest and largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious concert of knowledge, a more manifold delight of being. But there are certain reasons arising from its own characteristic status and power that prevent it from being the final possibility of the spiritual evolution. It is a power, though the highest power, of the lower hemisphere; although its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity. Its play is, like that of all Mind, a play of possibilities; although it acts not in the Ignorance but with the knowledge of the truth of these possibilities, yet it works them out through their own independent evolution of their powers.

LD.II, 26

The Overmind descent is not sufficient to transform wholly the Inconscience, the Supramental Force alone is capable of achieving this.

In the terrestrial evolution itself the overmind descent would not be able to transform wholly the Inconscience; all that it could do would be to transform in each man it touched the whole conscious being, inner and outer, personal and universally impersonal, into its own stuff and impose that upon the Ignorance illumining it into cosmic truth and knowledge. But a basis of Nescience would remain; it would be as if a sun and its system were to shine out in an original darkness of Space and illumine everything as far as its rays could reach so that all that dwelt in the light would feel as if no darkness were there at all in their experience of existence. But outside that sphere or expanse of experience the original darkness would still be there and, since all things are possible in an overmind structure, could reinvade the island of light created within its empire . . .

Also by this much evolution there could be no security against the downward pull of gravitation of the Inconscience which dissolves all the formations that life and mind build in it, swallows all things that arise out of it or are imposed upon it and disintegrates them into their original matter. The liberation from this pull of the Inconscience and a secured basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution would only be achieved by a descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial formula, bringing into it the supreme law and light and dynamis of the spirit and penetrating with it and transforming the inconscience of the material basis. A last transition from Overmind to Supermind and a descent of Supermind must therefore intervene at this stage of evolutionary Nature.

A transformation of human nature can only be achieved when the substance of the being is so steeped in the spiritual principle that all its movements are a spontaneous dynamism and a harmonized process of the spirit. But even when the higher powers and their intensities enter into the substance of the Inconscience, they are met by this blind opposing Necessity and are subjected to this circumscribing and diminishing law of the nescient substance. It opposes them with its strong titles of an established and inexorable Law, meets always the claim of life with the law of death, the demand of Light with the need of a relief of shadow and a background of darkness, the sovereignty and freedom and dynamism of the spirit with its own force of adjustment by limitation, demarcation by incapacity, foundation of energy on the repose of an original Inertia. There is an occult truth behind its negations which only the Supermind with its reconciliation of contraries in the original Reality can take up and so discover the pragmatic solution of the enigma. Only the supramental Force can entirely overcome this difficulty of the fundamental Nescience; for with it enters an opposite and luminous imperative Necessity which underlies all things and is the original and final self-determining truth-force of the self-existent Infinite. This greater luminous spiritual Necessity and its sovereign imperative alone can displace or entirely penetrate, transform into itself and so replace the blind *Ananke* of the Inconscience.

LD.II, 26

CHAPTER VIII

THE Gnostic BEING

The difficulty in understanding and describing the supramental nature comes from the fact that in its very essence, it is consciousness and power of the Infinite.

AS we reach in our thought the line at which the evolution of mind into overmind passes over into an evolution of overmind into supermind, we are faced with a difficulty which amounts almost to an impossibility. For we are moved to seek for some precise idea, some clear mental description of the supramental or gnostic existence of which evolutionary Nature in the Ignorance is in travail; but by crossing this extreme line of sublimated mind the consciousness passes out of the sphere, exceeds the characteristic action and escapes from the grasp of mental perception and knowledge . . . Our normal perception or imagination or formulation of things spiritual and things mundane is mental, but in the gnostic change the evolution crosses a line beyond which there is a supreme and radical reversal of consciousness and the standards and forms of mental cognition are no longer sufficient: it is difficult for mental thought to understand or describe supramental nature.

Mental nature and mental thought are based on a consciousness of the finite; supramental nature is in its very grain a consciousness and power of the Infinite. Supramental Nature sees everything from the stand-point of oneness and regards all things, even the greatest multiplicity and diversity, even what are to the mind the strongest contradictions, in the light of that oneness; its will, ideas, feelings,

sense are made of the stuff of oneness, its actions proceed upon that basis. Mental Nature, on the contrary, thinks, sees, wills, feels, senses with division as a starting-point and has only a constructed understanding of unity; even when it experiences oneness, it has to act from the oneness on a basis of limitation and difference. But the supramental, the divine life is a life of essential, spontaneous and inherent unity. It is impossible for the mind to forecast in detail what the supramental change must be in its parts of life action and outward behaviour or lay down for it what forms it shall create for the individual or the collective existence.

LD.II, 27

One can, however, describe in a general way the passage from the Overmind to the Supermind and form an idea of the supramental existence in its initial step.

This passage is the stage at which the supermind gnosis can take over the lead of the evolution from the overmind and build the first foundations of its own characteristic manifestation and unveiled activities; it must be marked therefore by a decisive but long-prepared transition from an evolution in the Ignorance to an always progressive evolution in the Knowledge. It will not be a sudden revelation and effectuation of the absolute Supermind and the supramental being as they are in their own plane, the swift apocalypse of a truth-conscious existence ever self-fulfilled and complete in self-knowledge; it will be the phenomenon of the supramental being descending into a world of evolutionary becoming and forming itself there, unfolding the powers of the gnosis within the terrestrial nature.

[This revelation] can assume the formula of a truth-conscious existence founded in an inherent self-knowledge but at the same

time taking up into itself mental nature and nature of life and material body. For the supermind as the truth consciousness of the Infinite has in its dynamic principle the infinite power of a free self-determination. It can hold all knowledge in itself and yet put forward in formulation only what is needed at each stage of an evolution; it formulates whatever is in accordance with the Divine Will in manifestation and the truth of the thing to be manifested. It is by this power that it is able to hold back its knowledge, hide its own character and law of action and manifest overmind and under overmind a world of ignorance in which the being wills on its surface not to know and even puts itself under the control of a pervading Nescience. But in this new stage the veil thus put on will be lifted.

LD.II, 27

The supramental or gnostic being will be the perfect consummation of the spiritual man.

In the Ignorance one is there primarily to grow, to know and to do, or, more exactly to grow into something, to arrive by knowledge at something, to get something done. Imperfect, we have no satisfaction of our being, we must perforce strive with labour and difficulty to grow into something we are not; ignorant and burdened with a consciousness of our ignorance, we have to arrive at something by which we can feel that we know; bounded with incapacity, we have to hunt after strength and power; afflicted with a consciousness of suffering, we have to try to get something done by which we catch at some pleasure or lay hold on some satisfying reality of life. To maintain existence is, indeed, our first occupation and necessity, but it is only a starting-point: for the mere maintenance of an imperfect existence chequered with suffering cannot be sufficient as an aim of our being; the instinctive will of

existence, the pleasure of existence, which is all that the Ignorance can make out of the secret underlying Power and Ananda, has to be supplemented by the need to do and become. But what to do and what to become is not clearly known to us; we get what knowledge we can, what power, strength, purity, peace we can, what delight we can, become what we can. But our aims and our effort towards their achievement and the little we can hold as our gains turn into meshes by which we are bound; it is these things that become for us the object of life: to know our souls and to be our selves, which must be the foundation of our true way of being, is a secret that escapes us in our preoccupation with an external learning, an external construction of knowledge, the achievement of an external action, an external delight and pleasure. The spiritual man is one who has discovered his soul: he has found his self and lives in that, is conscious of it, has the joy of it; he needs nothing external for his completeness of existence. The gnostic being starting from this new basis takes up our ignorant becoming and turns it into a luminous becoming of knowledge and a realized power of being. All therefore that is our attempt to be in the Ignorance, he will fulfil in the Knowledge. All knowledge he will turn into a manifestation of the self-knowledge of being, all power and action into a power and action of the self-force of being, all delight into a universal delight of self-existence. Attachment and bondage will fall away, because at each step and in each thing there will be the full satisfaction of self-existence, the light of the consciousness fulfilling itself, the ecstasy of delight of existence finding itself. Each stage of the evolution in the knowledge will be an unfolding of this power and will of being and this joy to be, a free becoming supported by the sense of the Infinite, the bliss of the Brahman,²⁴ the luminous sanction of the Transcendence.

The gnosis is the effective principle of the Spirit, a highest dynamis of the spiritual existence. The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living, acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality. All the trinities²⁵ of the Spirit would be real to his self-awareness and realized in his inner life. All his existence would be fused into oneness with the transcendent and universal Self and Spirit; all his action would originate from and obey the supreme Self and Spirit's divine governance of Nature. All life would have to him the sense of the Conscious Being, the Purusha within, finding its self-expression in Nature; his life and all its thoughts, feelings, acts would be filled for him with that significance and built upon that foundation of its reality. He would feel the presence of the Divine in every centre of his consciousness, in every vibration of his life-force, in every cell of his body. In all the workings of his force of Nature he would be aware of the workings of the supreme World-Mother, the Supernature; he would see his natural being as the becoming and manifestation of the power of the World-Mother. In this consciousness he would live and act in an entire transcendent freedom, a complete joy of the spirit, an entire identity with the cosmic self and a spontaneous sympathy with all in the universe. All beings would be to him his own selves, all ways and powers of consciousness would be felt as the ways and powers of his own universality. But in that inclusive universality there would be no bondage to inferior forces, no deflection from his own highest truth: for this truth would envelop all truth of things and keep each in its own place, in a relation of diversified harmony, — it would not admit any confusion, clash, infringing of boundaries, any distortion of the different harmonies that constitute the total harmony. His own life and the world life would be to him like a perfect work of art; it would be as if the

creation of a cosmic and spontaneous genius infallible in its working out of a multitudinous order. The gnostic individual would be in the world and of the world, but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his self of transcendence above it; he would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality. The True Person is not an isolated entity, his individuality is universal; for he individualizes the universe: it is at the same time divinely emergent in a spiritual air of transcendental infinity, like a high cloud-surpassing summit; for he individualizes the divine Transcendence.

LD.II, 27

*The law of the Supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity;
unity does not imply uniformity.*

A supramental or gnostic race of beings would not be a race made according to a single type, moulded in a single fixed pattern; for the law of the supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity, and therefore there would be an infinite diversity in the manifestation of the gnostic consciousness although that consciousness would still be one in its basis, in its constitution, in its all-revealing and all-uniting order . . . In the supramental race itself, in the variation of its degrees, the individuals would not be cast according to a single type of individuality; each would be different from the other, a unique formation of the Being, although one with all the rest in foundation of self and sense of oneness and in the principle of his being.

In the lower grades of gnostic being, there would be a limitation of self-expression according to the variety of the nature, a limited perfection in order to formulate some side, element or combined

harmony of elements of some Divine Totality, a restricted selection of powers from the cosmic figure of the infinitely manifold One. But in the supramental being this need of limitation for perfection would disappear; the diversity would not be secured by limitation but by a diversity in the power and hue of the Supernature: the same whole of being and the same whole of nature would express themselves in an infinitely diverse fashion; for each being would be a new totality, harmony, self-equation of the One Being. What would be expressed in front or held behind at any moment would depend not on capacity or incapacity, but on the dynamic self-choice of the Spirit, its delight of self-expression, on the truth of the Divine's will and joy of itself in the individual and, subordinately, on the truth of the thing that had to be done through the individual in the harmony of the totality. For the complete individual is the cosmic individual, since only when we have taken the universe into ourselves — and transcended it — can our individuality be complete.

LD.II, 27

The supramental being will realize the harmony of his individual self with the cosmic Self, of his individual will and action with the cosmic Will and Action.

The supramental being in his cosmic consciousness seeing and feeling all as himself would act in that sense; he would act in a universal awareness and a harmony of his individual self with the total self, of his individual will with the total will, of his individual action with the total action. For what we most suffer from in our outer life and its reactions upon our inner life is the imperfection of our relations with the world, our ignorance of others, our disharmony with the whole of things, our inability to equate our demand on the world with the world's demand on us. There is a

conflict — a conflict from which there seems to be no ultimate issue except an escape from both world and self — between our self-affirmation and a world on which we have to impose that affirmation, a world which seems to be too large for us and to pass indifferently over our soul, mind, life, body in the sweep of its course to its goal. The relation of our course and goal to the world's is unapparent to us, and to harmonize ourselves with it we have either to enforce ourselves upon it and make it subservient to us or suppress ourselves and become subservient to it or else to compass a difficult balance between these two necessities of the relation between the individual personal destiny and the cosmic whole and its hidden purpose. But for the supramental being living in a cosmic consciousness the difficulty would not exist, since he has no ego; his cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the truth-consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation.

For in fact both individual and universe are simultaneous and interrelated expressions of the same transcendent Being . . .

One in self with all, the supramental being will seek the delight of self-manifestation of the Spirit in himself but equally the delight of the Divine in all: he will have the cosmic joy and will be a power for bringing the bliss of the spirit, the joy of being to others; for their joy will be part of his own joy of existence. To be occupied with the good of all beings, to make the joy and grief of others one's own has been described as a sign of the liberated and fulfilled spiritual man. The supramental being will have no need for that, of an altruistic self-effacement, since this occupation will be intimate to his self-fulfilment, the fulfilment of the One in all, and there will be no

contradiction or strife between his own good and the good of others: nor will he have any need to acquire a universal sympathy by subjecting himself to the joys and griefs of creatures in the Ignorance; his cosmic sympathy will be part of his inborn truth of being and not dependent on a personal participation in the lesser joy and suffering; it will transcend what it embraces and in that transcendence will be its power. His feeling of universality, his action of universality will be always a spontaneous state and natural movement, an automatic expression of the Truth, an act of the joy of the spirit's self-existence. There could be in it no place for limited self or desire or for the satisfaction or frustration of the limited self or the satisfaction or frustration of desire, no place for the relative and dependent happiness and grief that visit and afflict our limited nature; for these are things that belong to the ego and the Ignorance, not to the freedom and truth of the Spirit . . . The gnostic existence and delight of existence is a universal and total being and delight, and there will be the presence of that totality and universality in each separate movement: in each there will be, not a partial experience of self or a fractional bit of its joy, but the sense of the whole movement of an integral being and the presence of its entire and integral bliss of being, Ananda.

LD.II, 27

The transcendence aspect of the spiritual life is indispensable for the freedom of the Spirit; but it will harmonize with the manifested existence and give it an unshakable foundation. For the gnostic being, to act in the world does not signify a lapse from unity.

The gnostic life will be an inner life in which the antinomy of the inner and the outer, the self and the world will have been cured and exceeded. The gnostic being will have indeed an inmost existence in

which he is alone with God, one with the Eternal, self-plunged into the depths of the Infinite, in communion with its heights and its luminous abysses of secrecy; nothing will be able to disturb or to invade these depths or bring him down from the summits, neither the world's contents nor his action nor all that is around him. This is the transcendence aspect of the spiritual life and it is necessary for the freedom of the spirit; for otherwise the identity in Nature with the world would be a binding limitation and not a free identity. But at the same time God-love and the delight of God will be the heart's expression of that inner communion and oneness, and that delight and love will expand itself to embrace all existence. The peace of God within will be extended in the gnostic experience of the universe into a universal calm of equality not merely passive but dynamic, a calm of freedom in oneness dominating all that meets it, tranquillizing all that enters into it, imposing its law of peace on the supramental being's relations with the world in which he is living. Into all his acts the inner oneness, the inner communion will attend him and enter into his relations with others, who will not be to him others but selves of himself in the one existence, his own universal existence. It is this poise and freedom in the spirit that will enable him to take all life into himself while still remaining the spiritual self and to embrace even the world of the Ignorance without himself entering into the Ignorance.

The gnostic being has the will of action but also the knowledge of what is to be willed and the power to effectuate its knowledge; it will not be led from ignorance to do what is not to be done. Moreover, its action is not the seeking for a fruit or result; its joy is in being and doing, in pure state of spirit, in pure act of spirit, in the pure bliss of the spirit . . . The gnostic being's knowledge self-

realized in action will be, not an ideative knowledge, but the Real-Idea²⁶ of the supermind, the instrumentation of an essential light of Consciousness; it will be the self-light of all the reality of being and becoming pouring itself out continually and filling every particular act and activity with the pure and whole delight of its self-existence. For an infinite consciousness with its knowledge by identity there is in each differentiation the joy and experience of the Identical, in each finite is felt the Infinite.

LD.II, 27

The gnostic consciousness will proceed towards an integral knowledge. And that will not be a revelation or a delivery of light out of darkness, but of light out of light.

Mind seeks for light, for knowledge, — for knowledge of the one truth basing all, an essential truth of self and things, but also of all truth of diversity of that oneness, all its detail, circumstance, manifold way of action, form, law of movement and happening, various manifestation and creation; for thinking mind the joy of existence is discovery and the penetration of the mystery of creation that comes with knowledge. This the gnostic change will fulfil in an ample measure; but it will give it a new character. It will act not by the discovery of the unknown, but by the bringing out of the known; all will be the finding 'of the self by the self in the self'.

A replacement of intellectual seeking by supramental identity and gnostic intuition of the contents of the identity, an omnipresence of spirit with its light penetrating the whole process of knowledge and all its use, so that there is an integration between the knower, knowledge and the thing known, between the operating consciousness, the instrumentation and the thing done,

while the single self watches over the whole integrated movement and fulfils itself intimately in it, making it a flawless unit of self-effectuation, will be the character of each gnostic movement of knowledge and action of knowledge. Mind, observing and reasoning, labours to detach itself and see objectively and truly what it has to know; it tries to know it as not-self, independent other-reality not affected by process of personal thinking or by any presence of self; the gnostic consciousness will at once intimately and exactly know its object by a comprehending and penetrating identification with it. It will overpass what it has to know, but it will include it in itself; it will know the object as part of itself as it might know any part or movement of its own being, without any narrowing of itself by the identification or snaring of its thought in it so as to be bound or limited in knowledge. There will be the intimacy, accuracy, fullness of a direct internal knowledge, but not that misleading by personal mind by which we constantly err, because the consciousness will be that of a universal and not a restricted and ego-bound person. It will proceed towards all knowledge, not setting truth against truth to see which will stand and survive, but completing truth by truth in the light of the one Truth of which all are the aspects. . . . There will be an unfolding, not as a delivery of light out of darkness, but as a delivery of light out of itself; for if an evolving supramental Consciousness holds back part of its contents of self-awareness behind in itself, it does this not as a step or by an act of Ignorance, but as the movement of a deliberate bringing out of its timeless knowledge into a process of Time-manifestation.

LD.II, 27

*The joy of an intimate self-revealing diversity of the One,
the multitudinous union and happy interaction within the One,*

will give a fully perfected sense to the gnostic life.

As mind seeks for light, for the discovery of knowledge and for mastery by knowledge, so life seeks for the development of its own force and for mastery by force; its quest is for growth, power, conquest, possession, satisfaction, creation, joy, love, beauty; its joy of existence is in a constant self-expression, development, diverse manifoldness of action, creation, enjoyment, an abundant and strong intensity of itself and its power. The gnostic evolution will lift that to its highest and fullest expression, but it will not act for the power, satisfaction, enjoyment of the mental or vital ego, for its narrow possession of itself and its eager ambitious grasp on others and on things or for its greater self-affirmation and magnified embodiment; for in that way no spiritual fullness and perfection can come. The gnostic life will exist and act for the Divine in itself and in the world, for the Divine in all; the increasing possession of the individual being and the world by the Divine Presence, Light, Power, Love, Delight, Beauty will be the sense of life to the gnostic being. In the more and more perfect satisfaction of that growing manifestation will be the individual's satisfaction: his power will be the instrumentation of the power of Supernature for bringing in and extending that greater life and nature; whatever conquest and adventure will be there, will be for that only and not for the reign of any individual or collective ego. Love will be for him the contact, meeting, union of self with self, of spirit with spirit, a unification of being, a power and joy and intimacy and closeness of soul to soul, of the One to the One, a joy of identity and the consequences of a diverse identity. It is this joy of an intimate self-revealing diversity of the One, the multitudinous union of the One and a happy interaction in the identity, that will be for him the full revealed sense of life. Creation aesthetic or dynamic, mental creation, life creation, material creation will have for him the same sense. It will

be the creation of significant forms of the Eternal Force, Light, Beauty, Reality, — the beauty and truth of its forms and bodies, the beauty and truth of its powers and qualities, the beauty and truth of its spirit, its formless beauty of self and essence.

As a consequence of the total change and reversal of consciousness establishing a new relation of spirit with mind and life and matter, and a new significance and perfection in the relation, there will be a reversal, a perfecting new significance also of the relations between the spirit and the body it inhabits.

LD.II, 27

Matter will reveal itself as an instrument of the manifestation of Spirit; a new liberated and sovereign acceptance of material Nature will then be possible.

This new relation of the spirit and the body assumes — and makes possible — a free acceptance of the whole of material Nature in place of a rejection; the drawing back from her, the refusal of all identification or acceptance, which is the first normal necessity of the spiritual consciousness for its liberation, is no longer imperative. To cease to be identified with the body, to separate oneself from the body consciousness, is a recognized and necessary step whether towards spiritual liberation or towards spiritual perfection and mastery over Nature. But, this redemption once effected, the descent of the spiritual light and force can invade and take up the body also and there can be a new liberated and sovereign acceptance of material Nature. That is possible, indeed, only if there is a changed communion of the Spirit with Matter, a control, a reversal of the present balance of interaction which allows physical Nature to veil the Spirit and affirm her own dominance. In the light of a larger knowledge Matter also can be seen to be the Brahman, a

self-energy put forth by the Brahman, a form and substance of Brahman; aware of the secret consciousness within material substance, secure in this larger knowledge, the gnostic light and power can unite itself with Matter, so seen, and accept it as an instrument of a spiritual manifestation. A certain reverence, even, for Matter and a sacramental attitude in all dealings with it is possible . . .

The gnostic being, using Matter but using it without material or vital attachment or desire, will feel that he is using the Spirit in this form of itself with its consent and sanction for its own purpose. There will be in him a certain respect for physical things, an awareness of the occult consciousness in them, of its dumb will of utility and service, a worship of the Divine, the Brahman in what he uses, a care for a perfect and faultless use of his divine material, for a true rhythm, ordered harmony, beauty in the life of Matter, in the utilization of Matter.

LD.II, 27

*The body will become a faithful and capable instrument,
perfectly responsive to the Spirit.*

For the law of the body arises from the subconscious or inconscient: but in the gnostic being the subconscious will have become conscious and subject to the supramental control, penetrated with its light and action; the basis of inconscience with its obscurity and ambiguity, its obstruction or tardy responses will have been transformed into a lower or supporting superconsciousness by the supramental emergence. Already even in the realized higher-mind being and in the intuitive and overmind being the body will have become sufficiently conscious to respond to the influence of the Idea and the Will-Force so that the action of mind on the physical

parts, which is rudimentary, chaotic and mostly involuntary in us, will have developed a considerable potency: but in the supramental being it is the consciousness with the Real-Idea in it which will govern everything. This real-idea is a truth-perception which is self-effective; for it is the idea and will of the spirit in direct action and originates a movement of the substance of being which must inevitably effectuate itself in state and act of being. It is this dynamic irresistible spiritual realism of the Truth-consciousness in the highest degree of itself that will have here grown conscient and consciously competent in the evolved gnostic being: it will not act as now, veiled in an apparent unconsciousness and self-limited by law of mechanism, but as the sovereign Reality in self-effectuating action. It is this that will rule the existence with an entire knowledge and power and include in its rule the functioning and action of the body. The body will be turned by the power of the spiritual consciousness into a true and fit and perfectly responsive instrument of the Spirit.

LD.II, 27

*Health, strength, duration, bodily happiness and ease,
liberation from suffering, are a part of the physical perfection
which the gnostic evolution is called upon to realize.*

As a result of this new relation between the Spirit and the body, the gnostic evolution will effectuate the spiritualization, perfection and fulfilment of the physical being; it will do for the body as for the mind and life. Apart from the obscurity, frailties and limitations, which this change will overcome, the body-consciousness is a patient servant and can be in its large reserve of possibilities a potent instrument of the individual life, and it asks for little on its own account: what it craves for is duration, health, strength,

physical perfection, bodily happiness, liberation from suffering, ease. These demands are not in themselves unacceptable, mean or illegitimate, for they render into the terms of Matter the perfection of form and substance, the power and delight which should be the natural outflowing, the expressive manifestation of the Spirit. When the gnostic Force can act in the body, these things can be established; for their opposites come from a pressure of external forces on the physical mind, on the nervous and material life, on the body-organism, from an ignorance that does not know how to meet these forces or is not able to meet them rightly or with power, and from some obscurity, pervading the stuff of the physical consciousness and distorting its responses, that reacts to them in a wrong way.

It is the incompleteness and weakness of the Consciousness-Force manifested in the mental, vital and physical being, its inability to receive or refuse at will, or, receiving, to assimilate or harmonize the contacts of the universal Energy cast upon it, that is the cause of pain and suffering. In the material realm Nature starts with an entire insensibility, and it is a notable fact that either a comparative insensibility or a deficient sensibility or, more often, a greater endurance and hardness to suffering is found in the beginnings of life, in the animal, in primitive or less developed man; as the human being grows in evolution, he grows in sensibility and suffers more keenly in mind and life and body. For the growth in consciousness is not sufficiently supported by a growth in force; the body becomes more subtle, more finely capable, but less solidly efficient in its external energy: man has to call in his will, his mental power to dynamize, correct and control his nervous being, force it to the strenuous tasks he demands from his instruments, steel it

against suffering and disaster. In the spiritual ascent this power of the consciousness and its will over the instruments, the control of spirit and inner mind over the outer mentality and the nervous being and the body, increases immensely; a tranquil and wide equality of the spirit to all shocks and contacts comes in and becomes the habitual poise, and this can pass from the mind to the vital parts and establish there too an immense and enduring largeness of strength and peace; even in the body this state may form itself and meet inwardly the shocks of grief and pain and all kinds of suffering. Even, a power of willed physical insensibility can intervene or a power of mental separation from all shock and injury can be acquired which shows that the ordinary reactions and the debile submission of the bodily self to the normal habits of response of material Nature are not obligatory or unalterable. Still more significant is the power that comes on the level of spiritual mind or overmind to change the vibrations of pain into vibrations of Ananda: even if this were to go only up to a certain point, it indicates the possibility of an entire reversal of the ordinary rule of the reacting consciousness; it can be associated too with a power of self-protection that turns away the shocks that are more difficult to transmute or to endure. The gnostic evolution at a certain stage must bring about a completeness of this reversal and of this power of self-protection which will fulfil the claim of the body for immunity and serenity of its being and for deliverance from suffering and build in it a power for the total delight of existence. A spiritual Ananda can flow into the body and inundate cell and tissue; a luminous materialization of this higher Ananda could of itself bring about a total transformation of the deficient or adverse sensibilities of physical Nature.

LD.II, 27

A vast calm and a deep delight of the gnostic existence rise together in a growing intensity and culminate in an eternal ecstasy. In the universal phenomenon is revealed the eternal Bliss, Ananda.

An aspiration, a demand for the supreme and total delight of existence is there secretly in the whole make of our being, but it is disguised by the separation of our parts of nature and their differing urge and obscured by their inability to conceive or seize anything more than a superficial pleasure. In the body consciousness this demand takes shape as a need of bodily happiness, in our life parts as a yearning for life happiness, a keen vibrant response to joy and rapture of many kinds and to all surprise of satisfaction; in the mind it shapes into a ready reception of all forms of mental delight; on a higher level it becomes apparent in the spiritual mind's call for peace and divine ecstasy. This trend is founded in the truth of the being; for Ananda is the very essence of the Brahman, it is the supreme nature of the omnipresent Reality. The supermind itself in the descending degrees of the manifestation emerges from the Ananda and in the evolutionary ascent merges into the Ananda. It is not, indeed, merged in the sense of being extinguished or abolished but is there inherent in it, indistinguishable from the self of awareness and the self-effectuating force of the Bliss of Being. In the involutionary descent as in the evolutionary return supermind is supported by the original Delight of Existence and carries that in it in all its activities as their sustaining essence; for Consciousness, we may say, is its parent power in the Spirit, but Ananda is the spiritual matrix from which it manifests and the maintaining source into which it carries back the soul in its return to the status of the Spirit. A supramental manifestation in its ascent would have as a next sequence and culmination of self-result a manifestation of the Bliss of the

Brahman: the evolution of the being of gnosis would be followed by an evolution of the being of bliss; an embodiment of gnostic existence would have as its consequence an embodiment of the beatific existence.

In the liberation of the soul from the Ignorance the first foundation is peace, calm, the silence and quietude of the Eternal and Infinite; but a consummate power and greater formation of the spiritual ascension takes up this peace of liberation into the bliss of a perfect experience and realization of the eternal beatitude, the bliss of the Eternal and Infinite . . .

Peace and ecstasy cease to be different and become one. The supermind, reconciling and fusing all differences as well as all contradictions, brings out this unity; a wide calm and a deep delight of all-existence are among its first steps of self-realization, but this calm and this delight rise together, as one state, into an increasing intensity and culminate in the eternal ecstasy, the bliss that is the Infinite. In the gnostic consciousness at any stage there would be always in some degree this fundamental and spiritual conscious delight of existence in the whole depth of the being; but also all the movements of Nature would be pervaded by it, and all the actions and reactions of the life and the body: none could escape the law of the Ananda. Even before the gnostic change there can be a beginning of this fundamental ecstasy of being translated into a manifold beauty and delight. In the mind, it translates into a calm of intense delight of spiritual perception and vision and knowledge, in the heart into a wide or deep or passionate delight of universal union and love and sympathy and the joy of beings and the joy of things. In the will and vital parts it is felt as the energy of delight of a divine life-power in action or a beatitude of the senses perceiving and meeting the One everywhere, perceiving as their normal

aesthesia of things a universal beauty and a secret harmony of creation of which our mind can catch only imperfect glimpses or a rare supernormal sense. In the body it reveals itself as an ecstasy pouring into it from the heights of the spirit and the peace and bliss of a pure and spiritualized physical existence. A universal beauty and glory of being begins to manifest; all objects reveal hidden lines, vibrations, powers, harmonic significances concealed from the normal mind and the physical sense. In the universal phenomenon is revealed the eternal Ananda.

LD.II, 27

Two questions remain to be examined, which are important for the human conception of life.

I. *What is the place of personality in the gnostic being?*

Ordinarily, in the common notion, the separative ego is our self and, if ego has to disappear in a transcendental or universal Consciousness, personal life and action must cease; for, the individual disappearing, there can only be an impersonal consciousness, a cosmic self: but if the individual is altogether extinguished, no further question of personality or responsibility or ethical perfection can arise. According to another line of ideas the spiritual person remains, but liberated, purified, perfected in nature in a celestial existence. But here we are still on earth, and yet it is supposed that the ego personality is extinguished and replaced by a universalized spiritual individual who is a centre and power of the transcendent Being. It might be deduced that this gnostic or supramental individual is a self without personality, an impersonal Purusha. There could be many gnostic individuals but there would be no personality, all would be the same in being and nature.

In the gnostic consciousness personality and impersonality are not opposing principles; they are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality.

This reality is not the ego but the being, who is impersonal and universal in his stuff of nature, but forms out of it an expressive personality which is his form of self in the changes of Nature . . . The Divine, the Eternal, expresses himself as existence, consciousness, bliss, wisdom, knowledge, love, beauty, and we can think of him as these impersonal and universal powers of himself, regard them as the nature of the Divine and Eternal; we can say that God is Love, God is Wisdom, God is Truth or Righteousness: but he is not himself an impersonal state or abstract of states or qualities; he is the Being, at once absolute, universal and individual. If we look at it from this basis, there is, very clearly, no opposition, no incompatibility, no impossibility of a co-existence or one-existence of the Impersonal and the Person; they are each other, live in one another, melt into each other, and yet in a way can appear as if different ends, sides, obverse and reverse of the same Reality. The gnostic being is of the nature of the Divine and therefore repeats in himself this natural mystery of existence.

What will be the nature of the gnostic person?

The ordinary restricted personality can be grasped by a description of the characters stamped on its life and thought and action, its very definite surface building and expression of self . . . But such a description would be pitifully inadequate to express the Person when its Power of Self within manifests more amply and puts

forward its hidden daemonic force in the surface composition and the life. We feel ourselves in presence of a light of consciousness, a potency, a sea of energy, can distinguish and describe its free waves of action and quality, but not fix itself; and yet there is an impression of personality, the presence of a powerful being, a strong, high or beautiful recognizable Someone, a Person, not a limited creature of Nature but a Self or Soul, a Purusha. The gnostic Individual would be such an inner Person unveiled, occupying both the depths — no longer self-hidden — and the surface in a unified self-awareness; he would not be a surface personality partly expressive of a larger secret being, he would be not the wave but the ocean: he would be the Purusha, the inner conscious Existence self-revealed, and would have no need of a carved expressive mask or *persona*.

This, then, would be the nature of the gnostic Person, an infinite and universal being revealing — or, to our mental ignorance, suggesting — its eternal self through the significant form and expressive power of an individual and temporal self-manifestation. But the individual nature-manifestation, whether strong and distinct in outline or multitudinous and protean but still harmonic, would be there as an index of the being, not as the whole being: that would be felt behind, recognizable but indefinable, infinite. The consciousness also of the gnostic Person would be an infinite consciousness throwing up forms of self-expression, but aware always of its unbound infinity and universality and conveying the power and sense of its infinity and universality even in the finiteness of the expression, — by which, moreover, it would not be bound in the next movement of farther self-revelation. But this would still not be an unregulated un-recognizable flux but a process of self-revelation making visible the inherent truth of its powers of existence according to the harmonic law natural to all manifestation

of the Infinite.

LD.II, 27

2. *If there is a gnostic personality and if it is in some way responsible for its acts, what is the place of the ethical element in the gnostic nature, what is its perfection and its fulfilment?*

The law, the standard has to be imposed on us now because there is in our natural being an opposite force of separateness, a possibility of antagonism, a force of discord, ill-will, strife. All ethics is a construction of good in a Nature which has been smitten with evil by the powers of darkness born of the Ignorance, even as it is expressed in the ancient legend of the Vedanta.²⁷ But where all is self-determined by truth of consciousness and truth of being, there can be no standard, no struggle to observe it, no virtue or merit, no sin or demerit of the nature. The power of love, of truth, of right will be there, not as a law mentally constructed but as the very substance and constitution of the nature and, by the integration of the being, necessarily also the very stuff and constituting nature of the action. To grow into this nature of our true being, a nature of spiritual truth and oneness, is the liberation attained by an evolution of the spiritual being: the gnostic evolution gives us the complete dynamism of that return to ourselves. Once that is done, the need of standards of virtue, *dharma*s, disappears; there is the law and self-order of the liberty of the spirit, there can be no imposed or constructed law of conduct, dharma. All becomes a self-flow of spiritual self-nature, *swadharma* of *swabhava*.²⁸

LD.II, 27

*The gnostic life will reconcile freedom and order.
There will be an entire accord between the free expression
of the individual and his obedience to the inherent law
of the supreme and universal Truth of things.*

A separate self-existent being could be at odds with other separate beings, at variance with the universal All in which they co-exist, in a state of contradiction with any supreme Truth that was willing its self-expression in the universe; this is what happens to the individual in the Ignorance, because he takes his stand on the consciousness of a separate individuality. There can be a similar conflict, discord, disparity between the truths, the energies, qualities, powers, modes of being that act as separate forces in the individual and in the universe. A world full of conflict, a conflict in ourselves, a conflict of the individual with the world around him are normal and inevitable features of the separative consciousness of the Ignorance and our ill-harmonized existence. But this cannot happen in the gnostic consciousness because there each finds his complete self and all find their own truth and the harmony of their different motions in that which exceeds them and of which they are the expression. In the gnostic life, therefore, there is an entire accord between the free self-expression of the being and his automatic obedience to the inherent law of the supreme and universal Truth of things. These are to him interconnected sides of the one Truth; it is his own supreme truth of being which works itself out in the whole united truth of himself and things in one supernature.

The two principles of freedom and order, which in mind and life are constantly representing themselves as contraries or incompatibles, though they have no need to be that if freedom is guarded by knowledge and order based upon truth of being, are in

the supermind consciousness native to each other and even fundamentally one. This is so because both are inseparable aspects of the inner spiritual truth and therefore their determinations are one; they are inherent in each other, for they arise from an identity and therefore in action coincide in a natural identity. The gnostic being does not in any way or degree feel his liberty infringed by the imperative order of his thought or actions, because that order is intrinsic and spontaneous; he feels both his liberty and the order of his liberty to be one truth of his being. His liberty of knowledge is not a freedom to follow falsehood or error, for he does not need like the mind to pass through the possibility of error in order to know, — on the contrary, any such deviation would be a departure from his plenitude of the gnostic self, it would be a diminution of his self-truth and alien and injurious to his being; for his freedom is a freedom of light, not of darkness. His liberty of action is not a licence to act upon wrong will or the impulsions of the Ignorance, for that too would be alien to his being, a restriction and diminution of it, not a liberation. A drive for fulfilment of falsehood or wrong will would be felt by him, not as a movement towards freedom, but as a violence done to the liberty of the spirit, an invasion and imposition, an inroad upon his supernature, a tyranny of some alien Nature.

A similar inevitability of the union of freedom and order would be the law of the collective life; it would be a freedom of the diverse play of the Infinite in divine souls, an order of the conscious unity of souls which is the law of the supramental Infinite. Our mental rendering of oneness brings into it the rule of sameness; a complete oneness brought about by the mental reason drives towards a thorough-going standardization as its one effective means, — only minor shades of differentiation would be allowed to operate: but

the greatest richness of diversity in the self-expression of oneness would be the law of the gnostic life. In the gnostic consciousness difference would not lead to discord but to a spontaneous natural adaptation, a sense of complementary plenitude, a rich many-sided execution of the thing to be collectively known, done, worked out in life.

LD.II, 27

All mental standards would disappear because their necessity would cease; the authentic law of identity with the Divine Self would have replaced them.

On this fact that the Divine Knowledge and Force, the supreme Supernature, would act through the gnostic being with his full participation, is founded the freedom of the gnostic being; it is this unity that gives him his liberty. The freedom from law, including the moral law, so frequently affirmed of the spiritual being, is founded on this unity of its will with the will of the Eternal. All the mental standards would disappear because all necessity for them would cease; the higher authentic law of identity with the Divine Self and identity with all beings would have replaced them. There would be no question of selfishness or altruism, of oneself and others, since all are seen and felt as the one self and only what the supreme Truth and Good decided would be done. There would be in the action a pervasive feeling of a self-existent universal love, sympathy, oneness, but the feeling would penetrate, colour and move in the act, not solely dominate or determine it: it would not stand for itself in opposition to the larger truth of things or dictate a personally impelled departure from the divinely willed true movement. This opposition and departure can happen in the Ignorance where love or any other strong principle of the nature can be divorced from wisdom even as it can be divorced from

power; but in the supermind gnosis all powers are intimate to each other and act as one. In the gnostic person the Truth-Knowledge would lead and determine and all the other forces of the being concur in the action: there would be no place for disharmony or conflict between the powers of the nature.

LD.II, 27

CHAPTER IX

THE DIVINE LIFE UPON EARTH

To be wholly and integrally conscious of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is what is implied by the perfect emergence of the individual consciousness, and it is that towards which evolution tends. All being is one, and to be fully conscious means to be integrated with the consciousness of all, with the universal self and force and action.

FOR the essence of consciousness is the power to be aware of itself and its objects, and in its true nature this power must be direct, self-fulfilled and complete: if it is in us indirect, incomplete, unfulfilled in its workings, dependent on constructed instruments, it is because consciousness here is emerging from an original veiling Inconscience and is yet burdened and enveloped with the first Nescience proper to the Inconscient; but it must have the power to emerge completely, its destiny must be to evolve into its own perfection which is its true nature. Its true nature is to be wholly aware of its objects, and of these objects the first is self, the being which is evolving its consciousness here, and the rest is what we see as not-self, — but if existence is indivisible, that too must in reality be self: the destiny of evolving consciousness must be, then, to become perfect in its awareness, entirely aware of self and all-aware. This perfect and natural condition of consciousness is to us a superconsciousness, a state which is beyond us and in which our mind, if suddenly transferred to it, could not at first function; but it is towards that superconsciousness that our conscious being must be evolving. But this evolution of our consciousness to a

superconscience or supreme of itself is possible only if the Inconscience which is our basis here is really itself an involved Superconscience; for what is to be in the becoming of the Reality in us must be already there involved or secret in its beginning. Such an involved Being or Power we can well conceive the Inconscient to be when we closely regard this material creation of an unconscious Energy and see it labouring out with curious construction and infinite device the work of a vast involved Intelligence and see, too, that we ourselves are something of that Intelligence evolving out of its involution, an emerging consciousness whose emergence cannot stop short on the way until the Involved has evolved and revealed itself as a supreme totally self-aware and all-aware Intelligence. It is this to which we have given the name of Supermind or Gnosis. For that evidently must be the consciousness of the Reality, the Being, the Spirit that is secret in us and slowly manifesting here; of that Being we are the becomings and must grow into its nature.

To be and to be fully is Nature's aim in us; but to be fully is to be wholly conscious of one's being: unconsciousness, half consciousness or deficient consciousness is a state of being not in possession of itself; it is existence, but not fullness of being. To be aware wholly and integrally of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is the necessary condition of true possession of existence. This self-awareness is what is meant by spiritual knowledge: the essence of spiritual knowledge is an intrinsic self-existent consciousness; all its action of knowledge, indeed all its action of any kind, must be that consciousness formulating itself. All other knowledge is consciousness oblivious of itself and striving to return to its own awareness of itself and its contents; it is self-ignorance labouring to transform itself back into self-knowledge.

To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight of being and to live in this integrated completeness is the divine living.

All being is one and to be fully is to be all that is. To be in the being of all and to include all in one's being, to be conscious of the consciousness of all, to be integrated in force with the universal force, to carry all action and experience in oneself and feel it as one's own action and experience, to feel all selves as one's own self, to feel all delight of being as one's own delight of being is a necessary condition of the integral divine living.

LD.II, 28

The plenitude of this consciousness can only be attained by realizing the identity of the individual self with the transcendent Self, the supreme Reality.

But thus to be universally in the fullness and freedom of one's universality, one must be also transcendently. The spiritual fullness of the being is eternity; if one has not the consciousness of timeless eternal being, if one is dependent on body or embodied mind or embodied life, or dependent on this world or that world or on this condition of being or that condition of being, that is not the reality of self, not the fullness of our spiritual existence. To live only as a self of body or be only by the body is to be an ephemeral creature, subject to death and desire and pain and suffering and decay and decadence. To transcend, to exceed consciousness of body, not to be held in the body or by the body, to hold the body only as an instrument, a minor outward formation of self, is a first condition of divine living. Not to be a mind subject to ignorance

and restriction of consciousness, to transcend mind and handle it as an instrument, to control it as a surface formation of self, is a second condition. To be by the self and spirit, not to depend upon life, not to be identified with it, to transcend it and control and use it as an expression and instrumentation of the self, is a third condition.

[The individual] must enter into the supreme divine Reality, feel his oneness with it, live in it, be its self-creation: all his mind, life, physicality must be converted into terms of its Supernature; all his thought, feelings, actions must be determined by it and be it, its self-formation. All this can become complete in him only when he has evolved out of the Ignorance into the Knowledge and through the Knowledge into the supreme Consciousness and its dynamis and supreme delight of existence; but some essentiality of these things and their sufficient instrumentation can come with the first spiritual change and culminate in the life of the gnostic supernature.

LD.II, 28

This realization demands a turning of the consciousness inward. The ordinary human consciousness is turned outward and sees the surface of things only. It recoils from entering the inner depths which appear dark and where it is afraid of losing itself. Yet the entry into this obscurity, this void, this silence is only the passage to a greater existence.

These things are impossible without an inward living; they cannot be reached by remaining in an external consciousness turned always outwards, active only or mainly on and from the surface. The individual being has to find himself, his true existence; he can only do this by going inward, by living within and from within . . .

This movement of going inward and living inward is a difficult task to lay upon the normal consciousness of the human being; yet there is no other way of self-finding. The materialistic thinker, erecting an opposition between the extrovert and the introvert, holds up the extrovert attitude for acceptance as the only safety: to go inward is to enter into darkness or emptiness or to lose the balance of the consciousness and become morbid; it is from outside that such inner life as one can construct is created, and its health is assured only by a strict reliance on its wholesome and nourishing outer sources, — the balance of the personal mind and life can only be secured by a firm support on external reality, for the material world is the sole fundamental reality. This may be true for the physical man, the born extrovert, who feels himself to be a creature of outward Nature; made by her and dependent on her, he would lose himself if he went inward : for him there is no inner being, no inner living. But the introvert of this distinction also has not the inner life; he is not a seer of the true inner self and of inner things, but the small mental man who looks superficially inside himself and sees there not his spiritual self but his life-ego, his mind-ego and becomes unhealthily preoccupied with the movements of this little pitiful dwarf creature. The idea or experience of an inner darkness when looking inwards is the first reaction of a mentality which has lived always on the surface and has no realized inner existence; it has only a constructed internal experience which depends on the outside world for the materials of its being. But to those into whose composition there has entered the power of a more inner living, the movement of going within and living within brings not a darkness or dull emptiness but an enlargement, a rush of new experience, a greater vision, a larger capacity, an extended life infinitely more real and various than the first pettiness of the life constructed for itself by our normal physical humanity, a joy of being which is larger and

richer than any delight in existence that the outer vital man or the surface mental man can gain by their dynamic vital force and activity or subtlety and expansion of the mental existence. A silence, an entry into a wide or even immense or infinite emptiness is part of the inner spiritual experience; of this silence and void the physical mind has a certain fear, the small superficially active thinking or vital mind a shrinking from it or dislike, — for it confuses the silence with mental and vital incapacity and the void with cessation or non-existence : but this silence is the silence of the spirit which is the condition of a greater knowledge, power and bliss, and this emptiness is the emptying of the cup of our natural being, a liberation of it from its turbid contents so that it may be filled with the wine of God; it is the passage not into non-existence but to a greater existence. Even when the being turns towards cessation, it is a cessation not in non-existence but into some vast ineffable of spiritual being or the plunge into the incommunicable superconsciousness of the Absolute.

LD.II, 28

Indeed, this inward-turning movement is not an imprisonment in the personal self; it is the first step towards a true universality.

In fact, this inward turning and movement is not an imprisonment in personal self, it is the first step towards a true universality; it brings to us the truth of our external as well as the truth of our internal existence. For this inner living can extend itself and embrace the universal life, it can contact, penetrate, englobe the life of all with a much greater reality and dynamic force than is in our surface consciousness at all possible. Our outmost universalization on the surface is a poor and limping endeavour, — it is a construction, a make-believe and not the real thing: for in our

surface consciousness we are bound to separation of consciousness from others and wear the fetters of the ego. There our very selflessness becomes more often than not a subtle form of selfishness or turns into a larger affirmation of our ego; content with our pose of altruism, we do not see that it is a veil for the imposition of our individual self, our ideas, our mental and vital personality, our need of ego-enlargement upon the others whom we take up into our expanded orbit. So far as we really succeed in living for others, it is done by an inner spiritual force of love and sympathy; but the power and field of effectuality of this force in us are small, the psychic movement that prompts it is incomplete, its action often ignorant because there is contact of mind and heart but our being does not embrace the being of others as ourselves. An external unity with others must always be an outward joining and association of external lives with a minor inner result; the mind and heart attach their movements to this common life and the beings whom we meet there; but the common external life remains the foundation, — the inward constructed unity, or so much of it as can persist in spite of mutual ignorance and discordant egoisms, conflict of minds, conflict of hearts, conflict of vital temperaments, conflict of interests, is a partial and insecure superstructure. The spiritual consciousness, the spiritual life reverses this principle of building; it bases its action in the collective life upon an inner experience and inclusion of others in our own being, an inner sense and reality of oneness. The spiritual individual acts out of that sense of oneness which gives him immediate and direct perception of the demand of self on other self, the need of the life, the good, the work of love and sympathy that can truly be done. A realization of spiritual unity, a dynamization of the intimate consciousness of one-being, of one self in all beings, can alone found and govern by its truth the action of the divine life.

*The law of the divine life is universality in action,
organized by an all-seeing Will, with the sense of the
true oneness of all.*

In the gnostic or divine being, in the gnostic life, there will be a close and complete consciousness of the self of others, a consciousness of their mind, life, physical being which are felt as if they were one's own. The gnostic being will act, not out of a surface sentiment of love and sympathy or any similar feeling, but out of this close mutual consciousness, this intimate oneness. All his action in the world will be enlightened by a truth of vision of what has to be done, a sense of the will of the Divine Reality in him which is also the Divine Reality in others and it will be done for the Divine in others and the Divine in all, for the effectuation of the truth of purpose of the All as seen in the light of the highest Consciousness and in the way and by the steps through which it must be effectuated in the power of the Supernature. The gnostic being finds himself not only in his own fulfilment, which is the fulfilment of the Divine Being and Will in him, but in the fulfilment of others; his universal individuality effectuates itself in the movement of the All in all beings towards its greater becoming. He sees a divine working everywhere; what goes out from him into the sum of that divine working, from the inner Light, Will, Force that works in him, is his action. There is no separative ego in him to initiate anything; it is the Transcendent and Universal that moves out through his universalized individuality into the action of the universe. As he does not live for a separate ego, so too he does not live for the purpose of any collective ego; he lives in and for the Divine in himself, in and for the Divine in the collectivity, in and for the Divine in all beings. This universality in action, organized by the

all-seeing Will in the sense of the realized oneness of all, is the law of his divine living.

It is, then, this spiritual fulfilment of the urge to individual perfection and an inner completeness of being that we mean first when we speak of a divine life. It is the first essential condition of a perfected life on earth and we are therefore right in making the utmost possible individual perfection our first supreme business. The perfection of the spiritual and pragmatic relation of the individual with all around him is our second preoccupation; the solution of this second desideratum lies in a complete universality and oneness with all life upon earth which is the other concomitant result of an evolution into the gnostic consciousness and nature. But there still remains the third desideratum, a new world, a change in the total life of humanity or, at the least, a new perfected collective life in the earth-nature. This calls for the appearance not only of isolated evolved individuals acting in the unevolved mass, but of many gnostic individuals forming a new kind of beings and a new common life superior to the present individual and common existence.

A spiritual or gnostic being would feel his harmony with the whole gnostic life around him, whatever his position in the whole. According to his place in it he would know how to lead or to rule, but also how to subordinate himself; both would be to him an equal delight: for the spirit's freedom, because it is eternal, self-existent and inalienable, can be felt as much in service and willing subordination and adjustment with other selves as in power and rule. An inner spiritual freedom can accept its place in the truth of an inner spiritual hierarchy as well as in the truth, not incompatible with it, of a fundamental spiritual equality. It is this self-

arrangement of Truth, a natural order of the spirit, that would exist in a common life of different degrees and stages of the evolving gnostic being. Unity is the basis of the gnostic consciousness, mutuality the natural result of its direct awareness of oneness in diversity, harmony the inevitable power of the working of its force. Unity, mutuality and harmony must therefore be the inescapable law of a common or collective gnostic life. What forms it might take would depend upon the will of evolutionary manifestation of the Supernature, but this would be its general character and principle.

LD.II, 28

New powers of consciousness and new faculties will develop in the gnostic being who will use them in a natural, normal and spontaneous way both for knowledge and for action.

An evolution of innate and latent but as yet unevolved powers of consciousness is not considered admissible by the modern mind, because these exceed our present formulation of Nature and, to our ignorant preconceptions founded on a limited experience, they seem to belong to the supernatural, to the miraculous and occult; for they surpass the known action of material Energy which is now ordinarily accepted as the sole cause and mode of things and the sole instrumentation of the World-Force. A human working of marvels, by the conscious being discovering and developing an instrumentation of material forces overpassing anything that Nature has herself organized, is accepted as a natural fact and an almost unlimited prospect of our existence; an awakening, a discovery, an instrumentation of powers of consciousness and of spiritual, mental and life forces overpassing anything that Nature or man has yet organized is not admitted as possible. But there would be nothing supernatural or miraculous in such an evolution, except in so far as it would be a supernature or superior nature to ours just

as human nature is a supernature or superior nature to that of animal or plant or material objects. Our mind and its powers, our use of reason, our mental intuition and insight, speech, possibilities of philosophical, scientific, aesthetic discovery of the truths and potencies of being and a control of its forces are an evolution that has taken place: yet it would seem impossible if we took our stand on the limited animal consciousness and its capacities; for there is nothing there to warrant so prodigious a progression. But still there are vague initial manifestations, rudimentary elements or arrested possibilities in the animal to which our reason and intelligence with their extraordinary developments stand as an unimaginable journey from a poor and unpromising point of departure. The rudiments of spiritual powers belonging to the gnostic supernature are similarly there even in our ordinary composition, but only occasionally and sparsely active. It is not irrational to suppose that at this much higher stage of the evolution a similar but greater progression starting from these rudimentary beginnings might lead to another immense development and departure.

In mystic experience, — when there is an opening of the inner centres, or in other ways, spontaneously or by will or endeavour or in the very course of the spiritual growth, — new powers of consciousness have been known to develop; they present themselves as if an automatic consequence of some inner opening or in answer to a call in the being, so much so that it has been found necessary to recommend to the seeker not to hunt after these powers, not to accept or use them. This rejection is logical for those who seek to withdraw from life; for all acceptance of greater power would bind to life or be a burden on the bare and pure urge towards liberation. An indifference to all other aims and issues is natural for the God-lover who seeks God for His own sake and not for power or any other inferior attraction; the pursuit of these

alluring but often dangerous forces would be a deviation from his purpose. A similar rejection is a necessary self-restraint and a spiritual discipline for the immature seeker, since such powers may be a great, even a deadly peril; for their supernormality may easily feed in him an abnormal exaggeration of the ego. Power in itself may be dreaded as a temptation by the aspirant to perfection, because power can abase as well as elevate; nothing is more liable to misuse. But when new capacities come as an inevitable result of the growth into a greater consciousness and a greater life and that growth is part of the very aim of the spiritual being within us, this bar does not operate; for a growth of the being into supernature and its life in supernature cannot take place or cannot be complete without bringing with it a greater power of consciousness and a greater power of life and the spontaneous development of an instrumentation of knowledge and force normal to that supernature. There is nothing in this future evolution of the being which could be regarded as irrational or incredible; there is nothing in it abnormal or miraculous: it would be the necessary course of the evolution of consciousness and its forces in the passage from the mental to the gnostic or supramental formulation of our existence. This action of the forces of supernature would be a natural, normal and spontaneously simple working of the new higher or greater consciousness into which the being enters in the course of his self-evolution; the gnostic being accepting the gnostic life would develop and use the powers of this greater consciousness, even as man develops and uses the powers of his mental nature.

LD.II, 28

The life of gnostic beings might fitly be characterized as a superhuman or divine life. But it must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood.

A gnostic Supernature transcends all the values of our normal ignorant Nature; our standards and values are created by ignorance and therefore cannot determine the life of Supernature. At the same time our present nature is a derivation from Supernature and is not a pure ignorance but a half-knowledge; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that whatever spiritual truth there is in or behind its standards and values will reappear in the higher life, not as standards, but as elements transformed, uplifted out of the ignorance and raised into the true harmony of a more luminous existence. As the universalized spiritual individual sheds the limited personality, the ego, as he rises beyond mind to a completer knowledge in Supernature, the conflicting ideals of the mind must fall away from him, but what is true behind them will remain in the life of Supernature. The gnostic consciousness is a consciousness in which all contradictions are cancelled or fused into each other in a higher light of seeing and being, in a unified self-knowledge and world-knowledge. The gnostic being will not accept the mind's ideals and standards; he will not be moved to live for himself, for his ego, or for humanity or for others or for the community or for the State; for he will be aware of something greater than these half-truths, of the Divine Reality, and it is for that he will live, for its will in himself and in all, in a spirit of large universality, in the light of the will of the Transcendence. For the same reason there can be no conflict between self-affirmation and altruism in the gnostic life, for the self of the gnostic being is one with the self of all, — no conflict between the ideal of individualism and the collective ideal, for both are terms of a greater Reality and only in so far as either expresses the Reality or their fulfilment serves the will of the Reality, can they have a value for his spirit. But at the same time what is true in the mental ideals and dimly figured in them will be fulfilled in his existence; for while his consciousness exceeds the human values so

that he cannot substitute mankind or the community or the State or others or himself for God, the affirmation of the Divine in himself and a sense of the Divine in others and the sense of oneness with humanity, with all other beings, with all the world because of the Divine in them and a lead towards a greater and better affirmation of the growing Reality in them will be part of his life action. But what he shall do will be decided by the Truth of the Knowledge and Will in him, a total and infinite Truth that is not bound by any single mental law or standard but acts with freedom in the whole reality, with respect for each truth in its place and with a clear knowledge of the forces at work and the intention in the manifesting Divine Nisus at each step of cosmic evolution and in each event and circumstance.

The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance, — for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there would be the same plastic principle; a rigid standardization, however necessary for the mind's arrangement of things, could not be the law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying unity might well become manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order.

A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fitly be characterized as a divine life; for it

would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material Nature. That might be described, since it surpasses the mental human level, as a life of spiritual and supramental supermanhood. But this must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood; for supermanhood in the mental idea consists of an overtopping of the normal human level, not in kind but in degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or dense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human Ignorance; it carries also, commonly implied in it, the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by the superman. That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type; it might be at its worst the reign of the 'blonde beast' or the dark beast or of any and every beast, a return to barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force: but this would be no evolution, it would be a reversion to an old strenuous barbarism.

But earth has had enough of this kind in her past and its repetition can only prolong the old lines; she can get no true profit for her future, no power of self-exceeding, from the Titan, the Asura²⁹: even a great or supernormal power in it could only carry her on larger circles of her old orbit. But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realized being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty, — not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-

fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature.

LD.II, 28

It would be a misconception to think that a life in the full light of Knowledge would lose its charm and become an insipid monotony. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest offered to us by the world of Ignorance.

This new status would indeed be a reversal of the present law of human consciousness and life, for it would reverse the whole principle of the life of the Ignorance. It is for the taste of the Ignorance, its surprise and adventure, one might say, that the soul has descended into the Inconscience and assumed the disguise of Matter, for the adventure and the joy of creation and discovery, an adventure of the spirit, an adventure of the mind and life and the hazardous surprises of their working in Matter, for the discovery and conquest of the new and the unknown; all this constitutes the enterprise of life and all this, it might seem, would cease with the cessation of the Ignorance. Man's life is made up of the light and the darkness, the gains and losses, the difficulties and dangers, the pleasures and pains of the Ignorance, a play of colours moving on a soil of the general neutrality of Matter which has as its basis the nescience and insensibility of the Inconscient. To the normal life-being an existence without the reactions of success and frustration, vital joy and grief, peril and passion, pleasure and pain, the vicissitudes and uncertainties of fate and struggle and battle and endeavour, a joy of novelty and surprise and creation projecting itself into the unknown, might seem to be void of variety and therefore void of vital savour. Any life surpassing these things

tends to appear to it as something featureless and empty or cast in the figure of an immutable sameness; the human mind's picture of heaven is the incessant repetition of an eternal monotone. But this is a misconception; for an entry into the gnostic consciousness would be an entry into the Infinite. It would be a self-creation bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being, and the interest of the Infinite is much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interest of the finite. The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The delight of the Spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste of delight, *rasa*,³⁰ of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it would be a greater and happier constant miracle.

If there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our destiny. The self, the spirit, the reality that is disclosing itself out of the first inconscience of life and matter, would evolve its complete truth of being and consciousness in that life and matter. It would return to itself — or, if its end as an individual is to return into its Absolute, it could make that return also, — not through a frustration of life but through a spiritual completeness of itself in life. Our evolution in the Ignorance with its chequered joy and pain of self-discovery and world-discovery, its half-fulfilments, its constant finding and missing, is only our first state. It must lead

inevitably towards an evolution in the Knowledge, a self-finding and self-unfolding of the Spirit, a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still a Supernature.

LD.II, 28

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N.B. The origin of each quotation is indicated by the letters

LD *The Life Divine*

SY *The Synthesis of Yoga*

HC *The Human Cycle*

followed by the number of the volume and/or chapter.

The Life Divine

The Life Divine originally appeared as a series in the philosophic monthly the *Arya*, published at Pondicherry, between August 1914 and January 1919.

The work was afterwards published in book form under the same title:

1st Indian edition — Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 2 volumes (3 parts), 1939 (vol. I — 1 part, VIII + 441 pp.) and 1940 (vol. II — 2 parts, X, X + 1186 pp.).

In this edition the order of the chapters was somewhat modified and their text revised and enlarged in places, often considerably. This is particularly the case in the last six chapters of the work, which are much quoted in the present book: two of them were rewritten and four completely new.

2nd Indian edition — Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 2 volumes (2 parts), 1943 (vol. I — VIII + 349 pp.) and 1944 (vol. II-X + 945 pp.).

3rd Indian edition — (Sri Aurobindo International University Centre Collection, vol. III), in one volume (VIII + 1272 pp.), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1955.

4th Indian edition — same as above, 1960.

5th Indian edition — as a part of Sri Aurobindo Centenary set, 1972, in two volumes (1070 pp.), also a smaller size edition for loose sale.

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French Translations — A translation of the first seven chapters was published in 1947 by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

The last six chapters of the work have appeared both in English and French (translated by the Mother), with the sub-title 'The Spiritual Evolution', in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* (bilingual Quarterly), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, from 1956, No. 2 to 1957, No. 4.

Translations in Indian Languages — The trilingual edition of the *Bulletin of Physical Education* (English, French, Hindi) has given a Hindi translation of these six chapters between the dates stated above.

There exist one complete Hindi and two Bengali translations of *The Life Divine*. Also one other Hindi translation in part.

The Synthesis of Yoga

The Synthesis of Yoga originally appeared (73 chapters) in the *Arya* between August 1914 and January 1921. It was incomplete when this monthly ceased.

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Love, The Yoga of Self-Perfection) have been reprinted without change from the *Arya*.

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¹ The present cosmic manifestation is the result of a double movement: *involution and evolution*. Involution is a process of self-limitation, of densification, by which the universal Consciousness-Force veils itself by stages until it assumes the appearance of a dense cosmic Inconscience. In this way a series of universal principles, worlds or planes of consciousness have been created, each characterized by certain powers of consciousness.

The three superior planes of this universe are called *the planes of Sachchidananda*. They form universal and fundamental states of the spiritual Reality in which the unity of the Divine Existence, the power of the Divine Consciousness, the bliss of the Divine Delight of existence are put in front. They are far above the reach of normal human consciousness and experience.

Then comes an intermediate plane, called *the Supramental plane*, or the plane of Supermind. It can be characterized as a self-effectuating Truth-Consciousness.

The series of descending planes ends with

- *the mental plane* or plane of Mind,
- *the vital plane* or plane of Life,
- *the physical or material plane*, or plane of Matter.

In the physical plane the involution reaches its last stage in a total Inconscience which becomes the starting point of a gradual evolution. This Inconscience is a stark and utter negation of the Spirit — an indeterminable original chaos, as it were.

In each plane all the powers of consciousness belonging to the planes above it are involved, so that all the powers of the original and universal Consciousness-Force are really involved or hidden even in the Inconscient.

These universal planes are worlds in themselves: they have their own forces, forms and beings. We are partly immersed in them and influenced by them (see Note 6 below), although it is only in the material plane that we have developed sense organs which bring the forces, forms and beings of the world of matter within our normal perception.

Evolution is an opposite process, by which the Consciousness-Force emerges again gradually from the apparent cosmic Inconscience and manifests its hidden powers.

Out of the Inconscient, *Matter* has been organized by the urge of the involved Consciousness-Force and under the pressure of the subtler forces of the physical

plane. It has gradually developed into the physical cosmos as we know it. Matter, again by the working of the secret Consciousness-Force and that of the forces of the vital plane above, has produced Life and living physical beings: plants and animals. In the animal, once more by a double action, the forces of the mental plane have successfully fashioned an instrument permitting them to come in contact with Matter and organize it: *Mind* is born in the physical world and, with it, Man, the self-conscious thinking animal. The next step of the ascent of the embodied consciousness will be taken under the pressure of the forces from the supramental plane: *Supermind* will emerge in the earthly manifestation. Sri Aurobindo's principal works are a comprehensive study of this new power of consciousness, the conditions of its emergence on earth and the resultant transformation of mankind.

'Mind, Life and Matter are the realized powers of the evolution and well-known to us; Supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda are the secret principles which are not yet put in front and have still to be realized in the forms of the manifestation and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movements and therefore not easily recognizable.' (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, II, 15).

It must be noted that, as Sri Aurobindo uses the terms, evolution is not exactly the reverse of involution. Evolution is not a withdrawing, a subtilization, plane after plane, leading to a reabsorption into the One Unmanifest. It takes place in Matter itself: it is a gradual emergence of higher powers of consciousness, leading to an ever greater manifestation of the divine Consciousness-Force *in the material universe*. This is the secret significance of the terrestrial evolution.

² The principle and support of all existence is the *Self* or *Spirit* (*Atman* or *Brahman* in Sanskrit). From the point of view of the manifested existence, it has three aspects:

a) transcendent: the *Supreme Self* (*Paramatman*), Existence *in esse*, above the individual and the cosmos, identical with the essential Divine Being, the Supracosmic Reality, the spaceless and timeless Absolute (*Parabrahman*);

b) cosmic: the *Universal Self*, the Spirit manifested in infinite self-extension, the indwelling Spirit equal in all beings;

individual (*Jivatman*): the true *Individual Self*, the central being of each living entity, the essential individual consciousness, immutable and free, not affected by desire, ego and ignorance. The Self is one and indivisible notwithstanding its three aspects.

³ To the highest spiritual perception, the One reveals a triple nature: *Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Sat-Chit-Ananda (Sachchidananda)*.

In the Supreme the three are not three but one — Existence (*Sat*) is Consciousness (*Chit*), Consciousness is Bliss (*Ananda*). In the superior planes of manifestation, they become triune although inseparable; one can be made more prominent and base or lead the others. In the lower planes they become separable in appearance, though not in their secret reality, and one can exist phenomenally without the others, so that we can speak of an inconscient or a painful existence.

Chit, Consciousness, is not an inert and passive principle; it contains inherently the potential spiritual Energy, *Tapas*, which in the manifestation becomes the dynamic and creative Power or Force, *Shakti*. *Chit-Tapas* becomes *Chit-Shakti*, the universal Consciousness-Force, the conscious creative Force.

⁴ *Mind*: in the language of this Yoga the words ‘mind’ and ‘mental’ are used to connote specifically that part of the nature which is concerned with cognition and intelligence. It proceeds by the elaboration of images, thoughts, ideas. It has various faculties: intelligence, memory, will, imagination, reason.

The *vital* is the life nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire soul in man and all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust, etc.

⁵ Man is made up of a temporary surface personality and a deeper eternal soul with an individual Self (*Jivatman*) presiding from above. The personality has three principal parts: *body, life* and *mind*.

The individual soul is called the *psychic being* by Sri Aurobindo. It stands, so to speak, behind mind, life and body, which are its instruments in the manifestation, and supports them at first in a veiled manner, then, as it grows, more and more openly.

The psychic being is immortal while the body, the vital and the mind are dissolved at death, or a little later. It passes from life to life, gathering the essence of its life experiences and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution of the individual through the ages.

The true central being, the individual Self or Spirit (*Jivatman*) presides over the individual evolution, but it remains above the cosmic manifestation: it is not born nor does it evolve. It puts forward, as a representative of itself, the psychic being, which stands behind the manifestation in mind, life and body, and ensures the continuity of the individual evolution.

The psychic being should not be confused with the vital being which governs the activities of life and is the seat of desires, passions and emotions. The true individual Self should also be distinguished from its distorted reflection, the *ego*. The ego, the little self, which regards itself as separate from others and from the world, is a physical, vital and mental formation; it belongs to the transitory personality and dissolves with it.

⁶ *Psychic*: which pertains to the true soul, the ‘psyche’ or psychic being.

⁷ The Spirit is the Atman, Brahman, the essential Divine. When the One manifests the Many, that are always inherent in it, it assumes two aspects: *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the Conscious Being or Soul, and Nature.

The *Purusha* is the true being, or at least represents the true being, on whatever plane he manifests. But in ordinary man, he is covered by the ego and by the ignorant play of the *Prakriti*, and remains veiled as a ‘witness’ which upholds and observes the play of the Ignorance. When he emerges, he is perceived at first as a calm, immovable consciousness, detached from the play of Nature. Thereafter he gradually asserts himself as the sovereign Master of *Prakriti*. Even when he is covered up, he is always present. The emergence of *Purusha* is the beginning of liberation.

What is commonly meant by *Prakriti* is Nature; it appears to be a play of unconscious and mechanical forces. But behind it is the ever present living Consciousness and Force of the Divine: the divine Shakti. Truly speaking Nature is only the outer or executive aspect of the Shakti or Conscious Force that forms and moves the worlds.

It can be said also that *Nature* is only the lower *Prakriti*, the *Prakriti* of mind, life and matter. There exists also a Higher *Prakriti* (*Paraprakriti*), the *Supernature* or divine *Nature* of the Sachchidananda, which has the power of manifesting the Supermind and remains always conscious of the Divine and free from Ignorance and its consequences.

⁸ Sri Aurobindo calls *Supermind* or *Gnosis* the higher dynamism of spiritual existence. The Supermind is the full Truth-Consciousness in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, in which the knower is one with that which is known. It knows the Self, the divine Sachchidananda and also the whole truth of manifestation.

The Supermind possesses an inherent dynamic power of self-determination and self-realization which sees all and unites all.

⁹ *Dharma*: this word, translated variously as 'law', 'moral law', 'duty' 'religion', is used at once in a wide and flexible sense. In its deepest meaning it is 'the law of the action according to the essential nature of each being'. Sri Aurobindo explains this meaning in the last quotation of Chapter IV.

¹⁰ *Pralaya*: is the periodical dissolution of the universe at the end of a cycle of cosmic creation and activity.

¹¹ *Tapasya*: practice of a discipline, and generally of austerities for a determined end; spiritual effort, concentration of the energies in a spiritual discipline or process.

¹² *Rishi*: 'one who sees (the Truth)', a seer, a sage.

Yoga: union with the Divine; the discipline by which one seeks deliberately and consciously to realize this union, or more generally, to attain to a higher consciousness.

Yogi: one who practises yoga; one who has attained the goal of yoga.

¹³ The *Bhagavad-Gita* (The Celestial Song); an episode in the ancient epic Mahabharata in which, on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, the Divine, in the form of Sri Krishna, gives his teachings to Arjuna. It is the most famous of the Indian Scriptures and universally revered.

¹⁴ *Nirvana*: dissolution of the separate individual self (the little self, the ego); extinction of all separative consciousness, of desire and egoistic action and mentality; it is not necessarily the extinction of all being, but of being as we know it.

¹⁵ *Swami Vivekananda*: (born and died in Bengal, 1863-1902): one of the chief disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission.

¹⁶ Whether for the individual or the collectivity, Sri Aurobindo stresses the fundamental difference which exists between the true *Self*, immutable and free, one with the supreme *Self*, and the *ego*, a transient separative individual consciousness identified with the mind, vital and physical, open and more or less subject to the forces of all kinds belonging to these planes.

In the evolution, the ego has a role of protection; it is necessary as long as the individual is not conscious of the true Self. But it becomes unnecessary when the psychic being, which is a delegate of the true Self, openly asserts itself, and in order that the psychic being may take possession of the nature, the ego has to abdicate and disappear.

¹⁷ *Ishwara*, the Divine as Lord and Master of the universe, and *Shakti*, the conscious creative Power, form of a fundamental duality somewhat different from the *Purusha-Prakriti* duality (Note 8, above). Purusha and Prakriti are separate powers, while Ishwara and Shakti are contained in each other. Ishwara is Purusha who contains Prakriti and rules by the power of the Shakti within him. Shakti is Prakriti ensouled by Purusha and acts by the will of the Ishwara, whose presence in her movements she carries always with her.

The Shakti of the Ishwara (*Ishwari-Shakti*) is the divine *Consciousness-Force* or *World-Mother*, who contains all and carries all within herself, and to manifest it in Time and Space is her role. She thus appears as the mediatrix between the eternal One and the manifested Many.

These two dualities, as also the third fundamental duality *Brahman-Maya*, correspond to different spiritual experiences or realizations in Yoga (see *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part II, Chapter IV, and *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Chapter II).

¹⁸ The part of our nature of which we are normally conscious is our surface personality, consisting of the body, the (surface) vital and the (surface) mind. But behind this superficial consciousness there exists a far greater, deeper and more powerful consciousness which is in constant touch with the universal planes of Mind, Life and Matter (see Note 3 above). This hidden consciousness, which influences and governs us without our knowledge, is sometimes referred to as our *inner being*. Sri Aurobindo differentiates in it three regions or parts. One part is *subconscious*, lower than our waking consciousness; another part is on a level with our waking consciousness but *subliminal*, behind the threshold of consciousness; and yet another is *superconscious*, a higher consciousness above the normal consciousness.

The *subconscious* is a concealed and unexpressed, inarticulate consciousness which works below all our conscious physical activities. It retains the impressions of all our past experiences; not as perceptions, reactions, memories, thoughts, but as a fluid substance of these, as impressions at the same time obscure and obstinate. These impressions can surge up in dream forms as mechanical repetitions, or as 'complexes' which explode in actions and happenings.

The *subliminal* contains, behind the surface mind, an inner mind, larger and more effective; behind the surface vital, an inner vital, larger and more powerful; a subtler physical consciousness behind the surface physical being, more open and plastic and free. And above, the *subliminal* opens itself to the regions of superconsciousness, just as it opens below to the subconscious regions.

The *superconscious* contains first certain regions of the mind of which ordinary man is not normally conscious, sources of the higher intuitions and inspirations, then the Supermind and finally that which is above and beyond it (the planes of Sachchidananda).

¹⁹ *Bhagavad-Gita*. The Buddhist elevation of universal compassion, *karuna*, and sympathy (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, 'the whole earth is my family'), to be the highest principle of action, the Christian emphasis on love indicate this dynamic side of the spiritual being.

²⁰ *Bhakti*: is devotion, *bhakta* is one who follows the path of devotion, the devotee, the worshipper.

²¹ Between the thinking mind and the Supermind there are a number of ranges, planes or layers of consciousness in which the element or substance of mind and consequently its movements also become more and more illumined and powerful and wide.

The *Overmind* is the highest of these intervening ranges; it is full of lights and powers; but from the point of view of what is above it, it is the line of the soul's turning away from the complete and indivisible Knowledge and its descent towards Ignorance. For although it draws from the Truth, it is here that begins the separation of the aspects of the Truth and their working out as if they were independent truths and forces, and this is a process that ends, as one descends to ordinary mind, life and matter, in a complete division, fragmentation, separation from the indivisible Truth above.

It is from the Overmind that all the different arrangements of the creative Truth of things originate. Out of the Overmind they come down to the *intuitive mind* and are transmitted from it to the *illumined mind* and the *higher mind* to be arranged there for our intelligence. But they lose more and more of their power and certitude and harmony in the transmission as they come down to the lower levels.

The Overmind is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators. One can consider it as the line separating the higher half of the Universe of Consciousness from the lower half. The *Higher Hemisphere* consists of the planes of *Sat. Chit, Ananda, Mahas* (the *Supermind*); the *Lower Hemisphere* of *Mind, Life and Matter*.

In the individual yoga, as in the collective evolution, consciousness has to rise successively to each of the ranges extending from the thinking mind to the Supermind. In the passages quoted in Chapter VII, Sri Aurobindo describes the characteristic functioning of the consciousness on these levels.

²² *The inner centres* are the seven lotuses or psychological centres (*chakra*) of the subtle body. They become active in the course of yoga and connect the waking consciousness to the subtler, deeper or higher states of consciousness.

²³ The word expressing the idea has the same power if it is surcharged with the spiritual force; that is the rationale of the Indian use of the *mantra**.

* *Mantra*: 'the word that reveals', a combination of words or sounds having a spiritual significance and power. The function of a mantra is to create in the consciousness vibrations which will prepare it for the realization of what the mantra symbolizes and is supposed to carry within itself.

²⁴ *Brahman*: the supreme Reality, the Absolute, the Divine (see Note 1, above).

²⁵ *The Trinities of the Spirit*: the fundamental Trinities have been mentioned in Notes 1 and 2.

'The Transcendent, the Universal, the Individual are three powers overarching, underlying and penetrating the whole manifestation; this is the first of the Trinities. In the unfolding of consciousness also, these are the three fundamental terms and none of them can be neglected if we would have the experience of the whole Truth of existence.' (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part I, Chapter XI).

'A trinity of transcendent existence, self-awareness and self-delight (*Sachchidananda*) is, indeed, the metaphysical description of the supreme Atman, the self-formulation, to our awakened knowledge, of the Unknowable whether conceived as a pure Impersonality or as a cosmic Personality manifesting the universe.' (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Introduction II).

²⁶ *Idea*: term belonging to the Platonic vocabulary, where it designates the essential form or type of things, a kind of eternal and immutable model. The Idea to Plato is the true reality; all the rest is an appearance or a derivative.

The Real-Idea is a perception of truth which contains in itself the force of its own realization.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes the Idea, which belongs to the higher regions of the mind (see Note 20), from the Real-Idea, which belongs to the Supermind. The Idea and the Will-Force are separated, whereas the Real-Idea possesses in itself the spiritual dynamism inherent in the higher Reality, the Supemature. But Sri Aurobindo uses sometimes the word Idea, meaning thereby Real-Idea.

²⁷ *Vedanta*: originally the word Vedanta meant 'the end or culmination of the Vedas' and refers to the Upanishads. Subsequently, one of the six classical schools

of the Hindu philosophy, which based itself on the Upanishads, also came to be known as Vedanta or Later Vedanta.

²⁸ *Swadharma*: the law of action proper to an individual (see Note 10, above).

Swabhava: the distinctive nature of each being.

²⁹ *Asuras*: hostile beings or forces belonging to the vital mind plane. The traditional legends of India speak of them as Sons of Darkness, and later, as giants, titans or demons.

³⁰ *Rasa*: the sap, the juice, the inner savour of things; essential delight, principle of aesthetic or spiritual enjoyment.