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LAMPS OF LIGHT

Lamps of Light

M. P. Pandit



to our Mother, "the Sun from which we kindle all our suns"

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How large is Her chariot,
how vast and all-pervading
the Goddess, how She brings
Light in the front of the days!

(Rig Veda)

The Spiritual and the Occult

THE SPIRITUAL AND the occult were never separate from each other in the hey-day of spiritual efflorescence in India. It is common to see many a spiritual personality of the Vedic times exercising his occult powers for the benefit of himself and of his fellow men. The hymns are full of hints on the ways in which these powers—spiritual and occult—were evoked and built up in themselves by these seers. For that is what is meant by the birth of the godheads in man. Each godhead represents a cosmic power with its own domain and the practicant who wins its favour receives and organises it in his own being and can share in it. Not only in the Veda but even later in the Epics, we come across instances of spiritual giants like Vasishtha and Vishwamitra summoning their uncommon powers to meet unusual situations and bringing about what we call “miracles.” They may be miracles for us, but they were not for those who effected them. For they were simply exercising their superior knowledge of the organisation of forces and things in the universe to achieve the desired results.

To the men of those days all creation was of one piece, a manifestation of One Reality. The world within and the world without were one. So too, knowledge of the domain and powers of the soul within—the Spirit—was not different from or opposed to the knowledge of the system of the world or the worlds outside, the occult knowledge—occult

because it was not patent to the common eye. Both were two sides of the same coin. The spiritual and the occult were mutually complementary and fulfilled each other. It was only in the later days of the decline of the spiritual vitality of the race that a separation between the two grew and they took independent lines. Occult knowledge, occult practice began to be frowned upon in the spiritual paths and spiritual truths treated as irrelevant by the occultists.

A typical instance of this unrealistic divorce between the two spheres is the prohibition of the use of occult powers by spiritual seekers. Almost all the treatises on orthodox Yoga and spiritual practice make it imperative on the sadhaka to refrain from taking any interest in—much less use—the occult powers that may manifest themselves in the course of the Yoga. This has continued for ages and has acquired the weight of an absolute Law in most traditions.

It is only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have questioned the correctness of this taboo. Sri Aurobindo brought a robust commonsense to bear upon this question and boldly said that it is an ascetic superstition to hold that a spiritual man shall not use occult powers. And what are these powers after all? They are faculties lying latent in the system or powers appropriate to different states of consciousness that open up in the course of the development of the consciousness in the spiritual culture of the being. They strike as “miraculous” simply because they operate in a way which is different from the modes of operation in the present organisation of consciousness in this mate-

rial world. That is why they look un-natural. But they *are* natural to the consciousness that emanates and puts them out in action. Who shall persuade this consciousness that it is acting in a prohibited manner ?

It is silly to say that these powers shall not be used because they are a mighty temptation and might retard the progress of the practitioner by confining his interest to their fireworks. That is entirely a different matter. It does not require occult powers to hold up the progress of the seeker; there are plenty of other things that could play the same role. Again, to say that these powers could be used to harm others is an equally insufficient reason. Do we refrain from developing and using the powers of the intellect or of the muscle for fear that others may be harmed by these ? Do we prohibit the scientist from utilising the powers he discovers or perfects in his laboratory ? Possibility of the diversion of purpose or of misuse could hardly be an adequate reason for shutting out the exercise of faculties and powers that manifest themselves in the natural course of the growth and expansion of one's consciousness.

What really matters is the motive with which the powers are used. If they are harnessed for the satisfaction or the aggrandisement of the ego, then it can be said to be unspiritual as the ego is the enemy of all spiritual progress. Like any other faculty or power, physical, intellectual or aesthetic, the occult also can be developed and used either for one's own well-being and progress or for that of others; what is to be guarded against here—as elsewhere—is the growth of unspiritual

elements of which the ego is the most harmful.

D.B. is a young man in his teens who is gifted by Providence with certain occult capacities. He has a healing touch and people of all ages flock to him on fixed days to be cured of their long-standing ailments. He does a few passes and they are healed. Now this youngster thought, at one time, of taking to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and asked the Mother if the healing that he had been doing so long ought to be stopped. I was very eager to know what the Mother would say. Without a moment's hesitation She said that it need not be stopped at all provided he took care to see that no egoistic claim crept in him for effecting the cures. He should be conscious that it was a universal Shakti, Divine Power, that was acting through him. How far he acted up to this advice is another matter and it need not concern us here. What is important to note and do is to deny the loud claim of the ego to be the master. Of course, it is difficult to do it. Even when one thinks that the ego is not active there are a hundred subtle ways in which it thrives. It is only an utter sincerity that is the sure shield against the manoeuvrings of the ego. If one is truly sincere to the call of the Soul then one can very well know whether he has the capacity to withstand the ego under certain conditions or he had better avoid the whole situation, as was wisely done by a seeker of whom we shall presently speak.

X. took to the *Sri Cakra pūjā*—worship of the Divine Mother in the linear Form—in a most unorthodox way. Moved by some Faith he drew a *Sri Cakra* design on a piece of metal he happened to have and commenced offering worship to it

according to the instructions contained in a book. He received no initiation from anybody. He put his heart and soul into it and to the wonder of all—not excluding himself—the *tīrtha*, i.e. *prasād*, distributed according to the usual custom, wielded a potency which could not be missed. People started crowding at the end of his Puja every day. All this happened in the course of a few months. It went on for about two years when the gentleman felt unequal to the situation. He felt the danger of the ego coming upon him, and not willing to risk his sadhana, he ceased the distribution of *tīrtha* forthwith. Of course, he has continued his Puja and *Upāsana* and we learn he is now well advanced in his line.

Thus it is really a matter of sincerity, capacity and strength of purpose which should decide the question of the use of occult powers by the seeker. A developed spiritual consciousness is indispensable for the right and safe use of these powers and we may say, the awakening and utilisation of the occult powers is necessary for the establishment and organisation of the manifesting Spiritual Consciousness. Indeed one can do without the use of these powers if it is a matter of individual realisation alone. But where it is a question of manifesting the Divine Consciousness in the collective Universe, the knowledge of its inner workings and effective direction of the occult powers is indispensable.

25-1-1963

The Divine in Form

I REFERRED TO the *Sri Cakra* while speaking of the seeker of *Sri Vidyā*, the Divine Mother.

The Chakra, as we all know, is a diagrammatic representation of the Abode of the Divine Mother in the Tantras. Why this particular form, some ask loftily, when God is everywhere? Indeed, God is everywhere, only we do not have the capacity to recognise Him, and feel Him everywhere. That is why God manifests, reveals Himself more in some Forms than in others. These are the several Forms in which men have found and worshipped the Divine across the ages e.g., Images, Idols, Yantras and Mandalas etc. The Divine is more easily accessible to the human consciousness in these special Forms either because He has been invoked and established in them by Holy Men who have realised the Divine or the Divine Himself has chosen to abide tangibly in some particular Forms which correspond to certain fundamental truths in the Being and the Becoming of the Divine. The *Sri Cakra* is one of the most remarkable forms of this kind. The *Yoginī Hr̥daya* (Tantra) says that the diagram of circles and triangles constituting the Chakra represents accurately the configuration of the creative Forces of the Divine Shakti in manifesting the Universe. That is why, apart from other factors, the Chakra acts by itself as a powerful evocation of the Presence of the Divine Shakti. It is an unmistakable experience of all, not only of those who worship but also those who

witness and receive the sanctified *tīrtha* after the Puja, how the entire atmosphere in the place where the Chakra is installed or worshipped is surcharged with powerfully spiritual vibrations.

Of course, there are requisite conditions like faith, devotion, love for the Yantra (Chakra) or the Image on the part of the worshipper. It will not do to treat it as an inanimate object of prescribed ritual. It should be looked upon and regarded as a living Personality. An incident in the life of Sri Ramakrishna would illustrate the point.

Due to some accident an idol of worship in the temple was damaged and the leg came off. They did not know how to proceed or what to do. A number of learned pandits were consulted on the course to be adopted. There was a heated discussion at the end of which they advised the authorities to consign the idol to the Ganges and substitute a new one. At that time someone had a bright idea to ask Sri Ramakrishna, who was already known for his strange God-intoxicated ways, what was to be done in the matter. He seemed surprised that such a question should be asked. He asked, in anguish, "You are consigning the lamed Krishna to the Ganga ! If a similar mishap befalls the son-in-law of the Rani, perhaps you will go in for a substitute son-in-law ! Treat it as you would treat a fractured human limb." So saying he took the idol and himself had it set right. It was so natural for him to do it because he treated the idol as a live entity to be treated as a living person.

Coming nearer home, we see so many times how even photographs spring into life. Times without

number people have seen Sri Aurobindo moving, smiling, even coming out of the photograph in the Reception Room in the Ashram and when Sri Aurobindo was asked about it, he confirmed the genuineness of such experiences. Whole lives have been changed by a single look at the Mother's photograph emanating vibrations of an unearthly order. Coming to the subject of the Mother's photographs, it may be mentioned how each photograph has a different effect, each radiates a force of its own. Once I remember, as I was seeing a new photograph, I suddenly felt my head disappearing; there was a yawning of Infinity as it were. When I mentioned it to the Mother and asked why we get different experiences from different photos of Hers, She graciously explained that the photographs were taken at different periods, on different occasions, and the vibrations they emanate correspond to the state of consciousness She was in at the time. She also added that one could put oneself into contact with that Consciousness through the particular photograph by concentration. Now, concentration of that kind may not be possible for all, but a loving adoration can be. And that is found to be more effective and lasting.

This is the reason why when you see some photographs of the Mother, your heart melts into tenderness; on seeing some your mind evaporates as it were and a stillness takes possession of you; on seeing others you breathe in sheer joy and beauty. There is a photo of Hers sitting on the window sill, watching, may I say, the birth of a New Age. Who can look at this picture and yet escape a feeling of Newness? Each of Her photographs is a land-

mark, a sign-post in the spiritual evolution of the race.

The photograph brought out on this year's Ashram Calendar is unique in this respect. I have yet to see a man who is not knocked out of his little world on seeing this portrait. It is expressively named REALISATION. I should regard this picture as the most vivid capture of Her Role as the sole-sufficing Link between the world of men and the Realm of the Divine Truth above. Her Eyes seize and hold the Link which is firmly established on Earth by the Power that exudes from Her Glorious Body.

26-1-1963

The Divine's Help and its Conditions

THE DIVINE CAN be approached, in the Indian tradition, not only in Form but equally in Sound. Sound in essence is regarded as the body of Brahman who creates and manifests through his Sound-Body, *śabdabrahman*. Each Sound is accompanied by the manifestation of a characteristic Form. For every form in creation there is a corresponding *śabda* that gave birth to it. Each Power of the Divine, each Deity has its Sound-form. By repeating this sound-vibration it is possible to call into manifestation the Deity that answers to it. This is the basic principle of the Mantra Yoga which concentrates upon *śabda* to actualise the *artha* that is inseparable from it. The ancients in India perceived that corresponding to the Gods, the several emanations from the manifesting Divine, there are certain sounds or combinations of sounds which could be called their sound-bodies and used as their Names of Call. These sounds, letters expressing the sounds or words formed from them,—called the *mantras*—are endowed with a mystic potency and when communicated to the novice by a qualified Guru, they provide a sure means to realise the Deity embodied in them. The way of Mantra-sadhana is no doubt long for it is not enough to simply repeat a mantra so many times a day. The Mantra is to be cultivated with feeling and adoration, looked upon not as a device but as the very Deity that is

sought for, rendered alive and the whole of one's being filled with it. The way may be long, still if you follow it with dedication, your life begins to be lit early enough with many happy results. There comes a growing control over circumstances, a glow of health, fore-vision, infallibility of speech, *vāk-siddhi*. In *vāk-siddhi*, speech develops a special power and tends to fulfil itself. That is to say, the sadhaka acquires something of the creative power of *śabda*. What he speaks effectuates itself, comes true. When he calls a Deity or a Power it reaches the destination unflinchingly.

Way back in the early forties, I was once travelling with my Guide, Sastriar, by train. On the way we had to change trains at a junction; but our train arrived late and there was not much time left to catch the connection. So Sastriar went straight into the compartment of the new train with our things and I hurried to the canteen as I could not do without the early morning tea. By some silly misunderstanding I got delayed. In the meanwhile—as I came to know later—the time for the departure of the train was up, the guard blew the whistle and the train started. It started, went a few paces and then stopped. I arrived after it had stopped, unaware of everything and came to know from the loud imprecations of bystanders that I had actually missed the train but luckily it had somehow stopped. I rushed inside the compartment and asked Sastriar. He smiled and confirmed that it was true the train had started and stopped after it had proceeded a little ahead. “How did it stop, why did it stop?” I asked. “When it started, I called MOTHER and the train

stopped," he explained.

This incident has remained ever-fresh in my mind. For though I knew he had been doing Mantra-sadhana ever since he was five and had heard from him and read about many instances of *vāk-siddhi*, this was the first time I had a first-hand experience. There were many occasions later when I saw his self-fulfilling speech at work. But that is another matter. The most important condition for such a power to manifest, he emphasised to me time and again, is *satya*, truth in speech, truth in thought. Under no circumstances should one yield to untruth in whatever form, even in fun. Nothing is so harmful for sadhana,—any spiritual sadhana—he would say, as falsehood. Where there is falsehood there the Divine is repelled.

There have been plenty of instances where people have sought the Mother's help in their affairs and in Her compassion She has responded but without the desired result. When once asked, She said that the Force sent out by Her came back as there was too much falsehood in the atmosphere of the person. It could not work. That is why She does not normally look with favour on appeals for help in matters like court-cases. For the Force She sends out is a Force of Truth and if there be any element of untruth or mixture of falsehood in the matter,—as is often the case — the Force, if it does not come back, stays to fight and break the evil formation and the man who asked for it has to thank himself for the consequences !

Allied to such cases of the 'failure' of the Divine Force which is really a refusal to salvage falsehood, are certain cases of illness, mental and physical,

where no favourable results are seen of Her response. Once, one of my near relations fell ill and in spite of all kinds of medical aid he would not improve. Daily, at times more than once each day, telegrams were arriving and placed before the Mother praying for help. There would be slight improvement and again relapse. When I looked at Her appealingly (and I may add, questioningly too), She said that everytime a call for help came She put a pressure in the Consciousness but the patient had so much shut himself in his own formation (mental and other) that the Force could not get in. Of course, in Her illimitable Grace, She persisted and broke through the barrier and today the person is enjoying sound health. It would be relevant here to add what She has said regarding Her Blessings for people when they are seriously ill. The Blessings go forth to do what is best for the soul, not what is desired by others. The good of the soul may coincide with the wish of those around, or it may not.

I have spoken of cases where calls for help were physically reached to the Mother. But there are innumerable instances where the call has been responded to, even without the knowing of the frontal personality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The fact is She is not confined to the body in which we see Her. To Her real Form, this physical body is just like a pin-point for effectuating Her purpose on the physical Earth. "Only the part that relates to this universe is here", She remarked once in passing. Her subtle body is spread all over and in a way, She is always there where She is thought of. Her subtle extension

knows no physical limits. Whether the part holding itself in the physical body is attentive or not, the rest of Her takes note and acts. Her Grace and Compassion overspread like the sky.

It was in 1947. I had written an article, my first one, and given it for inclusion in *The Advent*, if found suitable. In those days every article to be published in the Journal had to be approved by Sri Aurobindo. So my piece also was read out to him; he heard it through and then said, "But I have heard it before?" The reader assured him he had not. He repeated: "Yes, every word of it, I remember." Obviously cognizance of that writing had been taken earlier by his extended Being.

27-1-1963

Dreams

WE DO NOT remember all that we dream. We forget most of the dreams except perhaps something of the last before we wake up. But if, as the Mother says, we catch the last bit as the tail and go backwards we begin to remember more and more of what we have dreamt. And it becomes a fascinating study. For each dream is of its own kind and has an interest different from another.

If we analyse our dreams, we find they are of different types. Some are elongated reproductions of our experiences during the waking period; some are a working out of certain wishes or desires entertained but not fulfilled; some are a confused medley of what we have experienced during the day, read about in books or papers, heard from others. All of these are usually of a chaotic type occurring on the surface levels of our consciousness. But there are others which come up from deeper layers and have a distinct message for us, if only we are attentive to them and sufficiently dispassionate to interpret them objectively.

The first of such meaningful dreams is of the premonitory type. They indicate what is to happen. Every event that takes place on our physical plane is preceded by its occurrence in some way on the subtler plane above; in fact it is first determined there and then precipitated on the lower plane of existence. The premonitory dreams are, so to say, the registerings of happenings on the subtler planes, transcribed on the subtle layers of our conscious-

ness which correspond to or are in touch with those planes or worlds above. These dreams give us a foreknowledge of what is in the process of happening. And if we are alert and take steps to forestall it, it may be possible either to avoid it or minimise its effects. Thus I may see some ferocious animals coming to attack me. Usually it indicates an attack of the vital forces of passion, anger etc. If I am wise I will be careful in my movements during the period that follows and when actually there is the imminence of the attack, the very fact that I am prepared to meet it, reduces its striking power. Similarly with accidents. One can very well take precautions and save oneself. So too there are dreams which indicate favourable openings in the offing, and if one is prompt to take note and act, his is the gain.

Then there is the kind of dream which announces something that has taken place but of which we are not yet aware. Some good tidings, some untoward happening. The Ramayana—perhaps the earliest epic in the world—narrates how Bharata at his maternal home dreamt that his father Dasharatha was driving in a carriage drawn by an ass and was then seen floating in a vat of oil—both these being portents of death in the Indian Science of Dreams. In fact at that very moment messengers had been despatched from far-off Ayodhya to fetch Bharata as the King was dead. And actually his body had been placed in a vat of oil to preserve it till the son's return. Such dreams intimating what has already taken place are fairly common. Only, every dream in which we see or hear someone hurt or dead shall not be taken to be

true. Many times they are reflexes of the fears and anxieties harboured by us during our waking period and they are virtually our own creations. There is no truth in them. As a celebrated Sanskrit poet says, too much affection, attachment, always apprehends danger to the person loved, *atisnehaḥ pāpaśankī*. We fear, we imagine all kinds of danger to the object of our attachment and these fears take shape in the dreams. We may add relevently that by such kind of fear, we indirectly anticipate, prepare a ground as it were and invite the very things we fear to effectuate themselves—not merely in dream but in actuality too.

For those who are seekers on the spiritual path, building up an inner life, awakening themselves on the subtler levels of their being, dreams have a remarkable significance. They are unmistakable impressions of what is going on behind the surface. They have their own language and one must be conversant with their notations.

Once, four years ago, I had a peculiar dream : *my father was dead after living with me for twenty years. And simultaneously I had vomited blood.* Now, my father had passed away nearly twenty-five years ago and the dream was very unusual. But it was very vivid, so vivid and pursuing that I had to inform the Mother about it immediately. The Mother beamed, looked very happy and expressed her repeated approval. An important step in yoga had been taken, She told me, a decisive change had taken place : all the old *vāsanās* had been washed off.

Vāsanās, the impressions that we inherit from the past, dig themselves into habits and are really

the parents of our present formation. We do what we do, function as we function, largely because of the drive of these formed impressions in the several layers of our being which fix themselves in the form of tendencies, habits and natural impulses.

Again, there is a typical dream which I have been getting off and on. Suddenly I would find my teeth getting loose and come out; come out not one or two, but the whole bunch of them as if they were pebbles. Every time this happened I would get so nervous and wake up fearfully, only to assure myself that all the teeth were intact. I was wondering why this was happening till one day I read Sri Aurobindo's explanation of this dream to another sadhak who complained about a similar discomfiture. Sri Aurobindo said that the falling of the teeth indicates the loosening and rooting out of strong habits in the physical mind. It certainly put fresh heart into me to realise in what way the Mother's Yoga-Shakti was active in my being.

Then there is a dream—which many in sadhana get—of trains. The train arrives but I am not there in time; I struggle to reach it and at times make it but at other times miss it. It leaves just as I step on the platform. Or it is a bus which calls at the door step but my packing is not yet over. Clearly this is a vivid picture of what goes on in my being. There are moments in the life of everyone when there comes a favourable current of rise, of flow, which if caught properly leads one far towards the fulfilment of his object in life. If, when the movement arrives, one is either inattentive or unprepared, it just passes by and the unfortunate man has to wait for another such moment which may

come again or may not, in this life. Particularly in a sadhana like ours where the Mother's Shakti is at work, it comes in such a forward *wave* time and again and we have only to grasp the opportunity proffered. If we are immersed in other interests or are not ready to profit by it, then great is the loss. It is this coming of opportunity and our seizing or missing it that is indicated by our getting into the train or being left behind. Sastriar used to say that on occasions when the train started before he could get into it, the Mother stopped the train and saw to it that he entered.

At times the dream is more directly revealing. The examination-hour is at hand: today, at 11 o'clock. But I find I have not read the books at all. I have gone on postponing things to the next day and nothing is ready.¹ These dreams are at once an indication and a warning.

Or you travel and on the way the terrain suddenly changes. There are rocks, steep mountains and ravines and one does not know how to proceed. You take the Mother's Name and you are suddenly on the other side; or without thinking of anything you simply fly with the hands beating about, a thrill coursing through the body. In sleep our consciousness goes out to different regions and it is the subtle or vital body that is on the move; it is not bound to the tethers of the physical and it has its own freer movement. It is this that flies. The difficult terrain that we come across reflects the layout of these supra-physical regions which are full of dangers

¹ This is by no means a relic of any past memories of student days. For though never noted for any particular brilliance, I was all along a conscientious plodder who was at no time unprepared.

and are to be traversed carefully. There are not merely obstructions of landscape but even encounters with some of the denizens of those planes. Eerie dwarfs, sticky and proliferating creatures swarm about; fierce, hefty and ugly beings threaten; they crowd upon you and advance to belabour you. Fear is the one thing that should be avoided at these moments. But normally one has no control over one's movements in such situations. I may suddenly find all my courage failing at the nick of time; or on occasions I find a strong courage gushing up from somewhere. I beat up these fellows with an energy that is astonishing. Thus while self-reliance is commendable, one can never be sure what part of us is active at the moment, the developed and strong one or the timid. The one unfailing armour against all such unwelcome attentions, however, is the Divine Name. Times without number I have watched these *Panis* and *Dasyus* slink away the moment I called the Mother.

There are of course pleasant and happy dreams also. I see the vast silvery expanse of the ocean before me: the Infinite Consciousness that beacons. I see the Mother sitting on Her throne and distributing Her bounty to one and all. I see the Mother coming to give a White Cake, a big one, on a plate. I take liberties with Her which I would not lightly do in the waking state. And each time I have spoken to the Mother about these meetings, She has confirmed them either with an emphatic nod or with a pleased and melting smile. At times She gives an inkling into the truth of Her manifestation as on one occasion when She appeared, and as I was looking, She changed Herself into Sri Aurobindo and blessed

me with both hands. I woke up with a very warm feeling to realise that it was a special day, the day of Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Pondicherry, his *tapobhūmi*.

These are dreams to be cherished. They register important developments which take place behind our physical exterior and forge relations which come up on the surface later on.

Crises in Sadhana

IT WAS ONLY the other day that I was talking to a lady on a visit to our Ashram from abroad,—easily one of the most remarkable personalities that I have come across. Narrating one of her experiences she described how one day at noon in her garden she suddenly saw a great outburst of Light, Light from the trees, Light from the flowers, Light from everywhere. She experienced a manifestation of the Cosmic Divinity and was totally overpowered. A new kind of Consciousness came over her and she could not relate herself to anything around. Her one prayer at that moment was that she should be left alone. But that was not to be. Her husband, her son, her family members—all came where she had poised herself and started questioning. She was dazed and with great difficulty told them to leave her to herself for the time being. But no, she must take food, she could not be left to starve that way. The doctor was called to see why she was behaving in that unusual manner. She was asked insistently and all she could say was : ‘You won’t understand.’ That made them still more suspicious of some mental aberration and they took matters in their own hands. The result was that the poor lady had a very bitter time and hard struggle which could and should have been avoided at that hour of spiritual apocalypse.

This is a typical example of the risks of misunderstanding and mal-handling to which spiritual seekers are constantly exposed at the hands of the

laity. It is a matter of common experience for us to see people in Sadhana reacting at times in a most unpredictable manner. Persons who are normally sattvic flare up for no reason with a vehemence that would do credit to a demon. Hours of meditation would be followed by a tornado of fury. The fact is that in Sadhana, particularly in a path like ours which insists on the change of one's nature, the sadhaka is subject to an enormous pressure for change. Pressure from above by the Yoga-Shakti on the system to change, to adapt itself to the demands of the mounting aspiration and the responding Consciousness; pressure from below resisting the change from its accustomed routine of activity. There is no problem as long as man throws himself totally on one side or the other. He can wallow in the lower round of ignorance and as long as he is satisfied with it he goes on merrily. Or he should unreservedly transfer his allegiance to the Higher Call : then too there is no problem. But constituted as he is, man is a being of several parts, not all of which are agreed on what they want. Some parts of his being seek for the higher life, the others are content with the usual petty rounds of their activity and resist any change. That is why there is friction, there is struggle. The seeker is constantly exposed to this unseen pressure and it is this that is mostly responsible for his unexpected actions, un-natural behaviour. I remember how once, referring to a person behaving very erratically, the Mother said : 'She is under a tremendous pressure; she may do anything.' I was always intrigued, at first, at Her attitude of sympathy—indulgence even—towards such individuals, however dis-

ruptive and explosive their actions might be. It took time to realise that that was the only enlightened way to help them out. What persons under such circumstances need is an understanding, a sympathy, and if possible a little of love. But what happens usually is that the environment meets them with ridicule, provocation and self-justifying hostility. "Spiritual people ought to know better," "At least we have no pretensions to spiritual attainments",—how many times have we not heard such remarks! Nobody bothers to pause and see what are the circumstances that have precipitated the poor man into what he is doing. And even with the best of intentions the course adopted by those around is usually the wrong one !

In a recent paper¹ on the subject, Dr. Roberto Assagioli of the Institute of Psychosynthesis (Rome), gives an admirable analysis of such situations as they develop and are normally tackled. It is interesting to follow him step by step, whether we do or do not agree with everything that he says. Here is his analysis :

In the first place, the writer—like the other parapsychologists of his line of thinking—makes a distinction between *Self-actualisation* and *Self-realisation*. The first covers the various stages in the psychological growth of the individual, the awakening of his latent faculties which add beauty, moral values etc. to his life. Self-realisation, on the other hand, pertains to the experience and realisation of his deepest Centre, the Self of which the personal 'I' is just a projection. A further distinction is made

¹ Vide DARSHANA, Vol. II, No. 2 (Moradabad, India)

between the experience of the Self and the experience of the spiritual realms of consciousness which generally include all the levels that are above those normally accessible to man. The way to the Consciousness of the Self lies through these several states of the higher consciousness which are broadly described as spiritual.

Now, says Dr. Assagioli, in each individual there is a certain stir of new impulses, new drives, before or at the moment of his awakening to the spiritual reality. These stirrings in the being may be compared to similar movements in the body at the time of adolescence : the one at the awakening of the soul, the other at the maturation of the body. "Man's spiritual development," he writes, "is a long and arduous journey, an adventure through strange lands full of surprises, difficulties and even dangers. It involves a drastic transmutation of the 'normal' elements of the personality, an awakening of potentialities hitherto dormant, a raising of consciousness to new realms, and a functioning along a new inner dimension. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that so great a change, so fundamental a transformation is marked by several critical stages, which are not infrequently accompanied by various nervous, emotional and mental troubles."

Such disturbances may show the same symptoms as of common physical illnesses but they are not to be dealt with in the usual clinical manner.

And these disequilibriums are more today than at any time before. That is because—as the Doctor rightly observes—man today is a more complicated being than his forbear a few generations ago; his

mind has developed complexes unknown before, his involvements are more varied and the development has to proceed through a complex balancing of forces and factors. These disturbances may be studied under four convenient heads.

The first is the *crises preceding the spiritual awakening*: man begins to feel that the life he has been leading so long is not all, nor the best possible. He senses a change in the poise of his mind and inner awareness. This may come about either as a result of unforeseen happenings or simply by the growing feeling of a 'void' somewhere. He begins to question many things he had taken for granted; old values crumble but no new ones are there to replace them. He is distracted, restless; he turns to philosophy, religion, metaphysics or other branches of Knowledge for support. He is dissatisfied with himself, with everything and at times this disequilibrium takes physical manifestations also.

The second stage is of *crises caused by the spiritual awakening*. This awakening breaks the barrier and makes an opening between the normally active and conscious levels and the higher, super-conscious levels of the individual and there is a flood of experiences : light, joy, freedom pour down or spread themselves from within. Some spiritual energy courses in the being. If at this stage these developments are related to the 'I', the ego-self, a number of paranoid delusions or dangerous obsessions ensue blocking true spiritual progress. The distinction between the 'personal self' and the Basic Self shall not be lost sight of and what belongs and proceeds from one shall not be appropriated by the other. Emotionally too, with such sudden influx of spiri-

tual energies in weaker systems there is a tendency for uncontrolled ebullience, reckless waste of oneself in some activity or other. In some there is an opening of the subtle vision, subtle audition and an unreserved submission to them brings its own dangers of mislead.

The third stage is of the *reactions to the spiritual awakening*. At first, following the inflow of the higher consciousness in its several workings, there is a sense of peace, a harmony, a joy that not only fills the being but flows out to all around. In the best of the moments one has an intense perception of the unity of all existence, a happy vision of the purpose of life and one's part in it. The old, narrow, angular personality seems like an evil dream and there is a feeling of having arrived.

Such an exalted state of elation, however, does not last long. The system of man, physical and psychological, is not ready to hold and support the new charge beyond a certain limit. It lags behind; the old moorings begin to reappear; they had only been lost to view in the flood but not eliminated. After the flow, the ebb.

This period of reaction is almost universal. It is the valley of death, the 'dark night of the soul', when one becomes acutely conscious of one's imperfections. By contrast with the temporary experience of the high tide, things appear darker than they really are. People begin to bemoan their wretchedness, complain that they have deteriorated and have fallen into a state lower and drier than ever before, 'worse off than when I started the sadhana', they emphasise. Doubts, scepticism, cynicism, have a field-day and the

sense of direction seems to be lost. They can neither go back to the old life because somehow their harmony with it has been disturbed once for all; nor can they live in the new state of consciousness which has receded before it could be normalised.

The only way out of this morass is to realise that this is but a stage, an inevitable period of inner assimilation and preparation for the next forward surge, an interval for the outer system to absorb and stabilise the inner change in its members. This is the fourth stage of understanding and participating in the *phases of the process of transformation*. This is a most significant period in which the seeker has to watch the workings of the spiritual Consciousness in him, submit to its demands by the needed regulation of his movements, removal of obstructions and disposing of his energies in the hands of the Superior Intelligence. Dormant faculties begin to open up and there is the inevitable unsettlement of the older functionings. It would appear as if the capacity to deal with situations in normal life was seriously impaired. But all this is only a period of transition; "an intermediate stage in which, as it has been aptly said, one is like a caterpillar undergoing the process of transformation into the winged butterfly. The insect must pass through the stage of the chrysalis, a condition of disintegration and helplessness. But the individual generally does not have the protection of a cocoon in which to undergo the process of transformation in seclusion and peace. He must—and this is particularly so, nowadays—remain where he is in life and continue to perform his family, professional and social duties,

as well as he can, as though nothing had happened or was still going on. His problem is similar to that which confronts engineers in the reconstruction of a railway station without interrupting the traffic even for an hour.” (Dr. R. Assagioli)

Each night, however, is inevitably followed by a dawn and the succession of dawns—to use the Vedic figure—leads to the emergence of the full orb of the Sun of Truth.

This, I should think, gives a fairly correct account of the psychological and vital difficulties that every seeker has to face. Though each one, when he is subject to them, tends to think that his is an exceptionally hard lot, the truth remains that human nature being the same everywhere, every one who seeks to transcend that nature has to pay a price; and if the aim be not merely transcendence but even a transformation of that nature, the price is doubly great even as the achievement is doubly glorious.

7-2-1963

Space and Time in the Spiritual Context

IT WAS EIGHT-THIRTY in the evening. A young girl of thirteen was being taken round the temple at Chidambaram along with her family. Suddenly she started hearing a muffled moan in the heart; hard breathing ensued. This continued till nine o'clock when it all abruptly stopped. Later it was learnt that her grandfather to whom she was very much attached had passed away that day. The attack started precisely at eight-thirty and he breathed his last at nine. The incident is indeed extraordinary for the manner in which events tallied across a barrier of over five hundred miles.

To take another instance with a different setting. Some time recently, the Mother told me : "Broader and higher ! that is the programme for you." She repeated it once again before I took leave. I received Her command and came out with this Mantra, *broader and higher*, in my heart. Hundreds of miles away, my brother had just returned from a conference and arrived home. Suddenly he felt his consciousness expanding and rising upward. He noted it but the full meaning of it dawned only later when he came to know the Mother's message to me.

The fact is, apart from his openness to the Mother, there is so much of understanding and harmony between him and myself, that the spiritual workings which Mother released into my being automa-

tically reached him and manifested themselves. That he was so far away did not in the least matter. In the earlier case also, the impact of the forces culminating in death at one end broke through the physical space-barrier and had its reaction at the other because of the intensity of the inner relation between the two persons. The understanding, sympathy and subtle connection between them acted as a sufficient means of communication to function without physical means of transmission.

Instances could be multiplied in this manner to illustrate how physical distance ceases to be a barrier in certain conditions. Space, as we know it here in the material world, has no finality. That is so because there is not one space but many spaces; there are, we may say, as many kinds of space as the number of planes in existence. Each plane, that is each status of Consciousness, has its own organisation of self-extension. The space in our dream state, for instance, is something radically different from the space relative to the waking condition. Space there, in the subtler planes of life, does not act as a distance, as a barrier. No physical means of communication are needed either for transmission or for traversing the distance. A thought, a vibration is enough; it courses through almost instantaneously and reaches its destination. It is when something of this kind of communication takes place on the subtler levels and impinges upon the material that we see phenomena of the kind described.

Where the working is of subtler forces, spiritual, occult or even psychological or mental, physical space simply does not make a difference. By psycho-

logical, I do not mean our usual haphazard mental activity or thought-movements which sway us with them, but a well-controlled and directed thought-formation and radiation. It is such thought-incubations upbuoyed on the stirrings of the soul that Swami Vivekananda had in mind when he said that the French revolution was perhaps initiated by the thought-currents of some hermit in the snows of the Himalayas. Thoughts of deep thinkers or of those who breathe a higher Consciousness have a power—wings as they say—and they speed on their career no sooner they are given shape in the mind that forms them.

Not only Space but Time also is of several kinds. Each plane in manifestation has its own mode of duration. Time in one plane does not tally with time-relation in another. There is more than one story in the Puranas to bring home this truth.

A certain prince repaired to the court of the Gods in the Heaven on a matrimonial quest. On reaching there it took for him a whole day to complete his mission. Thereupon he returned to his kingdom on earth but imagine his dismay to find that some thousands of years had elapsed since he left the earth-scene and all those for whom he had undertaken the commission had long passed away. One Day in the land of Brahma is said to equal so many thousand years of man on earth. While one need not take these stories too literally the truth they point to is a fact undoubtedly. How many times we miss such profound occult truths clothed in the form of legends and parables in our ancient literature !

To take recent history : Years before India

attained independence, the Mother once saw in Meditation that India was free and told it to Sri Aurobindo. But it took thirty years for what She saw happen on the subtler planes to effectuate itself in the physical conditions. The time sequence in one organisation of existence is not the same as in another. As Sri Aurobindo explains, Space and Time are self-formulations of the Consciousness for the purposes of manifestation. What is prior and fundamental is the Consciousness which is one everywhere. What happens at one point in this vast expanse of Consciousness—*prāsara* of *Shakti*—has its repercussions all over and can be felt anywhere, at any point, if only the receiving or perceiving medium is sufficiently subtilised and sensitive.

The One Consciousness deploys itself in a various manner. There are several levels of its self-formulation, the planes as they are termed, each plane housing so many worlds governed by the organisation of that plane. But they are not rigidly separate from each other. They interpenetrate, they influence each other and in some ways even partake of each other. And this is possible because the underlying Consciousness of all is One. Corresponding to this organisation of the Cosmos, the Mother says, there is a scheme in the system of the individual. There are points, centres in the human body which relate to particular planes of existence in the universe. These are the Chakras spoken of in the Yoga and the Tantra, which act as switchboards, as it were, to enter into relation with corresponding fields of Consciousness in the manifestation around. When these centres are open or are opened by some discipline, one can get into

touch, see, hear what goes on or has gone on on the respective planes.

There are many layers in the vast extension of Consciousness that constitutes the Universe, some gross, some subtle, some subtler. Any vibration, any activity that takes place anywhere, on any level of existence, leaves a permanent impression somewhere. The subtle layers are full of such impressions of what has happened, what is happening and what is likely to happen. Past events leave a store of memory-impressions, *ākāśic* records; the present is being recorded as it manifests itself; the future, that is what is being shaped in the higher planes, sends out its own tentative prints on the subtler layers of the universal consciousness. It is possible for us to take cognizance of all these if only we develop the necessary sensitivity in our consciousness or forge the needed instruments to become aware of and seize the clues. These faculties may reveal themselves of their own accord in the course of Yoga or one may be born with them as a result of past evolution.

This is the nature of the subtler organisation of Consciousness behind the gross material exterior which is all that we are normally aware of and deal with through our physical senses. This outer physical world of ours is, in the nature of things, governed by physical laws and physical limitations. Yet, on occasions, the world or worlds that circumfuse it break into its framework through the windows of our minds or other less material faculties and give rise to what we call strange or mysterious phenomena. The same Ideas, at times the very words, are expressed by individuals who are sepa-

rated by thousands of miles without any means of contact between them. It is a noteworthy fact, for instance, that at the time Sri Aurobindo had discovered the *Secret of the Veda* and was formulating his findings in a corpus of profound knowledge, another seer unaware of this event, unacquainted with the modern languages of Europe, was working on clues revealed to him during his tapasya and had come to very similar conclusions. The fact is, it was explained later, that when higher truths enter the earth-atmosphere seeking for expression, they embody themselves wherever the receptacles are ready. I believe the case of Darwin's discoveries being paralleled by the researches of another scientist coming to precisely the same conclusions is another instance to the point.

14-2-1963

The Guru

THERE ARE MANY who ask why there is no system of initiation, *dīkṣā*, in our Ashram. There is no ceremony to mark the admission into the Path. No Mantra is given to the entrant. How is it possible to begin the spiritual sadhana without any such seal of acceptance hallowed by the age-old tradition ? Those who ask this and similar questions forget that *māntric* or any kind of formal initiation is not the only way of inaugurating the *guru-śiṣya* relation in India or elsewhere. Initiation is necessary, true; but there are several kinds of initiation. Initiation marks the establishment of a relation between the Guru and the disciple and this relation is essentially an inner one.

The Guru enters into the being of the seeker, implants himself within him and conducts the sadhana. Something of the Guru, his consciousness, *śakti*, leaps into the being of the disciple; there is what is called *śaktipāta*, the impact of Power from the Guru. This is the commencement of the *guru-śiṣya* relation on which revolves the whole course of sadhana.

The means by which this contact is made and the relation established is called initiation, *dīkṣā*. Initiation may be formal, outer, *bāhya*, which may or may not be accompanied by ritual or ceremony. When the means chosen is a Mantra or ritual like Puja, Homa, etc. it is called *kriyā dīkṣā*. When there is no ritual, the initiation may be based upon touch, *spārśī*. The Guru touches the novice physi-

cally on a chosen limb and there is the transmission. It may be based upon sight, *cākṣuṣī*; the Guru just looks at him and that is enough. Or it may be mental, *mānasī*; the Guru thinks of him and the movement is initiated. These three modes of Diksha are compared respectively, in the Tantra Sastra, to the manner of the bird bringing up its young ones by the touch of its warm enfolding wings, of the fish nourishing its offspring by sight alone and of the tortoise feeding its infant by merely brooding over it. Where the initiation is not outer, it is inner, *ābhyantari*; it is subtly effected. It is called the *vedha dīkṣā*; just as the arrow of an expert hunter speeds in the direction of the sound even without sight of the object, the Shakti of the Guru strikes at the disciple wherever he be, by his sheer will.

There are many other classifications in the Sastra—some describing as many as ten different kinds of *dīkṣā*—but it is enough for our purpose to know that initiation through mantra or word or ritual is not the only way. The main thing is to effect a subtle contact between the Guru and the would-be disciple by whatever means and each Guru has his own way of establishing this potent relation with others. Through his characteristic means he enters into the being of the disciple and takes charge of his inner life; his Shakti remains there ever vigilant, ever active, ever promoting. It is of course essential that this Guru-shakti should be helped by every means to function without hindrance by the disciple. It is indispensable that no influence alien or contrary to the Shakti-in-charge should be allowed to enter into the con-

sciousness of the disciple. Such an influence may be good in itself, may be very moral, religious and all that. Yet if it is not fully in tune with the Shakti of the Guru, if the truth that activates it is at variance with the purpose¹ of the active Shakti, it does have an effect of mixing up and to that extent of impeding the workings of the latter. There is even the danger of conflict between the two influences with inevitable disharmony in the being of the seeker, physical, psychological and spiritual. That is the reason why one is enjoined to be entirely faithful to one Guru to whom one has given allegiance. You may not meet others as Guru, true; but the action of influences and forces is so subtle that with or without your knowledge, things take place when you are in their proximity,—especially of those who are developed in certain directions. Of course if you are alert and organised in consciousness well enough to prevent these intrusions, it is another matter.

It may be said that this amounts to a prohibition, an injunction contrary to the spirit of catholicity, universality and oneness of Spirit which it should be the first duty of a seeker to recognise and cultivate in himself. Like the bee one can go from flower to flower of spiritual efflorescence, collect honey from every source and fill the jar of one's soul. Certainly this too has its truth and its own application. It can be put into practice only by a chosen few who have so much strength of spirit and will of purpose that they do not need to resort and

¹ A power or Influence working, for instance, for withdrawal from life, would hardly be compatible with an effort for a divine fulfilment in life.

surrender to a human Guru. They work out the sadhana by themselves and take whatever help they can, directly from the Divine's creation—animate and inanimate. The Scripture speaks of twenty-four Gurus of Dattatreya and thirteen Gurus of Uddhava. But every one is not a Dattatreya or an Uddhava. For most, it is indispensable to repair to a Guru who has lived the Truth and can launch them on the same Path and lead them thereon. At any rate once you arrive at the stage when a radical decision has to be taken and the path to be trodden clearly chalked out, allegiance to a single Guru becomes imperative. Till then, in the preparatory stages, benefit may be taken from all uplifting company and the aspiration strengthened and godward impulses enlivened.

So far regarding the general bearings of the subject. Coming to the immediate particulars like the oft-asked question, how to know who is accepted by the Mother as disciple and who is not, who are devotees and who the disciples,—in the absence of the usual standards of reference like formal *dīkṣā*—, it is best to state in substance what the Mother Herself has said on the matter.

All those who accept the Ideal of Sri Aurobindo and his Teaching are accepted by the Mother as Her children. They are always Her children. Of all, all who do so, whatever their number, here or elsewhere,—may be in the whole universe—She is the Mother, the Eternal Mother. And as the Mother, She tends the children, gives them wide latitude, bears with them even in their strayings. Her love remains the same, unchanged, and She helps them up. Thus every one who accepts

the Ideal established by Sri Aurobindo and believes in his Teaching becomes a child of the Mother.

This relation of Mother and child is to be distinguished from that of the Guru and disciple. The Mother has countless children but of disciples She has comparatively a very few. To be accepted as a disciple there are far more stringent conditions. The Mother does not agree to become the Guru of anyone unless Her conditions for a thorough-going inner life are fulfilled. And they are exacting. She Herself says that She is a hard taskmaster as a Guru, whatever may be Her aspect as the Mother. As the Guru She takes full charge of the life of the disciple. She has to link him to the Supreme and help him to achieve the object during his lifetime. It is extremely difficult to achieve within a single life but She works to make it possible and naturally, She expects that no time is allowed to be lost, no energy directed elsewhere. Deliberately, pointedly, She is 'severe' and corrects and pulls back at every wrong step; for when She chooses to see there is nothing that can escape Her. She allows no quarter to indolence, falsehood, ignorance. To be the Guru is less easy and more strenuous for Her than to be the Mother. As the Mother She can always remain in Her supreme state of Divine Benevolence; but as the Guru She has to come down a step, stoop to live with the disciple in active and close charge of his life.

She says that She exacts. But we shall not forget that She exerts Herself for the disciple in a manner that has no parallel in the spiritual history of man. Exacting perhaps, but exerting always.

And who, according to Her, is the true disciple?

He who asks for nothing, yet expects everything. That is to say, he never demands anything from Her; he knows and lives in the faith, that what is necessary is being done and will be done by Her unasked. She is more solicitous than we in our ignorance can conceive. It goes without saying that for the Mother the disciple is also a child. She not only builds up the inner life for him but showers too all Her Love on him. To him She is both the Guru and the Mother.

Thus, She says, She has many children but only a few disciples. Nobody is accepted as a disciple forthwith though, in the nature of things, as children many are accepted anon. One has to qualify oneself to be taken as a disciple. To so qualify oneself is itself a discipline which one can best start as a child of the Mother. Her help is there from the very beginning and if one is sincere and persevering, if one is prepared to fulfil the conditions of a single-minded pursuit of the Ideal of Transformation, She is there ready to respond.

25-2-1963

Consciousness in Material Things

WE HAVE, IN OUR Ashram, some mottos printed and displayed in prominent places, so as to serve as constant reminders of our Ideal in day-to-day life. They are all selected sayings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as for instance this one :

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

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

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

—The Mother

Now this motto-card is very much in demand by a certain class of visitors like industrialists, factory-owners, heads of commercial establishments. Discreet enquiries revealed why they all made a bee-line for this particular card : they wished to put it up in their establishments for the correction of their staff. The staff, I was told, are careless in their use of things putting the proprietors to considerable loss thereby and if such a motto were placed there in the premises under the *imprimatur* of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it was bound to have a healthy effect. None of these worthies evinced interest in other mottos like :

All wealth belongs to the Divine and those who hold it are trustees, not possessors.

—Sri Aurobindo

Or,

*Give all you are, all you have, nothing
more is asked of you but also nothing less.*

—*The Mother*

Did it ever occur to them that the truth and the purpose of this motto is quite other than what they intended using it for ?

For this profound dictum of the Mother underlines the fact that all over the universe, in every part of creation, there is a pulsation of One Divine Consciousness. It may be articulate or may be inarticulate, but the same Consciousness is there embodied in each form. It may formulate itself differently on each level of existence, but fundamentally it is the same Consciousness everywhere. Consciousness is not confined to human beings alone. Animals too have a consciousness.¹ It may not have the same form of expression as men's but it is articulate in its own way. Animals have their own language. Even in as old an epic as the Ramayana, there is mention of king Kekaya (father of the famous Kaikeyi) who knew the language of animals. Once it appears when he was resting

¹ One of the most remarkable and recent instances of the developed consciousness in the animal relates to a dog left by an American couple with a writer- friend during their absence from their mountain home. One day, it appears, the gentleman was sitting at his desk; the dog was out, perhaps gambolling in the garden. For a moment he got the thought of going out for a walk, but only for a moment. Imagine his surprise to find a commotion outside the room: the dog had run inside the house, rushed to the place where walking boots and stick were kept and soon it brought and placed them before the owner, yelping with delight at the prospect of a run in the hills. How it came to know of the thought—passing thought that it was—and how it acted upon that knowledge is truly a matter of wonder.

on his couch, he suddenly burst into laughter. On the queen's asking for the reason of this strange hilarity, he explained that he had just heard an amusing bit of conversation between two creatures. His wife got curious—who would not get curious under the circumstances, and that too a member of the feminine race!—and asked to be told what it was about. But the king was obliged by the conditions of his knowledge not to ever reveal what he heard in this manner, and with a cool head, unusual in such situations, he stoutly refused to yield to the entreaties and mounting blandishments of his wife, and saved himself.

To come back to the point, the animals too—birds, beasts and all the rest of them—have a language and men can have access to it under certain conditions. In Yoga, for example, it is possible, says Patanjali, to become aware of the speech of all animals¹ by special forms of concentration. It is recorded of Sri Ramakrishna that when he was practising the Tantric Yoga, he could listen to the speech of particular birds and beasts when certain centres or chakras within him were opened in the process of the ascent of his Kundalini. One has to enter into the state of consciousness which corresponds to the consciousness that governs that mode of speech.

So many times we have heard from the Mother how She has heard and talked to the members of the animal world. To narrate only one instance: long, long back when in Algeria, She was once sitting for meditation under a big tree on the out-

¹ *sarva-bhūta-rutāni*

skirts of a desert region. Suddenly She became aware of something in the vicinity and opened Her eyes only to see a huge cobra furiously hissing close in front of Her. The Mother studied the situation, saw that She was sitting blocking the entrance to the home of the cobra at the foot of the tree. She looked quietly at the cobra, and slowly moved out. Later, the cobra appeared to Her in vision and declared himself to be the king of the serpent world. He offered a pact of friendship promising never to harm Her if She would reciprocate. But She would not agree unless he promised not to harm not only Her, but all those who belonged to Her. Years later She found cobras lying on the floor of the car etc. But the moment She asked them to go, they slunk away.

Not merely in the animal world but also in the plant world is there a living consciousness with its own articulation. The Mother always says that the consciousness in plants is more sensitive than the human. Trees and plants are excellent conductors of energies of whatever kind. And the Mother has described how it is possible to establish an affinity with a tree, sit at its roots and open oneself to the vitality that flows in it. Then there are flowers which play a significant role in the Mother's scheme of things. Even in Her early days, in Japan, when She was in the garden plucking flowers, they used to vie with each other saying, 'pluck me', 'pluck me'.

I may mention a remarkable experience I used to have during the period when the Mother had made it possible for me to see Her every morning before starting the day. On coming down after meeting Her, receiving a flower in the button-

hole, I found myself oozing with goodwill and love for everybody. Everyone whom I met would evoke a feeling of deep sympathy and love from within. It was somewhat novel to me. It did not happen at other times of the day when I had occasion to meet Mother. I was intrigued about it and gave myself so many flattering explanations; but none of them was satisfying till one day I noticed on my shirt the Rose given by the Mother. Now, the significance of the flower is *flaming love* (or *psychic love*) *for the Divine*. That explained everything.

For the Mother, flowers are not just items of decoration; they are not even merely symbols; they are living messengers linking the spiritual to the material worlds. When She gives a flower, She transmits a state of consciousness designated by that flower. Each flower is endowed with an occult capacity to receive, hold and conduct a particular force of consciousness and the Mother has given us a scheme of their significances with very fine shades of meaning corresponding to the shades of hue of every kind of flower. To cite just a few, the pink rose signifies surrender, white rose integral surrender, yellow champak flower the supramental psychological perfection, Tulsi devotion, jasmine the divine's purity, and so on. The Mother finds flowers readier vehicles for Her Consciousness than us humans with our complicated minds and blustering egos. During a period of collective sadhana, She used to give a number of selected flowers to each during Pranam, suited to his need of the moment and the turn of his nature; sadhaks were advised to meditate upon them, form sentences from them

and know the message.

The ranges of Consciousness do not stop with the plant-level. Consciousness extends and spreads itself in what we call the inanimate and immobile creation also. Each form, each thing houses a concentration of consciousness. Every object in the universe, say Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is inhabited by a consciousness which is divine, just as each human individual is ensouled by a Consciousness that is Divine. To awake to this fact of divine extension, to be able to *regard* this Divine Consciousness in every form, every object, is true awakening of the spirit. Things are not just lifeless, masses of matter as they appear to our sense-mind. There is in them all the stir of a mighty consciousness that keeps them intact for the purpose for which they are formed in God's creation. It is of course not possible to recognise this fact at once. But you must start with a mental conviction that all things have a life, a consciousness¹ and it behoves man to deal with them as with living beings. They are entitled to the same consideration in our approach and our handling of them. The mental idea gradually sinks in the being and a spontaneous feeling grows up for these things. To those who are sensitive by nature or refined by spiritual aspiration and discipline, this comes out very naturally. When you approach a plant and pick up a flower, it does hurt you somewhere if you were to pinch the stalk harshly. If an article of use falls hard on the floor from your hands, you instinctively caress it with concern. You do not like to part with things

¹ *antaḥ sarjñāḥ bhavanti ete sukha-dukha-samanvitāḥ* (Manu)

easily. An understanding, a friendship so to say, is formed between the thing and yourself. And if a thing with such a relation with you is lost, it always tends to come back to you in some way or other.

The Mother once told an inmate who was winding the clock not to talk while winding. She asked him to put his full consciousness in the act of winding; for only then, She added, the clock would *respond* to him. Things respond to your trust and consideration. They do not break easily in your handling. They link you up with quite another order of creation and help your consciousness to expand and spread itself far and wide.

And they too speak, they communicate their feelings of joy, of sorrow.

Years ago, when the Mother used to visit regularly the different Services of the Ashram, sadhaks naturally took great care to tidy up things fitting the occasion. But in the nature of things it would happen that some corners or out of the way spots would receive less attention and all odds and ends would be heaped up there out of sight. But more than once it so happened that She went straight to those 'neglected' spots to the consternation of those in-charge and found things thrown pell-mell. On being asked how it happened that she went first to places which were so much out of the way, She replied to say that the moment She stepped in, those things kept pell-mell called Her, saying 'Look, how we have been kept, look at us', and She had perforce to go there !

More pleasantly, I recall taking to the Mother a few articles that were regularly sent by a devotee from abroad. Many times She would smile the

moment She saw me with the things and say that She knew they had arrived. On my looking up questioningly, She would say, “they came and told me, ‘we have come’, ‘we have come’ ”.

The Mother's Sunlit Path

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED how I got the fixed idea in my boyhood that to lead spiritual life one must be always serious. I was quite playful before 12. It was only when I awoke to the Call of God that I started developing into a different mood. Why it was so, I cannot explain. Perhaps it was from the environment that I imbibed the notion that spiritual life is a terribly serious affair and it was hence indispensable to prepare myself in the direction if I ever hoped to take to that path. For it was an accepted belief in those days—and I believe it is so even now—that to turn to the spiritual life one must bid good-bye to the world of mirth and laughter. One has to be in dead earnest, in desperate hurry to reach the goal of liberation before death overtakes. There is not a moment to lose and it will not do to relax; it will not do to take anything lightly. It is unspiritual to take joy in the things of life, in men, women and children—entanglements of Maya. Look only to the serious side of things, busy yourself only with those that increase disgust for the world, remind yourself at every moment of the transitoriness of life. Somehow this atmosphere has come to be built up around spiritual Quest in India. Whatever may be the historical reasons that led to this unnatural twist in the higher life of the race, the fact is this attitude has long come to stay. And when I was swept into the Quest, naturally I took it as a natural course and unconsciously developed a becoming solemnity of demeanour.

nour and a seriousness of mind. It was only when I was brought into touch with the Mother that I realised to my utter surprise that one could smile—even laugh with impunity—in spiritual life ! The more I saw of Her and of Her Way of life, the more I realised that cheerfulness, laughter, a certain gaiety of disposition are necessary in the higher life as are thought, work and devotion. And it could not be otherwise. For the Mother's vision and outlook is integral in character and embraces the Divine in all His aspects. Joy, Bliss is a fundamental aspect of the Divine as much as Knowledge, as much as Power. Was it Kalidasa who described the snowy peaks of the Himalayas as the white laughter of Shiva ? Yes, I realised that delight, joy, happiness all derive from the Divine. They are a part not only of the Divine—and true and lasting joy derives only from the Divine—but equally of the Creation of the Divine. In fact their full efflorescence is the ultimate meaning of this creation. Somehow they do not have, in the present transitional stage of the evolutionary world, their due place in the order of things. But they are there in their own inalienable right and are bound to come into their own as man moves further towards the Light. As in ordinary life, in spiritual life too, they have their own part to play. They are not things to be thrown out or banished, not even to be suffered, but valuable elements to be cherished and promoted. For a cheerful temper, a happy attitude to things and a capacity to laugh at discomforts and smile through difficulties are a great asset in ordinary life, much more so in the spiritual. It makes the path less hard, less difficult. And at

its best, it fits one to walk on the Mother's SUNLIT PATH.

Certainly it is not that one should be light-hearted or easy-going. Most emphatically not. The spiritual is the most difficult of all the lines of self-development, inexorable in its demands, inflexible in its conditions of fulfilment. There should be, without doubt, a seriousness of purpose, an earnestness in the being. But this inner determination is not to be mistranslated into terms of denial, asceticism, or a kill-joy spirit. Nothing is bad, nothing is unspiritual in itself so as to invite the superior frown of the self-righteous sadhaka. All is Divine, all has value in the Divine scheme. Some things express the Divine more directly, put us in tune with the Divine more easily. Of this kind are music, song, dance, art—movements that express something of the Divine rhythm in creation. Things of beauty, things that evoke tender feelings, things that exude a sunshine of cheer, are very valuable elements that should remind us and link us to the Divine whose characteristic expression in our physical world is of Beauty. Beauty, Harmony, Love—these are indeed some of the highest expressions of the Divine and when sought in things around us, they are capable of drawing us into the Divinity they represent and shaping us into their mould. To shun them, to turn our back upon them as traps of Maya, seductive chains of the material world, is a very perverted view of life which rejects the Divine as He comes to greet us. To awake to the happy, the pleasant, and the beautiful side of people, of Nature, of creation at all levels, is to find a sure door of entry into the Divine that is Auspicious, *śivam*, Beautiful, *sundaram*.

Times without number the Mother has emphasised the need of *benevolence* in those who would progress in the way of the Divine. To have a glad and helpful disposition and a charitable attitude towards others, to recognise that others can be right, to have an indulgence towards the drawbacks of others, to always look to the bright side of life—of ourselves and of others,—to refuse to be driven into tantrums at the first resistance to the satisfaction of our desires, to make light of difficulties and exude a breath of cheerfulness, is a gift that few are given. But all can cultivate this spirit of benevolence. It is in such an atmosphere of cheer and goodwill and radiance that the rays of the soul, the deeper influence of the psychic being can come forward and lead the sadhak on the bright path. The ground needs to be velvety soft with the gentle touch of love and radiant with the glow of joy for the tread of the Beloved's Feet. If we are constantly or repeatedly depressed due to any reason or no reason, or overweighed with prepossessions on the dark side of things—in ourselves and in others—then the soul within finds its gates bolted.

One of the most usual causes for this sort of moroseness or grip of depression in the earlier stages of sadhana is when the sadhaka becomes conscious of his weaknesses, what he calls his defects. He is occupied with them, is possessed by a feeling of helplessness at their obstinate refusal to cancel themselves. He develops a kind of obsession of his weaknesses and begins to despair of ever overcoming them. Now it must be remembered that these so-called defects are not the exclusive products of any individual manufacture. They are universal move-

ments, tendencies and workings, which express themselves more in some and less in others. But they are there in all, in some measure or other. When one takes to spiritual life in earnest, these formations hardened into habits by long repetitions, begin to show up in the manner of spots showing on cloth that is being washed. And that is on purpose. Nature brings them to the surface in order that the deficiencies may be corrected. It is the path of wisdom to recognise this fact, separate them from one's deeper being and treat them to the Higher Light. It is the wrong way to go about trying to root them out thoroughly before proceeding further. That is a negative way and hardly ever successful. A better and surer way is to look more to the positive gains. One has to aspire for and imbibe the higher calm, peace, purity, faith etc. In the measure they are received and settled in the being, the deficiencies of restlessness, desires, impurities and similar elements get gradually displaced and rendered ineffective. As one grows in devotion, in dedication, in purity, the outer and lower pulls begin to lose their hold and just drop off like dry skin.

Yet another cause of such hardening of spirit is an excessive preoccupation with oneself. I am so much centred in myself, my effort, my difficulties, my progress, my sadhana, that I am completely shut up in my own world. I become intolerant of all that appears to stand in my way. I resent laughter in my environment, mirth in the vicinity, I lose the sap of life. I would have everyone geared up to my needs. I lose all sense of proportion. I fail to realise that with all my straining the most that I

can do is a fraction of what the Mother's Grace and Shakti could do if only I consent to its workings and place myself in Her hands with a glad surrender. A happy trust in the Wisdom of the Divine, a devotion growing into the heart's love for the Divine, and a joyous dedication of myself in all my movements to the Divine, transform the situation out of recognition. Everything acquires a different look. The whole world appears in a new light. The cosmos moves without my furrowed brow at the wheel. I laugh. I feel light as I am wafted on the wings of the Mother's LOVE.

Difficulties in Sadhana

I WAS SPEAKING of difficulties. There are difficulties everywhere, in every walk of life, not only in the spiritual. Resistance, obstruction, opposition—these are necessary factors designed by Nature to ensure and speed up growth. Strength—muscular or other—is always built up against resistance. And there is always plenty in human nature that resists a change. But whatever the nature of the difficulty, in spiritual life it is our approach to it that matters much more than the inherent problem. Certain difficulties lose their edge in the very way in which they are faced. Some go to make a positive contribution to sadhana when rightly tackled.

There is for instance the question of disturbing thoughts, not merely in periods of meditation but even at other times. To take the first type : thoughts that crowd the mind continuously during meditation in the early stages are mostly inconsequential, incoherent and mechanical. There are many ways recommended to check this flow of thoughts and stop them. The easiest way, however, is not to mind them. It is not that thoughts come during meditation only. They are there floating in the air all the time; only we are not aware of them because we are normally busy with one thing or another. When we sit for meditation, we free ourselves from other occupations and it is then that we become aware of this incessant flow of thoughts. Even then if we have something positive to hold to or concentrate upon, the flow of thoughts

is not so distracting. Where there is interest there the mind turns spontaneously. Thoughts disturb easily and succeed in distracting only when we try to make the mind vacant or silent. If the meditation is more positive with something to hold to as a Name or an Idea or a Form, then their entry and passage occurs only on the surface without affecting the main process. Either way, the best course is to simply ignore them. The thoughts can be left to themselves and the mind directed to its object. There may be—and are bound to be—backslidings, but each time it happens the mind is to be quietly brought back to its object without much ado. Patience and persistence win in the end. The more the positive element of stability grows the more the negative is displaced.

However, thoughts are not always of this harmless type. At times waves of thoughts come touching upon what are our sore points; they strike at our weak spots. Where faith is weak, there they rush to weaken further. Where there is apprehension, they come and rake up things alarmingly. They give suggestions which are the very reverse of what we should do or seek to have. If we are afraid of anything, these thoughts hammer at that very point and a host of suggestions strike terror conjuring up visions and forebodings that are upsetting in the extreme. If we adore anyone, it is the business of these visitations to make suggestions that mock and are contrary to the spirit of our approach and throw us out of gear into confusion, nervous disarray. They induce and promote a sense of guilt, of sin and fill with a strong sense of impurity, incapacity. Here again, the easiest and the right method is to

quietly ignore them. After all, they do not originate in us, though they create that impression in their impact. They come from the subtle thought-worlds outside ourselves and they are to be treated as foreigners, passing birds in flight, with which we have nothing to do. They come only to disturb and interrupt. If we are upset then half their work is done. If we are obstinate in refusing them the pleasure of succeeding in their object, they slink away. They are not tests imposed by the Divine as some may think. The Divine does not test. The Divine always helps. It is the hostiles that test at every step whether the pilgrim has qualified to go beyond their regime before giving him passage onwards. Not to anticipate and so prepare the ground for these invasions but to resolutely refuse to identify ourselves with them, all the while growing in a happy confidence in the outstretched arms of the Divine is the unfailing way.

Another common difficulty relates to sex. Unfortunately such an atmosphere of taboo has been built up around this subject, at any rate in our country, that it is never considered in a proper perspective. Sex, indulgence in sex, is contrary to spiritual aspiration and progress. True. But is that the only element in nature that is contrary? In man there are so many movements that are to be corrected, uplifted and transformed. Sex after all serves a function in physical nature, in common life. If it is incumbent to abstain from it in spiritual life, it is not because it is something evil in itself, something immoral or sinful, but because it throws downward the energy that should be directed upward to support and strengthen spiritual effort.

Secondly, the vibrations accompanying the orgasm throw the system into a vortex of a peculiar excitement that is the very reverse of the rhythm of spiritual consciousness and repels it. Thus the question is not one of merit or demerit, *pāpa* or *puṇya*. It is mainly a matter of what promotes and what retards spiritual effort. Sex-energy is to be conserved and sublimated upwards. Now there are many other formations of nature that are to be similarly checked and reoriented. Then why this hullabaloo over this one element only? In a sense, some of the other nature-formations are more important and call for more urgent attention than sex in building up true spiritual life.

It is not generally realised that close to sex-energy is another important form of energy that is to be conserved with as much, or perhaps greater care. It is the power of speech. According to the Knowledge of the *Tantra*, the Centre which governs sex is also the Centre that governs speech. Both are energy-formulations of life-force, the vitality, both creative potentials governed from the centre of Agni. The force of *vāk* has in fact a wider and greater sweep and significance than that of sex. But it is the most ill-used and wasted of human potencies. The Mother once observed to me with a gesture of regret that I can never forget, how speech-power which should be harnessed to the great Divine Work of Realisation and Transformation is being carelessly frittered away. We talk, talk and talk away our subtle power of sustenance and effectuation. Those on the spiritual path have plenty of occasions to observe the aftermaths of these bouts of talk. We little realise what precious posses-

sion we squander when we are in the midst of that tempo. To conserve this energy from dissipation and draw its intrinsic power for self-development, is one of the main ideas behind *mounam*, silence of speech, recommended at certain stages in some of the spiritual paths in India.

Sastriar who launched me in this life of Yoga, required of me at the very beginning that I should attach the greatest importance to the cultivation of truth, truth in speech to begin with, truth in thought and action to follow. Truth is the form of God, he told me, and if you want God you must live in truth. To drive home the point, he added : "You may even commit adultery, but you shall not tell a lie." Of course it was a way of emphasising and shall not be taken too literally ! But the point is unmistakable. Movements of falsehood are more harmful than movements of sex. Falsehood is not merely un-spiritual but positively anti-spiritual. To those who seek the Mother's Presence it is an unflinching experience how the slightest breath of falsehood brings in the touch of the unclean. She is categorical on the point and admits no compromise. It is a well-known saying of Hers : "If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth ? A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation."

So is ego. The ego slays the soul. Compared to the effort required to get over the clutches of falsehood and the elusive holds of the ego, control and rejection of sex is nothing. Yes, nothing

compared to it. Only, as I said, we have somehow got into the habit of exaggerating the role of sex. As the Mother has observed, people take too much notice of sex.

People get upset over attacks of sex in a way that it is out of all proportion to their importance. Sex-dreams, for instance. A certain amount of waste is inevitable at some stages in the growth of the body. It does not mean that one falls every time it occurs. It is a matter to be approached in a rational way, keeping proper count of hygienic considerations, taking steps on the psychological level to eliminate the motivating factors etc. To brood over the wastages is the most wrong way. One continues to live in their atmosphere by worrying over them, one helps them prolong their *vāsanās*.

Sex is not a thing to be suppressed in the system. But to say so is not to mean that it is a thing to be indulged in. Far from it. It is a thing to be rejected. The rejection starts from the mind. It takes time for desire in the physical or the vital to be rooted out. But one can always start with eliminating the thinking of sex, sex imagination, from the mind. This is an earnest of the sincerity of the sadhaka. He must decline to entertain sex thoughts, much less participate in sex-reveries in his mind. If he abstains from physical indulgence but harbours sex in mental imagination, then he is a *mithyācārī*. It is such cases that result in what are called sex-disorders which are proudly held up by the European psychologists as examples of the ruinous results of the Indian ideal of Brahmacharya. *No man has ever got unbalanced by abstinence from sex.* All the havoc is caused by mental indulgence while keeping

up forms outwardly.

Be sincere to yourself, sincere to your aspiration and there is no problem. All difficulties arise due to a vital insincerity in ourselves. The crux lies not in the fact of sex but in our approach to it. Fear of sex builds up an obsession which is even more dangerous than indulgence. A just appreciation of the role of sex, a refusal to overrate its importance, and a robust confidence in ourselves go a long way to reduce this bugbear to its proper proportions.

One word more before I leave the subject. Much more than our personal effort, it is the settling of the Higher Consciousness in ourselves, its peace, its purity, that eliminates the difficulty. As one grows thus in the positive manner, there is a kind of *shift* in the consciousness and a displacement of elements and forces. Without much labour, sex recedes farther and farther till it just ceases to interest. I have known of one case which it would be permissible to mention by way of illustration.

He was a new inmate who had just joined the Ashram. As usual, after the first flush of enthusiasm and joy, there came what is known as the dry period. Among the many sides of his nature that came up for exposure to the corrective Light, was this desire for sex. He tried hard to get over it. He tried to meditate; he tried to read out of the impasse. He tried to forget it in strenuous physical exercise. But all to no avail. Then one evening when he was awaiting his turn on the Playground to go to the Mother and receive *prasād*, he felt so much ashamed of himself that he felt it would be better to go away from the Ashram instead of staying here and contaminating the Mother's

atmosphere by his sex-feelings. He realised he could not do anything further by his own effort. In despair he just surrendered to Her inwardly. By this time, his turn came up in the queue. Mechanically he stood before the Mother. The Mother looked at him and held his hand.¹ She looked and looked into him, gave a characteristic smile of Hers and gave *prasād*. He felt a thrill and a tremendous insurge. He went home. He could not sleep. In the heart there were waves after waves of delight. There was a sensation of ice-like cold in the sex-region. Throughout the night, this cold spell continued. And the next morning when he got up, there was not the least shred of sex-desire or sex-feeling. This continued for a long time, for many months. It was a unique experience and never again did sex bother him as before.

17-3-1963

¹ It must be noted that during these functions the Mother used to receive over a thousand people in a line and distribute *prasād* rapidly within about half-an-hour.

Surrender and Ego

L. is A good friend. A most simple person to all appearances. But behind an unassuming exterior there works a sharp mind supported by an amazing physical industry. Among the host of occupations that constantly engage his smiling attention is the editing of a high-class journal. He once asked me innocently if I would help by answering queries from his readers on subjects pertaining to our sadhana and philosophy. Not knowing what I was in for I agreed. That was some years ago. But time has not dampened his spirits. The questions never cease. Before one set of questions is dealt with, he is ready with another. He dovetails a series of topics in one broad question and watches how I react, in the manner of an examiner—that he indeed was in his *pūrvāśrama*. Lately I have begun to suspect whether all these intricate questions really come from the readers or are concoctions of his own. Be that as it may, in terms of our agreement, I am obliged to answer. Only last week he put before me a poser that would require quite a volume for a satisfactory answer. People say, he began, that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is unique from all other yogas in this that here there is no necessity of any set discipline, fixed course of devotions and the like, as is the case elsewhere. It is enough if one surrenders to the Mother. His work is done. The Mother does the rest and the goal is certain. Is it correct to say so ? Now, the naivety of the question would

be enough to dismiss it as not meriting any serious consideration, were it not for the fact that there are many who actually think in that line and run their affairs accordingly.

As usual my friend has combined a number of statements of fact in this seemingly simple query which can be answered neither with a simple yes nor a straight no. There is a graded discipline that one has to go through in the traditional lines of yoga. It may be *āsanas*, exercises in *prāṇāyāma* or sessions of conducted studies, prescribed meditations developing into samadhi, japa of various kinds and all the innumerable methods that have been developed by adepts for attaining spiritual ends in the different paths of yoga. All these modes of self-discipline are not obligatory—though not prohibited, be it noted—in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. What, then, is the means to achieve the object of this Yoga? It is by *surrender* to the Divine, full surrender to the Mother who embodies the Divine Shakti that alone can accomplish the difficult aim of this integral yoga. Once the surrender is made, it is argued, there is nothing left for the sadhaka to do. The Power to whom the surrender is made takes charge and executes the task. Simple, is it not? Rather too simple.

Now to come to grips with the question: it is certainly true that Sri Aurobindo has said that once a surrender is made to the Divine and the Divine has accepted it the rest lies with the Divine. But surrender to the Mother is not merely a physical affair. The material part of it is only a token, an earnest of the total dedication. Real surren-

der is inner and it is a long process. It is not something that can be done in a trice. A mental decision or even the heart's resolve is not surrender in terms of this yoga. A movement of surrender is not surrender, it is only a beginning. True surrender is a result of long and sincere effort. It is a complex achievement into which many strands of effort have to be fused. For man, as he is constituted, is of several parts, several persons as it were. He has to train each part of his multiple being to surrender itself to the Divine Mother. And to surrender means to yield one's own will and motivation in that part to the Higher Power so that the Will of that Power may act instead. To decide to surrender and affirm it in one's consciousness at that moment is not enough. The surrender is to be consciously confirmed at each step till it becomes a natural attitude. And this is to be relentlessly worked in all the parts of the being. The physical has its inertia and obstinacy, the vital has its passions and vehemence, the mind its own ideas and preferences. Surrender calls for a double effort of the progressive elimination of self-will and self-motivation in each member of the being and a pliant disposal to the will and rule of the Divine in each. There is no fixed hour for this effort; no fixed location either. It is a continuous and all-pervading tapasya which extends over long, long stretches of time—the whole of lifetime practically—and is far more exacting and severe a discipline than any we know of. The exertion and sincerity called for by this discipline of complete surrender—*pūrṇa-samarpaṇa*, not only *ātma-samarpaṇa*—is much more intensive than

needed in the other paths.

This translation of surrender from theory into actual practice demands ceaseless vigilance and sincere application. At every step in the life of the sadhaka, at every moment, the Mother points out, one is faced with the choice: to decide in my favour, in favour of my likes and dislikes, needs or preferences, or to decide in favour of the Ideal, of the Divine Call. Whether in my own psychological movements or in my dealings with others, the challenge that poses itself is always the same: am I going to choose what is pleasing to my egoistic self or am I going to opt for what is Right even though it may conflict with my personal conveniences? Every time I have to choose between my ego and the Truth whose demand is almost always counter to the clamour of the former. Nowhere does one realise the ubiquitous nature of the ego as in spiritual life. It is the most difficult knot to untie, the one obstruction that refuses to be easily surmounted, the impediment that delays true surrender the longest. And the ego is very cunning. It may go under in one form only to come up in another. For it has a thousand forms. It accommodates itself to any situation and casts its vitiating shadow in the subtlest ways. Ego is not pride alone as commonly thought. It can lurk very well in humility too. The vanity of Antisthenes, said Plato, peeps through the holes of his garment.

The ego has such a strong hold on man because it is a contrivance devised by Nature in the course of its long evolution, as a centralising agency, an individuating centre in the floating mass of forces and movements that constitutes life. It is a forma-

tion of Nature whose utility is over once the personality of man is formed and he is awakened to the existence of his true self within of which the ego is but the shadow, a figure. It is the first business of the spiritual seeker to become more and more conscious of this truth and eliminate the ego, steadily replacing it with his real self within.

But the ego is not a simple or a single formation that can be put away at one stroke. It is there on all the levels of our existence. In the physical being, it is there holding tight to its empire of inertia, ignorance and incapacity. It refuses to turn to the wind of change or yield to the onsetting movements of dynamism, expansion and knowledge. It is proud of its badge of weakness and likes to make a martyr of itself, enjoying its singularity in the complex of persecution and oppression. Even in obstinate illnesses of the body, it is this physical *tāmasic ego* that forms an important element in their persistence. It is that something which enjoys even illness and pleads for a longer lease.

Similarly there is the *rājasic ego*, the ego of the man of passion, dynamism and vital ebullience. It is full of its own importance, its sense of power and seeks to use everything under the sun for the effectuation of its will. It can very well take on the role of the instrument, utilise the force and the energies poured into the system and subvert their workings for its own aggrandisement. It swells with self-satisfaction even when it pays lip-service to a Cause or an Ideal. The pride of the instrument, Sri Aurobindo has remarked, is worse than the pride of the doer. One has to be on the utmost guard against this danger, particularly in a yoga

like ours where action, participation in the movement of life, plays an important role. One might be able to achieve much by way of execution in the force of this rajasic impulsion and gain title for efficiency and capacity in the worldly sense. But of spiritual value it has none. Unless things are done in the proper spirit, i.e. in dedication, free from the swayings of the ego, work has no meaning in the context of spiritual progress. "To me, what *you are* matters, not what you do"—these words of the Mother should be remembered by everyone who would do works for Godward growth.

There is also what may be called the *sāttvic ego*, the pride of a mind self-assured in its opinions, ideas and theorisings. It rests content in its learned posture with a studied reluctance to admit knowings other than its own. Outwardly there is no stamp of egoism for it behoves a thinker, a learned man to stand aloof from the turbulence of the vulgar ego. All the self-justification, self-assertion is concealed behind a deceptive exterior and this refined ego is much more dangerous than the blatant one, like a hidden rock in the waters of the sea.

There is even, what may appear to be contradiction in terms, a *spiritual ego*. I am different from others. I am doing sadhana, I am superior to the rest. Even among seekers my way is the best, the only true one; I am somehow different, more eligible for the Divine's Grace than others. I may permit myself certain liberties which ordinary sadhaks may not. I am so kind to everybody, I am so broad-minded and selfless. This is the most subtle and most resistant of all the avatars of ego

on the path. One never knows where it lurks. When you begin to judge others from your superior pedestal, beware. Those who see ego in others, says the Mother, have the ego in themselves. Whole careers have been wrecked on the shoal of this spiritual ego. Not merely in the past but in the present as well. One can never be too careful.

The ego is thus the main stumbling-block in making surrender a fact of our being. And unless surrender, which can only be partial at the outset, is built up into an integral self-giving to the Divine, it is idle to talk of the Divine taking up the sadhana in us. Such a surrender is the culmination of many lines of effort by way of aspiration, rejection and dedication in all the parts of our many-sided being.

20-3-1963

Our Sadhana

So it is essentially an inner turn that is given in this yoga. It is an inner change that is sought to be effected by inner means. There is no set practice to be done during each day because the whole of life is converted into one continual practice of higher living. Into this process for the change of the ordinary life into the godly life, many of the techniques perfected in other yogas may be drawn upon, either wholly or in part, for shorter or longer periods; not necessarily in their traditional forms but in principle. How do you begin, where do you start, is a usual question. Well, you start where you feel the urge, start in that part of yourself which asks for the change, the part that is ready.

It may be that it is your mind that is awakened to the Call. You realise the limitations of life as it is lived, its imperfections and its uglinesses and your mind is attracted to a Truth that is higher, infinite, eternal, the Divine Reality. You start forthwith from that point of departure. You seek every possible knowledge of the Reality that beacons, through the authentic writings of men who have known It, or by a systematic study under a teacher who can train and prepare your mind for the reception of that Knowledge. You come to an intellectual understanding of the Truth that you choose as your Ideal or Goal. But this grasp of the intellect alone is not enough. You may luxuriate in any number of mansions of philosophy without changing your life a wee-bit. The mind must make

this Knowledge real to itself, it must learn to live in the truth of that Knowledge, see in the vision of that Knowledge and function on the basis of that enlightenment. For that purpose it is essential to disengage the mind from the holds of Ignorance and Falsehood to which it is subject. And to achieve this end, you take to the method of concentration, say concentration upon the sole truth of the Infinite Brahman or the Divine as embodied in Form or in any of Its aspects; or meditation, a release of the mind into a relaxed flow on the Divine or what relates to It; or deliberation upon the problem that confronts and on the solution that is possible; or discrimination between what is divine and what is not, what is true and what is false etc. You take to the method which comes naturally to you and either go straight on that line alone or second it with the others, all of which are designed to work upon the mind and help it to release itself from the incessant drive of Prakriti and find its base in the Quietude of the One Reality. The aim is one: to withdraw the mind from its normal run of activity in Ignorance in slavery to Nature and open it to the Consciousness on the deeper or higher ranges of the Reality so that it may gradually absorb the vibrations and grow into the nature of the Higher Consciousness.

Whatever the method or methods that are used, they are but a part of the general effort that is made to effect the transition. This effort is three-fold in character consisting of aspiration, rejection and surrender. The mind thinks of and aspires for the one Truth, concentrates upon the one Goal, the Divine to which all energies are to be directed.

Alongside this aspiration which grows in the measure of the earnestness behind, there should develop a firm rejection of all that is contrary to the Ideal or Truth that is sought for. If you seek the Truth, then falsehood and all that contributes to falsehood needs to be rejected; if you seek harmony, all that results in disharmony has to be avoided; if you ask for Peace, all that makes for disorder and struggle has got to be kept out. Thirdly, all the movements of the mind must be gradually surrendered to the Divine and the mind learn to passively accept and reflect the Divine's impulsions alone. The clamour of the mind shall yield to the Silence or the Word of Brahman.

Or you are moved in the heart. Something in you becomes aware of the Divine, of His presence as the Lord and there is an irresistible urge to flow towards Him. Without any effort there is a gathering of feeling, a pull of attraction felt in the heart and you find joy in the growth of this movement. You take that as your way and summon all the feelings and emotions you are capable of to turn towards the Divine Beloved. Here too you may utilise the methods perfected in the Path of Devotion, e.g. laudation, *stava*, *japa*, worship, inner adoration growing into identity etc. The mode of advance, again, is the same. Aspiration for the Presence and the Revelation of the Lord. It is only a sincere and keen aspiration for the utmost identity that can guard against the tendency of human nature to rest content and shut itself in one experience or one intermediate realisation. The aspiration must be insistent for larger and still larger movements of Love. Each experience shall be the

forerunner of another greater. Rejection of all that brings in impurity and repels the Presence: egoistic demands and ignorant misuse foul the inner atmosphere from which the Deity shies away. Surrender of yourself in the core of the heart with an utter, selfless devotion melting into Love. The aim is to become, through the purified and yearning heart, one with the Divine Beloved.

Or it may be that though you have realised the necessity of growing out of the normal petty life of the world into the higher way of the Divine, the heart is not seized with any emotive quest nor the mind athirst for the knowledge of the Divine. You are awakened to the Existence of a Supreme Divine who has made you what you are and who claims your allegiance. You are moved by an intense desire to dedicate yourself, your energies and faculties of action to the Divine.

You can start at that point irrespective of the readiness or otherwise of the thinking mind or the emotional parts. You begin by acting in the spirit of the Karmayoga so well described and defined in the Gita. You dedicate the fruits of your works to the Divine; then you dedicate the works themselves to the Divine; and finally you clear the way and allow the Divine Himself to work through you. Here too is required the triple discipline. Aspiration for utmost purity of dedication and for acceptance of the offering by the Lord. "Remember and offer", is the Mantra given by the Mother for the divine worker. A sincere and constantly renewed aspiration alone can safeguard against the common danger of falling into the routine of mechanical work. Rejection of the claim and the taint of ego

which robs all action of spiritual value by stamping each output of energy with a capital 'I'. A joyous surrender of yourself with all the dynamism you are endowed with to the Divine.

You may start on any of these lines, depending on which you feel most natural to you. But it does not mean that your path will be on that single route only. What happens normally is that as you develop in the part you have elected as your spring-board, the other parts also undergo a resultant change and begin to participate in the movement. The heart contributes its fine emotions and movements of purity, opening and spontaneous surrender, to the mental seeking making it soulful, alive; the mind in its enlightenment gives an eye to the tender child of devotion within; the force of vitality receives the rays of the light of the knowledge in the mind and gets uplifted by the soaring emotions of the heart and begins to support the upward effort on the thousand hoods of its energies. Even the body obeys the pressure of the aspiration and it is a unique feature of this Yoga to recognise the claim of the physical body in the perfection that is aimed at. The body is in the individual scheme what the earth is in the cosmic. Just as the entire gradation of the worlds in the manifested Creation bases itself upon the earth for purposes of spiritual evolution, so the different formulations of the Consciousness in man in the form of mind, the subliminal, the vital etc. support themselves in this field of evolution on the pedestal of the physical body. The Mother gives as much value to the physical body in the Divine Manifestation as to the other constituents of man's being. The Divine manifests,

says the Mother, in Mind as Knowledge, in the Psychic as Love, in the Vital as Power, in the Physical as Beauty. To raise the physical body to its highest potentialities of perfection so as to form a beautiful, supple and at the same time substantial vehicular base for the manifestation of the Divine Consciousness is a necessary part of this Yoga. Thus in this Path where the whole being is exposed to and treated by the Higher Light, all parts gradually wake up and begin to participate sooner or later and there is a many-sided advance towards the Spirit.

There are, broadly speaking, three fundamental movements in this wide and integral effort for the upliftment of the entire human nature into the divine supernature. The consciousness which is confined in our limited, separative selves and always turned outward, is deliberately withdrawn from the superficialities and directed inward. It is steadily drawn into the inner and deeper regions of the being till it arrives at the core of itself, the *antarātman*, true soul, the psychic being which is the Divine seated within the individual. This is the realisation of the Individual Divine.

Second, the consciousness is led to expand itself, grow out of its individual confines and spread out in waves of sympathy, love, harmony, unity in feeling etc. till it touches and links up with the universal Consciousness, becomes one with this infinite extension of the Spirit. This is the realisation of the Cosmic Divine.

Third, the human consciousness opens into the rising tiers of the Consciousness that lie above and beyond the highest reaches of the mind and gets

gradually fused into the various self-organisations or states of the Divine Consciousness that transcend the boundaries of this triple world of Ignorance. This is the crowning realisation of the Transcendent Divine.

Such is the mighty effort that is called for in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is recognised that human effort alone is totally unequal to the task and that it is only the Yoga-Shakti which has initiated this Yoga of the Lord for the divinisation of life through the transformation of human nature, that can effect the change and achieve the objective. The key therefore lies in an active surrender to this Divine Shakti. But till this inner surrender is complete, personal effort is indispensable. It is only when the surrender is integral that the working of the Divine Shakti, conditioned till then by the many reservations and resistances in the nature of the sadhaka, can come into its own unfettered role leading to a complete assumption of the sadhana in its hands of Grace. Till then exert, exert in the spirit of the call of Sri Aurobindo : "Stride swiftly, for the goal is far; rest not unduly, for thy Master is waiting for thee at the end of thy journey."

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