ALL LIFE IS YOGA

M. P. PANDIT

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

These series of *ALL LIFE IS YOGA* were issued periodically during the years 1967 - 1970. Some of the contents were of a topical nature; they have been retained as they were, in this collected edition, in view of their historical interest.
# CONTENTS

**First Series**

I—**ALL LIFE IS YOGA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Life is Yoga</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II—**PHILOSOPHY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Philosophy of Life</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatars</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Age</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Divine and Men</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering and Soul-Growth</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms: Spiritual-Supramental-Illumined</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III—**YOGA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and Religion-I</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and Religion-II</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadhana and Life</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and Experiences</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and Illnesses</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantra</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudra</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV—**LIFE AFTER DEATH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life After Death</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul and Regression</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital Being</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo and the Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo: Philosopher or Mystic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mother’s Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mother’s Help Even After Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Second Series</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Ashram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Its Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Ashram Some Objections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Matters Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effort and Karma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divine Compassion and Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Service and Egoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thought or Action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner Silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astral Projection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mantra and Tantra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo and the Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramanuja and Sri Aurobindo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Integral Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mother’s Darshan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Ingratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material Progress and Spiritual Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beatniks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Third Series

#### I—The Tradition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Vedic Symbolism</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantra</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Place of Gita in the Evolution of the Indian Tradition</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Culture (Some Misconceptions)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### II—Sri Aurobindo: Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo's Vision of One World</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Destiny of the Individual in Sri Aurobindo's Thought</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine - Ishvara - Soul</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychic Being</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatars - Gods (I)</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatars - Gods (II)</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorakhnath</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### III—Sadhana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadhana and Life</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evocation and Invocation</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma - Prayer (I)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma - Prayer (II)</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantra Sadhana</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### IV—General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Unity</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Memories (I)</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Memories (II)</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicides &amp; Suicides</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattvic Food</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### V—Miscellany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miscellany</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Fourth Series

### I—In the Ashram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joy of Gratitude</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Our Ashram</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Unscheduled Darshan</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Ashram</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mother’s Blessings</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mother’s Feet</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II—Yoga and Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luminous Preservation of Sri Aurobindo’s Body</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Bliss — Higher Force</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate-Lines — Bad Thoughts</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarasvati Japa</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychic Being — Atman — Vyahritis</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Defects and Karma</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dope Evil</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Explanations</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mother &amp; Dreams</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III—Book-Shelf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother of Love</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Ramana Maharshi</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramdas Speaks</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahesh Yogi</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gita</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV—Miscellany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miscellany</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fifth Series

I—Philosophy

Mission of Sri Aurobindo ... 321
Sri Aurobindo's Teaching & Ashram ... 324
Are Machines Spiritual? ... 335
Sex-Problem ... 338
Reality ... 342
Deities ... 343
Katha Upanishad—A Query ... 345
Upanishad and Gita—A Problem ... 347
Sraddha ... 348

II—Yoga

Yoga-Sadhana (I) ... 353
Yoga-Sadhana (II) ... 357
Yoga-Sadhana (III) ... 361
Contradictions ... 364
Psychic (I) ... 366
Psychic (II) ... 367
Gita for the Common man ... 369

III—Book-Shelf

The Master and the disciple ... 373
Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo ... 378
Speech in Yoga ... 384
The Message of the Upanishads ... 391
Ramanuja and The Gita ... 394
Vaishnava Iconography ... 397
Spiritualism ... 400
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sixth Series</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I—Sri Aurobindo Ashram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Ashram &amp; Integral Yoga</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Change</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubts of a Visitor</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Man I Love</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II—Yoga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integral Yoga &amp; The Triple Path</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Attitude for the Sadhaka</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadhana in Life</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind &amp; Yoga</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Control</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Love &amp; Divine Love</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illusion &amp; the World</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical—Vital—Mental</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana &amp; Yajna</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Tantra</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakras—Reincarnation</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III—Book-shelf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga &amp; Mysticism</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Nanak</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramanuja on the Gita</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopinath Kaviraj</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-English Poetry</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo: Freedom Fighter</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV—Miscellany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Explanations</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions &amp; Connotations</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIRST SERIES

"ALL LIFE IS YOGA"

SRI AUROBINDO
"ALL LIFE IS YOGA"

_SRI AUROBINDO_
ALL LIFE IS YOGA

It was the usual question.

He is a busy executive whose interest in matters of the Spirit has been growing of late. He has studied Sri Aurobindo literature at considerable length and is keen on achieving whatever is possible by way of Self-realisation. He is fully occupied—he explained—with his routine work and the time he could spare for yoga is naturally very little. How to divide the time between the two contradictory interests was the question.

The evident answer is that there is no necessity at all to divide the time between the two. The secret, or rather the art, is to make the same time serve for both. It is a simultaneous endeavour. Outer activity, of whatever kind, is not and shall not be separate from the inner. For the whole meaning of this yoga is a change of consciousness. Whatever work one does, the quality of it, the effects of it, ultimately depend upon the consciousness in which it is done. The key lies at this base of consciousness. Looked at from this view-point, action is an unrolling of one’s consciousness. Both are related, both influence each other and hence shall be taken as one whole. Yoga consists in a constant deepening and heightening of the level of one’s consciousness; in an incessant purification of the stuff of the consciousness; and in exposing it to the vibrations of a Consciousness higher than one’s own. This operation has necessarily to extend all the time, day and night.

Thus in yoga there is no such thing as time for sadhana and time for work. They run into each other. Of course, there are special periods of concentration of the upward or the inward effort; they may be called the peak hours of yogic life. The rest of the hours provide the field as it were for the
confirmation and the testing of the results achieved during the special concentrated moments. At every minute, the Mother points out, one is offered opportunities to act in line with the inner ideal or in contradiction to it. Thus at each moment the being has to exert to be on the side of the Divine and what else is this but yoga?

The field of action is manifold. It is not merely physical. There are several strands to it: the vital overtones, the emotional complications, the psychological bearings and the subliminal promptings, not to speak of echoes from the subconscious. The more one becomes self-aware, the more one sees these bewildering elements in one’s nature and if one is earnest, one sees also how precisely the yogic attitude and the yogic impulses are to be brought to bear on each situation. In a sense these periods—when rightly lived—are more productive, yogically than hours of meditation or japa or whatever it is.

It is in this sense that Sri Aurobindo has said that “All Life is Yoga.”

II

In this Yoga we begin where we are. Each starts from the position in which he finds himself as a result of his past development. Consequently the sadhana of each is distinct from that of another. All the same there are certain broad lines of inner life which are common to all and which embrace both the inner and the outer life. To begin with, the first requirement—in all yogic effort—is aspiration. It is a seeking, a yearning for the truths of a higher or a deeper life, e.g. purity, dedication, love, harmony, etc. all of which are indispensable for any change from the lower into the higher life of the spirit. This aspiration is to be breathed into every activity of the being, on every plane of its movement. For
instance, on the physical plane, in the movements of the body, it translates itself into an effort of a purposive gathering of energies, a willful orientation of them Godward and a sustained processing of them in the way of cleansing. This automatically involves the counterpart of aspiration, i.e. rejection. It calls for the rejection of all that is contrary to what is aspired for. In the present context it means naturally a scrupulous avoidance of all dispersion of energies, control of their direction and elimination of all that taints their quality. Now this double operation of aspiration and rejection has necessarily to be applied at every minute of one's life, in every sphere of one's activity. If the flame of aspiration is once lit and fed with ardour and sincerity, every situation offers an opportunity for the sadhaka to test for himself the progress he has made and the leeway still to be made up. This is the utility of works or life for Yoga.

But the physical is not the only phase of our existence. There is that side of man which is governed by life-force, the vital part as it is termed in our Yoga. The dominating drive of this vital life is desire of self-aggrandisement, self-assertion and self-appropriation. The demand of aspiration is most imperative on this plane of the being. Beginning with the smallest movement, extending to larger and larger fields, this vitiating element of ego and desire has to be relentlessly ejected from the consciousness. One has only to try sincerely to do this and one realises in no time how difficult a task it is. While the negative aspect of this effort at vital purification is one of rejection, the positive is one of self-dedication and self-surrender to the Divine. Both proceed simultaneously and reinforce each other.

Rendered on a still higher plane of our existence i.e. the mind, this discipline calls for a wholesale rejection of all mental activity which is not relevant to the upward endeavour,
Secondly, it entails a steady denial of all thoughts and ideas which tend, if not aim, to weaken the higher aspiration. Negatively, this means an elimination of the whole crowd of useless thoughts, rejection of contrary and inimical suggestions and other mental formations; positively, one has to build up a climate of concentration, harmony and peace in the mind, in which atmosphere alone the right kind of thoughts are formed or received and shaped. This too, it will be recognised, is an activity that has to be pursued at every moment of one’s life, whether in an office, in a market place or in a prayer room.

All the demarcations or segmentations are on the outside; inside all intermingle, all are one. What is done at one point has its consequences at every other point. This Yoga proceeds upon this basic truth and can be pursued successfully only when life is accepted as co-extensive with Yoga.
II

PHILOSOPHY
MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

I am asked what is my philosophy of life.

To be frank I did not start life with any philosophy formulated by myself or by somebody else for me. A frame of values has formed itself under the direct inspiration of the Mother and that has been governing my perspective of men and things.

I regard the Divine as the sole Reality. All else derives from it. Each form contains something of the Divine and all together strive to embody and express more and more of the Divine as they develop in their evolution. The Divine element is there instinct in each form in creation.

This basic oneness, however, is in the Soul. There all are equal in God. The variations come in the expression, in the stress of manifestation. But each variation has its justification in the Divine scheme of things and should be accepted, respected and accommodated by the others. This necessitates that I recognise the right of others to express the Truth in their own way with as much freedom as I claim for myself. Not only that, there is something more. If I am awake to this fact of the existence of the One Divine and of all as so many members of the Cosmic Being, it is my privilege to help, as far as I can from my state of development, the others who are yet to arrive at that stage. Put in practical terms it means that I have good-will for all, not my human brethren alone but for all creatures on earth and elsewhere, vasudhaiva kutumbakam.

So far regarding my outlook on the world. But this outlook, to be real and effective, must be a natural result of a corresponding inlook. I am aware of a Presence which becomes articulate in me each time I think of the Mother or
open myself to Her. It is the Breath of the Divine within. My preoccupation is to turn the doors of my perception inwards and orientate all my faculties towards this Master within. A relentless pursuit to contact and establish a union with this inner Divine is the master-idea that governs my life—the whole of it. Indeed, the outer life is not separate from the inner; in fact, it is only an extension of the inner living. All mental exertion and expression, all physical work, all emotional outflow—all these are so many logs of fuel thrown into the burning fire that is lit on the altar of my soul by the Guru. I look upon the life that is given me by the Mother, with all its opulence, as a sacred trust and I seek to cherish each moment of the bounty by pouring the heart’s adoration and the being’s service of love to Her who occupies me.

All along I am conscious of the limitations of my equipment. But whoever reached the summit on his own? The dependence, the entire reliance is on Her Grace which is real and vivid to me every second of my life. The effort is only the human side of the operation of the Divine Grace.

This then is my philosophy. A conviction that all is a manifestation of the Divine; all are labouring to express the Divine within, consciously or unconsciously; the natural attitude of every awakened soul in this cosmic labour should be one of benevolence towards all; each individual has to justify his existence, justify the chance given to him to participate in this Divine Manifestation. And how else can he do it except by rising to his highest potential, by realising his innate Divine Nature? This is the object of human life: to realise the Divine within, to perceive and unite with the Divine in all, to become one with the Divine who is the Source of All.
AVATARS

Question: There have been a number of avatars in history. Even today we hear of so many avatars. In spite of them the world has continued to be as miserable a place as ever. The coming and going of avatars has had no perceptible effect and yet the Indian mind continues to adore and worship these avatars. How to explain this anomaly?

Answer: The avatar is a fact. An avatar is a purposive descent, avatarana, of the divine creative consciousness for the purpose of effecting certain crucial turns in the evolutionary journey of this creation and for establishing newer and newer principles of existence in the Manifestation. Naturally such avatars do not come every day. They come only at appropriate junctures in the progression of the Cosmic Spirit. It goes without saying that everyone called by that appellation by the credulous is not an avatar. Emanations or vibhutis are many, but real avatar is less frequent.

Thus the avatars have a definite role to play in the scheme of this creation. Their roles have been strikingly celebrated in the parable of Dasavatara. It is shown there how each special manifestation had to intervene at a critical period of transition from one fundamental stage to another. But for them, the world today could not have been what it is. It is not true to say that humanity, or, for that matter the world, continues to be as bad as ever. A detached study of History is bound to focus our attention on the steady rise in the curve of consciousness in humanity bringing it to the present summit of the mental growth. Even from the material point of view there has been a greater exploitation of the physical potentialities than ever before. The progress has been all-round at certain points. Some of the heights that were attained before may appear to have been lost; but there has come instead a
greater width, a larger complexity and plasticity of movement. In the rapid course of natural evolution no gains are really lost. Some are drawn back and held in reserve, new ones are forged and both the old and the new emerge in a still newer integrated form at a later stage.

The work of the avatar is thus largely in the field of consciousness and that is not usually patent to the physical eye though it leaves its impacts on the subtler domains of existence. Spectacular results with physical overtones may follow or may not, but their work is real nonetheless. If today one can think of God as Beauty, as Delight, and liberate oneself in the Beautiful and the Joyous, it is because an avatar like Sri Krishna came and worked for the establishment of the Divinity of Ananda on earth. We may multiply the cases of avatarhood whether the beneficiaries recognise the fact or the extent of the past occult work or not. How many of the common folk know of the great scientists, the inventors and pioneers in the many domains of human knowledge, their work and their worth, though they enjoy the fruits of their cloistered labours?
NEW AGE

Question: The Annual Number of the 'Astrological Magazine' has an article under the caption: "The Comet and the New Yoga". It says inter alia—(1) the present Comet (1965) is stated by Bhujandara Nadi to appear in the 99th year of the Master C. V. Venkatasamy Rao who started the New Yoga in the month of May, 1910. (2) This Yoga was started in 1910 May, when Halley’s Comet touched our earth and its completion and fulfilment will be heralded likewise by the advent of a Comet. (3) B. N. says that after Kali 5065 the disciples will observe non-decaying bodies. (4) The principle of raising the dead will be possible. (5) The New Yoga ushers in the Superman with an eternal body which may be likened to a television picture...made up of very subtle matter. It shines like a golden body by its inherent lustre. It is such a body that the New Yoga creates. (6) The Comet with a long tail gives pure knowledge.

Points for clarification: A few days ago I got an extract of what was described as the Mother’s message on the appearance of the Comet. The Mother also confirms that the Purusha of the Comet taught some significant things. In this connection I got some curiosity to know about the Master of Occultism, Sri C. V. V. Rao and the Bhujandara Nadi.

The year of the New Yoga coincides with the arrival of Sri Aurobindo in 1910. The predictions mentioned before anticipate Sri Aurobindo’s description of the Divine Body. Yet another reference to the glorious body is also to be found in St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.

In the Mother’s 'Prayers and Meditations', She says "The things that are promised will be fulfilled." Have these things been adumbrated by the author of the said Nadi and St. Paul?

Answer: In the spiritual evolution of the creation when new truths prepare to manifest themselves, there is a general
pressure in the earth atmosphere seeking for instruments for the purpose of their expression and effectuation. Many react to this pressure, each in his own way. The way in which the pressing truth is grasped, mentally understood and sought to be expressed depends upon the background—physical, mental and spiritual—of the receiving individual. Naturally, there is a variation in these matters. This is what has apparently happened in the early years of the present century. This period marks the inception of a concrete movement in the mind-world towards a new age in human evolution. Many responded to this urge and registered a clear perception that a new era was in preparing. But each formed his own conception of what would constitute the fundamentals of the new development and what were to be the means by which the new spirit would establish itself. That would explain the origin of the many movements started all over the world with the object of ushering in a new age. Their methods vary with the type of the personalities that initiated these movements. Some lay stress on the life-energy as the main means to bring about this change. The individual life-energy is linked to a larger formation of the universal energy, intensified and directed to exert itself to bring about a growth in the capacities and powers of the practicant, much beyond the normal limits. Some others proceed by cultivating the mental apparatus—releasing it into its wider subliminal field; yet some others seek to utilise what they call their spiritual power. Now spiritual is a very big term. Anything that derives from the Spirit is spiritual; but it is always graded according to the level of being where it manifests and the field in which it works. So here again the processes are widely different though the avowed objective is the same.

The C.V.V. movement, the Theosophical movement, the Subud etc., are to be seen with this background. The terms
they use may be similar but on a closer analysis you will see that the connotations are very different. The New Body has been spoken of from very ancient times in all traditions as the luminous Body, Corps Glorieux, Cintamayla Deha etc., but the methods to build such a body have ranged from physical alchemy to spiritual transformation. Sri Aurobindo approaches the question from the spiritual end. He believes, along with the Vedic rishis, that the luminous life can only be the culmination of a many-sided action of a plenary truth-power of the Divine, rtam jyotih. The process by which this spiritual dynamis works is not by the aggrandisement of the powers of matter, life and mind but by their purification and transformation. In the context of his vision and the Yoga to translate it into reality, the deathless body can only be a high-point of a long course of an integral Yoga pursued exclusively. It involves not only the complete spiritualisation of the manifold system of man but a minute and thorough overhauling of the very cellular structure of the physical body. In the nature of things the effort is more occult than patent and it is bound to take a considerable stretch of time before the first practical results become visible to the physical eye.

Meanwhile happenings like the coming of the Comet you mention can only be confirmatory signs of the work that is going on on the subtler planes of existence. All the various movements that you have in mind can at best act as feeders to this central stream of the Divine Evolution that is concentrated in humanity at its highest level today. Even the frequent disasters, natural and otherwise, that we see in the world of today are only indices of the commotion that is caused in the subtler worlds by the resistance of the long established powers in creation against the claim of newer and higher powers to manifest on this earth which is the evolutionary centre of our creation.
You refer to the things that were promised. No, they are not what were promised by human saints and sages to their followers. They constitute the Promise given by the Supreme to its own Emanation when it started out on its career of manifestation long before Time and Space came to be—the original Promise of the revelation of Divine Light, Power and Bliss.
THE DIVINE AND MEN

Question: If man is really divine as said by Masters like Sri Aurobindo, then how is it that men do not normally feel or see the divine either in themselves or in others? There is not even a seeking for the divine on a measurable scale. The divine is not a live factor as far as the majority of men are concerned, why is it so?

Answer: Things could not be otherwise in the present state of humanity. Ours is an evolutionary world and things are in varying stages of development of consciousness. Men, being part of this creation, are also in different stages of this growth of awareness. Each can know, can be aware, only at the level of his development of consciousness. Most men are yet in a rudimentary state of mental consciousness and their faculties function under the heavy weight of the Cosmic Ignorance; they are aware only of what the senses present to them, aware only of the surfaces but not of what is behind. Thus it is that man is not normally aware of what is within him precisely because he has not yet attained to the perceptive consciousness which can spontaneously feel this veiled Self within. When it is said that man is divine it naturally means that he is divine at the core. As long as he is engrossed, as most men are, in the extrovert play of the senses, bahirmukha, he cannot feel, much less, see, the truth of the divinity that is concealed in the depths of his being. It is only when some gap is made in his surface crust either as a result of past efforts, or as a matter of sheer Grace, that an awareness of the truth dawns upon him, takes firm hold on his being as a seeking and the pilgrim sets out on the great Journey.

It is thus a matter of one’s development. The consciousness has to grow—in height, width and depth—in order to
take cognisance of things beyond its immediate frontal grasp. This is so not only in the case of the Divine but even of verities of the Divine Truth like Beauty, Harmony, Joy etc. The seeds of Beauty and Harmony and Joy are there in the profound of every created being. But how many are conscious of it, and how few attain to their possession or expression? It is only those who are either born with a sensitivity to these truths or whose consciousness has been trained and processed to respond to the appeal of these values that take cognisance of them and illuminate their lives by them. Similarly it is only those men who are brought up to the required stage of development in their past births, or those whose sensitivity to the breath of God has been awakened and sharpened—say by holy company—satsang—or education or impacts of circumstances—that respond to the call of the Divine. No doubt they are in a minority and for a long time to come—till the evolutionary phase definitely enters into the belt of knowledge*—it will be so. It is only as the minority digs itself in and slowly enlarges its frontiers of the reign of the spirit that larger areas of human mind will receive the illumination and turn naturally towards the Life Divine.

* And this is the promise held out by the entry of the powers of the Supermind, the dynamis of spiritual Knowledge-Will, in the earthfield of the Cosmic Evolution. As it establishes and organises itself in action, evolution at its height will no more proceed in the shadow of Ignorance but be led forward by a Knowledge-Light of the Gnosis.
SUFFERING AND SOUL-GROWTH

Question: Sri Aurobindo has stated that the soul may even choose suffering for a quicker growth. How is that possible? The normal experience is that suffering breaks a man, makes him sour and renders him unfit to draw the full sap of life. How can growth be at all fostered in such circumstances?

Answer: The soul takes birth for growth. The growth is through experience. And experience is necessarily varied in its character lending spice to the adventure. Certain kinds of experience promote a leisurely growth and others make for a speedier development. When the soul is in need of quick self-growth it chooses the latter though it is the more strenuous way. It is like the physical culturist choosing resistance exercises and doing them the hard way, “till it hurts” as they say. That way the muscles are readily formed and the physical development quickened. When the being is subjected to such a pressure of circumstances and experiences, it learns to summon all its latent energies and develops the mettle that alone can meet the situation. That is Nature’s way. No doubt many break in the course of the experiment but that is perhaps inevitable in such a large endeavour.

It must be noted in this context that what impinges upon the surface being as pain, as suffering, does not necessarily strike so to the being within, the soul. The soul receives the impact in a totally different poise and as it develops in maturity it draws the Ananda of existence even from what we call suffering. As one develops even mentally, one can catch by way of reflection something of this capacity of the soul, not only to receive unpleasurable impacts with a calm quietude but even—under certain circumstances—take a sharp joy in these stresses from outside. These terms of pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering are
only relative. Their values change according to the state of consciousness that receives them.

A closer analysis of this problem of pain and suffering reveals that there is pain because our surface consciousness which receives the impacts is limited and unequal to bear them. If that consciousness could be enlarged and strengthened then the result would be different. This change can only be brought about by opening our inner recesses and connecting the surface limited consciousness with the larger and deeper consciousness within. Thus the way is for our external being to take on progressively the character of our inner being, the soul. That is the only way in which we can hope to front the contacts of life with a superiority that masters and draws from them what can most contribute to our development. For that purpose it is necessary that we cultivate a psychological discipline of first separating our consciousness from the external physical nature: Purusha from Prakriti. Mentally we decide to stand above the mechanical activity of the outer being. Thereafter we turn our consciousness inward, towards the soul, and gradually learn to think and act from this deeper base. Once the consciousness gets habituated to take a new status, its whole manner of action and reaction changes. Things no more impinge upon us with their usual stress of dualities.
TERMS: SPIRITUAL—SUPRAMENTAL—ILLUMINED

Normally the term ‘spiritual plane’ is applied to the whole region above the mind in the cosmic gradation. But, in fact, the *spiritual* is what pertains to the inner reality of things and hence the spiritual domain exists at every level of creation behind the surface formulations in terms of matter or life or mind etc.

The supramental is a particular poise of the creative Spirit in this gradation of existence. It can be described as a plenary organisation of the Knowledge-Will dynamis of the Divine. In other words it is a special determination of the Spirit. One can live in the spiritual plane without any contact with the Supramental; but one cannot live in the Supramental without at the same time living in a spiritual consciousness.

The difference between illumination and illumination plus transformation is this. ‘Illumined’ means lit up by something, in the context a spiritual Light. A nature can be illumined at certain moments, in certain poises, by the light of Knowledge. And yet it can remain generally what it has always been. Only a part of it is so illumined and effective action proceeds from that poise. But if the nature is also transformed then it means the illumination takes possession of all the nature that has been changed. Illumination becomes natural, continuous; the nature becomes luminous with a self-embodied light.

There are grades of illumination. At each level of man’s ascent up the evolutionary ladder there is a corresponding illumination. The highest illumination as far as our Manifestation is concerned comes about in the Gnosis.
III

YOGA
YOGA AND RELIGION—I

Question: Why is Yoga necessary? Is it not enough to practise our age-old religion that has traditionally come down to us?

Answer: The question really is not religion or yoga but religion and yoga. The two, though not the same, are yet not opposed to each other. In fact, true religion prepares the way for yoga, and genuine yoga takes up into itself the best of religion.

Let me explain.

Broadly speaking, religion awakens the mind of man to the existence of a Reality or a Being greater than himself. It teaches him to enter into some kind of relation with that Reality—let us call it God—by means of worship, prayer, ritual, catechism etc. It emphasises the utter dependence of man on God for his well-being, not only in this world but in other worlds as well. It inculcates a discipline, physical, moral and emotional, by which his animal propensities are gradually brought under control and governed by enlightened will: the animal man develops into a mental man, son of Manu.

This is the service that religion at its best renders to man. It was inevitable that in the course of the growth of this institution of religion, its self-protecting and assertive features developed into walls around it, e.g., dogma, claims for monopoly of the Truth of God, over-emphasis on forms etc. These defects are particularly noticeable on the institutional side of religion with which, however, we are not at the moment concerned. To confine ourselves to the topics under discussion; religion, as we see, posits a God outside of ourselves. Man needs to rely upon such an outside support as long as he does not become fully aware of himself. But
once he is so aware he begins to question this faith. It is at this point that spiritual wisdom steps in and tells him: "God is not outside. He is within yourself. You can become conscious of His presence and even unite yourself convincingly with Him if only you take steps therefor. You have to follow, for that purpose, a psychological discipline that trains your consciousness to realise its true nature, in a word, do yoga."

Secondly, how far religion can suffice for man depends upon the goal we set for him. If it is just a sense of security by way of assured grace and help of God and a sense of moral elevation, religion, as it is practised normally, should do. But is man content with that? Can he be happy with the state of existence realisable by the practice of religion? It is a universal experience that the happiness of man does not depend upon external aid or upon his moral status but on something within himself. It is the condition of his consciousness, the way in which it receives contacts and reacts to them that decides whether a man is happy or otherwise. Further, if we expect of man that he should one day be able to liberate himself from all the bonds of imperfection and limitations with which he is tied, then again it is a matter of his consciousness; it is his inner being, his consciousness that has to be cultured and set to function in the way that leads to freedom from ignorance. And this religion cannot do. Where it can positively contribute to this development it already ceases to be the formal religion we are familiar with; it turns into upasana which is but a form of yoga.

For any change in the nature of man, the effort has to be directed inward. It is only a psychological practice which takes up the faculties of our consciousness and subjects them to a growing enlightenment and a radical turn of functioning that can liberate from thraldom to the Nature of Ignorance.
Formal religion, its ceremonies, rituals, touch only the surface being and leave the fundamental nature as it is. A more concentrated effort is needed to change that nature and that is provided only by spiritual disciplines.

To sum up: religion prepares man for the state at which spirituality steps in. Man can change himself only when he has arrived at the possibility of the change. Religion brings him to the door or rather the threshold of awakening to the necessity of this change of consciousness. Spirituality leads him across and yoga effectuates it.
YOGA AND RELIGION—II

Question: What exactly is meant by "the age of religion is over"? Does it mean that religion is of no use now? By religion I do not mean mere rituals; I mean the spirit of religion.

Answer: The role of religion in the evolution of man has been to awaken him to a sense of a Reality greater than himself and educate him in the ways of establishing contact with that Reality in some form or the other. When that is done, when man is awakened to this higher truth of life it has to give place to another line of endeavour—the yogic, the mystic or the spiritual—which works out the practical steps of effecting a union of his being with the Reality. Clearly not all the rituals or even the spirit of religion can effect this union. A practical discipline is needed for the purpose and that always goes beyond the frame of religion. It is not that religion is going to disappear from the scene. It will be there always as a necessary scaffolding for that section of humanity which needs it. What is meant is that it is no more the highest expression of Truth or the sole way to the Truth.
SADHANA AND LIFE

Regarding the conflict between sadhana and life, things are not so rigid and clear cut. Actually, with a sincere sadhaka, sadhana flows into life and life grows into sadhana. It is entirely a question of attitude, not primarily a matter of omissions and commissions in detail. As the spiritual outlook and attitude forms itself it does formulate itself in the movements of day-to-day life in a progressive manner. Even mistakes or lapses are made occasions for movements of fresh upliftment. The inter-play between the two proceeds towards perfection in a graduated manner. Each feeds the other and imperfections in one are gradually replaced by the growing perfections in the other. There is no such thing as absolute perfection in this world of flux. Once you accept that the key to an orderly and purposeful life lies in the spirit, there is no other course but to apply it to every situation whatever the apparent consequences may be. The significance of each act, for a sadhaka, should be not in terms of material values but in terms of his inner growth. Lived in this spirit, life acquires a new meaning and every moment becomes precious as a feeder for the growth of the soul within.
YOGA AND EXPERIENCES

You are right: true yogis are averse to speaking about their spiritual experiences. And they have a very good reason for it. It is not due to any sense of humility, as you are disposed to think, but due to a healthy rule in spiritual life in these matters. The seeker is enjoined not to speak of his inner experiences to anyone for various occult reasons. To speak of an experience of this type invariably weakens it. One can afford to speak of such an experience only when it stabilises itself and gets established into a realisation. But when that happens all values change and the experiences pass into the structure of the consciousness. They do not have the same value to the man who has realised, as they may have to the person who enquires, himself being outside these experiences.

But you can take it as a verifiable truth that when one opens into the ranges of a consciousness which is other than the normal human outward consciousness, the transition is marked by various phenomena of which the seeing of lights, hearing of sounds, are the more prominent. It only means the subtler levels of existence are impinging upon the inner hearing and inner sight. Others may get other kinds of experiences like a descent of peace, ascension into states of bliss or power, etc. There is no absolute rule in these things. One can proceed and arrive without seeing lights and colours or hearing sounds. It depends upon what centres of the individual consciousness are developed and active. So if any yogi tells you that he does not hear the sounds, there is no reason to suspect that he wishes to withhold any information.

The anahata sound is a fact. It is a term that denotes the subtle-physical expression of the nada, the primordial Sound out of whose womb the Creation has come to be. In
yoga one can hear this sound if the appropriate discipline is undergone. Or in some cases the phenomena may happen by themselves in the course of a general expansion or deepening of the consciousness. The sound varies in form from centre to centre. These sounds cannot be grasped by the normal physical ear or physical instruments. Each kind of phenomena calls for its own kind of perceptive faculties.

These phenomena can be experienced in the practice of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. But, naturally, not by every practicant in the same form. Further, they have no special importance to us in the conversion and transformation of consciousness which we seek. At the most, they are fingerprints of the workings of the Yoga Power. We observe them but do not seek for them.

YOGA AND ILLNESSES

I note with interest that you trace physical maladies to some imbalance in the mind and seek to correct them by processes operating primarily on the mind and only secondarily on the physical. This is indeed a commendable advance on the medical stand-point that has been in vogue for so many decades. We, the disciples and students of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, go a step still further. For we see and feel behind both the body and the mind something else which really determines the movements of the physical body, the life-force and the mental energies—the soul. If one can get at this soul-level of the being, by any means, then one can decisively influence and govern the life of the instruments of the soul. A ray of Peace directed from the depths of the soul has a force for healing which no material means can have. This power of the soul or, to put it in more general terms, power of the deeper Spirit can impose its own harmony on the body and mind and set things right in
no time. The spiritual power in question may be operated by oneself from within or may be invoked from an external source. The Spirit is One, the Consciousness is One and a pressure at one point can have its consequences at another chosen point if only one knows how to operate these things.

I have spoken of the fundamental principle. Its application is naturally governed by so many factors into which I do not feel obliged to enter at this stage of our dialogue.
YOGA AND ILLNESSES

I am indeed happy to know of the work you are doing. It is an unmistakable sign of the advance in current thinking on the subject of human diseases that so many centres should have come into being in the country for the express purpose of tracing the psychological origin of illnesses which manifest in the physical body. Some time ago, we had here Dr. Caycedo who has started a psychosomatic Centre. And it was only recently that I received an unusual book in Kannada from a well-known physician at Bangalore, giving the cream of his experience in this line. He too comes to the conclusion that the origin of most persistent diseases is in the mind.

I may add that in our yoga we perceive that almost every illness is a result of a certain imbalance on the subtler levels of one’s being. The disturbance is first in the domain of the subtle physical consciousness—what the Mother calls the nervous envelope—the physical disease is the final outcome. The most effective way to check, if not eliminate, most illnesses is to be vigilant and keep out all movements of disharmony from the conscious layers of our existence. What about the Unconscious, the moderns would ask. I would at once say that the role of the unconscious has been unnecessarily exaggerated. Whatever it is, it is commonsense that in the measure we become more conscious and extend the area of our normal consciousness the belt of the unconscious diminishes. A strong will consciously put on the system with persistence does tell in the end.

I do not know how far your thinking would accept what are self-evident and verifiable truths to us here.
OPENING

You ask me to explain what precisely is meant by “Look within” and “Open yourself to Mother”. Well, it is difficult to define these terms, but, perhaps, an illustrative approach might help.

To look within does not mean to look with the physical eyes. It means to become aware and watch. For instance, you have thoughts, feelings, ideas moving in your mind or heart. When you withdraw your preoccupation with outside activities and try to see what are the thoughts or feelings that are current inside, that may be said to be looking within yourself. To put it differently, to hold back your attention from external objects and to direct it to something internal within yourself is to look within. In philosophical language, these two lookings may be described as objective and subjective.

In the context in which this expression occurs, i.e. in yogic literature, it simply means to fix your attention on your own consciousness. It may be to watch what is going on there or to listen to the response to any question that may be referred to within.

To open oneself to anything means to expose oneself to the vibrations of that particular thing. For instance, if you are accustomed to get angry every now and then you would be said to be open to anger. Similarly, if you are sensitive and react to sights of beauty, glory and other scenes of enchantment in Nature, you may be said to be open to Beauty. So also with regard to music, ideas etc. Also if you are receptive to the thoughts and influences of any particular person, you are said to be open to him. You will understand, from this example, that to be open to Mother is to be turned towards, inclined to, receptive to the influence and the workings of the Mother. That is, you accept Her personality, the
spiritual Truth She stands for, the teaching in which Her ideal is formulated. You are not only receptive mentally and accept these things but even the other parts of yourself, not only the conscious mind but the rest of the mental layers, the heart and all, lay themselves absorbent, open to the vibrations of the Mother.

There are persons who are open to Buddha i.e., the influence of Buddha, there are those who are open to Krishna. This opening is not confined to the spiritual domain alone. One can be open to Marx as well and absorb the spirit and inspiration of his gospel.
DEPRESSIONS

You ask how to face the resistance of the vital when it refuses to cooperate in your sadhana and puts a spell of depression on you.

To face it squarely. Once you make up your mind you have only to persist in the chosen course and go on in spite of everything. At first there is the sulking of the recalcitrant parts and their furious lashings. But if you refuse to be intimidated and stick to your resolution, take the period of depression as something to be gone through and proceed without reference to these distractions, the opposing elements lose their edge by and by. Each successive depression is shorter in duration and more bearable than the previous one.

There are certain positive steps which can lessen the intensity of this struggle behind the scenes. The first condition is, of course, a living knowledge that what you are passing through is only a transitional stage, and that it is not special to you but a universal phenomenon. It has its beginning and it has its end too. Secondly you must occupy yourself in something that holds the attention during such periods,—reading, manual work, congenial company—whatever takes the mind off from its shadow of depression. Third, a felt prayer to the Divine, the Guru, for a ray of light. A prayer with the confidence that the response is sure to come, if not today definitely tomorrow. The Divine is there to help and see you through. Once you have made the heart’s surrender to Him, and lived in utter dependence upon Him even for a moment, the link is forged and you are not alone.

What is important is that you should not accept to live with depressions. You should not allow them to form a habit of companioning you. As Sri Aurobindo has said, the only thing to be done with a depression is to throw it out.
However reasonable they may seem, they are always agents in disguise of the enemy and create favourable conditions in your being for further visitations of the hostiles. Depression is the enemy of spiritual progress. Know it to be such and resolutely refuse to be a party to it. Ignore it if you can, fight it if you must. After all your soul is greater than your mind or the vital which protest and seek to throw a spanner in the work. Summon the strength of the soul, rely upon the Grace to see you through. No one who has done so has ever failed.
DOUBT

This is a very common phenomenon in spiritual life. Whenever the seeker has gained something or is about to do so, the adverse forces who are set against spiritual progress anywhere in the world—for that automatically means a diminution of their empire—create conditions, precipitate circumstances in which the person concerned is likely to get upset and lose the poise. Most often the apparent causes for these disturbances turn out to be baseless or flimsy on clear analysis. At times of course, the circumstances are really trying. But the point is, the sole intention behind this projection of unfavourable situations is to knock you out and put you in a condition in which you can not only not receive anything by way of spiritual benefit but also lose what you have got.

In the present case, the hostiles have struck at your weak point. I mean that part of your mind which insists on a logical arrangement of everything in the universe and is fearful of any logic other than its own. Unless things fit into the moulds prepared by its own samskaras and training, they are suspect. It won’t give you peace of mind unless you cut up your world to fit nicely into its own conceptual frame. Its favourite weapon of offence is Doubt. And Doubt is a dynamite that can undermine a whole edifice. You can take it that every doubt that comes in such circumstances is illegitimate. It really does not matter if, while rejecting a hundred doubts in this summary fashion, a few legitimate doubts get brushed aside.

Coming to the subject that has caused such a huge commotion in your mind and the vital being: how does it concern you as an individual devoted to the sadhana of the Integral Yoga, what people say or do not say about some-
body with whom you are not connected in any way? Why do you assume that all that is reported is true? And even assuming that the person in question is guilty of all the misdeeds that are laid at his door, why should you think that the Divine will let down sincere seekers who sought Him through that individual? Have you not read Sri Aurobindo's categorical declaration that whatever the drawbacks or shortcomings of a guru, if one surrenders to that guru sincerely, the limitations of the guru cannot stand in the way of progress? For, in truth, in surrendering inwardly to a human guru it is really to the Divine guru of the universe that one gives up oneself. And the Divine safeguards his real interests.

I am not concerned at the moment to say whether all the charges of seduction etc., are true in the case of the person in question. Suffice it to say that beings of this sort are usually so constituted that they do not need these physical indulgences for their enjoyment. They draw food in a very subtle way. They glory in their asceticism. The enjoyment they seek is one of domination, possession and usurpation.

Your mind was upset by the incident not because of the reports spoken and heard but because the unholy vibrations of gossip and scandal,—which are the usual output of the lower vital,—found their way into your receptive being. All the rest is a logical development.
EXPERIENCES

Regarding the voices that you hear and the colours that you see. Normally these are phenomena that come when one opens to levels of consciousness that are other than what are normal to man. When the visual centre opens to these supra-physical planes of existence, there is often this play of images, colours, lights etc. When it is the centre of audition that is opened, the impact is felt often through particular kinds of sounds or voices. You ask if these voices can be taken as the promptings of God. I would answer, not always. Very often there are interferences by beings of the supra-physical planes which masquerade as the Divine or as your friends and misguide you. It is only when you have undergone a sufficient measure of psychological purification that you can hope to have the necessary discrimination to distinguish the true from the false. Or there must be an assured contact with the soul or the psychic being within. In that case there is an automatic assent or dissent when these experiences come by. If you are not sure of either of these then you have to be very wary, examine every suggestion in the light of common-sense and accept only what satisfies your innermost standard of selection.

The condition of absolute quiet is a result of considerable effort in meditation. It does not come, or if it comes does not last for long, in the earlier stages. The spells of silence or delight that you may be vouchsafed by the Grace in these beginnings are really in the nature of foretastes of what is intended for you, promise of what is held for you in the unfolding of the possibilities of your being. You should not feel discouraged in their absence. Rather you should aspire with faith and confidence for the return of these felicities since they have once come and stayed with you.
MANTRA

Question: It is said that one has to accept the mantra only from the guru, for then and only then it becomes living. Does this truth hold good in our Gayatri Mantra?

Answer: It is true that a mantra received from a guru has a living power which communicates itself to the recipient immediately. It is possible, however, to awaken the potency of a mantra by one’s own adoration, repetition and faith. For each such mantra is charged with spiritual power by its seer who gave it its sound-form. And that power can be evoked into action by tapasya. But this is an arduous task.

Regarding Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri: it has been released into the world by its seer with the necessary charge to make itself effective. Anyone who accepts the Ideal and the Truth of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching can verify the truth of this statement.

Just as no formal initiation, diksa, is necessary to start the yoga given by Sri Aurobindo, no formal communication of his Gayatri is necessary either. The technique of his yoga is in consonance with the state of development of the human mind. New conditions call for new methods.

Question: It is said that each sadhak can progress only through the kula, family, of his guru. Does this truth hold good in our yoga?

Answer: Neither in this yoga nor in any yoga. Only he is competent to initiate another into a yoga who has realised in himself the Truth of that path either in whole or in part. It does not matter to what family or gotra he belongs. The sastric injunction about the kula guru had a different background and spirit.
Question: To ward off difficulties (spiritual and mundane) I constantly utter the Mantra ‘Anandamayi, Caitanyamayi, Satyamayi Param’ and expect from Mother some relief. But I do not get any perceivable response. Is it wrong to expect this?

Answer: In the Mantra Sastra, each mantra has its deity as well as its purpose. For specific purposes specific mantras alone are to be used. A mantra for the restoration of health or warding off of death cannot naturally be used for the promotion of material prosperity like acquisition of wealth. The mantra you refer to is an invocation to the Supreme Divinity to reveal Herself—obviously for a spiritual fulfilment. I doubt if the difficulties you are beset with call for the application of this mantra. Under proper conditions what you expect from an upasana with this mantra is an energising of your consciousness with delight, a gradual change of its texture in terms of purity and Truth. The results start effectuating themselves somewhere on the deeper layers of the being and it takes time for them to come up to the surface though certain glimpses of the working are vouchsafed to the practicant now and then.

For the kind of difficulties that you meet with in daily life you may choose some of the well-known mantras from the scriptures like the Durge smrita harasi......(from Saptashati) or if you have that faith, just repeat the Mother’s name in an attitude of surrender to Her Will.

Question: Sometimes I utter the mantra conscious of its meaning but mostly parrot-like.

Answer: Naturally a mantra yields its fruits only when it is dwelt upon with a conscious identification with the body of its Idea: tad japah tadartha bhavanam. Stories of crowning results from a mere repetition of the mantra regardless of its being understood or not, regardless also of whether it is
correctly intoned or not, only underline with dramatic stress the necessity of devotion and persistence in these matters. Of course we exclude from our discussion at the moment the class of special mantras like the bijaksaras where a mere repetition of them in a particular sequence has an automatic effect. They are occult matters not germane to our purpose here.

Question: I think the Mother is not responding because there is an accumulation of papa in me.

Answer: It is not so. The action of the Divine Grace does not depend upon your deserts. It acts independently of your merit or demerit. What really decides the action is the intensity of your call and the extent of the sanction from the Divine for the operation of its Grace.

Question: Am I to console myself simply saying karmanyeva-dhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana?

Answer: The injunction of the Gita to do works without anticipation of the result is intended as a preliminary discipline for building up a strong spiritual adhara, not to console the weak or the less fortunate. If you can follow this precept even partially you will find a certain detachment growing in you. That is the beginning of a possible mastery over circumstances.
MUDRA

Question: What is Mudra? Why is so much importance given to it in the Tantras? How does the Mudra please the Gods?

Answer: Mudra is really a gesture of the body—any limb or limbs of the body—bringing out into an overt expression the state of consciousness that is gathered within. Thus when one surrenders oneself inwardly there is a particular physical gesture which expresses that state of submission; when the inner being is ready and calls the Deity the gesture is another. Each gesture, mudra, is an index of a world of feeling and psychological preparation that is going on within. The Gods look for these signs and naturally they are pleased when the right mudras are forthcoming.

The Kularnava Tantra and the Mahanirvana Tantra give considerable information on the subject.

Question: If Mudra is the expression of the inner state of our being, how do the yoni mudra and the like express an inner state?

Answer: Why not? The particular mudra that you refer to is really staggering in its conception. It means the Womb of things, the Womb of the universe, the Creatrix Supreme. One is either identified, on some plane of consciousness with that creative state, or is ready to give birth in his being to some new formation of the Gods.
IV

LIFE AFTER DEATH
LIFE AFTER DEATH

What happens after death is largely determined by what has happened in the life of the individual before death, i.e., during his life-time. The physical body is shed but the consciousness that lived in the body continues. It carries the movements which impelled it during its embodiment on the physical plane and hence its career after death is also governed by the same impulsions. The samskaras that were cultivated during the life in the body continue even after the body is dropped. No last minute tricks or subterfuges of repeating the name of God etc., can really alter this fact. If one wants to have a peaceful sojourn in the domain of light after passing, one has to work for it. The movements of the body, the life-force and the mind have to be educated to breathe more and more of peace and enlightenment till they win the right to live and emanate vibrations that are natural to the state of peace aspired for.

The individual who is accustomed to lead a life of passions, violence and disorder—whether of the physical kind or the mental does not matter much—can only continue the same movement even after death. The same momentum in the same direction accompanies him wherever he goes. That is why the ancients emphasised the necessity of equipping oneself here itself with the means to be happy hereafter; otherwise, they said, great is the perdition, mahati vinastih.

Secondly, it may be noted that heaven and hell are not some geographical locations in the universe where souls go according to their merit or demerit. Actually heaven and hell are states of consciousness. One need not die to experience them. A condition in which there is a natural harmony of movements, peace and bliss in the life-breath is heaven. So too a state of inner chaos, disharmony and helpless struggle
is hell. These are essentially inner conditions. Only, when one is living in the physical body their impingement is not so acute because of the presence of the physical body which blunts the edge of these vibrations. When the physical body is no more there to act as a buffer, the full weight of these psychological states falls upon the soul and one experiences the sharp intensity of these subtle formations. Here too, it will be clear to commonsense, the factor which decides whether one will pass through heaven or hell after death is really the kind of life led on earth and the psychological climate to which one has accustomed oneself.

This is the course of events followed in normal cases. It goes without saying that the situation can be altered—and indeed is altered—when there intervenes on the scene a supernormal agency like the Divine Grace or the help of a Guru which acts sovereignly to lift up the departing soul from its karmic morass and land it safe in its home of rest, deferring the working out of the process of karma to the next embodiment. The Grace assures a quick and smooth passage.
SOUL AND REGRESSION

1. You are right, a soul which has once taken a human body does not take an animal body subsequently. It is against the law and process of evolution for such regressions to take place. There are, of course, exceptions as in the case of borderline souls which have just crossed the animal belt and taken human birth. In such cases it is possible that the soul may find itself not sufficiently equipped to carry the human embodiment and may choose to re-enter the previous condition to make up the hiatus. There are also cases when after death, parts of the vital being which are strongly attached to objects on the earth detach themselves temporarily and come back to the earth, enter animal bodies appropriate to the unexhausted karma, and have their innings. I have discussed this question in the book, "Life behind Life".

2. It is not possible for an ordinary soul in evolution to work out its mission in the worlds above the physical. The earth is the appointed field for evolution, for progress. On the other planes the movement is not one of progress, not of evolutionary growth. Things are fixed in their set moulds on those planes and hence there is no scope for the growth and development of evolving souls in those worlds. The soul that wants to progress towards the Divine has got to come back to the earth.
VITAL BEING

Question: It is said that after death the vital being retires to the vital world and stays there till the vital sheath is dissolved. What becomes of the psychic being during this period? Does it retire to the psychic world of rest or has it to stay in the vital world with the vital being? And what becomes of the mental being during the period? Has it to live in the vital world?

Answer: The situation can be better grasped if we conceive of the central i.e., the psychic being leaving the physical body enclosed within so many sheaths. It is not as if the psychic being goes accompanied by so many beings. The psychic being passes through the various subtle worlds on its way to its place of rest. It has necessarily to halt in the vital world till the vital sheath that covers it is dissolved. The mental personality perforce continues till the central being moves forward to the mental world and subjects the mental sheath to the process of dissolution. It is only after all these sheaths fall off that the psychic being is freed to retire to the psychic world.

Question: What becomes of the experiences gathered by the vital being in the previous life? For it is said that the vital being also dissolves.

Answer: The essence of the experiences gathered during the life-time—whether by the vital or the mental being—is taken up by the psychic being at the time of departure from the physical body. So the core of the experience remains.

The vital being as such does not dissolve. Mostly what goes by the name is only the sheath. When a vital being has actually evolved, it does not dissolve if it has acquired a sufficient measure of individuality. In that case the coating dissolves but the being bides its time in its world till the
central psychic being at its head is ready for another embodiment.

Question: When the psychic being gets ready to take a new birth it accepts the mental and the vital sheaths. Have these bodies any connection with the previous bodies? Or are they altogether new ones? And then what of the minor experiences of those bodies?

Answer: Normally when the psychic being sets out for a new embodiment it prepares its own mental, vital and other vehicles from the stuff of the respective worlds. These are fresh and need not have any connection with what were dissolved. This is the normal course. But in cases where the being is advanced far enough in the course of its evolution to have built up and integrated around itself the vehicular bodies of mental and vital substance, these latter are ready waiting for the return of the psychic being in their respective planes.

Regarding the experiences of the mental and the vital selves, they are assimilated in their core by the central being.
V

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER
SRI AUROBINDO:
PHILOSOPHER OR MYSTIC?

Question: Some say that Sri Aurobindo was a mystic but not a philosopher. Many refer to him as yogi but not a philosopher. Someone has opined that Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is nothing but Advaita philosophy—a personal interpretation. One is not a philosopher unless one has said something new. If he were a philosopher he would have been mentioned in the book “Contemporary Indian Philosophy” edited by Radhakrishnan and Muirhead.

Answer: A philosophy, in the true sense of the term, is as presentation, in terms of the intellect, of a Knowledge received or thought out on the basis of experience. This Knowledge is primarily Knowledge of the Reality including its terms of Nature and Man. In the West, such philosophies are usually worked out by the thinking mind starting from different standpoints. But in the East philosophy has always been a darsana a revelation or a concrete vision presented to the human consciousness on the soul level and thereafter rendered in terms of human thought. Now, Sri Aurobindo’s teaching is essentially one such. He had never cared for philosophy. It was only when a mass of spiritual experiences organised themselves into certain fundamental spiritual realisations that a unique perception of this world as a manifestation of the Divine with a definite purpose began to formulate itself into a body of Knowledge covering the entire creation in its sweep. This Knowledge was expounded by him systematically in the volumes of the Arya.

It gave his conception of the Omnipresent Reality, the purposes of its Manifestation, its process and the application of truths in the individual and collective spheres. He envisaged—on the basis of his personal experience, verifiable by those who seek the initial experience—the emergence of a
new divine dynamism in this creation, a truth-power above the highest attained levels of the Mind and an eventual transformation of human nature into a Divine Supernature by its instrumentation. He organised this darsana into an integral philosophy of Life Divine. And he went further. He worked out and developed the means to translate this vision into a reality—the integral yoga for the perfection of man.

Thus his system has a metaphysic and also a practical discipline to apply and test it on the touch-stone of life-experience. Whether academic philosophers recognise this fact or not, it matters little for the Truth that Sri Aurobindo embodies and expresses with such distinction and success in giving a radical turn to the higher thought of humanity as he has done. If today life is accepted as a field of progress and the world a creation with a purpose in the fulfilment of which man has a crucial role to play, and there is a hopeful expectation of a brighter future for humanity, it is because a pioneer like Sri Aurobindo has worked and established this new Ideal on earth.

Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is certainly not the Advaita of Shankara. If Advaita it is, it is purna-advaita—Monism entire which does not admit of any Maya in the Being of Brahman. To Sri Aurobindo the World is as real as the Divine from whom it has been projected into manifestation. The philosophy of Life Divine aims at a transformation of the human into the Divine, and a continued existence of man in the supernature of God, not his extinction into the Featureless. His yoga recognises the claims of all the parts of man, all his faculties of Knowledge, Emotion and Action for liberation and perfection, not of Knowledge alone. To him the world is neither an illusion nor an existence of an inferior order. The world is divine, as divine as Brahman is; it is only our experience of it that is imperfect and false due to a
radical Ignorance that covers and vitiates our consciousness. If we dispossess ourselves of this element of Ignorance by appropriate means, we see aright, we feel aright and we experience the world aright as a sheer self-creation of the Divine.

In the East, every philosopher answering to the description given above is necessarily a mystic. For, after all, what is a mystic? A mystic is one who gets or recognises experiences as valid even though they are not explainable in terms of the sense-bound reason. He sees that in man there are many faculties beyond the physical sense and the mental reason; he sees in Nature the operation of powers and beings which transcend the range of the normal senses. That is to say, he is aware of and participates in the occult stream of consciousness that sustains and courses behind the surface life which is all that the common man knows. In this sense every yogi is a mystic and Sri Aurobindo pre-eminently a yogi.
THE MOTHER'S RESPONSE

I would at once say that the Mother is never indifferent to any yearning for a better life. In fact, She is here on earth only for the purpose of establishing and ensuring a better life for the whole of humanity. Anyone who appeals to her consciousness—whether in the physical form of a letter or in an inner movement of the mind or the heart—is bound to get the response. He may or may not be aware of the response; but it is sure to come and act in its own way.

Regarding the letters that come here in hundreds every day from all parts of the world, you will appreciate it is not possible for the Mother to go through every one of them. Even to those which are brought to Her notice, Her reply is mostly non-verbal. If She is so moved, She does what is to be done and sends Her silent Blessings in the best interests of the soul concerned. She does not, as a rule, concern Herself with the mundane affairs of people except in the case of those who are surrendered to Her even physically, e.g. those who have joined the Ashram and settled here permanently. Of these She takes care down to the most physical detail. As for the rest Her response is essentially spiritual. Once you write a letter to Her and despatch it, you can be sure that it reaches Her consciousness and evokes an automatic response, whether Her frontal personality is cognisant of it or not. I do not know if you have read Sri Aurobindo’s remarks on this point where he records how people have got relief the moment they have penned the letter, even before it had physically reached Her. Really, it depends upon our intensity of feeling, sincerity of aspiration and strength of faith. Our appeal impinges upon Her being precisely in the measure of these things on our part. The response evoked is effective according to the receptivity of our consciousness. She acts but how far the action is effective is determined to a great extent by what we carry in and with ourselves.
THE MOTHER'S HELP
EVEN AFTER DEATH

Question: Does the Mother help the disciples after their death also? What would be the nature of this help? Would their sadhana continue under Her guidance?

Answer: The Mother's Consciousness is not confined to Her physical body; it extends all over the universe and envelops it. Anyone who appeals to it gets the response instantly. This applies not to the disciples only but also to the large number of devotees and those who are in some way or the other open to Her influence.

When one leaves the physical body, the departing being is in a state of confusion. It does not know its way in the new unfamiliar surroundings it finds itself in. If at this time the Mother's consciousness has been invoked either by the being itself or by someone else on earth, then the being becomes aware of the Mother's presence as a point of light in a surrounding darkness. If it grasps at it at this stage then it is taken charge of by the Mother and taken to its place of rest in gradual stages. It happens at times, that when the Mother thus greets the departed being, it does not turn to Her; it goes on its own way. This happens at times even in the case of those who were Her devotees during their lifetime. There have been cases where the Mother tried to help them, but they did not recognise Her and passed on unconcerned. Obviously that is because their central consciousness had been always centred elsewhere. In such cases there is little that the Mother can do.

But normally a person who has had some contact with Her remembers Her at the time of departure and looks for Her after the transition. Actually, in many cases, his soul goes to Her even before the body is shed and communicates
its decision to leave the body. So often it has happened that when Mother was informed of the death of someone, She confirmed her knowing of it beforehand as the being had already met Her.

Till the soul is in a condition to pass to the other worlds, the Mother normally keeps the disembodied being either in Her own atmosphere or in the atmosphere of those who were near and dear to the person, so that the rigours of separation from the body are softened and the being gets composed. Thereafter the emanation from the Mother charged for the purpose helps and guides the being through the various worlds of the vital and the mental planes to its place of rest in the psychic world. What happens thereafter differs from case to case. She may let the soul choose its own birth in accordance with its karma. Or if She is so moved, She may, at the appropriate time, put the soul into a birth selected by Her. It all depends upon the development of the soul, the part it is to play in the divine work that is being carried on by the Mother.

Regarding doing sadhana after death: this is done only by those who were doing it seriously during their life-time on earth. They continue it on the subtler planes provided they are developed enough to be conscious and sufficiently powerful to shape the circumstances, in whatever worlds, to their advantage. Mother has seen some among Her disciples doing so.

The Mother’s connection with Her disciples does not at all cease with their physical departure. A near relation of a disciple had passed some years earlier with the full assistance of the Mother. One day the disciple heard the departed relation saying it was dark. He reported it to the Mother. She heard and observed that perhaps some small bit was there. And when She met him the next day, She told him,
“Yes, it is all right now”. Obviously what had happened was that though the central being had been reached to its place of rest, a fragment of the vital sheath had not been completely dissolved. And when the need of that part was brought to Her notice She resolved the difficulty.

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother maintain their connection with those who take refuge in them. Even today, Sri Aurobindo and Mother are known to be helping those who have departed to prepare themselves for the greater future they are building for the Earth.
SECOND SERIES

I

“SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM”
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM: ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Broadly put, your queries are: How is our Ashram different from the large number of Ashrams that abound in India today? How can one call this Ashram a Centre for Research in Yoga? What are the proofs that such a Research is being carried on here and where are the records containing the conclusions?

Let me state at the outset that we do not claim any superiority for our Ashram over others. All we say is that our aim is different from that of others, our ideal different and our way to realise them something distinct from the traditional methods of Yoga. Usually the goal of Yoga as practised in India is liberation from the limitations of Nature, from Ignorance, and a release either into a state of utter Peace or positive Bliss. The achievement is individual and whatever consequences ensue for the society are incidental. The collectivity does not, as a rule enter into the scheme of Yogic endeavour. One may indeed exert oneself for the total welfare, lokasamgraha, or put out one's energies to help suffering humanity in the way of the Buddha, but that is secondary. The main pre-occupation is personal salvation. The place where one retires to work it out is a retreat from the world and its activity. The world is left to itself while the individual salvages his soul by a progressive isolation of his being from the rest.

The aim of this Yoga and the Ashram where it is being practised in an organised manner is double: first, individual development, liberation, perfection, and then, participation in the world for its elevation and change of character by the force of one's own achievement. The two are not steps that are taken one after the other, but lines
of progression that proceed in parallel. Inner development is closely related to outer expression. Thus this Yoga has two aspects, inner and outer, and both develop simultaneously. Spiritual gains made in the inner domains of the being are canalised into purposeful activity for affirmation of the inner status in the outer conditions of the world. We believe in life, in the possibility of the eventual perfection of the material world, not merely in the perfection of the soul freed from the trammels of the body. The key to that change lies within ourselves. To find it there and turn it in the lock that shuts in the world-nature in a cosmic Ignorance is our aim. Each sadhaka exerts himself in this direction, for the reclamation of his part of the material world to the Light and Power of the Divine that are realised in his soul-state. We have not devoted our whole life for our personal liberation, mukti, but have dedicated ourselves to the Ideal of manifesting the Divine in this world of Matter. To serve the Divine, to express the Divine, to embody the Divine, in order to rebuild the world in the image of the Divine is our living Ideal.

In this teaching, Matter, the physical realm, is not rejected either as an inferior order of reality or as a temporary formation of Maya to be put behind. It is treated as a projection of the Divine, as real as the Divine. The spiritual and the material are two poises, statuses of the same Reality. To bring out this inherent relation in overt operation by infusing the active consciousness of the Divine Spirit in this triple world of Matter, Life and Mind is our object. All spiritual effort in the Ashram is directed towards realising the higher and still higher statuses of consciousness in oneself and turning their flowings outward into life; all material effort is to make this complex of body-life-mind more conscious, more pure and more ready to receive this higher charge and illumination. No part of life
is left outside our purview; all is equally sacred awaiting its hour of fulfilment in the divine manifestation. Every section of life is epitomised in the Ashram for this purpose. In fact, no distinction is made between life-activity and sadhana. The whole of life, during all the hours, is to be lived as a continuous sadhana for self-upliftment, self-enlargement and self-dedication. Visitors are often surprised that we do not have separate timings set apart for satsang, holy communion, common prayers etc. The explanation is very simple: our endeavour is to be constantly in a state of communion with the Divine inwardly; meditation and prayer are there fixed in attitude and inner poise, so that all life becomes a sadhana, all moments movements of prayer and aspiration.

I have been in touch with many centres of Yoga in our country and have had some knowledge of their aim and activities. At best, they are working for the Godward growth of man away from life, but if there are any who have this double purpose of the perfection of man and perfection of the world, I would be happy to know of them. To participate in the activities of life out of economic necessity or on the generous impulses of humanism is one thing; to take on the problem of the world at its crux in order to resolve it both at the individual and the collective levels by spiritual means is quite another.

Regarding the second question, I would put it this way. Research means the discovery of new process, new truths or principles hitherto not patent, and their bearings on our existence. In the context of Yoga, research would mean the opening up of new realms of consciousness, new areas of Knowledge, and the means to establish them in the human range. And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pioneers of this Yoga, have been doing. Day after day, for nearly seven decades, they have been engaged in
mapping out the subtler domains of this Creation, effecting fresh openings for the efflorescence of the human consciousness and its faculties, drawing into the universe truths and powers of higher orders of existence and establishing them in this triple world. Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*, particularly the pregnant section on the Yoga of Self-Perfection, is a standing testimony to the new Knowledge gathered in this field, and the processes tried out and made available to man for a total perfection. In fact, no book on Yoga or spiritual Philosophy contains such a vast store of Knowledge of Principles and Formulations of Soul and Nature in the Cosmos. Similarly, the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* are a remarkable transcript of the experiences and realisations registered in Her being in the course of Her work of linking together the highest and the lowest terms of this manifest Creation. The talks given by Her to the disciples, young and old, contain spiritual and occult wisdom unparalleled in the extent of spiritual literature for its sheer amplitude and the facility with which profound truths are delivered in forms which even a child can grasp.

At the moment, the Mother is pre-occupied with the organisation of the New Consciousness-Force, the Dynamis of Knowledge-Will, the Supramental Shakti that has been brought down on earth by the concentrated tapasya of Herself and Sri Aurobindo. She is ceaselessly engaged in extending its roots, furthering its blossoming in the earth-consciousness. She has exposed Her own physical body representing the Earth-principle in evolution to the workings of this transforming Force. Her latest writing in the *Bulletin*—the main organ of the Ashram—contain meticulously faithful and detailed notes of Her experiences in the course of this unprecedented labour. She examines the reactions of the very cells in Her body to the influx of the Supramental Power and describes the manner in which the
fusion is steadily taking place. Here is a graphic record of the transition that is on - from humanity to super-humanity.

Naturally, the aim of Her endeavour being what it is, She needs a collective base to support Her work. If it were a question of Her personal supramentalisation or transformation, She could very well have done it in a hermitage in a forest. But Her spiritual conquests are meant for mankind, they are to be established as the property of the whole humanity. For this purpose a representative collection of humanity at all stages of development, in all its variations of types, has been organised around Her in the form of this Ashram. Each spiritual advance that is made in this Central Consciousness housed in Her body is automatically radiated and conveyed to those around. She is trying to establish and affirm these developing states of being and consciousness in those who are equipped or are equipping themselves for this call. In this sense, each member of the Ashram, each inmate, participates in the task, contributes his mite and shares in the general advance at some level of his being or other. Thus the process is one of extending Her own realisations to as many as possible so that things get founded in the general consciousness and become available there to be drawn upon by anyone who seeks for them. The Ashram is a nursery of the new race to come.

Knowingly or unknowingly, all those who live in this Yogic milieu, absorb the vibrations of the Truth-Consciousness and those of us who are conscious know very well to what extent our own movements of mind, heart and even of the body are undergoing perceptible change. A great reservoir of spiritual power, light, consciousness is daily and hourly being built up for the benefit of the world. The fact that the work is done in silence, without fanfare or publicity does not make it any the less effective. Even agnostics
cannot help being struck by the solemnity, peace and quickened pace of life and joy in the Ashram atmosphere.

If this is not research in Yoga *par excellence*, I would like to know what else is.
OUR ASHRAM
SOME OBJECTIONS

An old friend who has just returned after a visit to the Ashram writes expressing his admiration of the way in which the activities here have expanded under the direction of the Mother during the last few years. At the same time he makes a few well-intentioned observations about what he feels to be developments in an undesirable direction. I would like to dwell upon these points since these doubts and apprehensions are shared by quite a few of the others, whether openly expressed or privately whispered.

He notes with satisfaction that the central kitchen of the Ashram serves pure vegetarian food for all. But he has heard that those who want to take non-vegetarian food are allowed to do so. This, writes the friend, is very objectionable as such food is on all counts injurious to spiritual aspiration. He quotes the Upanishad saying *ahara suddhau sattva suddhiḥ*, with the purity of food comes purity of being, and counsels prohibition of eggs, meat etc.

Now, in the first place, the community here does not consist of sadhaks alone. There is a large section of student population that is here for education—concentrated development of mind, life and body. There are a number of teachers, Indian and foreign, who are participating in the educational effort along with the students, though at their own level. Then there are always a number of residents from the West with families who come for temporary stay which may prolong itself indefinitely. And there are others who are associated with the Ashram but are not sadhaks. Is it practicable to enforce the diet of the sadhaks on all these sections of the community whose main interests here are not exclusively spiritual? There are many who are accustomed.
to non-vegetarian diet from birth; there are those who are medically advised to take that food; students who undergo the rigorous programme of physical education that is current here at the Centre of Education may feel the need of more nourishment than is possible by the kind of vegetarian diet that is possible in these parts; their physical body may demand special reinforcement. Regarding friends from abroad, it has been found that with the best will in the world on their part, their health cannot be sustained if it is deprived for long of the type of food they have been used to. It is such circumstances that have made non-vegetarian food permissible—but not, be it noted, prescriptive.

To come to the point about the compulsive necessity of taking only vegetarian diet in spiritual life, there is a good deal of confusion of understanding. Since when has it been so prescribed? Certainly not in the hey-day of spirituality in India, the epoch of the ancient Rishis. Even the statement in the Chhandogya which is quoted by our friend does not mean only what he says it does. When the Upanishad declares *ahara suddhau sattva suddhih*, it does not speak of purity of material food; that goes without saying and it does not need to be said in such a profound context as that of the text quoted. *Ahara*, food, here really means the psychological intake;* according to the thoughts, feelings etc., that one admits and lodges within oneself is the stuff of his being shaped. The question of material food really occupies a minor place in the scheme of spiritual discipline. The quality of the sadhana, the rate of progress are determined by factors like aspiration, sincerity, effort, Grace, etc. and not by the ‘kitchen religion.’ The question of food comes in only to keep the body in sound condition. And unless the body fully cooperates, it is not advisable to force it

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* Even so high an authority as Acharya Shankara explains *ahara*, food, here, as knowledge of sense objects.
to a violent change of diet especially if it is used to a particular kind of diet. There are more important factors to be considered, attended to and promoted other than the item of food. It is pertinent to quote here what the Mother recently said in reply to a query on the subject:

Food has very little to do with spiritual life; a sincere and total consecration to the Divine and His work is infinitely more important than what you eat or do not eat.

Of course this is not to belittle the value of vegetarian, sattvic, diet in spiritual life. There are indeed certain advantages, but they need to be balanced, in each case, with the evident disadvantages of the denial of the food that is normal to the body concerned. There should be a sense of proportion; it should not become a fad.

The next note of alarm sounded by our correspondent is of the "free mixing" of sexes, especially of boys and girls both within the classroom and outside. This, we are told, is dangerous to the climate of continence and should be stopped forthwith.

Our aim is to create—within our limits—a society in which the sex consciousness is eliminated. Here one meets another not as a man and a woman, a girl and a boy, but as two human beings, two inmates of the Ashram, two children of the Mother. All work together, study together, eat together, play together, in a free community spirit and the sex element is hardly present in these meetings. There is not the hiatus in consciousness that is promoted by the segregation of sexes. When people are so segregated, complexes develop on both sides, there comes in a secret attraction for what is forbidden, there is a suppressed sense of being held in leash, and a wholly unnatural outlook is built up. Nobody can say that we have indiscriminate mixing of sexes here; they move in a healthy environment and it blunts the edge of the novelty of the
opposite sex. And that is, I can confidently say, a more wholesome atmosphere than one where an artificial barrier of taboos and negative injunctions is erected between one human being and another for no other reason than their difference of sex. Segregation accentuates the sex consciousness, sharpens the sex instinct, deforms man’s whole outlook on womankind. Ours is an approach more in tune with the spirit and intention of Mother-Nature and we are satisfied that the experiment is moving in the right direction especially with an increasing realisation on the part of the growing members of the community that sex plays a small part in the total frame of life. We have found that barring a few aberrations, the interchange stabilises itself at a healthy level; likes and dislikes commingle in controlled freedom and friendships spring up on the basis of affinity rather than of sex. Sex as a factor in human relations is on the way out in the Mother’s Kingdom.

The third feature of life in the Ashram that is frowned upon by the learned friend is the adoration and the devotion that are offered by us to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Gurus are after all human, he argues, and no human being should be put in the place of God who alone must be worshipped and adored.

Indeed, the Divine is to be adored, to be worshipped, to be prayed to. But is that Divine to be found only as and in some Impersonal state Beyond? We proceed on the basis that the Divine is everything, the Divine is everywhere; only, enveloped in Ignorance as we are, we have no sight to see the Divine who is in every form including the human form—manusim tanum asritam, lodged in the human body, says the Gita. It is the Guru who opens the eye and puts the seeker in contact with the Divine. The Divine is real to us because of the Guru. We feel the breath of the Divine
because Mother and Sri Aurobindo have given us access to it; the Divine is closer to us through them and in them than it could ever be on our own. They are not only our channels but the very Forms in which we feel and embrace the Divine. To us they are the Divine. The timeless injunction not to miss the divinity of the Guru under the delusion of the human form is a truth of cardinal importance in the life of the spirit whatever be the dogmas of the half-baked logicising intellect. In adoring our Gurus we meet the Divine face to face. And in loving the Mother who is far far more than a Guru, we dissolve into the Bliss of the Infinite.
II

PHILOSOPHY
ON MATTERS SPIRITUAL

Your questions, interesting as they are, are too comprehensive to be answered in a single letter. All the same, we can open the discussion taking some of your points.

Before proceeding to do so, you will kindly permit me to say that there is no such thing as “Hindu Spirituality”. Spirituality is what concerns the Spirit. It is a science of the Spirit comprising knowledge of the spiritual Reality of Existence and the means to translate it into practice in order to embody that Truth in oneself. Thus spiritual truths, spiritual laws, belong to the realm of fundamentals, far above the planes of their formulations in terms of religious or intellectual conceptions. Religious denominations apply to the different ways of approach, understanding and assimilation of the higher truths at the human level. The Spiritual Truth and its content of verities is supra-religious, supra-human. It can be neither Hindu, nor Christian, nor Buddhist. And we are concerned at the moment with this order of the Reality and what pertains to it. It is a Pure Science of the Spirit.

Question: What is your notion of the human soul? Is it spiritual, eternal, created, ignorant by nature etc.?

Answer: The soul is a spark of the Divine released into the movement of evolution. Deriving from the Eternal Spirit, it is necessarily spiritual and eternal in its nature. At the beginning, it is but a speck of light and consciousness in the form it inhabits, heavily veiled under the folds of Ignorance. This spark evolves, grows by experience from life to life, becomes an entity and when it attains a sufficient degree of maturity and personality, it asserts itself, assumes control over the nature, imparts its movements and leads the evolution godward. The human soul is a developing entity
and in its fulfilment it secures for man the dual status of the human and the divine.

On a note of caution I may add that the soul is different from the self. The self is not involved in the evolutionary movement. There is a universal Self, the Divine self—extended at the base of the creation, supporting it, as it were, but not participating in the creative movement. This is the One Self spoken of in the Upanishads. And that part of the Self which is related to a particular form is the individual self, atman, of that form.* The soul may be taken, in this sense, to be a projection of the Self in the active movement of manifestation.

*Question*: What is meant by Spirituality?

*Answer*: This question has been answered above.

*Question*: Is asceticism necessary for it?

*Answer*: No. What is necessary is detachment, an inner renunciation of desire for things that lead one away from the spiritual quest. One can live in the midst of life in the world discharging the responsibilities that fall upon oneself, fully participating in it and yet be spiritual in outlook and in practice. One can equally have all the marks of asceticism and yet be very unspiritual in the movements of the mind and heart. Really it is a question of sincerity and attitude.

Secondly, for those who believe that the Divine is Love and Bliss and that the purpose of spiritual life is to embody and radiate some of these supreme values of the Divine, asceticism is a contrary discipline. It dries up the sources of emotions, cuts across the feeling of oneness with all. In extreme cases, asceticism hurts the Divine within; at its worst, it swells up the ego.

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*I* speak of ‘part’ to bring out the practical distinction; actually the Self is impartible.
Question: Do you admit a personal God distinct from men and the world?

Answer: No. We conceive of the world and the beings that people it as a self-projection of the Divine which is both personal and impersonal but in no case aloof from its own selfplacements in diverse conditions.

Question: What is your opinion about God’s Grace and His Love for us?

Answer: The Divine Grace is a fact. The creation has evolved from its dense beginnings in Inconscience to the present stage of militant mental consciousness only because of the enabling help and the lift given to it continuously by the Grace. The Grace operates at every level in creation lifting up each form to a higher and higher status in the ladder of cosmic existence. What applies to Grace applies equally to Divine Love. For the Grace is an operation of the Love.

Question: Can man arrive at union with God? If so, how?

Answer: Undoubtedly, the human being can achieve union with the Divine. This union is effected in the consciousness. The human consciousness is trained and cultured by some inner discipline or other to purify itself, enlarge itself, heighten itself, so as to change its very human character, acquire an increasingly godly nature till it arrives at a stage when there is a natural fusion between the developing consciousness from below and the answering Consciousness from above. Or the consciousness is turned more and more within in the same intense way till it merges with the inmost consciousness of the Self that is the Divine.

Question: In what does this union consist?

Answer: The union is in the consciousness. The human consciousness attains identity with the Divine Consciousness and this identity is never lost.
Question: Is this union a state of happiness?

Answer: That is the least. The Divine is experienced and realised in any or many of its states, e.g. as Knowledge, as Power, as Bliss, as Peace. But whatever the kind of realisation, a constant ease and beatitude is always there.

Question: Is it the final and ultimate state of a man’s life?

Answer: Union with the Divine, identity with the Truth, is indeed the goal of all spiritual seeking. But after this object is fulfilled, what state of being or status of consciousness is embodied by the individual to participate in the manifestation depends upon the Divine Will which is not the same for all.

Question: Can this union be attained and maintained in this life?

Answer: Assuredly so, provided the individual is truly ready for the quest, exerts himself in the right direction, perseveres and is open to the descent of the Grace without which no fulfilment in spiritual life is at all possible. The union is first achieved in the inner being and consciousness and thereafter progressively extended to the outer parts of oneself. The more one lives after this radical realisation is attained, the more pervasive is its impact on the world.

The attainment of this union is possible while being in the body, this is what is known as jivanmukti. It can not only be maintained but organised into a Force of liberation for others.

Question: Can it be lost? How?

Answer: There are states or statuses of union in the long process that culminates in a radical and irreversible union. A separation or fall from the state of union attained is always possible as long as the union or identity is not
definitive and fixed. Such deviations are brought about by movements contrary to the Truth that one seeks after. Impurity, insincerity of any kind, treason to the Ideal and similar unspiritual movements open the door to the invasion of the lower nature and effect a breach in the union.

Question: What is sin? What is to be done to avoid it? What is to be done if one has committed it?

Answer: From the spiritual point of view, sin is nothing else than a wrong placement of energies. In everything there is a natural and right law of being and action. When one follows this law, this truth, there is the growth of the Right, the Truth, in oneself and in those who are connected with it. A step forward is taken with each right action. When one acts contrary to this inherent law of things, the reactions are the opposite: the creative spirit in Nature is tapped in a wrong manner and the result is a recoil, a step backward, not forward. This movement of acting contrary to the true spirit or law of things is the result of Ignorance. It has no moral significance. It is at bottom a misdirection due to ignorance and is set right with the growth of true knowledge. As knowledge develops, its power of effectuating itself also develops and the wrong movement is replaced by the right.

How to avoid sin? Obviously to eliminate what is responsible for the sin: to take steps to divest one’s nature of the Ignorance that is the parent of all error and sin. And this can be done by the deliberate cultivation of knowledge and growth into the ways of knowledge.

The right way for one who has committed a sin is not to brood over it and so prolong its atmosphere but to recognise the error, and put his will not to allow it to be repeated. That ends the matter as far as his evolution is concerned. Some legacy or Karmic effect flowing from
that mis-doing may remain but that too can be erased for the most part by the Divine Grace, leaving perhaps only the irreducible minimum to be worked out.

*Question:* In what does the Divine Incarnation consist?

*Answer:* When the Divine Consciousness assumes a human body, there is said to be an incarnation of the Divine. To progressively change the human consciousness into higher and higher forms till it arrives at the state of a Divine Consciousness is one thing and for a Divine Consciousness to take a human body for its own purpose is another. In the course of the spiritual evolution of the Creation, the Divine has elected to manifest itself in this manner at crucial junctures for effecting difficult transitions.

An incarnation is conscious of his divinity. There are several kinds of incarnations, e.g. partial incarnation, temporary incarnation, etc. but we need not enter into those details just now.

*Question:* The different gods in Hinduism, are they only supermen?

*Answer:* No. The gods celebrated in the Hindu pantheon are not apotheosised human beings. They are the direct powers and personalities of the Supreme Godhead that presides over this Manifestation. They are, so to say, permanent emanations of the Divine put out for definite cosmic functions in the Creation.

*Question:* Is virginity to be preferred to the married state? Why?

*Answer:* From the spiritual standpoint, neither state is preferred for its own sake. For, a virgin is not necessarily more fit for leading a godward life nor is a married woman unfit for the reason that she has undergone the experience of marriage. After all, competence in these matters is
determined by the state of the development of inner consciousness, the ardour with which it seeks the Divine. And this does not depend upon the external physical conditions of a person.

*Question*: In transmigration, does the soul necessarily follow the ascending order, stone, plant etc. until it reaches the status of man or can it even redescend as animal, plant etc.?

*Answer*: Normally the course is upward. Throw-backs, regressions into orders of existence already transcended, happen for certain special reasons. For instance, a soul which has taken its first human birth may find that the development of its consciousness is not enough to support a human embodiment; in that case, it may choose to go back to its previous animal state and equip itself more thoroughly for the higher sequence. But such cases are rare. Stories of the birth of men as animals, plants etc. are not to be taken literally.

Certain parts of a human being may detach themselves from the subtle body after the death of the physical body and attach themselves temporarily to animals etc., in order to work out some unexhausted Karma, but these are details which are outside the normal run of evolution and may be left out of the present discussion.
EFFORT AND KARMA

What is the role played by self-exertion in the cosmic Law of Karma?

Exertion, purushakara, has its allotted role in the cosmic scheme of things. The lines of Karma are laid down broadly, leaving plenty of scope for possibilities to work themselves out. In fact, in the total determination of things by the Supreme Will even Karma plays an instrumental role. It represents the crystallisation of the output of energies in the universe at different levels. And even as the role of Karma is instrumental from an ultimate standpoint, individual effort also has its own part to play, not less important than Karma. From a certain angle personal effort may be said to be of a greater functional value to the cosmic purpose than the agency of Karma. For the individual effort is not so inelastic and confined as the force of Karma; at every moment it has a certain freedom of movement and can choose this possibility or that. You may say that this choice itself is compelled by the pressure of past Karma. It is true, but it is also true that at the moment of this compulsion the soul keeps open its reserves of will and strength to be drawn upon for overpassing the said compulsion. The point is, one must learn to become aware of this potentiality in oneself to overpass Karma and effectuate what one wills.

Most great events in history have taken place by the exercise of such will by individuals who have turned the tide of events in the process.

I would say that for the philosopher it is logical to preach the supremacy of Karma. For the practical man it is commonsense, justified in the higher knowledge and spiritual consciousness, to believe in the actuality of the freedom of Will and exert himself in the direction chosen for him by his most enlightened part.
DIVINE COMPASSION AND GRACE

What is the subtle distinction between Divine Compassion and Divine Grace?

Compassion is a particular regard of the Divine on the creation that is evolving. There is a look of sustaining and uplifting help on the part of the Creator towards all that constitute the creation. It is a constant fount of silent aid in the upward struggle of the evolving creatures. It is open to all whether they are aware of it or not, whether they consciously draw upon it or not. It is that aspect of the Divine dynamis that responds to every appeal and lets men walk in the way they choose, all the while leading them towards the right direction through whatever meanderings the erring will might insist upon.

The Grace is something different. It is a more particularised action of the Divine Consciousness-Force operative in the life of individuals or collectivities. It is not as impersonal as the Divine Compassion. Its response also is less calculable. For the Grace is active for a particular end, and its response is governed by that context. Further, the Grace needs to be accepted to become a live factor in one's life. The Compassion is there showering its gentle dew on you whether you care for it or not.

It may be all right to say that the Grace is a concentrated expression of the Compassion brought into a focus for a definite end.
SOCIAL SERVICE AND EGOISM

After all, what is called service, sacrifice and altruistic work in society looks to be really a movement of self-approving egoism. Is that not so? Can such a falsehood be overcome? What sadhana in day-to-day life is necessary to eliminate this evil?

It is true the ego masquerades under quite high-sounding names in the social and political life of man. It is so even in the individual life. Self-interest hides under the cloak of duty. A secret claim for moral superiority and a certain self-satisfaction of the ego do motivate most of the so-called altruistic activities of men. The egoism is less naked, more subtle; it enlarges itself and in the process, the circle of beneficiaries is extended. But it is an ego nevertheless. From the standpoint of the soul the movement is still vitiated and binds.

The only way out is to cut the root of the knot of ego. A searching self-examination at every step in private and in public life and a will to follow out the results of such a probe can go a long way in the elimination of this deforming and deceptive activity. The beginning here, as in other similar efforts, is to be made by the individual in his own daily life.

Of course this is not to say that public activities are taboo for the reason that they are tainted by ego in some form or the other. That would be a gospel of defeatism. The difficulty is to be faced and conquered; man has to take up the challenge of the omnipresence of the ego, hound it out relentlessly from every sphere of his action and thus raise the very level of his activity, thereby contributing most effectively to the upward progress of his kind. Not to do so but to settle down into the rule of inaction for fear of the contamination of ego is to forfeit one’s right to manhood. One sinks to the level of a vegetating animal. Rather than
be that, I would say, exert yourself even though it be with an egoistic motive; as you go on, the scheme of providence will see to it that once the role of the ego is played out, enough things will happen to make you realise the necessity of overpassing it.
THOUGHT OR ACTION

Which is more important, Thought or Action?

I do think that thought itself is action. Every bit of energy put out purposefully is action. The energy may be physical, mental or spiritual. The very process of putting it out is an act. Thinking is as much an action as concentrating in meditation or exerting oneself manually. It is the soul that expresses itself on each level of existence in a mode proper to that plane. That said, there comes the question of the relative importance of the types of activity.

From the individual point of view, thinking (or writing, which is the same as thinking in print) is more contributive to the progress in evolution in as much as it speeds up the functioning of the subtler faculties. The mind gets chastened, purified, developed and at its best learns to receive and transmit things from a higher Source. With the development of the mind and the faculties governed by it, the stage of overpassing the mind comes nearer.

But from the viewpoint of the Cosmic Manifestation, dynamic work in the various spheres of life, social, political, religious, cultural etc. is more significant than the mental activity of individuals. It is such action that carries forward the evolutionary progression of the collectivity and creates the atmosphere in which fruitful thinking is rendered possible at all.

Of course, the ideal is to combine both kinds of activity.
III

YOGA
INNER SILENCE

What are the steps to be followed to achieve inner silence?

The first step, naturally, is to stop the inner noise. Normally, the mind is full of racing thoughts brushing against each other, thought-movements taking shape and running helter-skelter; the emotions, desire-movements, and reactive impulses in the rest of the being also echo stridently in the corridors of the mind. All this goes on simultaneously with whatever activity one may be engaged in. And almost always one is lost in the vortex of these currents and cross-currents. To liberate oneself from this perpetual involvement is the first step. One has to learn to detach oneself from these customary movements, watch them, gradually separate oneself from their flow. And in the measure in which one succeeds in doing so, there is awareness of a static being which is aloof from all this movement and this awareness opens the gate into the Silence that ever looms over every form and every movement in creation.

It is not enough to become aware of the Silence. One has to create a climate in which the Silence can abide. And that means a relentless elimination of all that brings about excitement of whatever kind, restlessness and disturbance. The negative factors being eliminated, one has to take the positive steps of introducing an order, a rhythm, a growing harmony in the movements of one’s day-to-day life. The natural poise must be gradually shifted away from the surface exterior—ever at the mercy of the vicissitudes of nature—either inwards or upwards where one can find a relatively stable base of living.

All these are preparatory steps that are indispensable on the part of everyone who seeks the Silence. But, throughout, it must be remembered that human effort,
however necessary, is only secondary. The major role in these matters is always of That which is higher and larger than the human element. Here too it is easier and more successful if one learns to let the Silence take hold of oneself rather than for oneself to make a concentrated attempt to seize and hold to the Silence. The secret is to withdraw oneself inwardly and lay oneself open receptively to what is above one. Half the labour is done if one is fortunate enough to come under the influence of or in contact with someone who has achieved a measure of stability in the Silence. In such a case, the Silence is transmitted to the seeker without any conscious attempt on his part. The rest is a matter of cultivation and naturalisation.
RIGHT RELATIONS

How to know each other integrally? Would it be right to refrain from relations for the reason that it may not be the right one?

Yajnavalkya says in the Upanishad that all relations are there—each one dear to us—because of the self. This is commonly interpreted to say that we love others for our own selfish purpose. Leaving aside the right meaning of the dictum for the moment, we do see that the popular understanding sums up the situation fairly neatly. For, in most relationships it is the ego, the ego-self, that determines their nature. One who subserves the demands of our ego, who collaborates in its self-aggrandisement and otherwise contributes to its expansion is dear; one who acts contrarily is suspect. This is the one capital factor that vitiates most relationships in every sphere of life.

And to understand the other party of the relationship in any measure, it is first necessary to understand ourselves. Why do we seek a relation with another? What is our motive? When is the other most pleasing to us? And when is that person most annoying? The answer in almost all cases will be found in the focus of our own ego-self.

It is obvious that to enter into right relations with others we must first set ourselves right. Self-regard should give way to other-regard. Relationships must be utilised for the thinning of our ego and the cultivation of self-giving. Only so would we grow in the right direction; only so would we be able to understand others more correctly. Understanding deepens into liking and liking into love. And with the advent of love we come to realise the truth of Yajnavalkya’s statement: we realise that the other is dear to us because the Self of the other and the Self of ourselves is the same. It is
the one Divine who breathes in both. That is the ultimate secret of all attraction and all relations are based upon it.

So your relation with another will be fully right only when it is devoid of self-regard and you cherish the other for his or her own sake, your sole joy, self-giving.
Astral Projection

I am afraid there is no Indian literature of the past on 'Astral Projection' in the sense the term is understood today. The Indian mind has been familiar with the conception of the subtle body, rather subtle bodies, for there are more than one such body. Apart from the physical, annamaya, body, there is the life, pranamaya, body; the mental, manomaya, body; finally there is the vijnanamaya of the Upanishad, the ideal or the spiritual body. Indian tradition recognises the existence and the operation of these bodies—or sheaths as they are called—simultaneously with the physical. The Epics, philosophical-cum-yogic treatises like the Yoga Vasishtha and some collections of folklore, e.g. Kathasaritsagara, are full of narrations which describe how persons trained in the technique could operate through these subtler bodies in a purposeful manner. Only, the language adopted tends to veil the inner truth; but that is a common feature of the scriptural works and writings purporting to expound their contents: profound truths are casketed in picturesque symbolism or in attractive stories so that the vulgar mind may not seize hold of and misuse them. Patanjali, however, makes a direct reference to the subject in the III Section of the Yoga-Sutras where he speaks of an independent functioning of the mental body.

Astral Projection in the context of modern thought refers to the subtle-physical body attached to the physical, or at the utmost to the vital body which is composed of the life-sheath. The Theosophists have familiarised this concept during the last century. But there are other bodies, more subtle and more consequent. And the more an adept one is, the more subtle is the body in which he can function outside the physical dimensions.
So I do not think you can find an exact parallel between the 'Astral Projection' treated in modern books of Theosophy or Para-psychology and the incorporeal phenomena spoken of in the ancient Indian literature. In the latter the scope is much wider. The frames are different, the values are different.
MANTRA AND TANTRA

If one picks up a mantra from a book and practises it, does it yield results?

It depends upon the mantra. For there are certain mantras like the Gayatri or the Mrityunjaya mantra which have an immense power stored in them especially due to their being repeated in the earth atmosphere numberless times. Such a mantra, if approached and practised with due faith and adoration, does yield results. Of course, if it were to be imparted by an authorised guru, then the results would be quicker and more forceful.

If, however, the mantra does not come in this category, then it would require considerable effort on the part of the practicant to awaken the chaitanya, the life-power, in the mantra. Without such an awakening or energising, no mantra is effective.

Are all the stories of miracles effected by the Tantriks real?

There are stories and stories. After all by miracles we mean happenings which are beyond the normal workings of the laws of our physical world. And these phenomena do happen everyday due to several reasons among which the exercise of the tantric powers can very well be one. It is possible to bring about amazing results by the use of mantric power, vedic as well as tantric.

Often we come across hand-written manuscripts on the Tantras. But if we practise what is written in them we do not get the promised results. Why?

Very often these manuscripts are not genuine. They may be concoctions of fictitious authorship. At times they are evilly inspired and one would be better advised not to accept such manuscripts as authentic unless there are very
strong reasons to do so. Quite often things are written by half-baked Tantriks under a very impure inspiration and naturally such writings cannot yield the right results.

*How to convince those who do not believe in the Tantras?*

Is it necessary? Nobody is convinced in these matters by arguments. If at all, it is by example that you can carry conviction. It is only if you practise a discipline, absorb something of its knowledge and power, express something of this in your life that it would carry conviction to those around who genuinely want to know. No one will believe that heat is warmth-giving unless the heat is actually radiated on him.

*Can you say that the Tantras are true?*

The Tantra is a Shastra. And a Shastra in our tradition is a body of Wisdom, verifiable Wisdom with processes for its verification and laws for its functioning. It is a living scheme erected by those who have lived that Knowledge. The Tantra is such a Shastra, rightly called a *pratyaksha shastra*. It is even claimed that it is the only Shastra which proves itself at every single step.
IV

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER
RAMANUJA AND SRI AUROBINDO

Regarding the difference between the philosophy of Ramanuja and that of Sri Aurobindo:

1. In the first place Ramanuja posits three realities constituting one whole. They are God, the world of souls, the world of matter; the world of souls and the world of matter (distinct from each other) are dependent upon and governed by God. They are the attributes, *visheshanas*, of God; they are external and subordinate to Him. All the three are eternal realities and together make up a whole *sisihita*.

Sri Aurobindo perceives only One Reality, the Divine. All else, the souls, the worlds, etc., are become of that Reality. There is a basic oneness of being. Nothing is external to the Divine for all is a self-projection of the Divine.

2. The God in the system of Ramanuja is a Supreme Person of infinite qualities. The impersonal verities are only qualities or states of His being, they are secondary.

To Sri Aurobindo, the Personal and the Impersonal are equally real. The Divine reveals itself in both these statuses of existence and more. For there is a transcendent status also. As the Transcendent, the Divine exceeds both the Personal and the Impersonal which are its two aspects. Man can realise the Divine in all the three statuses.

3. In the scheme of Ramanuja, liberation, *mukti*, can only mean attainment of a likeness to the Lord. Freed from the limitations of ignorance, the soul dwells in the precincts of the Lord, *samipya*, becomes like Him, *sadrshya*, and enjoys the bliss of the Lord’s play. It does not and cannot become one with the Lord, for it is a distinct (though dependent) verity.
Sri Aurobindo's realisation points to a different content of liberation. The soul can attain complete union with the Divine and merge in the Divine. It can also experience the liberation of proximity, samipya, of likeness, sadrsya. It can have complete identity with the Divine in one status and simultaneously experience the other states of liberation at other levels of its being. What the Divine Being has, that the liberated soul can also have if that is the Will.

4. Finally, truth of the supramental gnosis, the conception of the Dynamis of Knowledge-Will capable of transforming and divinising Man is not to be found in Ramanuja.

There may be other details of difference, but these are the main.
Is the Integral Yoga and Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo fit for the grihasthas who have got their lifelong duty to the elders and the children?

This yoga is meant for all who seek a higher way of life progressively leading to the divine way, irrespective of their station in life. For the yogic discipline here is mainly inner and does not call for radical alteration in the outer way of living, like sannyasa, day-long ritual, etc. What is required is a recognition of the need to change—to change from the lower equilibrium of nature into the higher concord of the soul—and the adoption of the triple means of aspiration, rejection and surrender. All these are psychological methods and they are to be practiced wherever one is. To seek to purify oneself, raise the quality of one’s consciousness and be surrendered within to the Divine who is the Master of one’s being, is not inconsistent or contradictory to the discharge of one’s duties to the family or the society. On the contrary, this kind of yogic endeavour improves the relations of the individual with others; there comes about more of understanding, sympathy and love.

Is it necessary to admit ourselves in the Ashram to practise the Integral Yoga?

Not at all. One is not called upon to leave his station in life for practising this yoga. It is enough to be in touch with the Influence that is active in this Centre. That guides and leads. It is only later on, when the sadhana enters certain intense phases of its working, that it may be advisable to stay in the Ashram for concentrated tapasya.

No doubt there are certain natural advantages of staying in the Ashram, like a favourable climate for sadhana, congenial environment, physical closeness of the Yoga-Shakti etc. But all are not so circumstanced as to partake of it all the time. One has to accept the conditions in which
one is placed and try to make the best of them. Ultimately it will be found that they were the best needed for the education of the soul in evolution.

To stay physically in the Ashram does not necessarily mean progress in sadhana even as to live outside in the world need not imply cutting off from growth into the Spirit. It is really a matter of inner attitude and the steps one takes to translate one’s aspiration in terms of life.

*I have become more and more timid after my association with the Ashram. Reading of Ashram books has helped me no doubt, but it has made me doubt at every step.*

This happens invariably when the normal poise of the mind in Ignorance is disturbed. The cocksureness of the limited mind gives way at the revelation of the much that is yet to be known, the expanse of consciousness that lies ahead to be traversed. One loses the fulcrum of action to which one is normally accustomed and till a new and higher fulcrum is found, this kind of vacillation and weakness is inevitable. But this is only a passing phase which is bound to go once a capital experience is gained and a new faith in oneself is established.

*Are the dreams I am seeing almost every night after my darshan of the Mother hallucinations or visions?*

They are not imaginations or tricks of the mind. They are real experiences on the subtler levels of being, continuations of the contact made at the time of the Darshan. The Darshan has obviously established a connection with the Mother’s Consciousness and each time you go to sleep i.e. your physical consciousness goes to rest, the inner regions of your being come into life allowing the Mother’s Consciousness to work on them; the dreams you see and remember are only part registrations in your physical memory of that working.
THE MOTHER'S DARSHAN

You speak of the joy, the fear and the depression that came over you after the Mother's Darshan. You have explained the process yourself and hence I do not go into the details. I will confine myself to making a few observations on these matters as these happenings are not special to you but are fairly common.

Everyone has his own ideas of what the Divine is or must be. And when one approaches the Divine in form or without form, there is a certain anticipation of what is to happen or should happen. Now what actually ensues may or may not correspond to this mental construction. When it does not proceed exactly as anticipated by the mind, does not take the precise form visualised by one's preference, there is a natural bewilderment or disappointment. That is why we say, "When you go to the Mother, go with a quiet mind receptive like a sponge, without any formulation of the way in which the contact is to be effected." If that is done, the higher consciousness takes charge of the situation and makes the meeting most fruitful even outwardly. I say outwardly also because the contact has its inner results anyway, irrespective of the state of the outer being. If the attitude and approach are healthy, free from pre-conceived notions, the outer reception also is smooth and the whole thing becomes harmonious, from person to person depending upon the state of development, the nature of the being, etc. It is dangerous in effect to compare experiences in this matter.

You say that things around you are worse today than before you saw the Mother. I can very well understand that. Many, especially those who have some sort of psychological life, have their own frame of existence, rhythm of life based upon their mental and vital interactions. If this
set-up is not quite conducive to further development of the person, usually, it gets disturbed, upset, thrown out of gear in the Mother’s presence. This happens to clear the way for a better and a truer rhythm to be established. This seems to have happened in your case, if I understand what you have written aright. You have only to watch things without agitation and you will see the beginnings of a new harmony gradually taking root.

You speak of some “secrecy”. I can assure you that in this place nothing is kept secret. Everything is an open book. You were received with open arms, admitted into the Holy of holies at your asking and given the fullest freedom to move where you liked and ask what you chose. Perhaps the spiritual silence that reigns in every corner of the Ashram gave you the impression of what you call “unusual silence.”
V

GENERAL
BLACK MAGIC

With the growth of Knowledge many superstitions are dying. Not only religious superstitions but equally superstitions of modern science. As para-psychology advances it is coming to be recognised that there are various kinds of phenomena in the world which are not of a material character and are not seizable nor explicable in terms of physical science. Even as there is an activity of the physical forces, there is a play of subtle-physical or vital or mental or spiritual forces in the universe.

This organisation of Nature and her forces which are not patent to the eye but are nevertheless real and active, is the subject of what is called the Occult Science. It concerns itself with the study of the existence and the action of these invisible forces and the beings at the head of these forces, and the means to regulate and direct their activities. It recognises that there are in Creation forces that are good and forces that are bad; the good are those that help the Creation to grow Godward, the bad, those that twist the direction and turn it to go in the opposite way. When this Occult Knowledge is used for the utilisation of the good and benevolent forces for the welfare and well-being of man, it is called white magic in distinction to black magic which is a common name for the exploitation of this knowledge for the purpose of doing harm, effecting evil and in generally extending the reign of forces that are anti-divine.

Black magic is a fact. If one has the knowledge of contacting and the power of summoning into action the spirits or powers of the supra-physical worlds to do one's bidding, and utilises that faculty for harming others, that is black magic. Or one may not have recourse to the action of the supra-physical entities at all. One may develop one's
own thought-power beyond the normal range, and be able to effectuate results without any physical intermediary. When this power is used for nefarious ends, that too comes under the category of "magic." There was, for instance, the case of a professional man, a sexual pervert, who could direct his will or thought-force on the person of his intended victim so as to cause acute physical embarrassment. When one joins to this faculty the aid of supra-physical entities we can imagine what could be done and how far one could go.

Whatever black magic can do—and there is much that it can do—there is one thing which it cannot. It cannot touch a protected subject. If a person is under the spiritual protection of a guru or the Divine in any form, it is impossible for the agents of the black magician to harm him. Not only that, as the Mother reiterates, the force that is put out to harm rebounds on the source and hits it. Only, the person is required not to go outside the wall of protection built around him by the guru, and this can happen if there be want of sincerity and faith. Fear also can step in and undermine. One must have a staunch faith that he is secure in the protection of the Divine.

That is one way of being safe from the attentions of this malevolent tribe. But there is another also for those who are not so fortunately circumstanced as to enjoy the protection afforded by the Divine directly or through the Guru. And that is to counteract the evil forces that are released into action. For it is a fact that in this world there are both kinds of forces and beings—benevolent and malevolent. And due to the incessant action of the Divine Grace in the evolution of the world, the balance is definitely titled in favour of the Agents of the Good. One can have recourse to an adept who can summon these benevolent hosts and checkmate if not eliminate the opposites. There are scores
of instances where this kind of positive help has been successfully invoked to counteract the negative workings of destructive forces. We may recall in this connection a striking incident which is graphically narrated by Dr. Cannon in his book, *The Invisible Influence*. To narrate it in brief:

The husband lay sick and dying. The wife contemplated the bleak prospect of all the property passing to the younger brother of her husband and her impending dependence upon him. Suddenly she thought 'why not do away with him?' and, immediately, the idea of black magic came to her mind. On an impulse she set forth to a dingy lane where this set of the Evil Order was known to live. Seeing a lady of a respectable family near the lane, people got curious and small groups started following her. And, as luck would have it, the younger brother of the dying man happened to be passing along that way and he too joined the crowd.

The lady entered a house and asked for the residence of the chief of the Order of the Left Hand. His house was pointed out to her and she reached that place. She was shown into a room ill-lit and stuffy. After a few minutes, someone with an uncanny look in his eyes entered and observing the lady, said: "Woman, I take it that thou hast come to entreat me to take the life of thy younger brother-in-law, he to whom all thy wealth and power will go when the husband dies on the morrow." She was completely taken aback. However, the bargain was struck for three hundred rupees and she parted hearing his words: "Then I will evoke the Angel of Death this coming night, woman, and the morrow will find thy husband's younger brother also dead, as he—thy husband—will by that time be, having departed to another world, as yet unsighted by thee."

Now, the younger brother who was with the crowd had followed the lady and managed to hide in that house when
this conversation was going on. Needless to say he was completely unnerved and in his distress he rushed to the High Priest of his community and told the whole story. The High Priest listened and stretched his hand of help. He instructed him to dine well that night, light a fire in the spare room of the house, spread white sheeting all over the floor, spread a white table cloth in the centre and put up a rope fence around the table cloth. He was asked to kneel in the centre of the square in meditation and prayer facing the East, and remain in that position praying until sun-rise, without allowing himself even a moment of sleep, for in that fleeting moment the enemy could slay.

The young man did as he was told. With much apprehension he took his position as directed and the night crept on. The clock struck hour after hour but nothing happened. Then after midnight "unexpectedly as if from out of the bowels of the Earth, there appeared on the Eastern side of the rope a black horse so large as to terrify the most brave; which beast did spit fire out of its mouth, and whose rider was clad in sable and carried a sword of flaming fire. The youth, frightened beyond speech, forgot completely those high thoughts on which his attention had been fixed, so awestruck was he at this chimaera. The rider reined his horse nearer and nearer to his victim; but as he reached the rope on the Eastern side, the horse each time stepped back, in spite of the efforts of its rider to reach his victim. This terrible battle raged between the powers of evil and the powers of good for three long hours-from midnight until the hour of three did this ghastly rider, this fiend of the underworld, used every power under his control to reach his victim, but in vain. As the hour of three struck, the rider and his horse vanished into the bowels of the Earth whence they had come; during that ordeal the youth's hair had turned quite white. Though the enemy had departed, the youth, as
commanded by the High Priest, protracted his meditations until the sun had risen, when he realised that the great God had indeed spared his life."

That is not the end of the story, however. The spirit from the underworld that had been summoned had to have its due—a human life. Therefore having failed to get the promised life it turned to him that made the promise. And when the day dawned, the black magician was found dead.

This is what happens when black magic fails. This is what the Mother means when She says that if you are protected and you remain within the circle of protection, the attack rebounds on the source. It hits back with double violence. We may add, in passing, that certain diabolical magicians direct the attack on two—the intended victim and some close associate of his, so that if it fails to strike at the main person it will hit the other and so will not return.
HUMAN INGRATITUDE

I am often asked about this phenomenon. Why is it that people to whom you do good again and again almost invariably turn back on you? I have put that question to myself quite a number of times. For I too have had occasions to wonder. You live in society, you have relations, you have friends, you have acquaintances. And, if you happen to be in a favourable position, it is but natural that in the course of your dealings, there come up a number of occasions when persons come to you for assistance in matters, big or small. And you oblige. You render the help that is sought for. The person is happy, makes suitable gestures of histhankfulness. Such times may repeat themselves and it may also be that you are fortunately so circumstanced as to help each time. But a moment may come—as it does come sometime—when you are not in a position to help. And the result is totally unexpected. The person concerned turns round and becomes hostile to you. He feels denied of his right to expect your services. He forgets the ninty-nine times when you were helpful but remembers only the hundredth occasion when you could not "behave" yourself. This is an extreme though not an uncommon example of human ingratitude. Even in cases which do not involve repeated favours and final hostility, it is observed that it is only a small percentage of the recipients that are truly grateful and keep that warm feeling throughout. Why is it so?

A disciple asked this very question to Sri Aurobindo. And what he said in reply was an eye-opener to me. When you do good to another, he explained, that person feels a sense of obligation, and whatever the immediate feeling and expression of it on his part, his vital, his ego-self, resents this obligation. And it is this subtle sense of resentment that
gradually digs itself deep, known or unknown to the person, and at the first opportunity, lashes out against the benefactor for having laid it under this intolerable load of beneficence.

This, then, is the psychology that underlies the mystifying phenomenon of the bitter hostility, the unforgiving vengefulness that we see in many such cases. But this is one part of the problem. I have wondered whether there could not be something in the being of the person, who does the favours, that could vitiate the relation and invite this kind of reaction. In most there is an insistent awareness of having obliged. For the moment, let us exclude those who do calculated favours and take into account only such as do the good acts simply because it is natural to do so. Even with them, there is a certain satisfaction of having conferred a favour on another. But if it were to stop there that would not materially affect the situation. In many cases the ego steps in and stakes a claim on the thankfulness, on the continued gratitude on the part of the beneficiary. It is this demand of the ego, I am persuaded to believe, that presses subtly on the ego domain of the other, and evokes the adverse reactions immediately or at some future time.

Indeed, it is good to do favours. But it is less good to remember having done them, and it is positively vitiating to claim, however subtly, the adherence of the other person on account of the good you have done. In that case it ceases to be a good turn, it becomes a mere lever to attain dominance over another less happily situated than yourself. It is for this reason that it is enjoined in our tradition that the right hand shall not know what the left hand does. The memory of a good act done for another should not be carried over to the next moment. Only in such a case does the act become spiritually elevating to yourself, irrespective of the reactions of the other party.
It may be asked if this precaution of keeping out the claim for gratitude can ensure good behaviour on the part of the other. It may or it may not, but certainly it eliminates a vitiating factor from your side.

This absence of claim from you is bound to exercise a wholesome effect, in a subtle manner, on the other person. For his ego does not find a counter ego to fight against. Impurity cannot fight with purity all the time. It loses its edge and gradually sheds its character of ignorance and undergoes a modification in the direction of the superior purity. The true test of your purity, your disinterestedness, can come only when the other revolts and challenges your bonafides. If at that time you are unruffled and stand unmoved in the purity of your conscience, the opposing force is sure to fall back and possibly yield to enlightenment in future. That is the only way in which you can meet the situation helpfully. No man is wicked for ever or all through. There is a point of light which can be contacted at an unexpected moment and it may be that your refusal to be provoked into ill-will and your insistence on keeping the same attitude of helpfulness may strike some deeper chord in his being and mark a turning point in his life.
MATERIAL PROGRESS & SPIRITUAL LIFE

Quite often I come across letters of lamentations from seekers complaining of lack of material progress in keeping with the spiritual gains. If there is a descent of Grace, it is argued, it must reflect itself in the material sphere also. What happens in many cases, however, is that instead of an amelioration of conditions, the difficulties increase, problems multiply in the worldly life once one takes to the spiritual. Why is it so?

The question of success or failure in material life is comparatively simple. One puts out certain energies and they yield their results. According to the exertions are the returns. Whether the happenings represent the result of past energies or the present, usually they are forged by oneself. Material prosperity calls for exertion in the material way, the marshalling and the working out of the factors that build up the increase; whether it is done in this life or the last, whether it is done by oneself or anyone else, each such prosperity is the resultant of what has gone before. This, in sum, is the process, leaving aside for the moment other subordinate factors which play their own part in the situation.

What usually happens, when one takes to spiritual life, is that along with the intensification of the spiritual effort there is a certain relaxation of the hold and the push on forces that operate in the material sphere. This inevitably results in a corresponding diminution of returns. Secondly, a new factor comes in and that is the element of Grace. Over and above the operation of the Law of Karma there is this fact of Grace. But the Grace does not always act according to human calculations. It acts in the best interests of
the soul. It may choose not to interfere with the working of some part of the Karma. It may also set aside some materially favourable results should they prove harmful to the spiritual growth of the soul. Thus once one takes seriously to the life of the Spirit, the Law of Karma ceases to be ineluctable. The Grace establishes the priority of the soul-growth and things take shape in a manner that best promotes this inner evolution. Often it is the hard way of suffering which is inevitable if the hold of Ignorance and the clinging to the ego are too strong.

It may also be that the seeker finds himself amidst a plenty of everything; that is a bounty of the Divine which can be held and preserved by a right consciousness, so graphically expressed by the Upanishad in the memorable phrase \textit{tyaktena bhunjithah.} The soul is being educated to in the way of plenty.
BEATNIKS

It took my breath away when I read in the papers that a ‘Himalayan Yogi’ has called the Beatles the great practical philosophers of the twentieth century. I only hope he did not mean what he said and that was only his way of encouraging the youngsters to take interest in matters spiritual. The Beatles are, as is well known, the four young men of Britain who have their own ideas of what man and society should be and are blazing a new, bizarre trail across the youth of all nations. It appears they attended a seminar held by the yogi in England and that provided the occasion for the hyperbole.

The Beatles are a typical symptom of the disease that is infecting the youth of today in most parts of the world; the details may vary but fundamentally the nature and the direction of the phenomena are the same. We are told that the young men of the present age are in revolt against an old effete civilisation and want to break new ground. They are up against everything that smacks of the old, including its graces, and go all out to deny deliberately those values in their own person. They are known by various names, Beatletypes, Beatniks, Hippies, Red Guards and so on. They give up their families and settled ways of life and are always on the move; they discard the usual, conventional clothes and dress themselves in most outlandish ways; even their personal appearance is unedifying. And they delight in it.

To a dispassionate observer the whole movement cannot fail to strike as something retrograde, backswinging. Standards and values established by centuries of civilisation in the sphere of art, culture, polity, etc. are sought to be wiped out. Any genuine movement that hopes to build the future must perforce assimilate the best of the past and proceed further
to make fresh gains. But the youth movements of the type we speak of, seek to destroy without any worthy substitutes in their hands. They are more or less vandals with mock heroics of the vulgar type.

The whole movement, we fear, is a destructive wave deriving inspiration from a vital, a lower vital, consciousness. The ugly features that characterise the phenomena, the restlessness and mass hysteria these men generate wherever they move into action, leave no doubt about it. It is not some juvenile movement that can be allowed to run itself out. If allowed to grow it will swallow up the rising generations in a flood of negative and paisachic turmoil.

Of late we have been getting a number of these specimens from different countries. They are clad in all sorts of combinations of apparel; they bear no luggage; they let their hair and beards grow in an unkempt manner; they carry an air wholly unhygienic—physically and mentally. Only last week there was a group from Europe, clad in garish lungis, twigs of leaves in the ear, etc. At their request we extended our hospitality to them only to find that they were not above thieving, drunkenness, violence and every undesirable manifestation of the lower nature. It was a job to get rid of them and there was a good deal of unpleasantness in the process. When I spoke to the Mother about them and their movement. She asked me what their aim was. She heard and wrote this message to them:

To break away from the old traditions and not to obey the old rules is good—but on condition that one discovers in oneself a higher and a truer consciousness which manifests Harmony, Peace, Beauty and a superior Order, vast and progressive.
MISCELLANY

Question: A great critic can never be a great poet. It is so because one is essentially analytical whereas the other is its very opposite.

Answer: Not necessarily. One can be both a critic and a poet of eminence. A mature person can have the power of discrimination and judgement as developed as his power of creation. In such cases the creative faculty is helped by the critical in attaining heights of perfection; the latter operates effectively to detect and check fallings in inspiration.

Question: A certain delegation from Germany looking at our mathematical syllabus said that that was what they taught 100 years ago. There is a need to recast every syllabus so that one in a post-graduate college ends up at the very door step of the latest discoveries. Do we, here in the Ashram, proceed along such lines? Or, is such formal education, however desirable or otherwise, not contemplated for our purpose?

Answer: We proceed on the basis that knowledge is an expanding manifestation of the Divine and our syllabi are so framed as to admit fresh movements from any quarters. A basic supporting frame-work is provided leaving the rest to be filled up by the collaboration between the teacher and the student.

Question: Life instincts, if suppressed before they run out their course, will seek satisfaction clandestinely, Yoga or no Yoga.

Answer: It depends upon the nature of the suppressions. If it is thorough and severe, the instincts die, are burnt up (to use a yogic phrase). It is only if the suppression is on the surface that the instincts surge up from the subconscious at the first opportunity. Even then if they are denied expression repeatedly, they tend to fall away.
Question: Stealing is the immoral form of (a) acquisitiveness. (b) assertion.

The child of a broken family attempts, when grown-up, to wreak society in vengeance by stealing.

Answer: At the bottom, stealing is an act of ignorance, an expression of the life of the ego, the vital for self-aggrandisement, self-appropriation. When this life is denied satisfaction in the normal way, it breaks out in an abnormal manner.

Question: Different languages sprang all over the world to serve the local needs. Now that “one world” and “one government” is in the offing, is there a likelihood of any one language becoming the world language or a new language emerging for the purpose?

Answer: As far as one can peer into the future, it looks, as if ENGLISH will be the World-Language. It is the only language that has shown the plasticity, adaptability and expandability that are required for such a purpose.

Question: It is said that CIA pitched upon Dr. Oppenheimer for the post of the Director of the Atomic Research Organization because there was the possibility of his inferiority complex getting inverted, thereby hastening the progress of research.

And the result was the Atom Bomb! let us say:-

Good can never issue out of evil, however sophisticated the said evil is.

Answer: Good and evil are very relative terms. Good can issue out of what is called evil even as evil is known to result from what was good once upon a time but ceased to be so with the passage of time. From a higher point of view, both are movements of ignorance trying to arrive at knowledge, one less and the other more imperfect than the other.
Question: Tolstoy said somewhere that the incubus of the British Govt. in India could never enslave the souls of the Indians, and no Indian need feel enslaved on that score.

Answer: The alien domination denied expression to the Soul of India. It sought to stifle the healthy growth and vitality of the national collectivity, economically, politically and even spiritually by introducing and promoting false values. (The ameliorations due to British rule were really intended to strengthen their own hold on the country, the consequences, however, went beyond the intentions.) Sri Aurobindo perceived and experienced this injurious effect and fought to eliminate the constricting cause.

Question: All these questions must spring from the same level of mental consciousness or mental cognizance. If so, can all of them be generalised into something?

Answer: They show an active mind of reason trying to organise, harmonise and synthesise whatever segments of knowledge come into its ken.

Question: Can vision and lack of intelligence co-exist?

Answer: Yes, They belong to different orders of the being. A man may be endowed with a high vision of something to be done, but he may lack the necessary intelligence to give practical shape to it.

Question: There is a mental blank or vacuum other than the spiritual silence or the idiot’s inaction of mind.

Answer: Yes, indeed. They belong, each of them, to three different orders of the manifest being. The inaction of the imbecile’s mind is not a state of blank; it is full of chaotic movements. The vacancy in the mental consciousness is normally the result of a discipline to stop thought-activity of the mind and can only be a stage to a deeper, spiritual calm.
The spiritual silence, unlike the 'mental blank' is not the result of any effort; it is a natural state that unfolds itself when something in the being is ready. It is more permanent.

Question: A soul chooses a body for its own progress and growth. During its life the soul has to grow cleansing the accumulations of the very cells. At the end the body disintegrates. What is the story of the body in terms of growth? Has it a continuation like that of the soul?

Answer: Normally, the physical body provides a necessary habitation for the soul for progress on the physical plane. When the body disintegrates, the soul just drops it to take up another in due time. Only something very essential of the physical growth in terms of evolution is retained by the soul, the rest is assimilated in the Universal Matter.

Question: Everything that one craves for comes to him in one form or other, sooner or later.

Answer: Generally yes. For the will that is exercised and put out in the atmosphere goes on stressing itself and, unless it is too weak or countered by other will-movements, it tends to effectuate itself.

Question: As the slums cramp one's personality, lofty dwellings make for expansiveness.

Answer: True up to a certain extent. But when the being is developed enough not to depend upon external circumstances for its growth, it is immaterial where one lives; the impulsion is from within and is irresistible.

Question: Surrender of one's actions is the best because an act is the consummation of thoughts, feelings and sensations.

Answer: No. Actions are not usually such consummations. Acts are done mechanically while all the time
thoughts, feelings, etc., go on along their own lines irrespective of the actions done physically.

Further it is more important to surrender the inner movements of thought, feeling and sensational reactions than the outer actions.

*Question*: You can help others the extent that such acts help your inner progress (which alone is the divine intention).

*Answer*: In these matters our own progress is not the deciding factor. One helps because one is moved to do so. Beneficial effect therefrom to one’s own growth is incidental. There are cases where others are helped even at the cost of one’s own progress.

*Question*: Right judgement is comprehensive understanding of facts and possibilities.

Not always. At times it may be an intuitive flash.

*Question*: Sometimes people think by putting questions to others.

*Answer*: Yes, ideas begin to get coherent and organised when they are formulated in the form of questions or discussions.

*Question*: When smallness recognises the need to outgrow itself its only possible behaviour is jealousy.

Jealousy comes in when the smallness does not want to outgrow itself.

*Question*: Ordinarily nothing is impossible; only one must pass through the necessary antecedent steps.

*Answer*: True. Nothing is impossible in this world which is a realm of possibilities. The very fact that an idea arises on the horizon shows that it is a possibility. Only one must know how to actualise it, the process of its working out must be discovered and put into effect. All becomes possible.
Question: Ignorance resists light because it has not yet lived out the usefulness of its present organisation.

Answer: True for the most part. Falsehood— which is an extreme result of ignorance—however, resists the Light of Truth not because of any possible utility of its continuance, but because with the advent of Truth its very existence is eliminated.

Question: Mind is the only formation that overreaches itself by growth.

Answer: Why only mind? Every term in creation leads towards its next higher term by its own growth. After its ultimate is reached it precipitates itself into the immediately higher form. That is the process of evolution.

Question: Science and civilization advance. Man strains himself to re-adjust to new circumstances. As a result there is much imbalance, social as well as personal.

Can the future adjustments demanded of man be planned in the light of future discoveries? Is it in store for the world?

Answer: Actually both the environment and the man influence and shape each other. There is a continuous interaction—friction, disharmony, resolution into harmony, further imbalance calling for another corrective movement and so on. Things cannot be planned and executed in the human way. There is a Zeitgeist, Time-spirit, which exerts pressure on the human consciousness to respond to each situation in the right manner. What is needed is a greater awareness of his own Reality on the part of man.

Question: Fresh water is now got from sewage water. It is chemically pure. Would it still retain some of its character of issuing from sewage?

Answer: In a subtle manner, yes. The subtle physical impression continues.
Question: The Indian political atmosphere is full of threatening clouds. But I feel while the parties may collapse and disintegrate the democratic system will survive because the heart of the country’s body-politic remains sound.

Answer: Can’t say whether the system that will emerge after the turmoil will be ‘democratic’ in the modern western sense. The Indian genius has always had an affinity to a system of hierarchies in every sphere. The mould of the policy of the future may well be of this type.

Question: Plant life being a low organism the yield is not limited by any inherent mechanism. Unlike the members of the higher species, plants can be made to yield more and more. Only, the requisite methods must be skilfully employed.

Answer: Yes, these lower species of life have to be helped by the higher to expedite their growth and enable them to yield their optimum.

Question: Very largely the increase in mental knowledge is a horizontal expansion.

Answer: True of what are called physical sciences-apara vidya. The higher sciences and pure branches of knowledge do expand the consciousness vertically also and open up new summits.

Question: Ordinarily, successful teaching results in more of imitation rather than emulation. Should good teaching be so organised that the taught never imitates e.g., the handwriting, mannerisms, etc. of the teacher?

Answer: The right teaching should aim at bringing out what is latent in the student, helping him to come into his own, rather than follow the curve of another.

Question: Suppose one meditates on the lines of Savitri chosen by The Mother for illustration. Would the same sketches present themselves? Or is the experience of each different?
Answer: Visual representation may not come to all. Some may experience the spiritual truth embodied in the lines; others may be overpowered by the breadth of the afflatus brooding over the poem; some may see pictorially but those figures are likely to be clothed in the samskaras of the individual, shaped according to his mental and aesthetic development.

Question: 1. Kala (Time) is the upholder of Karma; when Karma is transcended one is ushered into the non-Time plane or 2. Karma exists only in Time or 3. Karma is the causal aspect of That of which Time is the aspect of sequence.

Answer: 1. One can transcend Karma and yet be in Time. There are several kinds of Time. 2. Yes.

Question: Fear is will inverted: Fearlessness is Divine will itself.

Answer: Fearlessness can be said to be a reflection of the Divine Will.

Question: There is nothing like 99% perfection. Whatever is not complete perfection is imperfection.

Answer: Naturally.

It is of course understood that perfection itself is relative. What is taken as perfection at one level of consciousness ceases to be so when one passes into another state of consciousness. The latter has its own kind of perfection. Progress consists in passing from perfection to greater perfection.

Question: No advice can be given with profit unless sought for.

Answer: Very true. Unless there is a felt need behind the seeking for the advice, it is useless to advise anyone. It makes no impact.

Question: How far is punishment permissible below six years?
**Answer:** It is not at all permissible. One has to correct patiently and gently. Punishment is more an indecent expression of the impatience and ignorance of the adult than a fruitful correction.

**Question:** There is no skill that cannot be taught to another?

**Answer:** I am afraid it is not so. There must be some favourable ground in the other for the reception and cultivation of the skill. If his nature is inhospitable to a particular type of skill, you cannot teach it to him successfully, however much you may try.

**Question:** Perhaps Pondicherry was chosen by Sri Aurobindo because it is very nearly the geographical centre of the great civilisation of the past.

**Answer:** Pondicherry was not chosen by Sri Aurobindo; it was appointed for him from Above. Why it was chosen we can only surmise. Tradition has it that this place has an ancient past and a good deal of tapasya has been done on its soil before, thus making it a suitable base for further effort in that direction.

**Question:** Are there any activities in the field of physical labour that have the inherent virtue of opening up spiritual possibilities in the individual?

**Answer:** There is no special virtue in any particular activity. All depends upon the spirit in which it is done. It is that which opens up or closes down whatever possibilities await the individual.

**Question:** In noble natures, even from their character-deficiencies, only generous emotions issue.

**Answer:** That is so because it is their svabhava, law of self-becoming. All movements carry traits of this fundamental nature.
Question: The normal, healthy, happy family as well as social life—a life of vital satisfaction—contains an element of sex satisfaction. In other words, social life is partly sex life.

Answer: Why spotlight sex only? Normal life—individual and social—consists of many kinds of satisfaction (and dissatisfaction). Sex is only one of them and it has its place in the present physico-vital set-up in Nature.

Question: Artificial insemination (among humans) demolishes social life-patterns; it does not so much as touch the domain of spiritual growth.

Answer: The first part of the statement may be true, but the second is not quite pertinent for even non-artificial insemination has little to do with spiritual growth. In fact all insemination is a negative factor—when it is not positively injurious—in matters spiritual.

Question: Humour is ridicule in disguise.

Answer: No, humour of the right kind is an expression of the Delight in existence.

Question: I know one who lies without hesitation. He once wrote a book extolling the nobility of Vali of the Ramayana.

Is it possible for one to espouse the cause of nobility and truth while being wedded to falsehood at heart?

Could it be his sub-conscious awareness of his position and the consequent attempt to dissociate himself from that?

Answer: Man is a being of multiple personality and until all the constituting personalities are integrated, it is possible for the different ‘persons’ to act, each in his own way. In the case cited here, the intellectual personality has acted on its own level, independent of the others.

Question: Crowded rats bear fewer off-springs. Crowded cities have lower birth rates. Has man’s excess sex-need been
sublimated by being huddled together? Would it be the reason for the irregular sex behaviours in big cities?

Answer: Social and economic conditions in modern cities are obviously not favourable for free, uninhibited sex life. Even animals demand a certain measure of privacy—from the rest of their own kind—for the purpose.

Question: The love for a wife is the love for the less noble aspect of her personality.

Answer: Yajnavalkya would give you a rap on the knuckles for saying that. One loves another, he declares in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, not for the sake of the other as such, but because of the Self. The Self in you and the Self in another are the same, that is why there is attraction, there is the flow of being from one to the other. That is the fundamental truth. The rest are exciting causes, attendant circumstances. At the base, the love of the wife is based upon the divine substratum in her.

Question: Is there any sin in family planning?

Answer: No. From the spiritual point of view there is no sin as understood in common parlance. One may say that sin is what retards spiritual growth. How does family planning harm or help spiritual progress? If it were to conserve the sex energy, it could be said to contribute, however indirectly, to spiritual stamina. But it does not. Hence it is of little relevance to spiritual life.

Question: Sri Aurobindo says that Karma or destiny can be transcended by knowledge and will.

Psychologists say that a complex vanishes the moment one takes a good look at it.

Do these statements express the same at different levels?

Answer: It is not as easy as the psychologists make it out. All that can be said in support of this view is that from a
certain poise in the consciousness, all Karma, all manifestation appears as dissolvable superficies. But as long as the embodiment is there without change of consciousness—in whatever sheath—the Karma continues. It can be overpassed only when one lives permanently in a state of consciousness higher than the state which gave birth to the Karma concerned.

**Question:** The integrity or intelligence of one like Bertrand Russel is unquestioned. But he takes the side of China in world politics. And China is no progressive force on any showing. Can we say, prejudices for and against die hard?

**Answer:** That only shows the inherent limitations of the human intelligence. It sees only in segments, in certain tracks only. It is incapable of a global view which is the only correct view of things in this universe. Russell’s is a self-satisfied mind content to make pontifical pronouncements from its superior pedestal.

**Question:** Vanity is the petty desire of the lower vital to parade. Ambition is the well-marked propensity of the mind, perhaps resulting from the inverted seeking of some deficiency.

**Answer:** Ambition is largely a drive of the vital. The mind supports the vital.

**Question:** To make a mean heart feel generous is more difficult than to give intelligence to an idiot.

**Answer:** I should think so. Idiocy is a sick arrested state of the mind and with proper training one can hope to build up mental health, but meanness is the very opposite of generosity, not an inchoate state of the latter.

**Question:** Why does the vital alternate between extremes whereas the growth of the mind or heart can be continuous?

**Answer:** It is the nature of the vital to swing between extremes when left to itself. It is only when it is controlled.
by the mind or the soul that it accepts the medial position. The vital is constituted of the life-energies and they always tend either to sink down or shoot up.

**Question**: Does patience properly belong to the mind or to the vital?

**Answer**: To the mind. It is the mind that cultivates and develops the quality of patience. It is the mind that imposes the quality on the other restless members of the being.

**Question**: Prayer is best if the situation is entirely surrendered to the Divine without wishing for a particular result.

*Suppose a dear one is dying. It is better to surrender the situation to the Divine rather than wish for his recovery. The latter attempts to limit the Grace to only one answer.*

**Answer**: Spiritually this is the best attitude—to make over the situation to the Divine with the prayer that the Divine Will be done. That promotes the way for the best to happen for the soul in question.

**Question**: Everyone who suffers, loves that suffering in some measure.

**Answer**: This can be said of those who are habitually suffering. Something in their vital—some perverse part—relishes and sticks to the suffering. Even when conditions change, it finds ways and means to create a cause for suffering.

**Question**: Sometimes great inner changes take place in a split second as they are the revelations of the Timeless?

**Answer**: Yes, but it must be remembered that such instantaneous changes are the sudden results or culminations of a long process of change steadily going on behind the veil.
Question: To expect, reveals an inner insufficiency.

Answer: It is so when one expects things from human associates.

Question: Sincerity is the light in the heart?

Answer: Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that sincerity is the reflection of the light in the Will.

Question: Below the silent conscious mind are the active subconscious mental, emotional vital occupations. Silence really comes only when they are suspended.

Answer: No, silence first comes upon the mind from above or within and it is as a result that the restless and sub-conscious parts fall into quietude. The light spreads from the more awakened parts to the less awakened.

Question: Spiritual ambition is still ambition; rather worse than the usual.

Answer: Yes, it is more inexcusable than the ordinary ambition. Spiritual ambition ruins the soul while ambition of the worldly type does not go so deep in its results.

Question: At a given time, for a given individual, there is only one next step in a given set of circumstances.

or

Nature's determinism is such that when every aspect of an event is fixed, the possibility is limited to one.

Answer: There is only one right step at each moment, but the possibilities presented are more than one. The choice of free-will comes here.

How a man decides depends normally upon the set of preceding circumstances which constitute his Karma. But the soul can over-ride them if it choses.

Question: Insulting narrowness of mind and exalting nobility of the heart never go together.
As matter of fact if either mind or heart or vital is great or noble, the other members are not permitted to fall below par as each is interrelated with the other.

Answer: Yes, provided the developed member has got or attained a masterful position so as to dominate over the rest and subordinate them to its leading notes.

Question: The Mother appears to function from a non-mental centre.

Answer: She functions from a centre far above the highest mental summits.

Question: Power, sex and money are most attractive to the vital ego. Is it so because they are the only fields through which it can assert and build up itself?

Answer: They are the three main lines of the self-affirmation and self-aggrandisement of the vital ego in the present organisation of the world.

Question: By detachment power and money can be made to serve the Divine. Can sex follow suit? It is said that the sex energy converts into ‘tejas’ by the divine touch. From this, can we say that all small formations would dissolve at the touch of the Divine?

Answer: I am afraid sex cannot be made to serve the Divine by mere detachment. It requires a more positive discipline of purification and sublimation before retas converts itself into tejas and tejas into ojas. The Divine touch expedites and uplifts, but human effort is indispensable.

"Small formations" can be dissolved by the Divine Touch if they are sincerely offered to it for elimination.

Question: Pleasure and pain are two sides of the same vibration. Does joy have its other side? Or is it self-existent?

Answer: At the human level of ignorance joy has its shadow of sorrow. What is self-existent is the Bliss
underlying all things in creation, the Bliss of which joy and pleasure, sorrow and pain are distant currents, positive and negative.

**Question:** Sin is committed in the conscience. Morality exists only in acquired notions of the Mind. These apart, is there no moral value for the act itself committed with or without knowledge or conviction? Can we say such moral values flow directly from the lingering convictions in the doer and acts by themselves are moral?

**Answer:** Every act lends itself to be measured in terms of many values e.g., utilitarian, moral, spiritual etc. To the doer himself only the motive with which he does it is relevant, whatever the significance or consequence of the act to others. Acts can be moral without any such intentions on the part of the doer.

**Question:** Does the Divine sometimes employ habitual instruments of falsehood to deliver (i) the social good (ii) the absolute good?

**Answer:** In the ultimate analysis, all serve the Divine, the good and the bad, the Gods and the Asuras, forces of truth and forces of falsehood. Even the legions of Falsehood and Ignorance are utilised by the Divine power for the evolutionary progress in creation.

**Question:** The last stage of the spiritual journey must be done in single file. So real love of the fellow creature is the love of the divine in him. Human affection, however exalted, is out of context in spiritual endeavour.

**Answer:** Normal human affection is indeed outside the spiritual frame of things. But usually even this human affection deepens into a divine love with the growth of the spiritual consciousness. It is spontaneous and even from those going in a 'single file' there is a spontaneous outflow of love and compassion for others who are all seen as
embodiments of the one Divine struggling to realise themselves in their true nature. It is the Divine in one reaching out to the Divine in the other.

**Question:** A Guru passes through various stages of growth in his endeavour, each being surrounded by various social factors, favourable or otherwise.

Is it possible for a sincere disciple to catch some of those aspects of life (certain sufferings, set-up of life, etc.) unwittingly?

**Answer:** Normally the disciple absorbs the condition or state of consciousness that is active in the Guru at the meeting. What the Guru has passed through comes into the picture only in so far as it has been assimilated into his present. The disciple shares in the results of the past but not in the attendant, local elements that contributed to the working.

**Question:** Anything worth can be best communicated in silence, specially when the receiver is silent. Can a discourse be so arranged that it silences the receiver’s mind and strengthens it in the process?

**Answer:** The discourse also will have to be in Silence like the instruction of Dakshinamoorti.
THIRD SERIES

I

THE TRADITION
ON VEDIC SYMBOLISM

In a sense all forms are symbols. Each symbol is a representation, on one plane, of a reality on another plane of existence. This perception of physical forms being living symbols of psychological and spiritual realities was very common among all societies in their mystic Age. For every human society has its stages of growth which for purposes of study we may loosely group into Ages, the Mystic Age governed by symbols, the Typal Age, the Age of Reason and so on.

The Age of the Veda was pre-eminently an age of symbols. Everything in life, in the physical environment of those times, reminded the seers of the deeper verities of existence which were brooding behind. Features, happenings, physical forms recalled to the mind of the Rishis developments in their own inner life in which they were ceaselessly engaged. Thus the hill with its rising plateaus reminded them of the Reality of the Existence with its ascending planes of consciousness to be scaled by the human soul. The waters come as a natural figure for the currents of energies from which life is born and on which it is sustained. Agni, the living flame, is a transparent symbol for the dynamic aspiration and will that burns in the being of man for self-exceeding. The physical sun, the source of light in the universe, is the symbol of the Sun of Truth that irradiates the whole of Creation with his luminous energy. The Rishi speaks of several Suns, one on each plane of the being—the physical sun is only one of the solar concentrations of the Truth-Light.

There are other kinds of symbols in the Vedic hymnal which are more or less conventional, e.g. the Cow which stands for Light or the Horse which symbolises Power. The
live state of language of those times helped them to transmit these truths in a natural manner. Thus the word go in Sanskrit means both the quadruped of that name, cow, as also a ray of light. And light - in all spiritual experience - is the physical form of knowledge. So to the Rishi the cow stands for spiritual knowledge. Milk is the yield of the cow; so is ghee, ghṛta; and hence both are figures for formations of illumined thought.

Sacrifice, yajña, the most important feature of the Vedic society is itself a spectacular symbol of the inner effort of the seer at self-transcendence in which he consecrates himself, all that he is and has, to the Gods. The sacrifice is aptly spoken of as a journey - going from the finite to the infinite; as a battle—fight against obscurity from within and without; at times, as an ascent—from the plains of ordinary life to the mounting peaks of divine existence.

The Veda is a world of symbols.
MANTRA

It is one of the fundamental perceptions of the ancients that the Reality turned towards manifestation reveals itself as a primordial Sound, the Brahman is nada, God is Logos. The first stir, spanda, of the Creative Consciousness renders itself as a vibration of sound, sabda, and all else issues from this Sound-Form of the Reality. Each form in creation has this Sound-origin at its base. It may belong to any plane of existence, it may be a god, it may be a thought-form or a current of force or a material object on earth. At its root there is a Sound-substance from which it has evolved into this manifestation. Naturally, this Sound is not the sound of our physical world, but it is the Sound of the plane of the supreme Ether, paramavyoman. Indeed, it translates itself into appropriate form on the different levels of creation. It is only the last stage of this rendering of Sound-form that is the human speech. And when any particular word or words in our speech are such projected correspondences of the supreme Sound-forms, they are called mantra.

Thus the mantra is a transcript in terms of human speech of the basic Sound-body of any truth or form in creation. By dwelling upon such a word or words one can connect himself with the prototype in the higher planes and evoke the truth embodied in that original Sound-form to manifest. It is an occult law that if one can recreate the conditions in which something first manifested, an inducement, a pressure, is exerted for that thing to manifest again.

In the mantra-sastra each Deity is conceived as having its own Sound-form which is rendered at the human level in the body of the letters of a mantra revealed to the seer. By concentrating upon this physical nodus one evokes the Deity ensouled in its corresponding Sound-form above to manifest.
Rapport is established between the person who waits upon the mantra and the Truth at its head.

Naturally, a mantra of this type is not concocted by the human mind. It is not a matter of clothing an idea into metrical form. The Word comes into the being reverberating from the deeps of an eternal Silence and settles in the recesses of the heart. There it is brooded upon by the central consciousness till it is assimilated and acquires sufficient individuation in this world of flux. When it is so processed, hrda tattan, carved by the heart, it is taken up by the intelligence and subjected to a further process of fusion and then clothed in an appropriate thought-form. This thought-form flows in its inevitable sound-body, and we have the Word.

This is the sacred character of the mantra around which a whole science has been built up by the seers of yore. A mantra is not a convenient means for concentration for arresting the wayward tendencies of the mind; it is not even a vehicle to connect oneself with a Deity; the mantra is the body of the Deity, in a sense it is the Deity itself. It is when one looks upon the mantra in this spirit, adores it, takes to it with the love that one reserves for the Divine Beloved that the mantra reveals its true nature, yields its truth and becomes one with the upasaka, practicant. He attains identity with the ensouled Deity.
THE PLACE OF GITA IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN TRADITION

The Veda is of course the supreme Source of all Indian tradition. Being the first extant record of the aspirations, the exertions and the achievements in the field of thought and soul-life of the ancient fathers, puruṣa pitarāh, of the race, the Rig Veda—for that is the main body of hymns around which the whole of the Vedic literature has been built up—has formed the basic ground and the governing fount of all efforts of self-development of the humanity of this land in the present cycle of its life and progress. The society to which the hymns of the Veda testify is essentially a collectivity with a robust outlook which made no distinction between the Earth and the Heaven, between Life and God. To the seers of the Veda, the leaders of the Aryan civilisation of that age, all life was one, a creative manifestation of the Divine in which men, Gods, titans participated, helped or hindered each other. Individually and collectively men strove to overcome their limited humanity and grow into the wider dimension of divinity. Each worked and moved in the way that was fit for him. Thus the more developed men, the initiates, had an esoteric path for their self-development and self-transcendence while the laity had a religion of ceremonial forms, the path esoteric. The hymns of the Rig Veda contain the broad features of both of these disciplines and their application. This high effort continued for a long time, we do not know how long. But certain it is that after a sufficiently long period there came a falling off in the effort.

The next important stage in the cultural and spiritual history of India is marked by a revivalist movement. The Veda was sought to be resuscitated and made a live force again. This movement took a double shape. The Brahmanas
represent the attempt at the revival of the religion of forms, ritual; the *Upanishads* are unmistakable efforts for the reclamation and restatement of the esoteric content and tradition of the *Veda*. This marked the bifurcation, so to say, of the Vedic tradition which thereafter took two practically independent lines of development.

The third stage in this evolution may be said to have arrived with the age of the *Darshanās*. The *Upanishads* and the *Veda* were held up as starting points, standards of reference, authorities for confirmation; but the Knowledge of Reality,—the knowledge of oneself and the knowledge of Nature,—was sought to be built up by means of the intellect. This was how the various systems of Philosophy came to be formulated by different thinkers starting from different standpoints.

In the course of time this inevitably led to a certain profusion of systems of thought and ways of life based upon them and to a confusion too. Each expounder claimed his presentation to be the only right one, the sole means of progress and achievement of the object of life. It was at this juncture—in answer to the need of the hour—that the *Gita* came to be written. The *Gita* is essentially a book of reconciliation. It assimilates in itself the best of the tradition behind it, rejects all fungus growths, takes account of all the existing lines of Thought and Life, formulates and projects a synthetic view of existence. It records the services rendered by each of the main systems of Self-development e.g. the Way of Works, Way of Love, Way of Knowledge and proceeds to work out a comprehensive scheme by which the lower life of the senses could be transmuted into a higher life of the Spirit in which all the elements of life, action, feeling, thought, fuse together and culminate in the Bliss of Union with the Divine.
All subsequent developments in the realm of Indian philosophy and spirituality have recognised this unique feature of the Gita and held it in high esteem as a significant apogee in the growth of the Indian Spirit.
INDIAN CULTURE
Some Misconceptions

When it is said that the culture of the Indian people is spiritual in character, it does not mean that every Indian is spiritual or that the community is wedded only to spiritual effort. Similarly when we say that the Japanese culture is essentially artistic, it does not imply there are no unaesthetic elements in that society. All that is meant is that the Japanese as a race have cultivated a way of life that is basically artistic. Nature, history and the people have all combined to produce a civilisation that is dominated and governed by high values of the artistic spirit in creation. May be there have been departures and temporary turns from this central theme of their life, particularly with the inroads that the commercialism and militarism of the West have made in that country since the beginning of the present century. But that does not alter the main character of the Culture of Japan. Even so, in spite of all deviations, aberrations and wrong turns that were perhaps inevitable in the long run of Indian history, the fundamental basis of this culture has been and remained spiritual.

And what do we mean by spiritual? It is the recognition that Spirit is the primal Reality and all else derives from it. The body, the life, the mind, all draw their value from the soul, the Spirit that bases and informs them. The key to life lies in the Reality that is God.

The Indian mind has looked upon all life as a manifestation of the Spirit. The Universe is a projection of God. There is one Consciousness, one Life, one base of Matter, however variously formulated. There is a Unity behind all the apparent diversity and this Unity is imposed by the manifesting Spirit which is at the core of each form and
equally extended everywhere. This truth of the unity of Man, Nature and God is a fundamental base of Indian Thought and Vision. All else flows from it. This unity is to be worked out and realised at every level of life, in every sphere of activity. Each individual form in creation is instinct with this spark of the Spirit and its mission is to realise its oneness with the sparks in other forms and its unity with the Parent Flame of which it is an emanation. Evolution into higher and higher forms of life and consciousness is the process by which this objective is sought to be fulfilled. All life is envisaged as a part of this cosmic process in which the Supreme Godhead, its various powers and personalities—the Gods—the creatures at all levels of creation and Nature as the mother of all, participate. Everything, every event draws its significance by its place in this context of spiritual manifestation.

This is the broad outlook that governed the thought and movement of the forefathers of the Indian civilisation, the Seers of the Vedas. And basically it has remained the same down the millenniums across the ages of the Upanishads, Epics, Darshanas, Theistic movements etc. There may have been local departures, but they have been more or less in the nature of overgrowths and have not affected the overall perspective in which the Indian views life on earth and beyond. For him life does not cease with one brief innings on this earth. He is aware that his present life is only one of a series of lives in which he is developing himself, growing from animalhood to manhood and thence to Godhood and the whole extent of the universe with its several worlds is the field of his labours. He knows that his soul is a constant factor amidst all changes of form and that the true test of values lies in the crucible of his soul.

It is this total perspective of human life as an integrated part of the cosmic manifestation of God and as a field for the
individual progression and ascent up the ladder of the Spirit, that has moulded the outlook and culture of the Indian people and has created its inalienable values of relativity, catholicity, commonality and conformity to the demands of the Right, the Truth, Satyam, Ritam, as the ancients called the governing Law of the Spirit or Dharma as the later builders described it.

It has been propagated by certain critics that this bent of the Indian mind towards things religious and spiritual has had a disastrous effect on the material fortunes of the race. Their spiritual turn has promoted, we are told, an other-worldly outlook and that has resulted in a failure of the life-energy in this world. This is a total misconception. A spirituality that cherishes life as a manifestation of the Divine Reality—and such has been the genuine spiritual tradition of India—raises up the value of life as a golden opportunity for progress, for self-statement and self-development in the image of God and invests every little of it with a profound significance. It is this spirit that has actuated the efflorescence of the Indian genius in her most fertile periods.

The best contributions of the Indian people towards the human heritage have been made in the eras when this spiritual inspiration was at its zenith, when the society consciously held up the spiritual ideals and sought to translate them into practice. This has been so in all fields of effort—political, social, cultural, religious. A receding of those standards has coincided with an ebb in the life-stream. But a renaissance is now on and any one can see that springs of this rebirth have lain in a restatement of the pristine spiritual truths and a fresh dedication of the people to them.

A truly spiritual outlook does not hamper or constrict the flow of life. On the other hand, it gives a wholesome sense of proportion, a balance, so that one is not helplessly
lost in the fortunes or misfortunes of the moment. The present is not all. There is a before and an after. I am not alone either. I have a host of agents to help me in my effort. It is this element of faith, reliance and optimism that is characteristic of all true spiritual perspective. Local or temporary vicissitudes are not allowed to blind the vision and dampen the spirits. Endless are the vistas that are opened to the heroic life-spirit.

The Doctrine of Karma - which is inherent in the scheme of life - is accused of turning Indians into a nation of fatalists. On the contrary, it has lifted man out of the sense of helplessness before circumstances that seem to crowd upon him from everywhere. This acceptance of the truth of Karma (and re-incarnation for the working out of the results of Karma) has given a consciousness of strength and self-direction and dignity to man. For it recognises that man can create his own Karma, forge his own destiny by his will. Whatever the element of past legacy, for the greater part he can exert his will and release karmic forces that are most favourable to his development—not only in a distant future but even in the present. Indian tradition also recognises the possibility of cancelling even a good part of the past Karma that is not ineluctable:

*Man can accept his fate, he can refuse.*

*(Sri Aurobindo).*
SRI AUROBINDO: PHILOSOPHY
SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION OF ONE WORLD

The truth of things is not on the surface, it lies in their depths. This world of ours derives its significance from its source, which is concealed by its appearances. Sri Aurobindo perceives an Absolute, a Divine Reality, at the origin of all creation. This Reality is an Infinite Existence whose nature is puissant Consciousness that is Bliss. It is this One Reality, this One Consciousness that manifests the Many out of its infinite Being. The manifestation is indeed multiple but its governing truth is the fundamental Oneness of All.

This truth of Oneness at the base of all formation is preserved at all levels of the many-tiered Creation. Looked at vertically, this manifestation is pronouncedly unified at the spiritual level of existence above. At the mental level the basic oneness is less prominent but the unity of the Mind-world is realised once the superfcies is crossed. In the realm of Life too, inspite of all barriers and limitations, the oneness of all life is evident. It is only on the physical plane that the unity is more or less effectively veiled by the extraordinary fragmentation of forms that characterises material existence. And yet, as on every level of Creation, it is the truth of Oneness that presses for expression through the variegated Many.

II

Sri Aurobindo studies the evolution of the universe in the perspective of this truth of Oneness—the Many manifest from the One and the One manifest in the Many. Nature starts with an endless division of material form and evolves step by step forging means for bringing those forms closer to each other, for establishing relation and community between one form and another. With the advent and development of Life and Mind, there is a sensible growth of relation, of cohesion,
among the multiple units in the Creation; with the stir of the Spirit in the emotional and psychological layers, the universe is getting closer-knit and the stress of an emerging Oneness is unmistakable. The organisation is transforming itself into an organism.

III

And this is the trend of the evolution of humanity too, especially in its sociological and political directions. Starting from small units of association like the clan, the tribe, etc., groups of men have expanded, under the compulsive factors of self-preservation and self-affirmation, into steadily larger and larger aggregates. The largest unit so far arrived at is the Nation. And the very same forces that made the formation of the nation-unit inescapable are today operating to make the advent of a super-nation unit inevitable. Sri Aurobindo sees the unfailing signs of this movement in the determined urge at international collaboration in an increasing number of areas, viz., Health, Education, Production, Labour and, today, even in the political field. He does not envisage the replacement of the present order of nations by a monster State in which all orientations of race and culture are obliterated under the steam roller of uniformity but a loose federation or confederation of peoples who keep their variations of type in vigorous health and yet join together for a common, unimpeded advancement towards their collective Destiny.

The Poet's vision of a World-State is on its way to realisation. The Zeitgeist of the age is pressing for the firm establishment of this spirit and rule of Oneness in all spheres of life, so that the stage is set for the plenary manifestation of the Divine Spirit of Harmony and Oneness in the universe.
THE DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN SRI AUROBINDO’S THOUGHT

_He stood erect, a Godlike form and force_
_And a soul’s thoughts looked out from earthborn eyes;_
_Man stood erect, he wore the thinker’s brow;_
_He looked at heaven and saw his comrade stars._

—SRI AUROBINDO

It was a significant moment in the history of the Earth when its evolving creature lifted up its head and stood erect in the person of man. That day man became the king of Nature and the crown of her evolution.

The entire past of the Earth’s evolution stands compressed in man; all the future possibilities also rest in him. As the highest developed being in this creation, man is the key to the evolutionary movement. Each human being marks the decisive turning point in the process of Nature’s evolution; in him evolution becomes a conscious process and if he wills he can direct it, shape it and lead it to any culmination he chooses.

Sri Aurobindo looks at the human individual in this context and envisages a triple destiny for him. First, he has to discover his own self. He must become aware of the full range of his being. For it is obvious the limited personality he calls himself is not the whole truth of himself. There are regions of his mind, his heart, his life-forces, his soul which are pressing from behind and claim attention. It is Nature’s imperative that man should become more and more conscious of larger and larger areas of his being, acquire control over them and discover his inmost, real self. This self is at the core of his being and is realised to be the very Divine in its individual embodiment. This realisation of the Individual
Divine is the first great landmark in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

This, however, is not the end; it is the beginning of the next step. To experience and realise the Divine within oneself and as oneself inevitably leads to the perception of the same Divine without oneself, in the cosmos around and as the All. The cultivation and expansion of the individual consciousness in the process of the first realisation brings one near and face-to-face with another and larger formulation of the same Divine Reality—the Universal Consciousness. To enter into this Cosmic Being, identify oneself with it and realise it as another term of the same Godhead is the second destiny. The individual human becomes the Universal Man and he discharges his responsibility to Mother Nature by participating in her effort and exerting himself for the development and upliftment of the totality towards its goal in the Divine Manifestation.

But this endeavour cannot be wholly done by man as long as he remains in the individual formula of existence or stays widened in the larger circle, however exalted and full they may be in themselves. The imperfections and limitations that characterise their life cannot be entirely eliminated even by the highest knowledge and power that can be attained and made operative in this belt of existence. A dynamism higher and greater than both these formulations is needed for the purpose.

To fulfil and perfect the manifestation of the Divine in the individual and in the Universe, man needs to attain union with the Divine Being that transcends both and is the origin of both. An identity with this Transcendent Divine—the Divine that stands above the Universe—is indispensable, for it liberates one into a supracosmic Knowledge, Power, Bliss out of the realm of Ignorance that pervades the
extension as the Universe. Only then can one deal effectively with the problem of the limitations of embodied life in the cosmos and bring to bear the highest dynamis of the Spirit for change of nature on earth. This realisation of the Transcendent Divine is the third and crowning destiny of the individual in the Vision of Sri Aurobindo.

The individual being, with the realisation of his identity with the Divine within himself, proceeds to effect his union with the Divine manifest in the Universe around and on the wings of this double achievement, liberates himself into the infinity of the Transcendent—all the while retaining the centre of the triple movement in his being.
DIVINE—ISHVARA—SOUL

Question: "What exactly is meant by the Divine"? Is it the same as the Purushottama of the Gita and Para Brahma or Paramatma of the Upanishads?

Answer: The Divine means the basic Reality of all that is. This sole Reality, the Truth, reveals itself essentially as a Consciousness. All is a form of That, All is based upon That. All is a manifestation of this divine Reality, not only the Parabrahman of the Upanishads, the Para Shiva of the Tantras, the Purushottama of the Gita but equally the Universal Godhead, Vasudeva, the God in Humanity, Narayana, and the God in man, Nara. The Divine is at once the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual Reality.

The Mother once described the Divine as all that we, in our Ignorance, are not and what we aspire for.

Question: What is 'natural being'? Is it the mutable being, kshara purusha, of the Gita? And is it a temporary formation which dissolves with the dissolution of the body or a vital sheath or is it permanent?

Answer: Difficult to answer without knowing the context. 'Natural being' can mean the surface personality formed in Nature i.e. conglomeration of the outer physical, outer mental and outer vital instrumentations, in which case it is clearly not the kshara purusha of the Gita. It is subject to dissolution with the end of the physical body.

Question: The Gita speaks of Ishvara in the heart of creatures. What corresponds to this Ishvara, in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo?

Answer: It is neither possible nor necessary to trace exact correspondences in the classifications of different systems. Each approaches the Reality from its own stand-
point and arrives at a systematisation and organisation of precepts and concepts proper to its own objective. All the same there is, in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, a place for the realisation of the Lord in the heart.

In each individual there is the Prakriti, Nature, that acts and the Purusha, the self that witnesses that action. As one proceeds in Yoga, with the establishment of sufficient purity in the consciousness and growth of Knowledge, one begins to perceive this Purusha-Prakriti relation undergoing a steady transformation. The witnessing person reveals himself—at a certain level of being—as one who sanctions, controls and ultimately rules the Prakriti who too is realised to be a power, shakti, of the Lord. Thus the Divine Self in the individual, not in its witness poise but as the ruler, Lord of his executive Nature, is the Ishvara dwelling in the Heart.

*Question*: Who is the other Bird in dva suparna of the Upanishad? Is it the Divine Himself? or the Soul? or the central being within?

*Answer*: The bird below is naturally the soul in evolution, tasting the fruit on the tree of life. The bird above that watches is the Jivatman who presides over the evolution of the individual from its station above the embodiment. It is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Central Being whose delegate in the life movement is the psychic being, the soul.
PSYCHIC BEING

Question: Is the psychic being the same as the angushtamatra purusha of the Upanishad residing in the heart? Are the soul and the psychic being the same? Sri Aurobindo says, yes. But the Mother says, no. What then is the difference between the two?

Answer: The word 'soul' means different things in different systems. In the western thought, for instance, the soul can mean the inner mind, the deeper emotional being or the whole of the subtler part which is not visible on the surface. In some of the modern lines of thought and practice what passes for soul is nothing but the vital being. In our system of yoga and the philosophy based upon it, the soul is a portion, amsa, of the Divine put in evolution. It is a developing entity and must be clearly distinguished from the Self, the atman, which supports the embodiment without being involved in it. We may say that the soul is a projection, as it were, of the Self into the evolution. This Divine entity is likened to a spark from the Divine Flame which is at the core of every form in the universe. This spark grows and develops into a being in course of time. When this development has taken place and the soul-entity has grown into a being, we call it the psychic being. Thus in the lower forms of creation e.g. animals, there is the spark, the soul element at the core, but not a soul, a psychic being. This comes to be only in man after he has grown sufficiently in the evolutionary scale.

So, for all practical purposes, we may say that the psychic being and the soul are the same. What must have been meant in saying that the psychic being is not the same as the soul is that the psychic is not the desire-soul which, in most men, does duty for the real soul.
The psychic being dwells behind the heart centre as a purusha whose form is light, bharupa (Chhandogya Up.); it is the same as the thumb-size, angushtamatra, Person of the Upanishad.
Question: What is the relation between the God who makes the Avatar and the Avatar e.g. Rama or Krishna? Is it the same that exists between our souls and our bodies? Is it the relation between me and the pen with which I write?

Answer: In a sense every one is an Avatar: he carries an element of the Divine at his core, the element that has descended from the Being of the Divine. Only, he is not conscious. An Avatar is a fully conscious embodiment of the Divine for a particular purpose, some work to be done in the manifestation. The Avatar is always conscious that he is a special formulation of the Divine emanated for a special objective. His relation with the transcendent Divine is one of identity, not of an instrument and its master.

Our bodies are not normally conscious of the soul within. But the Avatar is always aware of the Divinity he embodies.

Question: Siva is said not to have Avatars but to assume a form. What is the relation between him and the forms he assumes?

Answer: It is not true that Siva does not incarnate. Vishnu’s Avatars—ten of them—are celebrated because of his role as the Preserver. Siva’s are less known. If one reads the Siva Puranas, however, one does come across the tradition of Siva’s Avatars also. Some of the famous saints of South India e.g. Jnanasambandhar, are known to be manifestations of Siva. We do not speak for the moment of the number of instances where the individuals were clearly special emanations, vibhutis, of Siva.

The relation between the Divine and the vibhuti may be said to be that of a Parent Consciousness and its power.
Question: The Trimurti is said to have wives. How to understand a God having wives and children?

Answer: Certainly, these statements are not to be taken literally. It is in fact a symbolic language of expressing occult and spiritual truths. When, for instance, Siva is said to have a wife, it means he has a Shakti, Dynamic Power with him. His sons mean his manifestations. The names by which they are known are usually indicative of their character. Parvati—she who is born of parvata, mountain—means the Power, Energy manifest from Matter (the rock or the mountain stands for Matter, the Earth-principle, in the ancient symbology). Similarly, Skanda, the elder son of Siva, represents the Fire-principle, the heroic manifestation of his Consciousness. Ganesha is the lord of the hosts of Siva, a manifestation at the head of his several forces. Ganapati’s wives are Buddhi (Intelligence) and Siddhi (Fulfilment). The symbolism is clear.

What is written in the Puranas is not always to be understood literally. They themselves declare, again and again, that their function is to elaborate upon, present in a popular form, what is revealed in the Veda, The Book of Knowledge, in cryptic terms.
AVATARS—GODS (II)

The major Gods like Siva, Brahma, Vishnu are as old as Creation. In fact they are expressive names of the fundamental formulations of the manifesting Divinity for purposes of the creation. They are divine Godheads ever active in the creative Consciousness for the fulfilment of the Object of the manifestation. They are alive to our call and they give what they are empowered to.

From the Vedas we learn that Brahma, Vishnu, Surya etc. have their definite roles in the building up of a divine life. All together toil to manifest the divine world in man. The seer prays to each to accept his self-offering and take birth in him. The conception of Siva is not the same in the Veda, the Puranas, the Tantra. Now he is the God of Peace, Purity and Immortality, now God of wrath and destruction—a major God all the same.

All participate in the great Work, each contributing his share, together hastening the advent of the new Creation. But their part is contributory. The decisive role in the establishment of a new Truth-Principle like the Supramental is played by the special Embodiment made for the purpose. This Embodiment necessarily contains all the other puissances harmonised and harnessed to the work in hand.
Questions: What is your estimate of Gorakhnath–his time and his works?

Answer: Gorakhnath, in my opinion, is something more than a historical figure: he is a legend, a symbol and an institution by himself. No doubt, someone by this name must have existed at sometime in Indian history and done remarkable work in the resuscitation of the genuine spiritual tradition of the land from the ruins of exaggerated practices and thought aberrations that came over during the decline of the life-curve of the nation. Not only he revived a tradition which, to my mind, seems to be a synthesis of Tantric and Vedantic sadhanas that were current till then, but he also gave it a new turn by emphasising the possibility of the perfection of the body by whatever means and also in underlining the fundamental unity between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm—Brahmanda and Pindanda.

Obviously, all the works (manuscripts) ascribed to him could not be his, even as all the 500 books that claim the authorship of Shankara are clearly not of that origin. As it happens in such cases, every author who derived his inspiration from the master was tempted to ascribe the authorship to him and thus secure a certain standard and hearing for his work.

There is also the tradition of men in the parampara bearing the same name. I do not think it really possible at this stage to separate with any degree of finality the historical Gorakhnath from the legendary figure; and it does not really matter, for, the basic truths for which he stands have relevancy and appeal even today, and, if properly applied in life, can lead one to the realisation of the Divine.

Question: What do you say regarding his teacher Macchindranath and the story of them both?
Answer: I think there is more of symbology than history in the Macchindranath and Gorakhnath episodes.

Question: Was Gorakhnath a Saivite or a Buddhist?

Answer: I feel that Gorakhnath assimilated in himself the best points in the Advaita, Saiva and Baudhika systems and grafted them on the base of the Tantric system in order to break through the ritual-ridden, or metaphysic-obsessed systems that crowded upon men who sought higher values in those days. He cannot be said to belong to anyone of the Schools. His speciality lies in his transcendence of the established systems.

Question: What is Gorakhnath's philosophy? What are his contributions towards Indian tradition?

Answer: Recognition of the innate divinity of man and the possibility of dissipating the veils that cover it by means of a physiological and psychological discipline is his first contribution. Second: he included physical body in the scheme of spiritual perfection which he worked out. Third: he made the cardinal tenets of the Hindu Dharma, in so far as they promote the purification of the mind and life dynamisms, an integral part of the sadhana to be pursued to achieve this end.

Question: Why was not Gorakhnath much followed by the succeeding generations?

Answer: Because the demands of his path were strenuous and his teaching contained no lure of eternal joys in heavens or on earth. In its very nature it was a selective discipline and intended not for the common populace but for those who felt the need to outgrow common humanity. The heart of the Gorakhnath lies in its esoteric content.

Question: What is the value of Gorakhnath's teachings for the modern world?
**Answer**: From the point of view of modern knowledge, Gorakhdarshan has a special value in its clear analysis of the different constituents of the being of man, the diverse centres of energies that are active in his system, the inter-relation that exists at a certain level between the body, the mind, the life and the soul in the individual organisation. He does not merely enunciate; he prescribes the methods of verification and of activising these centres even in external life. Moreover, his emphasis on a purified body as a pedestal for the edifice of the realised Spirit is a distinct service to the call of Matter which plays a dominant part in the scheme of the modern civilisation.

**Question**: How do you place modern scholars and their interests in Mysticism?

**Answer**: The interests of the modern scholars, generally, in the field of mysticism are more in the nature of researches into the history rather than scrutinies for the elevation of man.

**Question**: What are the points of similarity and otherwise between the systems of Gorakhnath and Sri Aurobindo?

**Answer**: Both the systems perceive the workings of a dynamic Consciousness-Force (Shakti) in the universe. Both recognise that the universal and the individual are different manifestations of the same Shakti with close correspondence between their organisations.

Gorakhnath posits more chakras, i.e. centres of conscious energies, than the traditional six or seven. Sri Aurobindo too holds that there are many centres and the popularly recognised seven are only the major ones. Both the systems look upon the physical body as the robe of divinity and insist on a purification and spiritualisation of this material base.
The main difference is both in the goal and in the process. In the older system, the process is one of ascent from the lower centre of *mooladhara*, upwards. In Sri Aurobindo's system, the movement starts either from the head or the heart, whichever is more developed and ready, and then spreads downward and sideward. In the former, the reliance is more or less on individual will, exertion and technique, in the latter there is a reliance, an entire dependence upon the Yoga-Shakti which adopts in each *adhara* the process that is natural to it.

Another capital difference is regarding the central objective: it goes beyond the goal of individual liberation of the past system. Proceeding upon the base of individual perfection, it aims at a collective elevation and eventual perfection of Man. And this it does by evoking into the scheme of its operation the dynamism of a supreme Knowledge-Will—the *vijnana* of the Upanishads, the *mahas* of the Veda. The power of this Principle functions not only for the perfection of man but also for the radical transformation, of his nature, the human nature into the Divine Nature. Thus in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, Nature does not occupy a secondary place—*prakriti* is transformed into *shakti*. 
III

SADHANA
SADHANA AND LIFE

Question: My mind is normally restless and feelings are disturbed. The moment I think of leaving myself in the hands of the Mother, everything becomes quiet. I become peaceful. Is this due to the effect of the Mother's Force? Or is this peace due to the descent in inertia?

Answer: The sense of peace comes here by the assent of the mind to let itself be taken up by the Mother's Consciousness. This Consciousness makes itself felt as either Power or Peace and in your case it is evidently the latter.

Inertia gives a feeling of dullness not peace or calm. There is heaviness in the system not lightness.

Question: Whenever I remember the Mother, I feel her presence instantaneously most of the times. The presence is in the form of her image, flowers or lights. But sometimes the image changes its form and becomes hideous. Is it due to hostile forces? How can I distinguish her true image from the imitative? The moment I try to distinguish, I become a victim to Doubt and everything is spoiled.

Answer: Every image that rises is not genuine. There are many mischievous or hostile agencies that cause these forms to appear, change etc., and bring about bewilderment. It is always safe to be guarded when such images or voices are offered to experience. A real form of the Mother, when it appears, will not allow itself to be so interfered with. It will leave a stamp of purity, upliftment and growth in Peace. In the presence of such a Form the hostiles slink away.

Question: In daily life I am often faced with many alternatives while taking decisions. How to get Mother's help to decide correctly?

Answer: To formulate in the mind all the possible alternatives and offer them to the Mother with a prayer for
guidance. That done one must keep quiet for a time without thinking or anticipating. After a while something arises in the consciousness and gradually takes shape. It carries with it a certain certitude, a solid sense of peace. It is thus that one can get the right decision from above or within. Naturally, it goes without saying, that one divests oneself of all preferences or desires pertaining to the choice in question and allows no interference from his conscious or half-conscious being. The sincerity and the spirit of surrender at the moment are very important.

Question: Sometimes I see light on my face: I also see it becoming dark and hateful. Is it really the light of the Mother or mere imagination?

The light is not a product of imagination. When one is not under the cloud of lower nature but is open to the higher, at any level of the being, there is a kind of brightness on the face. But the moment one allows or is overcome by thoughts or feelings of the opposite i.e. dark kind, there is an immediate change and dark lines begin to appear. Those who have a keen or a subtle sight see this every day.

Question: I believe that by being more devoted to Mother, I should be able to do my work better and be more successful. Am I correct?

Answer: Of course you are. To be truly devoted to Mother means to accept what She stands for and to strive to do what She expects of you. The Mother always expects of Her devotees more and more sincerity and application in their effort towards perfection. And She helps them to strive successfully.

Question: During my quiet hours generally I am hovering round Ashram or go to the Mother’s room, be with her or sit near Samadhi. What does it signify?
**Answer:** That your consciousness comes here in the subtle body.

**Question:** How can I fill my entire being with the Mother? While repeating Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri, I sometimes see myself in golden lustre? Can it be true or is it a self-deception?

To fill oneself with the Mother, one must establish contact with Her Consciousness at all levels of one’s being. The physical by working in dedication to Her; the vital by regulating the flow of its energies Motherward; the mental by suffusing its stuff with the thoughts of the Mother—reading what She has written, thinking about Her or Her work etc; the heart by laying itself in adoration of Her in increasing love.

The experience of the golden light while repeating the Gayatri of Sri Aurobindo is certainly not a piece of imagination. The colour of the Supramental Purusha who is invoked in the Mantra is golden and it is no wonder you see that lustre when you are one with the sound-body of his truth.

**Question:** Can I pray for Mother’s help all the time or should I leave the entire matter of my life to Her?

**Answer:** Prayer for help is necessary and natural as long as one is not entirely surrendered and guided by the Divine. Until there is the sense of personal effort, individual exertion, partial surrender, call for help and guidance is inevitable. But once the self-giving is complete there is no more the necessity to pray for help. The help comes spontaneously and automatically in answer to the demands of each situation; one just stays trustfully receptive in tune with the Higher Will. Such a state takes long to establish itself and till that is achieved it is always wise to be vigilant and prayerful.
EVOCATION AND INVOCATION

Question: I have always felt that some tremendous power lies somewhere in me; but I am completely cut off from it, and hence I have to lead the life of a weakling. Is that power a reality? If yes, how can I get it? I feel that by concentrating on the Powers of the Mother in her forms of Maheshvari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasarasvati, I can invoke powers in myself. Since the ego is there I hesitate to invoke the powers, because the ego may be filled with vanity and may misuse the powers. How can those powers manifest in my external life? How can it be done? I am a worshipper of Shakti, but I feel so unworthy of Her that I tremble lest She should come to me.

Answer: The fact that you feel the presence of a power within you is a clear indication that it is there behind the veil of external nature. That you are unable to summon it and put it into action does not negate its existence within yourself. A strong feeling of this kind usually testifies to a corresponding reality somewhere within the being.

The way to enliven it in your life is to give it a chance to come forward from behind the veil. And that is done by a willed and progressive disentanglement and dissociation of yourself from the currents and cross-currents of life in the superficial nature which holds you captive. This step followed by a gradual process of purification and a sincere aspiration makes the conditions favourable for the emergence of the latent faculties that are awaiting their hour. In a word the consciousness normally turned outward should be turned inward facing the Power that is sought.

This, it seems to me, is a more natural and effective way than to invoke a power or powers outside yourself for awakening and activating the power imbedded in yourself. The purification is insisted upon precisely because of the tendency of the ego to usurp power for itself.
Purity, along with surrender, is also the condition for receiving the influx of the higher Shakti without danger. Before the Divine there is no question of anyone being worthy or unworthy. From a certain standpoint one can claim to be worthy of the white purity and the unsullied consciousness of the Divine when it greets the aspiring soul; from another viewpoint no man, however sinful, is totally unworthy as long as he has a spot of light in him that seeks to enlarge itself. It is all a question of sincerity, receptivity and equipment.
KARMA—PRAYER (I)

Question: Can the sufferings which are natural consequences of past errors (i.e. past and present birth) be overcome or wiped out by the sincere prayer in the present birth? If not, why not? and if so how?

Answer: Before dealing with the question proper let me observe that all sufferings are not due to errors, past or present. The present organisation of the forces in the universal set-up is such that even a right step or a correct action may result in a certain amount of suffering and heroism consists in braving it.

It is possible by prayer to obviate the consequences of one's Karma in part or in full. By prayer one puts the will in tune with the Higher Will and exerts a pull in the desired direction. The Higher Will so moved, acts from its own plane in a manner that weakens, if not cancels, the Karmic forces in action on the lower planes.

Prayer, I may mention in passing, is not the only way of setting aside the workings of Karma. One can do it even by changing the level of one's living consciousness. For instance, if one takes to spiritual life in earnest this change is effected in a natural way. The destiny of the lower level by which one was governed in the past ceases to apply to him who has moved into the domain of the destiny of a different altitude of being. As you know, each level of being has its own destiny and one is governed by the destiny of the plane of consciousness in which one takes his station.

Question: What is the significance of sincere prayer?

Answer: In our context prayer can be of two kinds. The first is where one submits one's desire or wish to the Divine and leaves it to the Divine's Will to deal with it. One is content to abide by the Higher Will whether, in the words of
Sri Aurobindo, "Heaven's wiser love rejects the mortal's prayer" or chooses to grant his wish. The second kind is to attune oneself to the Higher Consciousness and call upon it to fulfil one's will. That is prayer. As for being sincere no explanation is required. Sincerity means to want it with all the being.

In prayer it is more the heart than the mind that plays the major role in the evocation of the higher aid.
KARMA—PRAYER (II)

Question: What are your views on Utkata Karma? Can one escape from it by prayer?

Answer: Utkata Karma is considered to be that part of the Karma which cannot be set aside by any human means such as counter-measures by way of religious rites, accumulation of Karma of the opposite kind etc. It has to be gone through. That is the tradition. But even this Karma can be negativied by the Grace if it chooses to do so. For the Divine Grace nothing is impossible though whether it is good and helpful for the evolving soul to so interfere with the operation of its Karma is another matter and that certainly enters into the situation in the working of the Grace. Prayer can be a means to move the Higher Will, the Grace, but how it would respond depends upon its supreme Wisdom.

Question: Was it some such Utkata karma that brought physical suffering in the form of cancer to Sri Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi etc?

Answer: In a sense yes, only with the qualification that it was not the Utkata Karma of the saints themselves but the Karma of those whose burden they took upon themselves in the process of sheltering them. Things have to be worked out in some manner at some level or other, by one or another. That is the law. And though much of such Karma is done away with rapidly by the higher spiritual Force at work in the embodiment of the saint or Guru, some element remains to be lived personally.

Question: If it is possible to obviate the consequences of one's Karma, why do saints or Gurus who have attained divine consciousness, suffer?
Answer: They have no will of their own. They are moved only by the Divine Will and unless they are so directed, they do not interfere with the working of the Karmic forces in life. They may have the power to stop the pain etc., but they do not exercise it on their own.
MANTRA SADHANA

Mantra sadhana requires a minimum amount of external and internal purification. The mantra that is to be adored and repeated is decided by the Guru who selects the appropriate mantra after ascertaining the nature of the individual, his need etc. It is in this context that janmakshara and other factors are consulted. The Guru communicates the mantra. And in this communication there is an automatic transmission of the tapas-sakti or mantra-sakti stored up in the being of the Guru. The grace of the Guru is as important as the potency of the mantra. It is that grace which guards the Upasaka from possible deviations or dissipations.

It is true that till a certain stage of siddhi is reached one should repeat only one chosen mantra. To repeat several mantras at a time makes things mechanical and no one mantra is allowed to sink into the consciousness and become part of it.
WORLD UNITY

It was during the recent seminar of the World Union on Education for One World, that a friend asked me what was the meaning of the Mother's message that world unity is a fact and it is only to be manifested. Did it mean, he asked, that the unity is on the supramental plane awaiting its translation on earth into human terms? I told him that was not how I had understood the message. There is a unity of being, unity of consciousness on all planes of existence including our physical world. Only, that unity is at present veiled by our Ignorance. When that veil is dissipated by conscious effort the underlying unity becomes patent. It is there naturally and does not have to be forged by our effort; the effort needed is to remove the obstruction of Ignorance in our consciousness and let that unity manifest.

Later I had an opportunity to ask the Mother about it. She confirmed and said that the unity is there as a fact, a living truth, behind the surface being. Man is not aware of it in his active consciousness because of its faulty looking. The moment he changes the standpoint of his consciousness, he sees the unity as a self-evident truth, a dynamic fact which displaces the false sense of division that prevailed till then. The key lies in the proper placement of one's consciousness.

Speaking in the universal context, the Mother observed that the mind has come to accept the truth of oneness of all being; even the vital has come to have that feeling and experience; but the difficulty is in physical. The physical is still under the load of past habit and even when it gets enlightened in parts, it shifts back to the old poise after a time. The cells have that perception, they embody it for a while but it is yet to be established. This consciousness of
oneness, the Mother continued, is dominant in plant-life. The plants are aware of it in a concrete way.

Has it been always so, or is that a result of the descent of the supramental force, I asked.

It has been now expedited, the Mother replied, their consciousness has grown. She mentioned that She has been seeing many remarkable things in this direction with flowers, even in the animal world that consciousness is growing; though, of course,—the Mother added with a gesture of helplessness—animals that live close to man, do not share in that growth; they have lost their capacity to progress in their own way.

As a whole, the Mother concluded, the general consciousness in the world at all levels is moving in the direction of oneness, as an immediate result of the influx of the Higher Power of the Supramental. The awareness of oneness is emerging from within outward. The movement is all round. For, She explained, the supramental change does not simply mean a change at the top, a new dimension added to evolving creation; it certainly means a change all over. The whole imbibes and breathes the vibrations of the New Power, New Consciousness; the whole undergoes a consequent transformation in the very stuff of its being.

Thus the Unity of all, its Oneness, is not a truth that lies in some high plane of existence above, awaiting its transition to the earth below but a truth that underlies our life here as its substratum. And this truth is steadily pressing into the zone of our awareness as a result of the pressure of the Supramental Descent on our consciousness.
PAST MEMORIES (I)

Nowadays one reads of the use of hypnotism in curing illnesses. There are reports of the hypnotist replacing the anaesthetist in the operation theatre. The other day I heard of an eminent doctor in the Services trying this technique of putting a strong suggestion on the patient that there would be no pain. Repeated suggestion did its work and the doctor found that he could do away with the use of the anaesthetic. The results encouraged him to continue with his experiments till one day the patient on the table suddenly started shouting with pain half-way through the operation. Naturally steps were immediately taken to bring in anaesthetics but the doctor experienced immediately an unaccountable drain of energy from himself. Obviously the being of the patient had rejected the thought-suggestion at some stage and that thought-formation came back and hit the doctor with the attendant results. One never knows when the suggestion fails or gets rejected and the spell is broken. There are so many factors at play in such situations.¹

This incident comes to my mind as I read a press-cutting sent by a friend from the United States. It speaks of a doctor curing chronic illnesses by hypnotic means. He makes the patients regress in their consciousness: he takes them backwards and still more backwards, questions them, and in the process, gets the cue to the causes of their persistent sicknesses. Thus far it is quite understandable. Now, the report adds, the doctor has teamed up with a lady of 'psychic

¹ If somehow this technique is perfected it can be used with great advantage. For even when the waking consciousness of the patient is dulled to the point of feeling no pain, the physical body as such does receive a shock during the operation. But if the body were to be persuaded to accept the suggestion, then, I am inclined to think this shock could be avoided.
abilities' who can take back the memory to previous incarnations. She has, we are told, "the technique of being able to relieve an earlier incarnation in detail and as a deliberate exercise." Jointly, they are now "regressing patients beyond birth, until they were describing traumatic experience or death-scenes hundreds of years earlier, which seemingly triggered their present fears."

It all reads very well, indeed, but I am afraid anyone who knows something of the process of embodiment—life, death and after—can only smile at the naiveté of it. For, when the soul leaves the physical body at death, it departs in its subtle body consisting of the subtle-physical, the vital and the mental sheaths. The memory of the receding life is stored mainly in the vital sheath and that gets dissolved in the vital plane before the soul is free to proceed to its place of rest. And once the vital sheath or body is dissolved, the vivid memories that stuck to it are also gone. What remains of the past is only the essence of the experiences of that embodiment in the soul—the psychic being. And this essence represents what was lived during the high moments in which the soul came out of its veil and participated in the experience. The soul remembers such climacteric experiences, but very little of the surrounding circumstances is preserved. Details of the past lives are not relevant for the soul's growth—and growth is the real purpose of repeated births—, hence they do not form part of drawable memory. Furthermore, it is also a part of Nature's process to put away the past memories as they tend to interfere with the purpose of the present incarnation. This is the normal procedure.

No doubt I would be reminded of the many reports in newspapers of children becoming suddenly aware of their past birth, recalling incidents and connections with astonishing and verifiable exactitude. But these are clearly cases of
aberration, exceptional turn-backs of the soul under the pulls of the vital being from half-way in transit. The being returns prematurely, even before the past memories have had time or reached the conditions for their dissolution. Indian tradition discourages such returns and most of the post-obsequial rites are intended to prevent such unnatural throw-backs and to speed up the journey to the place of rest. To spotlight abnormal cases of past memories in order to prove or disprove "scientifically" the truth of reincarnation, as some of the modern psychologists and parapsychologists are doing to-day, is a very unhealthy and morbid preoccupation. It harms the individual and deepens the chaos. However, to come back to the subject, happenings of this type are not the rule. One does not remember this details. Usually it is the vital imagination, either of oneself or of some one else that takes the form of these dramatic accounts.* They have no value in truth—spiritual or occult.

Similarly fanciful is the belief of the doctors under mention (in the press-cutting) that the Beatniks, Hippies and other modern young men in revolt against society are reincarnations of servicemen killed in World War II, men "who brought back with them their rage against adult bungling that prematurely ended their lives." While it is possible that in a few individual cases, strong passions and hatreds choose another physical innings to work themselves out, as a rule they are left in the vital zone where they either spend themselves or are utilised by the local denizens for their purposes. The departing souls do not carry these gusts with them for their subsequent embodiment. The dynamics of reincarnation operate on a totally different basis.

* I do not speak here of the part played by the entities of the subtler worlds in misleading people when they dabble in such fields without adequate knowledge or power.
PAST MEMORIES (II)

I had sent a copy of my causerie on Past Memories to the friend who had forwarded the press-cutting that set me thinking on the subject. He has written a very cogent and interesting letter raising a number of legitimate and crucial questions. "Is there no drawable memory, of details," he asks, "surrounding circumstances etc., for any one, in any circumstances?"

I would at once answer there is. When I said that detailed past memories of past lives is not possible because the sheaths that carry them fall away in transit after death, I set down only the general rule. That is what happens in the case of most people. But there can be cases of individuals—however few—who are well developed in the scale of evolution, who have sufficiently integrated their vital and mental bodies around their soul, the psychic being. When such persons leave their physical body, they do not need to cast off—they are not obliged to do it—their vital and mental bodies. They carry these personalities organised around their central being to their place of rest. And when they come back for their next embodiment on earth, naturally the past mental and vital bodies are brought along and a fresh career of growth is begun. When such an individual looks back with the appropriate concentration of poise, he can certainly summon the past memories to his active consciousness. The layers of consciousness that recorded those events have not been dissolved and hence their contents are available for one who knows how to tap them.

There is also what is called the terrestrial memory, at each level of the universe e.g. physical, vital, mental etc. Every thing that passes is recorded faithfully in this cosmic
memory. Not only what happened but also what tried to happen. If one can enter into these layers of the universal consciousness through one’s subliminal being, it is possible to obtain whatever detailed information one wants from the past—the past of oneself, the past of others as well. Usually this calls for a special type of concentration, *samyama* of Patanjali; but for some this capacity comes as a natural gift. One has to extend oneself in consciousness and contact the relevant levels of the terrestrial memory in the universe.

Another point. Since the essence of all the past is there embedded in the soul, every thing that has happened in one’s career must be there in however concentrated a form and theoretically it should be possible to trace things to their roots. But there are practical difficulties of which I have spoken before.

Another question he asks is: “May not memory be a help in one’s progress, rather than a hindrance, when one has progressed enough?” I am afraid not. Whatever can be helpful in the present embodiment from the past is already made an active part of the equipment with which one comes to birth after the intervening period of assimilation and preparation. What is not relevant is put aside. If any new factors intervene in life necessitating some knowledge gained in the past, the divine agency that presides over the particular evolutionary progression sees to it that that help is given in some form or other. But normally when one comes to birth, one has chosen one’s field of experience, the objective of experience, and brings all that is necessary for launching upon that effort from the past gains. What has not been brought has been deliberately excluded and should not be looked for.
Sri Aurobindo's warning against suicide is well-known. Suicide, he points out, is no solution to any problem. In fact it multiplies the very difficulties which are sought to be escaped from by this drastic step. For, after the physical life is ended, the being suddenly finds itself in alien surroundings full of foreign elements. The normal coat of protection, i.e. the physical body, is not there and one is exposed helplessly to all kinds of painful contacts in the subtle physical and vital worlds in which one finds oneself. *The very chaotic atmosphere which preceded the exit is there too in a more oppressive way because there is no getting out of it at will. The fears, anxieties and apprehensions of the earth-life stare in the face in a magnified form. Nothing has been got rid of. Even after this painful transit is over and one comes back to the next incarnation, the conditions which had been abruptly left behind in the previous birth, are repeated as it were to enable the soul to continue what was interrupted and work out its own solution.

This, in brief, is the position, and it is understandable. Does the same apply to cases, asks a correspondent, to suicides of the kind prevalent in Japan? Those, for example, who end their life from a code of chivalry or as part of

*This post-mortem state following an unnatural death is quite different from the conditions that follow a normal death. For, in natural cases, the being has prepared itself for the departure at the termination of the experience for which it came to birth, and the conditions through which it has to pass follow the usual line of transit, the details being decided by the overall trend of *samskaras* (formed tendencies) of the life that is just passed. These conditions are, so to say, in affinity with the immediate past of the soul. In case of suicide the soul is almost lost in the maelstrom of the dark forces that crowd upon one following the unnatural exit. The direction is lost.
ancestor worship or on matters of honour? What about those who sacrifice themselves for public causes, rightly or wrongly, as in Vietnam? And then what about those who are forced to commit suicide, as in the case of Seneca and Lucan in the court of Nero?

As these questions raise important issues, I asked the Mother about it. And what She said is interesting. She said in sum:

The suicides in Japan are altogether on a different basis. The people there have a strong and genuine faith in the object of their self-ending. And this faith stands them in good stead. For instance, if one dies to join someone who has just passed away, his sincerity and faith assuredly link him with the person across and things work from both ends to bring about the desired result.

What about suicides done under the pressure of a mistaken idea about the justness of a cause, I asked. Even there, the Mother replied, it is not the mental idea—right or wrong—but the psychic attitude that decides. If the spirit behind the act is sincere and the sacrifice has the quality of self-consecration, then there is an automatic protection gained in the process and the person is not subjected to the usual painful consequences.*

Regarding forced suicides, She said, it differs from person to person, depending upon the soul-development, the circumstances that surround the crisis, the destiny of the person etc.

*So, after all, there is a truth underlying institutions like the sati. May be when compulsion came to be exercised on the unwilling partner, it lost its raison d'être but in its principle it was essentially sound. So too, the Indian tradition of heavenly destiny for those who lay down their lives on the battlefield.
Incidentally, the Mother observed, each person has his own destiny and even in apparently identical conditions no two people fare in the same way. This can be clearly seen in other worlds than here in the physical. There are these worlds with their own organisation and their own laws. They exist all the time. Only man does not see them normally because he does not have the vision therefor. They are, nonetheless, real. In fact from a standpoint, it is this world that is just an appearance, a vestibule to the larger systems of existence. Just because his senses seize easily the objects of the physical universe man thinks that the physical is the only world. Man needs this limitation of the senses as a protection in the present state of ignorance.

"Only in human limitation man lives safe."

(Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*)
SATTVIC FOOD

The Gita speaks of three kinds of food and the corresponding types of temperament in men that are drawn to them. For it is a fact that the characteristic nature of a person goes a long way to determine the kind of food he prefers; and the nature of food that one takes influences one's temperament. The text declares that those who are tamosic by nature, inert, slothful and heavy, have a habitual preference for food that is stale, impure, cold and rotting. Men of rajasic temperament, those with restless energy, spirit of adventure, full of passions, kinetic, take naturally to food that is violently sour, pungent, hot, acrid, rough, the aliments that increase the distempers of the system. Persons cast in the sattvic mould, balanced, gentle, enlightened always turn to things that are healthy, healthful, succulent, soft and firm and leave a certain nourishing satisfaction in their wake.

Naturally these are broad observations and they cannot be applied rigidly. No man is made of tamosic nature alone or sattvic only. All the qualities, gunas, are there running into each other in each person; it is the preponderent quality that stamps its type on the nature. Necessarily, it is possible to change this balance of gunas in a nature and one of the means to do so is through the regulation and change of the food that feeds the system.

Food has a definite influence and a consequence on the person who takes it. Not merely in a physical way but even psychologically. For everything that constitutes the items of food, whether a grain or a leaf or a piece of meat - everything has a life in it. That life may not be of the grade of overt consciousness as ours, yet the breath of life is there. This life element in each food-item carries with it all the vibrations to which it is subjected from within and without. And
it is this subtle content of the food that goes into the system that really influences and shapes, as far as it does, the psychological and psycho-physical set-up of the eater. Naturally, a clean, fresh, nourishing vegetable dish cooked under healthy conditions by people of good-will is more contributive to the health of mind and body than a stale, half-cooked food prepared indifferently by a man of indolent mind and sluggish body. The quality of the material food and the psychological vibrations of the person who cooks and serves*—all these enter into the situation. The situation is complicated if non-vegetarian food enters into the picture. For the flesh that is eaten carries in it the live and articulate vibrations that the animal carried—not only in its career but particularly during the moments of its last agony at the time of being killed. These get into the system of the eater in a direct way and interfere with the working of his own psychological apparatus.

We are not concerned here to touch upon the other reasons for our preference for vegetarian food over the non-vegetarian; for there are other reasons, the most important of which is the vandalistic interference with Nature involved in destroying higher and higher products of life evolution produced by her. Life has to feed life, true. But as enlightened children of Mother Nature, it is our bounden duty to see that the life-form we feed upon comes from as less developed a grade as possible. That way we minimise the wastage in the economy of nature.

To come back to the topic of this paper: in so far as food contributes to the physical, mental and other well-being

*We have all heard how many times Sri Ramakrishna simply could not gulp down any food that happened to be cooked by an unclean person—unclean of mind.
of man, it is indispensable that it is constituted of the same character as is desired for one’s growth. For a refined, gentle and cultured type in evolution the natural aliment is what partakes of corresponding purity, freshness and facility of absorption.
MISCELLANY
MISCELLANY

Question 1: Space is the simultaneous manifestation of Existence at different points.

Answer: Space is a term of the self-extension of Existence. Even if it is only at one point, there is space. For, is not a point itself space?

Question 2: Humility of the mind is knowledge of the smallness of the human personality.

Answer: Humility need not be always an expression of the consciousness of one's own limitations. It can arise at the recognition of a greatness, a vastness before one. One need not feel small, but one feels the greatness around or in front and there is a dignified humility.

Secondly, this knowledge is not always of the mind. It arises more truly in the heart; something within recognises a greatness and develops humility. There is no reasoning or intellectual conclusion in the process.

Question 3: He who surrenders the vital entirely rises above sex.

Answer: To surrender the vital entirely is very difficult. But for control over sex even a moderate purification and surrender is enough. For a full conquest however, it is necessary to bring the Higher Will into operation by aspiration, sincerity and uniting one's own will with the Divine's.

Question 4: (1) Which part of the being thrills?

(2) One thrills when there is a sudden short opening of the lower members to the higher emotions.

Answer: All the parts of the being can thrill. The physical body, the vital energy, the emotions of the heart, the
several layers of the mind—all of these thrill at one time or other when their appropriate situations appear. These situations need not be of a higher kind; they can very well be—and usually are—of the same order of being as the part concerned.

**Question 5:** Psychological motives are sometimes powerful enough to prevent or at least postpone conception of a child.

**Answer:** Quite so. Psychological factors—inhibitions particularly—play a strong part in the working of the physical or physio-vital organisation. The mind has a particularly obstinate layer—the physical mind—and the fears, anxieties, thought habits that have once gained entry in the active mind sink there and dig themselves in. They spread themselves in the physical vital layers that are linked with the mind and influence or govern their movements.

**Question 6:** Indulgence towards errant behaviour may also come owing to partial knowledge of such defects in oneself.

**Answer:** Yes, if one is charitable to do that. Very often people excuse certain faults within themselves but are very severe when the very same faults are seen in others. Some condone these defects in others in order to lighten their conscience. True tolerance is born of understanding, sympathy and extension of one’s own consciousness helpfully.

**Question 7:** The desire to borrow things may also issue out of an inner craving to maintain such contacts.

**Answer:** Yes, it can well be an expression of the need or desire to maintain an interchange.

**Question 8:** Total surrender of any one part of the being has to wait till all the other members arrive at a similar or near similar stage.

**Answer:** It is so. All the parts of the being are interconnected and each has its own influence over others. Even
if the mind is surrendered, for instance, the physical part of it shares to a certain extent the character of the physical body and the completeness of its surrender necessarily depends upon the state of surrender of the body.

Question 9: Any spiritual experience comes as soon as there is a strong element in the being deserving that experience; but a realisation awaits till the last flaw on that level disappears finally.

Answer: No such absolute rule can be made. A realisation can come even before the adhara is ready; the advent of the realisation may itself be a decisive step in the final change and transmutation of the being.

Question 10: The abandoned marriage is sometimes 'sought' in gathering disciples.

Answer: Till one learns to be alone with God—as Sri Aurobindo puts it—the vital craves for company. It seeks for interchange with others. It may seek satisfaction of its impulses for domination and possession in the company of admirers or disciples.

Question 11: Each person has a subtle smell about him.

Answer: Why only smell? Each one has also an aura around him. Only they are of subtle character and can be perceived and sensed by persons sensitive to their impact. They belong to the subtle-physical being.

Question 12: Smallness of any description in any part of the being can never be an advantage in the adventure of the soul that is yoga.

Answer: Indeed. Smallness of any type is a constriction that always stands in the way of expansion of consciousness which is the meaning of yoga. Yoga calls for a breaking out of the limitations of the ignorant Prakriti and smallnesses in nature that are found highly inconvenient and obstructive in sadhana.
Question 13: A happy healthy recognition of the beauty of a person can stop short of love.

Answer: Appreciation, admiration, liking, love—they are usually the steps taken by the movement in such a context. It can stop at any point or may rush to the final irresistibly. That depends upon the strength of the impact made by the object and the conditions at the receiving and reacting ends.

Question 14: One feels elevated when there is a flash of light from the soul on any member of the being.

Answer: Naturally; the soul is a spark of the Divine, a delegate, and is divine in its essential nature. When a ray from this divine element falls upon any part of oneself—say the mind—there is an instantaneous illumination, upliftment and joy. For the Divine is the source of all Light, Power and Bliss.

Question 15: He who expects gratitude from others really suffers from the lack of it.

Answer: To expect gratitude from another is to impose a claim on him. This attitude robs the act of beneficence of half its good. Actually one must be grateful to the Divine for giving an opportunity to help another, to do good to another, for that is a means of inner growth. If this spirit is vitiated by the said expectation naturally there is no real sense of gratitude to the Divine.

Question 16: A defect cannot be finally removed until one outgrows all the defects of similar nature at that level.

Answer: True in the sense that nothing is done till all is done. But one has to begin at some point and gradually extend the area of operation and this includes going forwards and turning backwards for stabilisation, rectification and eradication.
Question 17: The Physical universe is contiguous, but the human eye perceives only points of concentration from its own point of view.

Answer: As long as the eye is content to function through its physical frame. The moment the subtle part of it is awakened by yoga or any other means the Vision is different. In some states of consciousness there is a view which holds simultaneously the different strata of the Universe as one extension of the Being.

Question 18: Complaining is rather due to unstable nerves than a want of comprehension.

Answer: Due to want of comprehension, true. For if one were to understand the reason for another’s behaviour or why a set of circumstances has come about, then one would not complain; one would either proceed to help, to change or to accept. But ‘nerves’ cannot be the only reason. There may be something in the vital, in the mind, even in the physical which is dissatisfied or is uncharitable and complains without adequate reason.

Question 19: Altruism does not lie within, the ambit of spiritual ideals.

Answer: Altruism properly speaking, belongs to the domain of ethics and not spirituality. In spiritual life one does things that lead to the Divine; the load-star is the Divine, not man, not humanity. Service to men may form part of this life—if that be the Divine intention for one—but is not necessarily a part of spiritual discipline.

Question 20: Inner silence can be extended to another at will but is not inherently infectious.

Answer: This Silence spreads, envelops and impinges upon all that comes in its radius without the necessity of a human will to bring it into movement. But who is conscious
of that impact and responds to it depends upon the receptivity and mental condition in each case.

**Question 21:** Mind or heart may harbour well-marked propensities for considerable periods without ever allowing them permanent play in any field.

**Answer:** Yes, it can be so if either the propensities are weak or the will to check them is stronger.

**Question 22:** Words are of a single dimension. They can never attempt successfully to capture all the facts of yoga that is multi-dimensional.

**Answer:** In fact all statements—to whatever they relate—are only partially true. Everything has more aspects than what strikes the eye and any description or definition of that is but one sided—can only be true relatively. Truth is global and language to express it needs to be more plain and communicable than hitherto.

**Question 23:** Suppression of the springs of vital energy either turns into morbid sadism or sublimates itself into great capacity for work.

**Answer:** Suppression of the vital impulses instead of their rejection leads to quite unhealthy repercussions of which sadism is one. But when rightly handled, given a direction upwards, the energy does uplift itself and multiplies its expression in many ways.

**Question 24:** The vital can never interest itself without bringing in an element of possessiveness. This distortion attaches itself to the vital till it is fully surrendered.

**Answer:** Quite true. The instinct of possession, domination and self-aggrandisement is almost inalienable from the vital and the vital can be freed from it only by ceaseless purification and surrender to a higher law.
Question 25: Human consciousness in any individual is not of one level. It admits of an amplitude with a minimum and a maximum limit. It is so because it is a field for progress and is not of a typal world of perfection.

Answer: There are no limits at all to the consciousness that has embodied itself in the human form. That is why it is called the field of progress. Beings in typal worlds are specific formulations and severely limited in their manifestation.

Question 26: When a person goes to Mother for pranam all that he carries on his mind, being as well as his person receive Her Blessings, earning a further lease of magnified life.

Answer: I have always seen the Mother as Annapurna, as a Kalpa Vriksha. Her sanction goes forth to what you sincerely seek. She once explained that on Darshan occasions Her Blessings go to all for the realisation of the highest aspiration they have at that moment.

Question 27: Cruelty is the ladder through which ignorance often climbs to light.

Answer: Cruelty is a peculiar form of the attempt of unconsciousness to become conscious. It needs such fierce vibrations to take interest, to wake to life. Lesser vibrations fail to evoke enthusiasm. The intensity of cruelty reflects accurately enough the density of ignorance, the thickness of the crest of unconsciousness that is sought to be activised and dissolved.

Question 28: Capacity to keep secrets is fidelity to the inner ideal.

Answer: Very well put. This fidelity to truth is really loyalty of the soul to another soul, regard; to the Divine in another from the Divine in oneself.
Question 29: Enlargement of human capacities makes one better fitted for sadhana.

Answer: True, but it is more true that progress in sadhana leads to a natural enlargement, an effortless improvement of capacities lying untapped. For it is a process of the growth of consciousness and with the flowering of consciousness there comes about naturally a blossoming of its powers and faculties.

Question 30: Persons of good character are sometimes under social obligation to accept questionable ways of life. By an effort of will, they arrive at a successful accommodation. This effort very often strengthens the goodness of their original characteristics, sometimes ennobles them.

Answer: There is such a thing as Dharma—a standard of conduct—relevant to each person, depending upon his state of development, circumstances of life etc. If one adheres to it sincerely, however limited that standard may appear to be from another point of view, one draws a moral strength from it and is at peace with oneself. This sincerity of character cannot fail to have its stamp upon the environment. And the person concerned makes progress on the plane chosen for him in that embodiment.

Question 31: Certain beings happen to preside over certain spots. They give all the protection to those who are under their wings, taking the toll of lives they consider necessary. When people develop marked tendencies that are not in tune with the being’s line, he is thrown out of its periphery. He is generally well off as he is one capable of growth.

Answer: It is so. These beings take care to promote the material prosperity of those who come under their influence and thus keep them under their domination. The
moment they seek to go away or beyond them, they threaten and if threats fail, inflict—or try to do so—punishment.

When one realises the nature of this sort of servitude to an inferior being and seeks to break out of it, relying upon a greater Power, the necessary Help comes and the individual breathes free in a healthier air.

Question 32: Mantras uttered with absolute sincerity fructify instantaneously. The rewards are postponed even upto a few generations according to the measure of sincerity and understanding.

Answer: Hereditary effects of Mantra-upasana can only be very indirect. Only that much of mantric potency which is assimilated by the physical or the subtle-physical elements is passed on in the seed. Even so, the being may or may not choose to manifest these traits.

Question 33: In human affairs one who offers help to another necessarily shares the consequences of the latter’s character, shortcomings, social associations and even destiny.

Even in matters spiritual a similar sharing is not unknown. But, is there a possibility for the guru to help his disciples, himself remaining untouched by the act of help?

Answer: To help means to put oneself into relation, to associate with another. And this interchange is bound to have repercussions. The giver has to keep his being open to the disciple or to anyone whom he helps; for otherwise nothing can flow from him to another. If he were to erect a wall around himself he cannot act upon others. That is why the sins of the disciples are said to have their Karmic consequences on the body of the guru.

Question 34: To be endowed with an all-comprehensive observation of the physical surroundings is any day better than the blinker-controlled master-observation of a single field, however exalted the field may be, spirit notwithstanding.
Answer: Indeed. Provided it is accepted that at certain periods or in certain fields an exclusive concentration becomes inevitable till the results are achieved.

Question 35: To reach the goal of the soul, there is no greater speed than that of the unhurried pace of the Yogi.

Answer: Sri Aurobindo describes somewhere that the seeker aspires with an intensity that seeks realisation at the next moment, but has at the same time the patience that knows it has eternity at its disposal.

Question 36: The aim of the integral yoga is to cast away the ego-dominated individuality in favour of divine-directed individuality.

Answer: The aim is rather to erase the element of ego from one’s individuality and let the inner Divine move forward and take its due place as the charioteer of the vehicle prepared by nature in evolution.

Question 37: Sound carries to lower levels of consciousness what silence creates in the higher levels.

Answer: Yes, Sound is a means of manifestation.

Question 38: Law is the embodied social conscience.

Answer: Law is the principle of operation of the Truth in each thing. Each plane of Existence has its own laws. The laws in society are erected on the basis of its ethical, religious and social developments and aspirations.

Question 39: There is no endowment, human or divine, meant exclusively for self-consumption.

Answer: None at all. In truth there is neither an exclusive ‘I’ nor an exclusive ‘You’. What I conserve is derived from others in some way and affects others in another way.
Question 40: Every willed human movement delays or hastens the fulfilment of the divine intention.

Answer: It depends upon the character of the will. If the human will is in tune with the Divine Will or at least subservient to it; then it plays a helpful part in the process. But if it be contrary to the Will, then naturally there is friction and inevitable delay.

Question 41: Attraction towards a thing indicates in the person so attracted a future possibility of deserving it.

Answer: Attraction proceeds from a secret oneness. That oneness seeks to manifest itself. The one seeks to join itself at the other end. And attraction, pull, flowings are some of the first movements of this seeking.

Question 42: The emergence of willed physical movement in human evolution is a major landmark. It made possible gathering of diverse sensations which were to be organised later and a sense organ developed for the purpose.

The corresponding stage in the evolution of the individual in yoga, is the point when the will acquires sufficient mastery over the personality to shift it from one yogic poise to another.

Answer: I would put it this way: The emergence of conscious will in the mind was the turning point in the evolutionary movement of Nature. A similar decisive turn arrives in the process of yogic development when the inner Divine or the psychic purusha comes forward from behind the veil and assumes direction.

Question 43: Vexation, among other things, is an indication of exhaustion of capacity—capacity to understand, bear with or deal with.

Answer: Very much so, though in some there is no capacity at all to understand or sympathise. The slightest
movement contrary to their conveniences or preferences makes them vexed. It never occurs to them that they should see behind the movement for its cause and either set it right or adjust themselves to it.

Question 44: In what measure does the Supermind retain the character of the mind?

Answer: Imagine the mind of your youngest son and the mind of say, Einstein. The difference is much more; it is differences of kind essentially. After all, the mind is only the lowest end, antennae, as it were, in a field of ignorance of the Supermind above. It is the last end of a particular projection of the Supramental Faculty in Creation. One may say that the character of the mind as it is, is completely transformed by the time it is assumed into its original Principle of the Supermind.

Question 45: Delay of the divine possibilities either through human refractoriness or otherwise only enlarges the Divine domain.

Answer: Perhaps true in the sense that the working out involves—under these conditions—more of manifestation in terms of time.

Question 46: Is there any connection between light and silence?

Answer: Light is a term of manifestation. Silence is of the Unmanifest. Both the manifest and the unmanifest, however, are states of a Supreme Transcendent Reality and hence Light and Silence are also states of the same Reality.

Question 47: Ordinarily there is no opinion worth communication. Its formation indicates a certain level of mental activity in the individual and hence is primarily of value to him only.
Answer: Yes, an opinion has validity and value to him who holds it, if he has arrived at it after circumspection and due deliberation. To others it cannot have the same relevance unless their states of consciousness are the same.

Question 48: It is said that the intelligence one is endowed with at birth remains constant. What increases is experience, information, skill etc.

Does the spiritual opening increase one's native intelligence too?

Answer: It is certainly not true that intelligence is a constant factor. It grows if fed properly and trained; it decays if neglected. Spiritual opening is not necessary for the increase of intelligence. Stimulation and exercise on its own level is quite enough for the purpose.

Question 49: Austerity that is merely deprivation of certain comforts is no form of discipline. Indeed it is a remote form of mental sadism.

Answer: Austerity as a discipline belongs to the ethical domain. Spiritually it has no special virtue because as long as there is the sense of deprivation, there is necessarily some attachment, some longing for the object kept out. Initially such austerity may be undertaken as a preparatory step if the clinging in nature is too strong. But spiritual growth begins, in the matter, when there is not the usual longing for those things and no special austerity is needed to keep oneself unentangled in them.

Question 50: Sadhaks see in their visions Sri Aurobindo or the Mother in the physical forms in which they are seen on the earth. Is it possible for the sadhaks to feel them even without form?

If so, what difference is there between such appearances in form and formless presence?
**Answer:** It is certainly possible to feel the presence of the Mother or of Sri Aurobindo. The presence has its unmistakable stamp and is experienced as such.

Revelation in Form has its own significance answering to the need of the person concerned. The same person may be vouchsafed both the types of Grace. There is no difference of gradations between them.

**Question 51:** Laski says that one can be impartial but not detached. Krushchev has said that nations can be neutral but not individuals.

**Impartiality is a cultivated mental virtue and springs from understanding, tolerance and adherence to principles; whereas detachment is a psychic endowment and lies beyond the pale of mind.**

**Answer:** True impartiality can come only from detachment. If there be any kind of interest then impartiality is naturally out of question. Detachment is not necessarily of the psychic origin alone: the mind if it is sincere can certainly take a detached view.

**Question 52:** The average citizen at Pondicherry is less rough, less calculating and more cheerful than his comppeer at either Villupuram or Cuddalore. This is attributed to the soft nature of his erstwhile rulers, the French. Would this have anything to do with the Presence of the Mother here?

**Answer:** Sri Aurobindo once described having found this place—when he arrived—a tamasic locality. Things were all sleepy, dull and lethargic. People are not ‘soft, cheerful’ etc. They are just a happy-go-lucky lot, leaving serious matters to another set of people to conduct as they choose. They are not civic-conscious, not politically awake. This is not due to any benevolent attitude of the former rulers. Nor is it due to Ashram influence.
What Pondicherry owes to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is its spiritual peace, material prosperity and placement on the international map.

Question 53: “Thoughts come from outside and are not of the mind.”

If this is so what of the store in one’s memory?
Answer: Even that store is formed from thoughts that came from outside, is it not?

Question 54: Education is not so much a growth of consciousness as the growth of capacity to receive the higher consciousness.

Answer: Both. The increase in the capacity to receive is a direct result of the growth of the consciousness that receives.

Question 55: There is a stage in yoga when the sadhak moves from progress to greater progress, attracting no attack from the hostiles, steering clear of every form of suffering.

Answer: Those steps or states are called ‘Days’ in the Veda as against the ‘Nights’ when the journey is in rough weather.

Question 56: At the height of awareness the sadhak is actively aware of every subtle movement of growth of life in him. Also he is aware of every shade of growth of consciousness in him.

Awareness is capacity to know when one chooses. It is not as if one is mildly conscious of the myriad activities of existence in one’s own being. It would be bewildering.

Answer: One can be aware of things even without choosing to do so. Such awareness may come about without any willing on one’s part.

Question 57: Creative talents are scarcely the result of ripening erudition or scholarship. They are disparate faculties which co-exist sometimes by chance.
Answer: Creative talent is something with which one is born. It can be supported and given shape by appropriate discipline of acquiring knowledge, perfecting the needed technique of expression etc.

Question 58: The only method to fully assimilate the Force when granted is to remain quiet in the inner parts of the being. During the period when the Force acts no movement of any part of the being in any direction is permissible. Such acts can only distort or counteract the descending influence. Even aspiration must be put by for the time being. In the measure it is human effort it acts against the descent. Aspiration must fall into quiescence once it has succeeded in bringing about the descent by its strength.

Answer: Correct. Quiet receptivity is the ideal condition.

Question 59: Effort, (especially a mental effort), is just a concentration of energy on that plane. It is the thought that gives direction to effort.

Aspiration is the effort on the emotional plane.

Answer: Each part of the being has its aspiration. Normally, however, one starts with an aspiration that partakes of both the mind and the heart. And that gradually spreads out.

Question 60: There is a certain stage even in purna yoga when most of the sadhaks need a holiday from physical as well as mental occupation. It offers unfettered freedom for the descending Force to arrive at the intended harmony, shaping itself into the chosen mould—chosen for the individual.

Answer: Mental holiday is more helpful than the physical. If the mind could be somehow freed from its meanderings, pointless preoccupations and a quiet established in it, the work would be pretty much easy.
Physical activity with an underlying quiet and calm is often more helpful than a state of physical inoccupation which tends to slip into inertia.

**Question 61**: He who functions on the plane where his consciousness abides naturally and with ease has no need to have the feeling of being too busy, however active he may be. All his activity will not result in any strain. Strain comes in only when the plane of activity is slightly higher than the plane of consciousness. Hence the feeling of being busy.

**Answer**: Why higher only? Even when the activity is of a level which is lower than one's natural state of consciousness, there is an effort involved.

**Question 62**: An idea occurs in the mind that one should sing the praise of the Mother, say by composing a poem.

Even such an innocuous idea can be a mere desire; or it can very well be an aspiration. It depends upon the orientation of the individual.

**Answer**: It is more an aspiration than a desire—aspiration to translate one's devotion and realisation in some concrete way. If the impulse is to impress others, make a name etc., then it is of the nature of desire.

**Question 63**: Corporal punishment is an attempt to teach the mind from below i.e. through the physical upwards.

**Answer**: Picturesquely put. It creates fear—physical and vital—and seeks to bludgeon the mind to fall in line.

**Question 64**: The roots of fear are deep down the consciousness. That is why one gets one's prayers, while in fear, readily answered.

Fear is only fear of losing. Fear lives with attachment and goes with it.
Answer: The roots of fear go down deep into the subconscious; that is why fear is not amenable to reason.

The reason why prayer under stress of fear often evokes a response is that it touches a core of sincerity in the call. All outer covering is cut across at that moment.

Question 65: One like U Thant is universally liked as is seen in his unanimous election—a unique feature in international affairs. But the price of his affability is non-action i.e. refusal to take dynamic initiative. His illustrious predecessor Mr. Dag definitely threw his weight on the side which he understood to be right.

It is too much for one who stands by the Truth to yearn for universal acceptability.

Answer: I do not think the gentleman is there because of any liking for him on the part of the Powers that decide. It is to keep out someone who might be more inconvenient and less out of one’s way that this choice seems to have been arrived at. The negative factors outweigh the positive in such a situation as this.

Naturally if one stands by the Truth and nothing but that, the question of acceptability does not arise. It is in the interpretation of the applicability of the Truth in practice in a given set of circumstances that all these extraneous considerations come in.
FOURTH SERIES

I

IN THE ASHRAM
JOY OF GRATITUDE

I remember the Mother once saying that while She receives letters in abundance complaining of circumstances, sufferings and the like, She hardly gets any reporting things when they are good. I have often thought of this phenomenon for it is so true and yet it hardly strikes anyone. When things go well we are apt to take them for granted; we just sail along. It is only when they go awry that we are forced to sit up. And perhaps, from a certain point of view, that is the justification for adverse conditions in the economy of Providence. Indeed there are exceptions; few and rare, like the one I came across unexpectedly this morning.

He is an old man, unprepossessing, homely in appearance and in attire. He asked to see me and I received him with considerable reservations in view of possible requests or demands which might prove to be embarrassing. But I soon found that I was mistaken. The encounter was totally different, the first of its kind in my life. There was nothing negative in the person, no voids to be filled in; it was all a positive movement full of contentment, full of happiness, replete with gratitude to the Divine. I should like to report the substance of what he said in the first person, in order to be faithful to the spirit and spontaneity of his testament.

"I was a businessman on a small scale. I had the usual habits of the world and was getting on in the vicissitudes of my calling. One day, some 28 years ago, I heard a voice within me asking me to go to Gorakhpur and read books on God. The effect was so strong that without thinking of anything, I went straightaway to Gorakhpur and purchased a few cheap books, costing two annas each, on God, religion, etc. I do not have a developed mind or understanding of
such subjects. But, when I opened the pages, to my great surprise, I followed what I read, new vistas unrolled themselves before me. I suddenly realised that all that I had done so far was useless and a new life was being opened to me. My heart leaped with joy and without any questioning I started to practise what was written in the books according to my understanding. As I said, the habits of my life were not very edifying and I commenced correcting them in the firm faith that God would lead me on.

“One day I heard the same voice for the second time, asking me to do intensive Pranayama. Regardless of every other consideration, I started Pranayama and with a mad zeal practised it at all times of the day except when I was eating or sleeping or doing business. I had read in books that Pranayama should not be practised at certain hours and so on. But I simply could not conform to those requirements. Helplessly I pushed on with Pranayama, and while doing so I made a discovery.

“I found that the mind which I had all along thought to be myself was not myself at all. I saw and experienced that I am different and the mind is different. When this experience settled itself and became a part of my life, things ceased to worry me. The problem of thoughts no more existed because I was not in the thoughts. I felt a lightness about me, my whole being repeatedly rose in adoration of the Divine who had given me this new dimension to my life. Tears would come to my eyes when I realised that but for this Grace I would have just lived and died, but now I was lifted out of that round and given a new direction to make my life meaningful.

“A third time the voice spoke, ‘Do Japa the whole day.’ There was no denying to it. The injunction came with such a force that I had to follow it and, as I did so, I
was filled with delight. The whole being was surcharged with a bliss which refused to take account of any happenings elsewhere.

"It was at this juncture that a kind friend suggested to me that though I was in a good condition, I should go to Pondicherry for something still higher. And I acted upon it. I had my own trepidations because of certain habits which have been with me all along. I had been assured by high authorities in the beginning that once one steps into the life Godward, bad Samskaras are automatically displaced by good ones. Now it is thirty years since I started but strange to say, those habits and tendencies continue. I have no complaints, for they do not interfere with my inner life. For instance, smoking. I took to heavy smoking when I had reverses in business. And the first thing that came before my eyes on arrival at Pondicherry was the board 'Smoking strictly prohibited', hanging everywhere, in all directions, in the guest house where I stepped in. Naturally if smoking was prohibited I could not very well indulge in it. What was to be done? I asked myself, and my own reply was that the Mother's Grace would see to it. And the Grace acted. At that moment, the thirty year old habit left me for good.

"I am extremely happy in this atmosphere; the bliss gets intensified when I sit at the Samadhi. As long as there is life in this body I like to put in some service for the Lord and in this spirit I participate in the work around for a couple of hours. After coming here, the voice was heard again - for the fourth time: 'Sing the praises of the Lord, chant the Name.' I was astounded because I have never had any penchant for singing. All the same, could I resist?

"I have physical infirmities. Material conditions are not always cooperative. But who cares? The Lord sees
to it that there is no feeling of want. Who could do more to an insignificant creature like myself? I know no cares, no anxieties, no fears. I know only that He has taken me up and doubtless, He knows what He will do with me."

I was deeply moved as he spoke. It was a great education to me. It was spiritually a pregnant moment. I melted; there was a shift in the consciousness.

All that the Mother has been saying about Grace, gratitude and the joy of it, the solicitude of the Divine for the humble, had come to life.

As he rose to leave he asked me whether he could come again and tell me a few of the interesting things that had happened in his life. "May be you can write a book," he added. I invited him to come the next week.

I am certain I shall benefit by his company, though I am not sure whether I shall write the book.
WORK IN OUR ASHRAM

He was young and had just come for a two-month holiday after completing his studies at the University of Madras. He had qualified for the Master's degree and was brilliant in Mathematics and languages—an intellectual of a high type. He came and met Sri Kapali Shastriar who took to him very kindly. A few days later, when the youngster asked how best he could utilise his time, Sri Shastriar told him to work in the Dining Room, and to do it consecratedly, for about six hours a day. And he did accordingly.

I was intrigued. I had thought that for an intellectual like him, Sri Shastriar would advise an intensive course of reading Sri Aurobindo literature, general philosophy etc. So I asked him why he had advised this kind of physical work to the young man. He replied cryptically, "It will do him good in the future". I could not quite follow but did not pursue the topic.

The young friend left after the vacation. He had great difficulty in settling down; circumstances were very trying. But gradually a series of changes took place and today he is a top executive drawing a four figure salary in a premier industrial establishment. Every time I see him I remember what Shastriar said when the young man was asked to do work in the Dining Room. The seriousness with which he had taken it up and the spirit of consecration that evidently had gone into it have had far reaching consequences in shaping his whole career. The selfless output of his energies in adoration of the Mother forged new lines of destiny for him.

That is the character of the work that the Mother provides in the Ashram. It is a dynamic means for growth and change—not only spiritual but also material. Properly approached and rightly taken on, work in the Ashram effects
changes and promotes growth much more rapidly and effectively than meditation. Work is given by the Mother as an opportunity for one to learn to consecrate oneself, to pour out one’s energies—physical, mental, vital and others—in the service of the Divine, to repeatedly converge the multiple movements of one’s consciousness on the Divine. The entire being participates in the *yajña*. There is a joy of selfless exertion, self-giving, and the being exults in a glow of upliftment. Continuous practice is found to lead to a gradual change in the consciousness.

Indeed, the type of work does not matter. As long as it is taken up and done in a spirit of *sadhana*, it operates as a lever for growth into the Mother’s Consciousness. One feels concretely the vibrations of a different consciousness during the period of work. And yet for particular seekers who by nature or by habit are lethargic, slow-moving or too erratic, disorganised and tense, physical work is found to be ideal. It harnesses the most difficult part of the system to a higher purpose and one does not take long to feel and experience the steady dissolution of the tamasic crust or the beginnings of a settling order; a lightness begins to be felt, a streak of joy issues forth and develops into a stream of delight. There is even a light on the face which no onlooker can miss. This change has its effects even on the other levels of the being. This kind of hard exertion is specially advisable in moments or spells of depression. It is an unfailling remedy.

II

What is the right way to do this work, one would ask. First, work is to be approached as something sacred, as a means of *yoga*, a means for achieving union with the Divine Consciousness. It is something holy which one takes up with a measure of poise, purity and soul-attitude, as when one begins to pray, for example. And indeed,
as the Mother has repeatedly said, work is the body's prayer to the Divine.*

And when one begins the work each day, it is offered to the Divine—here to the Mother who is the Divine to us. The offering is not a mere mental idea. It is a felt movement that issues from the heart and the work proceeds on the wave of that inner impulsion as a continuous self-giving to the Divine. One may and does forget this purpose after a while and works mechanically, especially in the beginning. The moment one perceives this, one has to rededicate and continue. Without the spirit of dedication, work becomes just labour. The quality deteriorates and it has little spiritual value. I remember once some one had typed some matter for the Mother and sent up the sheets. The moment She held the papers, She remarked that it was only physical exertion, nothing more. It is not the quantity of the work done or the speed with which it is carried out that matters in the spiritual context. Even a machine can do things and that too much more efficiently and quickly. When a sadhaka does it he is expected to put his best consciousness into it and make it alive with his soul's consecration.

Naturally when one does this work in dedication to the Divine, it becomes a kind of communion with the Divine. One shuts out all movements—whether of the mind, life-force or body—which are contrary to the spirit of the undertaking. One is concerned to see that what one offers in work is the best he is capable of; and this best changes from day to day. That is because in this work it is not merely

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* In this connection I may mention in passing how jarring it is when some people visiting the Ashram propose to "do work" in lieu of payment for their boarding and lodging expenses. Work in the Ashram is not that kind of utility at all; it is not meant to do duty for money. If it is done that way, it goes just that far and no further.
as the object of dedication that the Divine comes in, but also as the sustaining and executive Force. Once the Mother allots a work, She gives also the necessary Force of Her Consciousness to do it. The worker has only to learn to put himself in the proper poise of receptivity and instrumentality. The Higher Force works through him and in the process it floods his being, accustoms the system to its own nature and opens the way to an eventual transmutation. The Consciousness-Force adjusts itself to the capacity of the instrument but also it helps to increase its capacity, its range and its heights. As long as one is in tune with this growing Force of Consciousness, one does not feel the flow of time, there is no flagging of the energy or enthusiasm. The moment one feels tired, it is time to look inward and see where there has been a lapse. It was a few years ago that there was an extraordinary rush of work in the section where I serve. For days together from morning till late at night, things would crowd one upon another and the whole batch of us was exhausted. I approached the Mother and informed Her of the situation. Her reply was thrilling; Think only of the work, and not of yourselves. Needless to say we were instantly lifted up and saw where we had gone wrong.

There are certainly some limitations of the physical body and there is a line beyond which it cannot be safely stretched; but within these limits it is possible to work without fatigue for longer periods than is normally held to be possible. And it is found in Yoga that even these limits are not fixed. They can be pushed farther and farther. All depends upon the extent to which one is in tune with the presiding Yogic Consciousness.

I have spoken of work as a means of growth, of sadhana in our Yoga. There is another side, the aspect of work as an expression of progress of the inner consciousness. It is quite a subject by itself.
AN UNSCHEDULED DARSHAN

This was the third year in succession that the Mother had acceded to the request of the Miners from North India for Darshan. They wrote first in October 1965 that some 600 of them were coming South on tour and wanted to take a special detour to Pondicherry in order to have the Mother’s Darshan. And though the Mother gives public Darshan only on certain fixed days of the year, She graciously consented to receive them at Darshan on their Day. This was repeated the next year. This time too the Darshan was fixed for the 24th of December. There was some difficulty in train arrangements and they prayed for postponement to the 29th; to this also the Mother agreed.

And all waited for 5 p.m. of the 29th. Imagine our surprise when on the 28th the gates of the Ashram were flooded by the miner friends in groups after groups. Was there a mistake, somewhere? I asked myself and wanted to check up the papers. But in the meanwhile the head of the party met us and explained how they had been hustled into these changes of programme by the railway and other official authorities. The local station staff would not allow their train to stay longer and hence, she said, they had to go back with a heavy heart. However, their aspiration worked, the railway authorities agreed to let the train stay till evening and the Mother was approached at about 3 p.m. on their behalf. The Mother instantly agreed to give Darshan at 5 p.m. and the word was passed.

What happened thereafter can best be described by a friend of mine who had arrived just a couple of hours before from Madras.

"It was 3-30 and I was proceeding to your place from Golconde. As I was coming I saw people coming and
moving; rushing;—men and women, young and old. Each one stopped to tell me that Mother was giving Darshan at five today. I was thrilled and stood glued to the spot. Suddenly I became aware of a great atmosphere around. There was there a massive surge of joy, of aspiration. I could not walk. Waves of Delight were rising one after another and blocking the way. I had to literally push myself further and was enveloped by these waves. I have known something of Peace, known Power, but this was the first time I experienced this concrete Ananda. I then walked on the streets around the Ashram Building and found that the whole place was surcharged with this rising Spirit. There was more than delight in it; there was "Gratitude".

Yes, gratitude of the Earth to the Divine for Her Grace. For when the Mother comes to give Darshan it is not to keep an appointment for putting in an appearance at the balcony. She gathers—or lets gather—in Herself a whole world of Consciousness, Light and Power of the Supreme and comes to pour it on Earth for its transformation. She greets the Earth in the person of the humanity present for the occasion and reaches Her Grace to each one there to enable him to realise his highest aspiration at that moment.

It was glorious. As the hour approached, all stood still. And when She appeared in Her emerald glory, all forgot themselves:

A wonderful face looked out with deathless eyes...
A power leaned down, a happiness found its home.
Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

—Savitri.
OUR ASHRAM

The main purpose of this Ashram is spiritual. It is to develop a way of life by which man discovers his essential divine nature, grows into a higher consciousness, and translates this inner progress in terms of the betterment and perfection of external life in the world. The discipline that is followed here for this purpose is the Purna Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Ideal we seek to realise is the perfection of man in God, unity of the human race based upon the perception of oneness of the Divine in all. The Ashram as it is today consists of about 1100 adults dedicated to this Ideal. They come from all religions, all countries, all races. No distinction is made on religious, racial or social grounds. All are looked upon as fellow seekers on the path to the Divine. Apart from the inner discipline, sadhana, practiced by the sadhaks, each one voluntarily undertakes to do part of the work in the community life, as consecrated service, in the spirit of Karma Yoga. Facilities are provided for the study of whatever subjects the members may choose. All are assured by the Mother—who is the Guru—of an adequate standard of living. Each one, when he joins the Ashram, makes over what he is in a position to offer.

Believing as we do in the reality of the world, the possibility of elimination of imperfections, limitations and ignorance from the life of man, we have sought to extend our endeavour in as many fields of life as possible.

All the services essential for full living e.g. agricultural farms, dairy, poultry, bakery, laundry, horticulture gardens, cottage industries, hand-made paper unit etc., are organised and run by the sadhaks with the necessary help of paid labour. There is a printing press which brings out books in
14 languages and a good deal of literature in the main languages on Spirituality, Culture, Polity, Art and such other important subjects is being disseminated. Authentic expositions of the Vedas, Upanishads, Tantras etc., are being issued under the lead of Sri Aurobindo’s writings.

We have developed a Centre of Education where children are admitted from the age of four onwards and trained under new methods of education, with a special stress on physical development. The curriculum is determined with a view to the full efflorescence of the inner faculties of the student and the system of teaching is oriented in the direction of a full development of the personality by the time he leaves the Centre on completion of the Higher Course. This Centre of Education has about 160 teachers who are sadhaks in their personal life. The number of students (of both the sexes) is nearly 600, many of whom are lodged in small Homes (as the boardings are called) in charge of Wardens.

Apart from Humanities, Science, Medicine, and Engineering are being taught in developing courses. Though no religious or spiritual education as such is given, the students are encouraged by the example of the elders to cherish higher values of life.

The Ashram has also projected itself in a small way in business and industry and is trying hard to set an example of honesty in commerce. Some of our members participate and develop in the social welfare activities of the State.

The latest project of the Ashram is the founding of an international township, named Auroville, where plans are under execution for the development of a large community of 50,000 citizens from all parts of the Globe, living and working on a cooperative basis and dedicated to the ideal of
Truth. The foundation ceremony of Auroville took place on the 29th February last year when earth-soil from over a hundred nations was received and deposited to mark the commingling of all the peoples in this supreme effort to transcend the barriers of nationality and race division and establish a truly living Universal community. The progress of the work depends to a certain extent on the flow of funds and world agencies like the UNESCO are exerting themselves to effectively sponsor this pioneering project.

The overall picture of life here is one of a miniature world governed by a growing aspiration for God-realisation which expresses itself in a many-sided attempt to lift up the diverse currents of existence Truth-ward, God-ward. Each one contributes his mite and shares in the general progress.
THE MOTHER’S BLESSINGS

Question: What does Mother mean when She writes "Blessings"? What are the Guru’s Blessings?

Answer: Each Guru has his own way and each one’s blessings have a connotation that is in keeping with that way. Some grant what the devotee or the disciple prays for: they release a will for accomplishment of that — whether it is of the material kind or spiritual. The blessings of some turn out to be disastrous from the worldly point of view but fruitful spiritually. The form of the blessings also varies. You may have heard of some saints who throw stones at those who flock round them. But even then there is a stampede for the stone-hits. For the hit effects a connection—a concrete physical connection—with the saint and inevitably some good ensues. So it is difficult to generalise on the significance of the blessings of Gurus.

When the Mother gives Blessings, She sends out a vibration of Her consciousness in order that what is best for the supplicant may come to be. This best may or may not coincide with the expectation of the seeker. What is intended is that which is best for his spiritual growth. If a particular satisfaction in the material way is in consonance with or contributive to his general development in the right direction, that is included in the sanction. Spiritual good includes true material well-being.
THE MOTHER’S FEET

Question: What is the significance of the Guru’s placing of his foot on the disciple’s head?

Answer: When any physical touch is made to convey help or blessings by the Guru, it is done to ensure communication at the physical level also. In the material world, material means have their own efficacy. The Feet of the Guru have a special significance in the spiritual tradition of the East. They are great centres of transmission, especially of spiritual Power. The spiritual energy from the whole body of the Guru flows like a flood through the Feet when they are contacted.

This is the general truth of the matter.

The Mother’s Feet have, in addition to their Power content,* a unique charge of rapturous bliss that recalls Sri Aurobindo’s description of them: “Where she presses her feet course miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda.” Times without number we have experienced this thrill and the very sight of her Feet—even in photographs—awakens throbs of love in our hearts. Moulds of Beauty, mystic jars of Wine!

* Speaking of this Power I always remember how years ago a dying disciple—whom the doctors had given up for lost—entreated to be brought to the Mother. A few of us were present. He could not sit up, he was lying down. When the Mother came down to see him, he bared his chest and prayed to Her to place Her Feet on his heart. The Mother was solemn. She complied with his request. The man recovered and he is still alive defying all medical prognosis.
SRI AUROBINDO’S YOGA

Question: Though Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is so perfect, complete and easily practised, why is it not as popular among the masses as one would wish? Is it due to the fact that many are not in a position to understand it? Is it due to the fact that no wide publica- tion or propaganda is made among the mass of people? Is it because hostile forces fight against such yoga through men who are not keen to have it? Or, that materialistic people who want miracles in material progress are not inclined to do yoga?

Answer: You are right, this is the easiest Yoga because it follows the course of Nature, though in an accelerated manner. But in another sense it is also the most difficult because it involves a complete change of nature, a radical transformation of human nature, into the Divine. This is a long process and involves very stringent conditions which only a few can fulfil. It is only the preparatory stages of the Yoga that can be practised by all, whatever be their station in life. Even this is a gain. However, the public in general is yet to be educated and informed of this side of the teaching. It is no use placing before the masses the high peaks of the Divine Life envisaged in this Yoga; they become relevant only after one has equipped oneself to share that vision and is in a position to realise it. What the generality of men ought to be impressed with is the certainty of self improvement, self-purification, right relations with others, harmony within oneself and such other results ensuing from the practice of the preliminary steps of this way of life opened by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Also it is a matter to be emphasised that this way can be adopted by any one of any religion, in any phase in life.

A right type of dissemination is called for backed up by example on the part of those who instruct. No amount of
prejudice, obstruction or hostility can prevail for all time against such a self-evident truth as the one enunciated in the teaching of Sri Aurobindo.

Any kind of Yoga means an effort, a certain measure of self-denial and soul-ful exertion. How many really are willing to do that?
LUMINOUS PRESERVATION OF SRI AUROBINDO’S BODY

(Though Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his physical body on December 5, 1951, the body did not show any signs of decomposition till four days later. The body was aglow with a special light which the Mother confirmed as being the light supramental.)

Regarding the preservation of Sri Aurobindo’s body for several days after his withdrawal: You are right; the mere fact of preservation does not give special significance to the event. What was unique and important about that phenomenon was the presence for so many days of the Supramental Light in the body. It was the first time that the said Light was seen by many physical eyes, illuminining a physical form. It was an irrefutable testimony to the fact of the great Light having concretely descended on the earth plane and found a material habitation, for however short a period.

Preservation of the body by yogic means is not very uncommon. There are scores of instances of Hathayogins withdrawing their life-breath, leaving their bodies intact for days together. There are certain currents of life-force—called sub-pranas in the Indian system—which keep the body without disintegration even when the main life-breath has ceased. One need not be a yogi or a spiritual man or a saint for that. Persons who are used to pranayama in one form or another can have this effected in their system.

The greatness of saints is always their own. It is not conferred on them by the beliefs or superstitions of the devotees.
INNER BLISS—HIGHER FORCE

Question: I often experience an inner bliss. How to bring it out in my day-to-day activity?

Answer: The bliss cannot be brought out. It surges forward by itself. But there are conditions in which alone this natural movement can take place. The outer nature must first be purified by eliminating the dross tamas, desires, passions etc. For these and their brood cloud the being, clog the passage and create a very inclement climate for the inner joy to come out and survive. There must be, what the Mother calls, a constant attitude of benevolence; a seeking for harmony, harmony between oneself and others as also harmony among the various movements in one's own being. The ego must be underplayed and gradually thrust into the background if not eliminated. Only under such conditions can the psychic joy manifest.

It is understood, of course, that the bliss you speak of is the joy of the psychic and not the thrill or the excitement in the vital or the emotional being.

Question: How does the higher Force work? Does it work directly without the mediacy of sense organs or does it work as a power behind my individual activities or is it both? Can I use this force for my personal needs?

Answer: The Force works both ways, directly as also through appropriate instrumentation. But in this material world the working is mostly through agencies. In your individual life, for instance, it works—when invoked—through your faculties, e.g. your mind power, your vital capacities, physical qualities etc. It moves you from behind the veil of your nature.
A Force of this kind has its own goal and to turn it to one's own purposes centred round the little ego is dangerous. Actually the one condition for the full working of such a Power is the submission of one's will to the higher Will. When it functions one has no personal choice or need. As long as one is in the personal groove the higher Force cannot come into its own.

Note that until one's faculties are entirely surrendered to the higher Power the action can only be indirect. It is only when they are fully attuned and surrendered to the Power that it can effectuate itself directly without being coloured or diminished by the nature of the instrument. For one becomes a channel instead of an instrument.
FATE-LINES—BAD THOUGHTS

Question: An astrologer has said that the heart line and the mind line on my palm are combined and this is bad for me. He added that I may have accidents.

A disturbing thought comes unexpectedly and upsets; thereafter it goes on repeating itself.

Kindly intimate what these fate lines are. Are they actually true? Are they subject to change? How to get rid of these disturbing thoughts?

Answer: The lines on the palm generally indicate the kind of karma that is to fructify in the present birth. But there is nothing rigid and hard about them. It is within the experience of many that these lines undergo changes. Much depends upon the karma that is being forged in the present life. It may by itself negative the past to a certain extent. If there is an intervention of a powerful factor like the Divine Grace, then naturally the indications whether of the palm or of the horoscope do not hold good.

Even otherwise if a stronger and a more dynamic destiny comes into contact with oneself, say by marriage, then one’s own destiny is very much influenced and shaped by the new factor.

All said and done, these indications may be utilised by way of precaution, to be more alert, and nothing more.

Regarding the disturbing thoughts, there is only one way of dealing with them and that is to reject them. If you have the strength in yourself to throw them out the moment they come and think no more of them, that is the best. Failing that, you just ignore them and refuse to pay attention. They will knock once, twice, thrice, then recede. They may repeat
their call all of a sudden at an unexpected moment and see if they can upset you. Even then if you ignore them they are bound to fade away. The mistake most people make is to get agitated with these visitors even when they do not accept their promptings. Thereby they cooperate negatively with the intruding elements whose sole purpose is to mislead or, if that be not possible, to throw the subject into confusion. By fear, nervousness, excitement one loses the right and natural poise in which alone one can receive the Divine help effectively. To know this real character of the thoughts and to refuse to play into their hands is the only answer.

If, however, one is too weak to do this, one has only to call the Mother and pass on the suggestions to Her for disposal.
SARASVATI JAPA

Question: You have written in your book 'Japa' that one should not utter a mantra unless the meaning is understood. I have been advised to utter a mantra of Saraswati by my father, but I do not know the meaning. Should I make a Japa of it? The mantra is:

Om Pabakanam Saraswati
Bajinam Bajinibati
Jegyanbastu Dhiabasu
Sri Saraswati Devi Swaha.

Answer: It is true that Japa to be effective must be accompanied by an awareness of the meaning, the sense of the mantra that is repeated. *Tad japah tad arthabhavanam*, repetition and understanding of its purport, says the Rishi. The being has to participate in the invocation and this it cannot do fully unless its consciousness dwells upon and enters into the Idea. There are, indeed, cases where even mere repetition without the knowledge of the meaning has been fruitful. That is because of the puissance of the Guru who communicates the mantra: that power works in the disciple and the repetition of the sound is only the occasion for it. But such Gurus are not found everyday or everywhere. Often one receives these mantras from sources not very high and then one has to rely upon the inherent potency of the mantra which in turn becomes alive when one is awake to the Idea-Truth it carries and contacts oneself with it.

The mantra to which you refer is wrongly worded. It is the tenth Rik in the third hymn of the first Mandala in the Rigveda. It should read:

"Pavaka nah Sarasvati
Vajebhir Vajinivati,"
"Tajnam vastu dhiyavasuh"
Sri Sarasvati Devyai Swaha!

Sri Aurobindo has translated it:
"May purifying Sarasvati with all the plenitude of her forms of plenty, rich in substance by the thought, desire our sacrifice."

Swaha to the Goddess Sri Sarasvati!

The main idea in this invocation is the offering of oneself, especially the activities of the mind, the intelligence, to the Deity presiding over Wisdom and Intelligence. They are directed for their fulfilment to Her who, in accepting them, lifts them out of their field of ignorance, eliminates whatever falsehood there be and purifies them and enriches them with her inexhaustible felicities of Knowledge-Thought. It is implied, indeed, that the person who thus offers the functionings of his intellect is ready in preparation and will for the higher purification; the quality of his thought movements has attained or tends to attain the grade of consciousness which can fuse naturally into the operations of the luminous Intelligence that set in with the approach of Sarasvati.

You may ponder over this meaning, equip yourself in its spirit and proceed to do the Japa.
PSYCHIC BEING - ATMAN - VYAHRTIS

Question: Is there anything corresponding to our psychic being in the Vedanta philosophy or the Upanishads or in the Gita?

Answer: There is no exact correspondence between our psychic being and the central purusha called variously in the older scriptures. Perhaps the Chaitya purusha spoken of in some of the texts can be taken to be the same, in as much as that purusha is entirely a formulation of the divine consciousness. The jiva spoken of in these works is too much involved in Nature, almost a product of it. The Atman is indeed aloof from Nature but it is aloof also from all evolution. The psychic being participates in the evolution all the while retaining and developing its character of the divine consciousness.

This psychic being can be described as a delegate of the central being called Jivatman by Sri Aurobindo which stands above the manifestation. The psychic is, as it were, a projection of that Jivatman in the evolutionary movement.

Thus we may say that the Jivatman corresponds to the Self (of the Upanishads) connected with the individual manifestation. It stands aloof and above. The psychic growing in life experience may be called for our purpose, the Antaratman, what they call the soul in English.

Note the distinction between the psychic essence which is there even before the evolution commences and the psychic being which is developed in the course of the evolutionary movement.

Question: What are the two birds sitting on the same tree in Katha Upanishad? Are they the witness soul and the psychic being? If not, what are they?
Answer: The lower bird is the soul identified with Nature, lost in its workings. It feels enslaved. In its anguish it looks up at the other bird sitting serenely on the higher branch of the tree of life. When the suffering soul realises that he who is above, the Jivatma, not involved in the movement yet presiding over it from his high station, is none other than its own self all sorrow passes away from it.

Question: isvarah sarvabhutanam hrdaye...tisthati. Is this isvara the supreme Divine or God? And who is to surrender to Him “tameva saranam gachha”? Is this the psychic soul? Does Gita admit the psychic being?

Answer: The Gita makes no mention of the psychic being of our conception. In the context, Ishwara is the individual Divine who stations himself in each person and who can be reached by a concentrated inward plunge. He who surrenders is the human personality constituted of so many selves and evolving towards godhead. What surrenders is not merely the soul but the entire complex which is upheld, governed and led by the psychic purusha within.

Question: What is the difference between “consciousness and being”? Is “being” formed of consciousness, its progressive formation? If not, where does it come from?

Answer: No, consciousness is of the being. Consciousness is there because the being is there. For what after all is consciousness? Consciousness is simply the awareness—self-awareness or that awareness extending itself into all awareness of the being. This consciousness may be articulate or so self-gathered as to appear in a swoon: only the being is sensed. Chit is based on Sat. Sat is not formed by Chit. Chit is really a way of being of Sat.

Question: What becomes of the physical being, vital being and mental being after the dissolution of their respective bodies? Are
they dissolved? Are they temporary formations or permanent? If permanent, where do they stay till the next incarnation of the soul i.e. psychic being takes place? If dissolved, how are they formed and from what?

**Answer:** This question has been answered a number of times elsewhere. Normally all the sheaths are dissolved, one after the other, in their respective planes. The soul is not free to go to its place of rest till these sheaths that tie it to their corresponding worlds are shed. In the case of developed individuals where the mental or the vital personalities have been integrated around their psychic being, there need not be this dissolution. The soul carries them with it or leaves certain parts of it in their planes and assumes them when it chooses to come back for the next embodiment.

In cases of dissolutions, new sheaths are formed out of the substance in those planes with the help of the guardians of those worlds.

**Question:** What are the vyahritis? Why are they not included in our Gayatri?

**Answer:** Vyahritis are potent words which are said to have mothered their respective worlds into being. They symbolise those worlds. Normally three Vyahritis e.g. Bhooh, Bhuvah, Suvah, are mentioned in rituals or mantras. They represent the earth, the mid-air and the heaven, the physical, the vital and the mental principles. Perhaps since Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri invokes the Truth-Light on the entire expanse of our being—not merely on the three lower planes of our existence—it has not been considered necessary to specifically refer to them.
PHYSICAL DEFECTS & KARMA

Question: What is your view about the lameness, deafness, blindness, i.e. physical defects of men in the world? Whether these defects are due to their past bad karma, or the choice of the soul? Or are they due to some scientific reasons or deficiency in the womb of the physical mother?

Answer: Surely, the soul does not choose a defective body for experience. The defects—physical or psychological—are really due to other causes e.g. the psychological conditions of the parents at the time preceding the conception, the physical and psychological conditions of the mother during pregnancy, the circumstances attending the biological growth of foetus etc. It is said, for instance, that if either of the parties is too much drunk at the time of the congress, the issues so born carry a physical defect. Similarly, if there is a strong passion like anger, hatred at that time, the results are not very healthy. There is also the aspect of mischief by malevolent elements or beings during the pregnancy. It also happens at times that harmful drugs or foods taken by the prospective mothers interfere with the natural formation in the womb. In short, these defects are due to external causes, not the choice of the soul. The souls are certainly not pervert to invite such abnormal situations.

In fact when the soul finds the body, in which it has landed, inadequate for its purpose, it feels disappointed and either withdraws precipitately or resigns itself to the situation and does the best it can under the circumstances.

Please note that conditions in physical birth do not always correspond to the choice made by the soul before it set forth on the career.
The soul may choose a hard life for quicker growth but not necessarily suffering. Pain is different from suffering.

Even when the conditions in birth are found at variance with those anticipated before, the soul can utilise them for a purposive growth.
DOPE EVIL

Question: Dope is surely a tool in the hands of the dark forces, operating not only in U.S.A. but all over the world. We tried to fight it through the Law, but this does not seem to be the answer. What is the answer?

Answer: Naturally this evil cannot be checked by Law alone. To restrict the source of its supply is as far as the legislation can go. It is only an organised and sustained programme of education on the ruinous effects of dope that can help. It must be brought home to those who are pulled that way that these drugs end by de-humanising man. They strike at the root of consciousness in the body—wherever the centres are—and remove all control over the activities of the mind and the life-force. These fall out in pieces in the absence of a central will. Instead of an organised system working in the body, there is a chaotic disorder and the doors are opened to an unending process of disintegration. The clock of evolution is turned backwards and Mother-Nature's effort at progressive heightening of the consciousness in the being of man is undone. Man betrays his maker. This truth must be presented in an impressive manner, through every possible medium of publicity, so as to make its impact on the young minds that are drifting towards a psycho-physiological suicide.

This much from the normal common sense standpoint. From the spiritual angle, the whole development takes on a different complexion. Sri Aurobindo said long ago that when the evolutionary movement enters a final phase, all things that need to be rejected before the movement can enter the next step, are deliberately brought up to the surface for elimination. They surge in all their ugliness and multitude and compel attention. The present irruptions of drug-
mania, violence, falsehood—all these fall under this category. The Spirit at work can be trusted to do what is to be done. Individually, it is the duty of everyone who is turned to the Light to throw his weight, in every possible way, on the side of Progress, Order and Harmony. There is no doubt that the Anti-Divine is using every possible situation, every means available, to delay, if not to defeat, the Divine Manifestation. Each individual who chooses the Way of the Light is a gain; each one who slides backward into sub-humanity by self-reduction is a set-back. The evil of dope is only one factor in the situation.
SOME EXPLANATIONS

I

*Force*: Force is Shakti.

*Power*: The capacity that comes from the possession of force is power.

*Energy*: Force in action is energy. Force can be held in inaction also.

II

*Subjective*: What pertains to one's consciousness of oneself, one's ideas, feelings, sensations, and other formulations of various kinds is subjective—whether it is knowledge or experience. For instance, anger, joy; one feels them and one knows them within oneself. There is here no reference or relation to anything outside of oneself. It is exclusively within oneself.

*Objective*: What relates to things outside of one's consciousness—outside the experiencing agent. This is the usual distinction in philosophy. But things are not so clear-cut as that. Even in a 'Subjective' experience, one can distinguish between the self that experiences and the particular movement that is experienced as the object. From the standpoint of the self, even the experience is objective.

III

*Psycho-physical*: What is connected both with the mind and the physical body is psycho-physical. It can be the organism that answers to this description or an experience of that kind. There is a part of the physical body that has a mental layer even as the mind has a physical part. They are psycho-physical.
IV

_Buddhist Nirvana_: The difference between the Nirvana of Buddha as we have known it from their tradition and the Nirvana of Shankara is this: the absolute, undefinable state in which the Buddhist merges at the culmination of his endeavour is negative compared to the Brahmic state of the Adwaitin which is one of positive Bliss. The former is empty of everything including Bliss. It is really not permissible even to describe it as a state for there is none to experience it; it is a condition of complete dissolution.

V

_Ardha-Narisvara_: The manifestation of the Supreme in a biune body in which both the masculine and the feminine aspects co-exist, _along with each other_, not one behind and distinct from the other as in the status of Purusha-Prakriti. The truth emphasised here is the unity of the two in one—both in Being and in Consciousness.
THE MOTHER & DREAMS

Question: In dreams do we go to the Divine Mother or does the Mother come to us?

Answer: Both. Very often it is the inner being of the devotee that goes to the Mother. Her Grace also comes in various forms. In either case the fact is unmistakable; there is a continuing effect of the impact even after the dream.
III

BOOK-SHELF
MOTHER OF LOVE

It was long ago. Sastriar was explaining to me how each Avatar comes to manifest on the earth one special truth of the Divine, one particular principle of Existence. Young and impetuous as I was, I interrupted him and asked: “And what Truth has Mother come to manifest?

“LOVE”, he replied.

I had not thought of that. Thereafter a new vision and sensitivity opened in me and life has been a continual revelation of the Divine Love in the person of the Mother. Especially during the last few years, none can miss the overwhelming intensity of Love in the Mother’s touch. It is predominating and one simply melts in Her atmosphere.

Naturally this Love is not the self-regarding feeling that commonly passes under that name. It is something self-existent, not dependent upon anything outside. It is fundamental to creation and it is realised naturally as one gets closer to the basic Truth of existence—the Divine Self. This Love loves because it is its nature to do so, it cannot help it. Whatever be the response of the person on which it turns, it flows and flows irrespective of whether he is aware of it or not. We have seen it in action hundreds of times with the Mother. What then is this Love? How does it act? Why is it so powerful?

We get striking answers to these questions in the latest series of Mother’s Letters issued under the title White Roses (III series).

“Love is the source”, the Mother says, “of the Universe and the Power that at once unites the manifestation in itself and with its creator.” “When I speak of Love, it is always of the Lord’s Love which manifests only in
Truth.” And what is Truth? “The Lord’s will is the Truth in everything and everywhere always.” So it is the Love of the Supreme that is aflow everywhere like ether and makes all progress possible. Only it is not palpable to the grosser sensibility of men. But it is concretely manifest in the Mother, making its unmistakable impact wherever She turns Her gaze.

How does She pour this great Love? On whom? Has she preferences? Is She affected by the opinions or thoughts of others? Does She frown on our deficiencies and failings? How does She deal with the thousands of natures that come and flock wherever She is? These questions that arise naturally to an enquiring mind are also answered in these pages. The Mother, however, asks us to “read with your heart and you will understand.” For truth, spiritual truth, is many-faceted and cannot be grasped adequately by the reasoning faculty of mind which imposes its own narrow moulds on everything that it approaches. To understand the truth, this mind must fall silent; the intelligence in the heart wakes up and it comprehends what is offered to it. As She puts it: “The Truth is not always what we think it to be and the ways of the Lord are innumerable.” And further: “Nobody knows the exact truth of things here. And each one speaks as if he knows, but in fact nobody knows. If the Truth were revealed one day to all, most of the people here, like everywhere, would be terrified by the enormity of their ignorance and of their wrong interpretations.”

First, here is Her assurance to everyone who looks up to Her for help to reach the supreme goal: “I will always do exactly what is needed to make you realise the Divine Truth and Love.” One shall not allow the existence of defects in nature to form a veil between the Mother and one-
self. For, "I am not looking at defects but at possibilities." One has to increase the awareness of the positive side instead of being obsessed with the negative. In Her dealings, She is guided not by what others say or do: "As for what people say to me, you can be quite at ease. I believe only what the Lord tells me." She has no likes and dislikes. There is "only the clear vision of what helps to come closer to the Divine and what does not; and this does not go by fixed rules, for each person and at each moment this can change." She does not impose: "Every body is free." She does not demand and yet gives what they seek. "Those who do not tell everything do not do so, because they prefer to decide themselves what they will do, and they write only to get protection for what they are doing."

How can anyone express gratitude to Her? She replies: "Be filled with the Divine's happiness; it is the best way of making me happy." She gives so much of Herself to those who come to Her, so much identified is She with them, that every action of theirs has its repercussions on Her. "In each and everyone of my children, whenever they think, speak or act under the impulse of falsehood, it acts on my body like a blow."

The Mother always goes straight to the root of the matter. She never pays attention to the details that crowd on the surface. To realise the Divine is the first aim. How to set about it? Naturally to get aware of Him first within ourselves. How to do it? "Go deep, very deep down in the silence of your heart, and you will find the Lord there radiant and merciful." How to feel His constant presence? "Peace in the storm, Calm in the effort, Joy in the surrender, a luminous Faith and you will become aware of the Lord's constant Presence." To be aware of Him is not enough. One must act according to His Will, and for that one must know
what is that Will. The way to know it is given: "To know what the Lord wills is the supreme wisdom. This can happen only in perfect silence of the mind." The Will reveals itself to the waiting soul in Silence.

It is a universal experience that when one takes to the higher life and becomes more and more conscious, it is only one’s deficiencies that stare in the face and bring depression in their trail. But that is the wrong way, the Mother points out. "To become aware of one’s deficiencies is a sign of great progress and the door opens on the road to success in sadhana. So rejoice and keep confidence all is well."

Similarly with difficulties. There is a yogic way of meeting them which takes the sting out of the difficulties and turns them into opportunities. "If we look at troubles as the most effective way to make us progress, then they lose their bitterness and they become easy to bear. And when we know how to call the Lord in all circumstances to make Him share in all the events of our life, then life becomes an Ananda because He covers all with his delight!" "When difficulties come it is to teach us to be peaceful and even cheerful in spite of everything." "Difficulties are the sign of possibilities. So they must not upset us. To remain quiet and confident is the best way to make them pass away quickly." Also, "Never forget that the greater the difficulties the greater also our possibilities. It is only those who have great capacities and a big future who meet with great obstacles and hardships." "The more there are difficulties the more you can be sure that the Lord is pulling you towards Himself as quickly as you can possibly go." "There is only one way out of all difficulties—but it is a sure one. Keep your faith intact and living like a shining flame." There is always help from the Divine when one is confronted with difficulties. The Mother assures, "The help from the
Lord is proportionate to the difficulties." And She adds, "He is always there, close to those who suffer and feel lonely; ready to welcome them and give them the supreme Comfort of His Love." Only one must have endurance. "The more we endure the more Force and the Love of the Lord are with us and the greater is the joy of the Victory." "We must be more enduring than the opposition and all obstacles will disappear." One must put trust in Her word: "Everything will come in due time; the true Power knows how to wait." The endurance is supported by faith in the certainty of help and victory. "With faith and confidence even the endurance becomes easy."

That brings us to the question of Faith which is indispensable in spiritual life. The conditions of the world are such and the human limitations are so ubiquitous that faith is a must. "If there were no falsehood all around, there would be no need of faith because everybody would live spontaneously in the truth. It is with ardent and constant Faith that we fight falsehood."

Faith must be complemented by sincerity, otherwise it remains inactive. What is sincerity? "The whole being in all its parts and all its activities wants only the Divine, aspires only for the Divine."

Naturally all this means the filling of the whole of life with the aspiration and inner effort. "Yoga is sufficient to fill a whole life if it is done seriously." Once this is done, every circumstance, every event reveals itself to be full of significance. "It is at each instant of our life that the Lord saves us so wonderfully and so simply that in our blindness we do not even know it. It is only when we remain quietly in his arms, untouched by what comes from the others that we can see and feel His wonderful protection." We see that
"The Lord arranges our lives for the best of our souls and His wisdom is infinite and perfect."

Each act is to be turned towards the Divine; the life-movement must cease to revolve round the ego, but flow towards the Divine. "To realise the Divine and be united with the Divine, you must lose your ego. If you dissociate from the ego, you will no longer feel miserable and soon you will become aware of your soul—and then you will always be aware of the Divine Grace and its quiet happiness." The impulse must be from within. "If we want our consecration to the Divine to be total and perfect, it must be unconditioned and independent of all circumstances." It must be the urge of love to consecrate: "The true condition is to be absorbed in an all-embracing love for the Divine. Consecration is indeed meditation in action. The Mother makes a revealing statement: "Never do I sit in meditation there is no time and no necessity for it. Because it is not through meditation that one gives oneself to the Divine, it is through consecration and surrender—and it is through all activities of life that consecration and surrender are to be made."

And there are so many other topics touched upon, subjects that are at once topical and of eternal moment to the aspirant.

What is the ideal attitude of one who seeks for the Divine? It is in the spirit of this prayer: "O my beloved Lord, let Thy Will be done, Thy Will alone without any resistance or opposition, Thy Will—is our happiness and our security." Only so can one have "The Light, the Peace and the Love of the Lord always." "The peace in your heart, light in your mind and the joy of the Divine's Presence in all your being."

If that be the attitude towards the Divine from above, towards life around the attitude must be governed by the
knowledge that "material things ought not to be the cause of happiness or unhappiness. To be one with the soul is the only way of being constantly happy; all the rest is of little importance." "The only way to pass through, is love and a smile!" Relations with friends, people in general is an important point. On this the Mother lays down: "One can have a quiet and harmonious relation with all those whom one knows, a relation that exists only in the Lord." "It is the Lord who creates the friendships. It is the Lord who ends the friendships; it is the Lord who makes us lonely to make us ready for this everlasting Friendship; when we are ready for it all loneliness disappears and we become constantly aware of His soothing Presence which dismisses all loneliness." And one more guiding line: "I shall say from the Truth's point of view there is nothing superior or inferior. The Lord alone is and only that which consciously expresses Him constantly is true."

How is the seeker to face calumny, hostility? "There is only one remedy; it is not to listen to people when they begin to gossip and pay no attention to what they say. Never to be affected by all this talk—not to mind a bit what people say or do not say. Never answer to what they say. Never utter a word when you feel angry. And to be able to do that there is one way: think of the Divine, take refuge in the Divine, surrender all, your life, your feelings, your friends and your enemies, all and everything, to the Divine."

For one who wants to serve the Divine, it is necessary that he maintains perfect health of body and mind. How to keep whole health? "For health the most important is an inner calm and peace that are not affected by the outer circumstance." "Almost all of the physical troubles have their cause in an inner disorder. Get the inside quiet all right and everything will be all right."
Fatigue is common in active life. But it is not due to physical exertion as generally thought. "The fatigue comes from inner tension and restlessness, not from physical work. If we keep quiet in our mind and vital we are never tired."

Among other subjects on which Mother has made thought-provoking remarks is prophesies. "People are fond of prophesies, but I refuse to make any because, in order to be understood by the human mind, they limit the Truth and make it narrow."

On occultism. "In the night during sleep, it is with the subconscious that you get in touch and you get upset by all the fears accumulated there; this has to be cleared off before you can safely do any occultism. The first thing to achieve is to overcome the fears." "Each teacher of occultism has his own theory and declares that it is the most ancient teaching and tradition. In each teaching there is something true based on personal experiences and also something very relative which is the product of mental theories and additions."

Soul relation. "A lasting relation between souls is the cause of their meeting in life, but not necessarily are they tied together and have the same destiny."

India's destiny. "India ought to be the spiritual leader of the world; inside she has the capacity but outside......for the moment there is still much to do for her to become actually the spiritual leader of the world."

There is a confident note in all the utterances of the Mother. Who can fail to be thrilled by her call: "Keep the certitude of the final Victory constantly present in your mind and the way will be much shorter.

The final Victory is already there, present in the Lord, waiting for the earth to become aware of it."
TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI* covers the period from May 1935 to April 1939, and gives a detailed account of the talks that took place between Bhagavan Sri Ramana and the multitude of visitors who called on him. They throw ample light on the several aspects of his teaching and its bearings on life in general. They also reveal the many-sided personality of the sage: the Jnani and Teacher handling abstruse philosophical problems with masterful facility; the Bhakta whose being melts at the very mention of the Lord; the man who has always a tender look for the uninhibited child as for the little sparrow whose nest has been dislodged by an enthusiastic attendant. We come across in these pages, the great compassion of God for man so tellingly illustrated in the tear drop gathering in the eye of Bhagavan when a casual visitor takes leave with a heart full of sobs; we also see man’s exploitation of God in the picture of the Bhagavan on the hills sitting in the open shivering with cold, but unperturbed at the Andhra devotee who comes without notice, breaks a cocoanut and pours the cold cocoanut water on his head in order to get the merit of abhisheka.

The central teaching around which all the talks revolve is of self-enquiry. The Reality is within oneself. What passes for the ‘I’ is only a shadow in the form of the ego. By a process of analysis of this ‘I’, it is possible to go deeper and deeper within the recesses of one’s being and arrive at the Self which is the source of all. This Self is One. By awakening to the Self within oneself one becomes conscious of one’s identity with the same Self in others. To withdraw the consciousness from outward preoccupations and direct it

* Pub. Sri Ramanasramam.
inward till it reaches its base in the heart is the main technique in this teaching.

This heart, however, is not to be confused with the physical heart. "The physical organ is on the left; but the Heart of which I speak is non-physical and is only on the right side. It is my experience, no authority is required by me. Still you can find confirmation in a Malayalam Ayurvedic book and in Sita Upanishad". Bhagavan quotes from the Ecclesiastes, "the wise man’s heart is at the right hand and a fool’s heart is at the left." The Maharshi repeatedly refers, in this connection, to an interesting extract from the Modern Psychological Review which states: "The dynamical centre of the heart is on the right and not on the left, whereas the physical organ is on the left". Nothing can be more definitive than the personal experience of the sage on the matter: "I had been saying all along that the Heart centre was on the right, notwithstanding the refutation by some learned men that physiology taught them otherwise. I speak from experience. I knew it even in my home during my trances. Again during the incident related in the book of Self-Realisation I had a very clear vision and experience. All of a sudden a light came from one side erasing the world vision in its course until it spread all round when the vision of the world was completely cut out. I felt the muscular organ on the left had stopped work; I could understand that the body was like a corpse, that the circulation of blood had stopped and the body became blue and motionless. Vasudeva Sastri embraced the body, wept over my death, but I could not speak. All the time I was feeling that the Heart centre on the right was working as well as ever. This state continued 15 or 20 minutes. Then suddenly something shot out from the right to the left resembling a rocket bursting in air. The blood circulation was resumed and normal condition restored. I then asked
Vasudeva Sastri to move along with me and we reached our residence."

While it is true that all is effected in the inner life by the Grace, it is also true that without practice no progress is possible. Until, it is pointed out, the fundamental realisation is established, practice is necessary. Is solitude necessary? asks Mr. Evans-wentz. Answer: "Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind; such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in a forest, but still be unable to control his mind; he cannot be said to be in solitude. Solitude is a function of the mind. A man attached to desire cannot get solitude wherever he may be; a detached man is always in solitude." Is mouna, silence, necessary? "Mouna is not closing the mouth. It is that state which transcends speech and thought." How to achieve it? "Hold some concept firmly and trace it back. By such concentration silence results. When practice becomes natural it ends in silence. Meditation without mental activity is silence."

Is a Master necessary for realisation? "The realisation is the result of the Master's Grace more than teaching, lectures, etc. They are only secondary aids, whereas the former is the primary and essential cause." Where to find him? "The Master is within. Meditation is meant for the removal of ignorance, of the wrong idea that he is without." The value of association with the enlightened, satsanga, is emphasised: "The mind comes under control spontaneously in the presence of a superior power."

Which posture (asana) is the best? What are the effects of tiger skin, deer skin etc.? "Any asana, possibly sukha asana (easy posture) or the half-Buddha position." "The skins correspond to conductors and non-conductors of magnetism etc. But it is all immaterial for the path of
knowledge. Posture really means location and steadfastness in the Self. It is internal.” What about japa? “Mental japa is very good. That helps meditation. Mind gets identified with the repetition and then you get to know what worship really is—the losing of one’s individuality in that which is worshipped.” Is the Name important? Yes, “God’s name is effective. Repetition of the name is a remembrance of what it signifies.” Can any name or mantra be picked up casually and repeated with benefit? No, replies the sage, it must be received from an adept who gives the mantra according to the competence of the seeker.

A mild form of pranayama is recommended for those who are restless by nature. “Pranayama may be done just a little. To watch the breath is one way of doing it. The mind extracted from other activities is engaged in watching the breath. That controls the breath; and in its turn the mind is controlled.”

Brahmacharya in this context is not merely physical celibacy. “Brahmacharya is living in Brahman. It has no connection with celibacy as commonly understood. A real Brahmachari, that is one who lives in Brahman, finds bliss in Brahman which is the same as the Self.” Similarly a Brahmmin is not one who is merely born in the class known by that name. “A Brahmmin is one who has realised Brahman. Such a one has no sense of individuality in him.”

Dhyana is indispensable in this path. “Concentrating on one thought, all other thoughts disappear; finally that thought also disappears. It is necessary to be aware while controlling thoughts otherwise it will lead to sleep.”

Breath-Control may be used as a support for dhyana. “While doing it mechanically take care to be alert in mind and remember the ‘I’ and seek its source. Then you will
find it that where breath sinks, there the ‘I thought’ arises. They sink and rise together. The I—thought also will sink along with breath. Simultaneously, another luminous and infinite ‘I’ ‘I’ will become manifest which will be continuous and unbroken. That is the goal.”

But there are obstacles and they are: “Ignorance which is forgetfulness of one’s pure being; Doubt which consists in wondering if even the experience was of the Real or of the unreal; Error which consists in the ‘I am the body’ idea, and thinking that the world is real. These are overcome by hearing the truth, reflection on it and concentration.”

Regarding the wavering of the mind, the Maharshi observes it is “a weakness arising from the dissipation of its energy in the shape of thoughts. When one makes the mind stick to one thought the energy is conserved, and the mind becomes stronger.”

The seeker is greeted with many new experiences once he steps on the inner path. One is apt to mistake many of these to be indications of great advancement. There is plenty in these observations to put one on guard. “Horripilation, sobbing voice, joyful tears etc. are symptoms of exceedingly subtle modes of mind (pratis).”

Speaking of the Light of the Self, the Maharshi explains: “The sunlight is insentient (jada). You are aware of it. It makes objects perceptible and chases away darkness whereas consciousness is that Light which makes not only light but also darkness perceptible. Darkness cannot exist before sunlight, but it can remain in the Light of consciousness.” That is to say, spiritual light pin-points the areas of darkness within oneself.

Further there is a warning on nada. “Nada helps concentration. After it is felt the practice should not be made
an end in itself. Nada is not the objective; the subject should firmly be held, otherwise a blank will result. Nada upasana is good; it is better if it is associated with vichara. In that case the nada is made up of chinmaya and also tanmaya.”

Making interesting remarks on swoon, sleep, death, the Maharshi states: “sleep is sudden and overpowers the person forcibly. A faint is slower and there is a tingle of resistance kept up. Realisation is possible in a faint and impossible in sleep.” Regarding the state just before death: “When a person gasps for breath it indicates that he is unconscious of this body; another body has been held and the person swings to and fro. While gasping there is a more violent gasp at intervals and that indicates the oscillations between the two bodies due to the present attachment not having been completely snapped.”

Apart from matters connected directly with the quest of the Self there is a variety of topics on which the Maharshi throws helpful light.

Disappearance of the body: “The gross body is only the concrete form of the subtle stuff—the mind. When the mind melts away and blazes forth as light, the body is consumed in that process. Manickkavasagar is one of those whose body finally resolved itself in blazing light, without leaving a corpse behind. Nandanar is another...The subtle body is composed of light and sound and the gross body is a concrete form of the same.”

Spiritual animation: (Apropos the report that St. Theresa was devoted to a figure of the Madonna which became animated to her sight and she was in bliss. Was it shakti pata?) “The animated figure indicates depth of meditation (dhyana bala). Shakti pata prepares the mind for introversion. There is a process of concentration of mind on one’s own shadow which in due course becomes animated and answers
questions put to it. That is due to the strength of mind or depth of meditation."

*Mouna-silence*: "Mouna is the utmost eloquence. Peace is utmost activity. How? Because the person remains in his essential nature and so he permeates all the recesses of the Self. Thus he can call up any power into play. That is the highest siddhi."

*Rercolletion of past births*: "There is a class of people who want to know all about their future or their past. They ignore the present. The load from the past forms the present misery. The attempt to recall the past is mere waste of time...God in his mercy has withheld this knowledge."

*Symbolism of arati and vibhuti*: "Karpara arati is symbolic of the burning away of the mind by the light of illumination, vibhuti is Shiva and kumkuma is Shakti. Vibhuti is of two kinds: para vibhuti and aparva vibhuti. The sacred ashes are of the latter class. The para is what remains after all the dross has been burnt away by the Fire of realisation."

There is much else besides. Especially fascinating are portions which refer to the reminiscences of the sage. His answers to the special Court Commission which held its session in the Ashram for ascertaining certain facts arising from a suit filed by interested parties, are a model of precision and truth in action. The Maharshi’s powers of observation are famous. Witness for instance his study of the colony of white ants: "While living on the hill he had seen a hut built of stones and mud and roofed with thatch. There was constant trouble with white ants. The roof was pulled down and the walls demolished to get rid of the mud which harboured the ants. Sri Bhagavan saw that the hollows protected by stones were made into towns. These were skirted by walls plastered black, and there were
roads to neighbouring cities which also similarly skirted with black plastered walls. The roads were indicated by these walls. The interior of the town contained holes in which ants used to live. The whole wall was thus tenanted by white ants which ravaged the roofing materials above."

While reading this book one is inevitably tempted to compare it with another work in the field on the same subject, *Day by day with Bhagavan*, and note the tremendous difference between the two. While the latter breathes a spontaneity of the Spirit and brings the picture of Bhagavan to the eye and almost reaches his voice, the book under study now reads more like a philosophical treatise. The intellectual mould of the recorder is stamped on almost every page; each statement is presented with philosophical frills; the intimacy of the Godman is overshadowed by the loftiness of the Jnanin.
RAMDAS SPEAKS*

In this account of the talks of Swami Ramdas in Europe during the first ten days of his world-tour, we have an exposition of the philosophy and practice of God-life at first hand. For in every discussion with his callers Swamiji proceeds from his own experience and not on the basis of Sastras. The questions asked are of various kinds, some of them embarrassingly personal but he is unruffled and answers from his poise in the Divine Love which is more real to him than anything else in the world.

When he set out on his tour he made it clear that he was not going abroad as a teacher but as a servant of God, God in Humanity. The essential problem of the world, he said, is the problem of disharmony and that can be solved only by each one realising the source of all harmony in oneself, the Divine who is the same in all. Once this Divine seated in the heart of each one is realised there is an automatic recognition of the same Divine in others and there is a spontaneous flow of Love on the world. There are many ways of realising the Divine, but the easiest, says Ramdas, is the Way of Love. And of this way the adoration of the Name is the key. The Name, the mantra of the Name, to be fruitful must be received from a Guru and not just picked up from a book; only when communicated by one who has already realised the truth of that Name in himself, is the mantra effective. Along with the word, the power of the Guru passes to the seeker.

Not all, however, are attracted to the path of nama-japa. There are many – especially in the West – who are interested in the Kundalini Yoga and some of the pages in this book

are devoted to questions on that topic. To take up just one interesting reply: “When the Kundalini is roused by the contact of a saint, a desire for God—realisation springs up in the person. When the Kundalini comes to any one centre, certain peculiar symptoms are visible in him. From the Muladhara when it rises to the Svadhishthana Chakra, the aspirant develops dispassion for worldly objects and enjoyments. When it reaches the Manipura, it is said that the man rejects everything relating to the enjoyment of his senses and his mind becomes more and more resolute upon getting at the Divine. When it comes to the heart centre, the Anahata, he develops one-pointed devotion to God, and love and compassion for all the creatures in the world. Whenever he sees suffering he cannot bear it and strives to alleviate it. His heart melts at the distress of others. When the Kundalini reaches the Vishuddhi Chakra, at the throat, the aspirant is averse to talking about anything but God. From there it reaches the Ajna Chakra between the eyebrows, and he sees visions of divine forms, lights and flashes. When it reaches the highest Chakra, the Sahasrara, at the crown of the head, the aspirant loses consciousness of the body and goes into Nirvikalpa Samadhi, in which he realises that he and God are one.”

Among the many hints and warnings to the seeker given by Swami Ramdas is his note on Pranayama. Pranayama, regulation of the breath in the prescribed manner, promotes calmness of mind and purifies the nādis. But when it is done wrongly or for longer periods than advisable, it “tells upon the brain” and people go even mad. The practice must not be done except under the guidance of a teacher. Otherwise, “Heart palpitation, lung diseases, mental derangement, consumption and such diseases await the person.” Secondly, Pranayama is a means of purification and mind control, it does not by itself lead to God. Speaking of his
own experience in the matter, he notes: "Mere practice of Pranayama will not enable you to realise God. It can keep your mind still for some time, but the desires lurking within can never be destroyed by Pranayama. You can attain some amount of concentration, but this is not an end in itself. The veil of ignorance that has clouded the soul has to be destroyed. The grace of the Guru is necessary for that, as also continuous meditation on the Reality within you, Ramdas himself tried Pranayama for six months. He found that its effect on the mind was a deadening blow by which the mind became perfectly blank and still. It was an experience of dryness, complete blankness. This is not an advisable state as in that state you have to abandon all work and sit silent like one who has nothing to do. He was sitting like a statue. He therefore stopped the practice."

Equally important is his injunction to be loyal to the Guru who is chosen for you by God. "Guru is the representative of God on earth. Why should one go from Guru to Guru? One Guru will do. Guru stands for God on earth. As you have accepted the guidance of one, it is better to cling to him. Guru never dies. He may not be alive in body. The body is not the Guru. The Guru can inspire you even after he drops the body." It is all right to go from person to person—drawing honey from flower to flower as has been described by some—as long as you are still feeling your way. But once you have chosen your path, it is indispensable to stick to the Inspiration that has put you on the path and guides you thereon.

To conclude with a few more of his observations:

Fear keeps one away from God, Love takes near.
Separation from God is sin. To be united with Him is virtue.
God-realisation does not mean disappearing into some unknown realm beyond the world. True spirituality consists in our living in this world, moving in it and serving all beings, all the time being conscious of the Divine within us and everywhere around us.
MAHESH YOGI

Few contemporary figures have been subject to so much controversy as Sri Mahesh Yogi. His rise to fame in the West was as sudden as the decline in his popularity. Much has been said and written favourably and otherwise, of the person and his 'transcendental meditation'. Celebrities of the show-world in the West gave a wholly artificial boost to the movement, but it was temporary. Surely there must be some truth in the whole thing however deformed it may have got in its expression. The present book*, containing several accounts written by competent men and women who have had first hand contact with the Yogi and in some way participated in his movement, gives a good deal of information and help to the reader to form judgment.

Of all the radio, television and magazine write-ups included in these pages, the paper by James Crenshaw of Los Angeles is perhaps the most balanced and convincing. Rightly he sets aside the question of the personality of the Yogi as less important than the method of his 'Meditation'. He complains that the core of the method is in experience and as such cannot be communicated in words. But the method has been so effective in giving peace and contentment to the practitioners that many in the West have discarded the psychodelic drugs that are so popular these days to promote 'expanded awareness'; many have felt their energy-potential extended; some more in tune with universal nature. What then is this method of meditation? From all accounts given in these papers, one gathers that the Guru receives the seeker, ascertains his nature and need, communicates to him a mantra which is in

affinity to his temperament and equipment. Thereafter the disciple lets his mind dwell upon the mantra, at fixed hours of the day (twice a day, for half an hour each or so). The mental thoughts are gradually drawn around the mantra; the sound vibrations are followed with attention; a gradual transition takes place in the consciousness. The mind withdraws from the grosser thought-levels to the subtler ranges of consciousness—to the 'source of thought' as is put here—and one experiences a state of calm which, by practice, deepens into a condition of bliss.

This is all that can be said in words. But why cannot everybody do it? Can any one choose a mantra, or have a mantra chosen for him and be sure of arriving at this result if he meditates upon it? We are told one must not even concentrate or control the mind in this technique. The mind falls in the right poise by itself. How?

The secret, indeed, is in the principle of initiation. When the Guru communicates the mantra, he also transmits something of his own spiritual energy, tapas-force, that has accumulated in him, either as a result of the initiation and help received by him from his own Master, or the fruit of his own inner effort or simply by Divine Grace. Whatever the reason, he is in a position to pass on a spark of his spiritual force which works out the sadhana, leads the mind and the being in the intended way to the destined goal. The disciple has only to surrender himself inwardly to this power—whether in the form of mantra or image or any other way—and to the extent he does so, keeps himself attuned to its vibrations, he progresses and realises. All the writers in the book seem to have missed this important and basic truth of the technique.

The Maharshi is obviously in a position to give this initiation. Contrary to all that is claimed by the enthusiastic fans, there is no departure here of a fundamental type from
the ancient Indian tradition. The novel features are in more or less inconsequential things like diet, habits etc. It is a pity that such a sound movement to promote calm and happiness in the mind of man has got befogged in the mists of the typically western exaggerations of surface details.

The book deserves to be read by all who seek to know the current tendencies in the western society, including the phenomena of the ‘hippies’, L.S.D. etc.
EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) is one of the tallest figures in the civilisation that has grown and is growing in America. He spoke for the common man, the dignity of life, the oneness of Mankind in God. He perceived, experienced and called upon all to awaken to the one stream of Life-Power that is unending and potential in every being. Life, he said, is a Banquet and the Host is none other than the Divine. Participate fully, largely, deeply. Do you look for friends? "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

With all his physical infirmities, depressing social and economic circumstances, he went on heroically spreading cheer and hope among the downtrodden, alarm and dismay in the narrow bigotted and entrenched interests of the Church and society. He thought deeply, wrote profusely, spoke movingly and created a new tradition which is aptly called the "American Gospel".

*The Gospel of Emerson* a handy little book - containing the cream of this thinking is a stimulating introduction to the Seer who realised and preached the unity of man, nature and God.

"The highest revelation", he writes "is that God is in every man."

"The life of the soul in conscious union with the Infinite shall be for thee the only real existence."

What is the soul? "... the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but

* By NEWTON DILLAWAY, UNITY BOOKS, Lee's Summit, Missouri, (U.S.A.)
uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie,—an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all."

Life is a continual revelation: "No truth so sublime but it may be trivial tomorrow in the light of new thoughts. People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them."

Further, "The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force of truth of the individual soul."

"Man's life is a progress, and not a station." There is no gulf in this vision between the world and the Divine. "I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real, and in the impenetrable mystery which hides (and hides through absolute transparency) the mental nature, I await the insight which our advanced knowledge of material laws shall furnish.

"Once men thought Spirit divine, and Matter diabolic; one Ormuzd, the other Ahriman. Now science and philosophy recognize the parallelism, the approximation, the unity of the two: how each reflects the other as face answers to face in a glass: nay, how the laws of both are one, or how one is the realization. We are learning not to fear truth." (P. 56)

The book is full of epigrams. To cite a few:

The religion that is afraid of science dishonours God and commits suicide.
Heaven always bears some proportion to earth.
The only sin is limitation.
Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar.
The way to mend the bad world is to create the right world.

One feels in great company in reading these pages.
THE GITA

Based upon his popular discourses, this monumental work of Swami Somanathananda on the Bhagavadgita* strikes a line of its own in as much as it is not a philosophical exposition of the doctrines enunciated in the text, not an attempt to justify any particular religious faith in the context of the Gita, but a sincere exploration of the help offered by the Scripture to the seeker of God whatever be his path. As Swamiji observes in his scholarly introduction, the Gita is valuable to us for the eternal spiritual truths it enshrines, truths that have relevance to man at all stages, in all ages. Local and temporary elements - which are, however, too few to merit mention - can be safely ignored and the whole inspired Poem understood in terms of its spiritual contents which have a perennial appeal.

The author raises a number of pertinent questions in his prefatory writing and it is well to follow him in his answers for the reader gets to know, thereby, the approach and the spirit in which the exposition of the seven hundred verses is made. Was the Gita a part of the original Epic or was it a later secretion? Rightly it its answered that the Gita is an integral part of the scheme of the Mahabharata, Did Sri Krishna reply in so many verses on the battlefield when the hosts were ready to strike? Obviously the instruction was not given in the very language and very words in which the Gita speaks to us today. As the commentator Sridhara states, Poet Vyasa has developed the purport of the Teaching in his own way so as to suit the mentality of the coming humanity. Throughout there is the impress of one strong hand.

* Gitabhasadhare By Somanathananda, Pub. Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Mysore.
What about Krishna? Was he a historical figure? Is the Krishna of the Mahabharata the same as the Krishna of the Bhagavat? Swamiji cites relevant evidence from the ancient lore, from inscriptions and from the accounts of Greek travellers, to affirm the historicity of Sri Krishna. Be that as it may, continues the author, does it really matter whether such a historical figure lived and whether he is the same as the Godhead worshipped as an Avatar down the ages? As long as his Name is a power, his message a living Force that moves countless men to peaks of spiritual realisation, these questions have only an academic value. That there has been a divine Manifestation in the form of Sri Krishna in the history of the spiritual evolution of Earth is an incontestable fact, verifiable even today by those who take the appropriate steps by way of sadhana to make the Truth of this Avatar real to themselves.

For Sri Krishna was an Avatar and his place in the line of the major Avatars that have led the Earth Godward from its nescient beginnings is fixed. The Avatarhood of Sri Krishna or the general Doctrine of Avatar is a fact that cannot be denied by anyone who accepts the scheme of spiritual evolution, of the possibility of the growth of man into divinity. It is not, as the author concedes, a concession to the weak, to the ignorant, who need some such staff before they can walk. The truth of Avatar is a pivotal part of the Message of the Gita.

The author draws attention to the profound significance given in the Gita to the institutions of Yajna, Chaturvarnya, the concepts of Surrender, Grace, and the science of Yoga. The whole of the work is, in a deeper sense, a treatise on Yoga. Here Yoga branches out into number of disciplines, each suited to a particular temperament and nature, and all of them are treated as sure Paths leading to the Supreme.
The writer is particularly convincing in his exposition of the necessity of personal effort in sadhana till the ego-nature is transcended and one is able to truly surrender oneself to the Divine. It is only thereafter that all can be left to the Grace. Indeed, the Grace is always active: at first behind the veil impelling the effort and thereafter directly assuming all the burden of the sadhaka.

There is an understandable emphasis on practice, abhyasa. The Teacher speaks of abhyasa yoga. Abyasa, it is pointed out, is repeated effort to control the nature, a willed self-assertion against distracting movements. Sri Aurobindo says somewhere that one must be more obstinate than the difficulty; then it weakens and crumbles. Abyasa, concentrated and determined practice is indispensable in yoga, at any rate till the nature accepts the Ideal and consents to collaborate in its realisation.
IV
MISCELLANY
Question: Simple minded people, people, devoid of any endowment either of mind or otherwise, are sometimes recipients of Divine Grace for totally different reasons. Lack of basic human endowments too is no bar for Grace; but it may not lead to spiritual growth taking any formed direction.

Answer: Grace does not depend upon deserts. It would not be Grace otherwise. It flows at the will of the Divine. It is upto the human recipient to profit by the gift or to waste the opportunity. It often happens that due to lack of sufficient aspiration or other equipment man fails to avail himself of the Grace in his current embodiment. But the action of the Grace continues in the subsequent births.

Question: That fellowmen should receive the Grace is purely a human desire; that Divinity should fulfil itself in the field that is man is still the same thing; silent communion with the Divine is the only permissible attitude for the aspirant. And such a communion is not possible as long as the last vestige of the physical mind is active.

Answer: To want the Divine to fulfil itself in humanity is a step higher than to want one’s fellowmen to benefit by the Grace.

Communion with the Divine need not wait till the physical or vital mind falls silent. It is possible to have and build up the communion with the central part that aspires for the Divine and is given to it.

To submit all wishes and wants to the Divine Will and wait upon it in trustful surrender is the best attitude.

Question: To realise oneness, silence is a pre-requisite. Are there other pre-requisites too?
Answer: And aspiration. One must seek for the Oneness in the multitude; expect to glimpse it. This subconscious seeking opens the doors and the experience glides in. The aspiration inclines the nature into the proper attitude of receptivity to that particular Truth.

Question: It is true in theory that any man's inner progress is totally a function of his own actions. It little depends upon what others are or do to him. Is it equally true in utter practicality of the outer conditions?

Answer: One's progress is a result of one's action and reaction—helped by the sustaining and uplifting grace (in the spiritual context). Outer circumstances are only an occasion to test the degree of the progress made and, if fully utilised, a means to confirm it.

Question: Man's compromises help him to survive at the level of life where compromise is made. But it stifles progress beyond that level. All progress issues out of uncompromising adherence to the Truth at the next higher level of existence.

Answer: Compromises can only be half-way houses to rest and regroup one's resources before the next spurt is made. Otherwise they mark the stage of arrest in progress.

Question: No man can share the highest knowledge he has. What he can give to others is at best a shade lower than what he has attained.

Answer: True, as things are, expression reduces the intensity of the Truth expressed. It is only in the Truth-consciousness of the supramental that what is expressed is an exact reproduction of the knowledge.

Question: Rama and Krishna had not desisted from employing a ruse when found useful.
Answer: They had come to fulfil certain cosmic purposes in the field of evolution dominated by infra-human and other hostile elements who had to be met on their own grounds. The means had to be in their own terms; strength met by greater strength, stratagem by stratagem. Powers natural and appropriate to different orders of existence cannot be normally used in totally different conditions. For instance, the principle of non-violence cannot hold good on our physical plane where the law is one of struggle—violent if necessary.

Question: An Avatar’s words are left to the world more as a medium to get into his consciousness than as intellectual knowledge.

Answer: It is the disciples that erect the intellectual system. What the Avatar gives is a direct revelation of the Divine Truth in a language proper to human understanding. Undoubtedly it serves for all times as an unfailing channel for the flow of the consciousness that was manifest in that Avatar.

Question: There is a period in history when nations need to be ruled by a strong man whatever consciousness he represents. Such periods are generally periods of abject survival as well as periods of consolidation.

Answer: Usually strong men appear during the crises and a team of men of collective strength to consolidate the gains afterwards.

Question: People who have never taken a full round decision in life, when faced with a situation that mercilessly calls for decision-making, would rather lay down their lives than bring themselves to deciding.

Answer: If the soul is awakened, then whatever the hesitation of the surface being, the inner being meets the challenge with its own decision.
Question: There is a stage of purity in Yoga when a mere thought of falsehood causes as great a fall as a heinous crime for the social being.

Answer: Yes, it is so. Falsity in thought is as repulsive to the awakened men as falsehood in speech.

Question: Loyalty to Guru is an article of faith in the tradition; but loyalty to God is greater still. Is there any contradiction here?

Answer: Loyalty to the Guru because he represents, to the disciple, the Divine. The relation continues as long as the Guru continues to represent, to function as the channel between the Divine and the disciple. There is thus no contradiction because all along it is the Divine in the Guru that claims the loyalty.

Question: In what measure is publicity permissible for a Yoga like ours?

Answer: Publicity to the extent that is necessary to put our weight, the weight of the higher Ideal and the practice to realise it, in the balance of the world-forces. This is a positive Force of reclamation and should be promoted in the life-arena by all means available. But it shall not be weakened by indiscriminate propagation and cheap publicity. The Truth must be presented widely so that all who are ready may come to know of it and accept it to their advantage. That is all.

Question: One who indulges in miracles extensively suddenly ceases to do so. It can be due either to loss of power to perform miracles or a realisation of its uselessness.

Answer: Either the occult power is withdrawn or the person undergoes a change by the Higher Grace.
Question: In fighting illness, to what extent is medicine to be necessarily employed?

Answer: To the extent the faith is not complete, to the extent the malady has got hold on the system, especially the physical body. Obstinate physical illnesses usually need some physical means like medicine to serve as an effective instrumentation for the Higher Power.

The faith is not whole unless it is shared by the material body also.

Question: If there is an element of simple mindedness in one it is possible for him to be led to subordinate his otherwise commendable intelligence to his enlightened self-interest.

Answer: That means Vital pushes back the Mental faculties and guards its interests. The mind is not developed enough to hold its position.

Question: There is nothing contemptuous in the world, not even contempt itself. On the other hand, one in Yogic poise must be able to see the Divine behind the contempt and feel the joy of seeing it.

Answer: True, there is nothing contemptible or wholly detestable. Some perversion has given that appearance to a truth of the Divine. Pierce through the apparent and you will spot the concealed truth.

Question: Mechanical recording goes on in the sub-conscious. Observation by the conscious mind is almost always psychological.

Answer: Very much so. The observation of the mind is rarely disinterested. It is always coloured by the likes and dislikes, predisposition.

Question: Interest in others is often not without an element of sympathy for what they are.
Answer: No, no, not at all, at any rate not usually. Interest in others can arise from some self-regarding desire, sub-conscious or half-conscious or fully conscious to exploit them for one’s own purpose. The cloak of sympathy wears thin as time goes by.

Question: Constant remembrance of Mother later leads to the constant Presence in the being.

Answer: Yes, it is so. Each remembrance acts as an invocation and serves to stamp it on the consciousness. Gradually the ground is prepared and it attracts the Presence to stay.

Question: Man acts under the lash but accepts higher knowledge only by soft persuasion. A compromise is always a failure. Use the lash however veiled when action is imperative, but educate under the shelter of the widest freedom.

Answer: Profoundly true.

Question: No moment that is not full of joy and cheer indicating a sense of freedom can really be a moment of the higher consciousness. And such moments are easily possible even amidst oppressive duties or a vitiating social atmosphere.

Answer: Yes, it is so. Only, it need not always be of joy. It can be full of peace, a stillness; it can be full of the dynamism of Will. The consciousness expresses itself in several movements.

Question: Seriousness is sincerity in aspiration. In smaller characters the serious disposition becomes grave; whereas in personalities of vaster resource the seriousness of character does not exhaust the energies but allows a little for being cheerful and happy.

Answer: To be serious is not the same as to be tense. There is actually a conservation of energies in the process;
all energies are summoned and harnessed to the purpose that holds the attention. Dissipation is not allowed. It need not affect the general cheer or happiness. In fact, the effectivity of seriousness is helped if one is in a happy poise.

One need not of course be grave or grim in order to be serious. To be serious means to be earnest and intent. Lesser or different interests are not allowed to distract the main attention.

**Question:** Life is teeming with opportunities for man to progress. Only some greet them as occasions for service or joy, others meet them as difficulties, quarrels and irritations; each according to his need. Wisdom lies in recognising it as an opportunity.

**Answer:** Yes, life is a continual opportunity for growth, for progress, the precise nature of the opportunity depending upon the need of the nature, the kind of experience that is best fitted for the purpose.

**Question:** Spiritual or social movements produce a great leader but he generally leaves no successor because what has to be achieved has been done by him and the rest is only to be worked out. A Jesus or a Gandhi leaves no one behind. A whole movement grows to throw up one leader even as a whole mountain ends in a single peak.

**Answer:** The leader is one because he forms so to say the piercing point of the movement which breaks through all resistance and emerges into full being. Thereafter it is the work of consolidation which is to be necessarily done at several points; this is best done by a line of leadership.

**Question:** It is said people hear the bud opening or the sap rushing up the tree. Is it possible to hear words coming out of another's mind? Perhaps one in silence can hear.
Answer: Yes, it is possible for those whose subtle audition is open. Words in another's mind echo, reverberate in one's own if there is attunement in consciousness and the inner hearing is in action.

Question: Confusion of mind is only the next higher stage to that of having no formed mind.

Answer: Yes, till the mental faculties get organised and regulated around some central principle, chaotic movements are natural. It is a natural stage in formation and growth.

Question: Always it happens that when man, (who has not successfully transformed his nature) rises by the strength of his soul to a much higher level and levels off, he finds his untransformed nature and character asserting themselves even at that higher level.

Answer: Nature is of one piece and its imperfection at any level reflects itself wherever that nature comes into action.

Question: Life at every moment tells man that he needs to go back to the thing he shuns, hates or dreads; and he arrives at his compromises! This is one of the ways of God who insists on man learning the principle of oneness in creation.

Answer: True progress lies in an all-inclusive movement, not exclusive. Exclusion may be a temporary expedient, but one in the evolutionary progression is compelled to take up what was left behind, work it and assimilate it in his experience. All that is offered to experience in life is done with a purpose by the presiding Spirit and it is wisdom to make the proper use of everything. To shun betokens some flaw in the consciousness; what is shunned comes up again and again in order to force the rectification.

Question: One allows one's surface conduct to be unreasonable or even silly in spite of a fairly good inner growth. Does he normally invite a stroke that sets him heart-searching?
Answer: It depends. Often some uneasiness or dryness inside reminds him of the disharmony. If he does not take notice, the soul just withdraws to its inner chamber having no turn to its course.

If the time has come to take a radical turn inward, then some shock or some such rapping may come upon him.

Question: Another acquires almost all the trappings of guruhood and a retinue of disciples without any appreciable inner gain. If such a one has had no call he turns out to be a seasoned hypocrite. In the event of there being a call, however small, a crisis descends on him. How does this crisis present itself? In what shape or form?

Answer: Crisis need not come to him. It depends upon the intensity of the call. If it is a slight call, the soul may prefer to wait for the next life or lives to come before the call gathers strength. Meanwhile, the pseudo-guru prospers or perishes according to the credulity of people or the extent of his own denseness.

Question: When remembrance is constant, presence in the heart becomes possible. With the presence becoming fairly frequent, knowing the Divine Will in one form or another requires but a little effort.

Answer: Quite so. Remembrance leads to presence; awareness of presence leads to awareness of the Divine Will.

Question: Sri Aurobindo says that the human nature and character have arisen out of insconscience. Then, is it true that everything except the soul and its attributes has been fashioned out of insconscience?

Answer: Yes, even the soul is a development from a spark. The spark is from above, the growth from below.

Question: Doubt is the denial of God by mind. How is the acceptance of God by mind expressed in its terms?
Answer: Mental certitude, conviction.

Question: *Is it a long way to realising the Cosmic God having first realised the individual Divine? Is not the order reversed in some cases? In the reverse order how far apart are these two realisations?*

Answer: Once the Divine is found within, the other realisation is easier; it is a question of orientation and time.

Yes, the order can be reversed. I do not see the two realisations are really apart from each other. It is, after all, the same self that you realise in two poises. To realise it in any one status is important; the rest can follow if you seek for it.

Question: *"The vital makes the choice: and the mind justifies it," says Sri Aurobindo. Is it true at least in some cases the mind decides on the choice and the vital goes whole hog to bring it about?*

Answer: Usually the vital’s choice masquerades as the free choice of the mind. But it is possible for man to decide upon a course of action purely on the mental level and throw in his whole weight in the matter. That is not very common, though.

Question: *A young child of four or five is often found kissing Mother’s picture wherever she sees it. How do we understand the child?*

Answer: The soul is awake and has the contact. The picture reminds her of it and she expresses her joy at the meeting.

Question: *What is the previous stage to feeling gratitude to the Divine?*

Answer: Usually consciousness of some lacunae; when it is filled up in any manner there arises a wave of gratitude to the Divine. Even when there is no such need, there can be gratitude; the soil is one of love.
Question: How far one is bound by a promise given during a period of infatuation?

How far a sankalpa made towards an inferior deity binds one after his turning towards Light?

Answer: A promise given under a set of conditions obtaining at the time it was made, is no more binding when the conditions change radically. One is no more bound by a past commitment when one passes into a different stage of growth where that understanding has no relevancy. What is promised in ignorance cannot bind in knowledge.

Of course, it all depends upon the intention; if the intention was sincere, it is perfectly all right. Man moves on and the past cannot bind the future.

Question: When one is in the right and knows it too well, rarely it behoves on him to explain his actions to others.

Answer: Indeed, one does not need to justify. But for those who are earnest and want to know, things can be explained in order to help them grow in the right understanding of life.

Question: To allow oneself to be exploited is no less a crime than exploitation. It comes either due to an illusion about human nature or a guilty conscience.

Answer: I do not think it is always so. Often exploitation of oneself is allowed in the interests of a larger work or for the eventual good of the exploiter who may awaken one day to his wrong and redeem himself.

Question: Normal vision is to subtle vision what newspaper reporting is to a day of world’s life.

Answer: Very well put. It is as superficial, biased, illegitimate generalising and yet serviceable in practice as the newspaper.
Question: The highest form of obedience to the Divine is love.

Answer: It is no more obedience there. It is self-giving in sheer love. Conformity to the other Will is an act of spontaneity.

Question: When an act is initiated with a settled poise in the higher consciousness, the normal rules governing the life circumstances appear to relent, function somewhat exceptionally allowing the act to reach its culmination.

Answer: Yes, it is usually so. The Will that impels is superior to the common circumstances and they fall in line, unless some stray opposing elements rise up to obstruct.

Question: In any organisation, consolidation of gains without a lapse of an interval is as essential as eradication of imperfections detected.

Answer: Consolidation is not complete or not possible fully unless detected imperfections are eliminated.

Question: When the ego subordinates itself to another's ego, it is always for selfish ends.

Answer: Yes, it is a calculated subordination which comes to an end the moment the smaller ego feels itself strong enough to over-ride the other.

Question: The average mind receives all the security and consequent relief in offering conventional obedience to another mind of average capacity embellished with the trappings of either learning or religion. It is a pastmaster in escaping light in whatever guise it touches it, however close it lives with it.

Answer: The average mind seeks security and is always disinclined to exert itself to expand its horizon, to take to adventure. It feels safe in the environs of another of the same kind, with the same wave-length.
Question: Common sense is comprehensive wisdom (at the level in which it is).

Answer: Common sense is a practical intelligence centered around one's immediate interests. It is far from wisdom which comprehends the ultimate interests and relates the immediate to them.

Question: It is perfectly possible to inherit the higher faculties of mind—for instance, clear thinking or right judgement—by a well marked imitation.

Answer: Not by imitation only, but by a certain attunement of being of which similarity of expression may be a sign. When one's consciousness is in rapport with another's in a deeper way, all that constitutes the latter is likely to communicate and form itself in the former.

Question: The loveliness of woman is in its purity akin to the innocence of a child—an expression of the Divine as beauty.

Answer: Beauty, wherever it is, is an expression of the Divine. There is no object that has no beauty of its own, however veiled. The beauty of a woman is indeed a special ray of the aesthetic manifestation of the Divine; but usually in the perception and reception of it by man there is a mixture.

Question: As a mantra when cherished yields up its treasures to the aspirant, Silence, Love, Oneness, etc. also yield themselves to him who cherishes them with love and devotion.

Answer: Indeed they do. Patanjali speaks of Samyama—concentrated dwelling upon a subject—bringing out its concealed contents. Love and adoration is an easier and more pleasing process.

Question: Destiny is that which plants man in circumstances just equal to the ranges of his mind (or soul?).
Answer: Yes, when life is taken up to work out that part of the destiny which is ripe, Providence provides for the instrumentation adequate for the purpose and the conditions appropriate to it.

Question: Can we not be as charitable towards the vital mind (or vital itself) as towards the mind and its ignorance?

Answer: The vital has power; the mind does not have it. That is why the damage that the vital can do is immense. Normally, the extent to which the mind can harm is limited, but not so with the vital. Even without one’s being charitable, the vital cunning has its own ways of exacting indulgence to itself in one form or other.

Question: Absence of a strong will suggests a lower level of consciousness, will being a concentration of consciousness.

Answer: Consciousness has two sides—knowledge and will. In some one is more developed and in others the other. It is not rare to see men of mediocre intelligence having strong will even as we come across highly intelligent people lacking will.

Question: To prevent an aspiring soul from approaching the Divine, is, in effect, to prevent oneself from reaching the Divine.

Answer: Quite so. True aspiration for the Divine always spreads around, ignites the flame in others too without special effort. To block another is a movement of the lower vital, jealousy, ego and where these are rampant real aspiration cannot thrive.

Question: Man can be brilliant in parts but can never claim perfection that is confined to one part of his being.

Answer: For the simple reason that all the parts are inter-connected, interacting and no part can be perfect until all others are perfected. Nothing is perfect till all is perfect.
Question: When man stops initiating wrong doing, similar impulses rear their heads from below and overtake him. Similarly when he stops conscious acts of good, he is moved from behind to acts of good.

Answer: Force of samskaras; the pull of habit is too strong in nature to be terminated abruptly.

Question: For the period when the mind or soul is fully aware, aware of the Divine, the body stops aging.

Answer: Can’t say that. Each has its own accustomed law, Dharma, and unless the consciousness acts directly on the physical body and gets its assent to function according to the higher law, the body will go on its own course. The development of the mind or the soul can only have an indirect effect on the body. Even if the development is too rapid or exclusive, there might come a disharmony between them and the body to the detriment of the latter.

Question: One who observes no forms, practises no ritual, can still be form-bound in mind. He is no better than the one who observes the external trappings of it.

To extricate oneself from rituals it is best to withdraw simultaneously from the observance of it externally and the mental assent inwardly.

Answer: It is the physical mind in man that sees reality only in form and clings to it. Whether on the material level or on the mental, it is at home only with those truths that are clothed in some firm forms. Form is the symbol of a truth, not the truth itself; the mind is apt to lose sight of the truth and stick to the form-symbol as the reality. The mind needs to be educated to realise this fact and move away from its first moorings in forms.

Question: Each man, the house holder, the criminal or the sage, is under a discipline of his own in the broadest sense of the
world. To try to change his course out of one’s own notions of progress is rank interference that will of course be repulsed. Any external influence will be permissible only when the individual is on the threshold of a change—change to another discipline.

Barring exceptions, external influence on an individual can only be brief, though significant like initiation.

Answer: No, the enlightened one has a duty to the less fortunate who wallow in ignorance without realising the harm they are inflicting on their being by following their chosen course of life. Conditions must be created—both externally and inwardly—whereby a sustained pressure is exerted on them to move from their accustomed grooves to larger and higher expanses. By example, by precept, by work they must be uplifted. If one waits for change to come by itself, one will have to wait almost for eternity.

There are elements in society who have no discipline, Dharma, of any kind. They are just creatures of circumstances.

Question: In one sense at least liberal spending of money is indicative of an expanding inner freedom.

Answer: Not necessarily. One may be a prisoner of the same ethical idea of charity, punya etc., and spend without discrimination. Liberal spending can also result from lack of inner control. Inner freedom reflects itself in non-attachment to money, which however, need not express itself in free spending; it may support the power of conservation if that be the Divine Will.

Question: Inferiority complex refuses to dissolve by knowledge. It sticks till the reality of the inferior position remains. It would do well to the concerned individuals to preside over a set-up, however small it is, and ‘feel’ superior to the situation.

Complexes may be sublimated but not dissolved till the cause remains. Knowledge of the fact is not of great avail in that context.
Answer: Complex in such a context means a groove which the consciousness gets into, not justified in truth but created under wrong assumption. Even if the outer conditions are changed, the inner obsession remains, at any rate the memory of it and this always gives rise to unnatural reactions. The complex is resolved only when the subject is made to realise that the particular feelings that have built up the complex are not warranted at all. External conditions, natural handicaps, do not touch the essential man, the soul, who has an equal right with the others to ride over the crest of life. When this truth is perceived or effectively pointed out and accepted, the complex drops off, even though all the factors that led to it still operate.

Question: Alertness is of the mind; receptivity is of the heart; and awareness is of the soul.

Answer: Can’t say that so very trenchantly. The mind can be, and has to be, receptive to new knowledge. The heart has to be, awake and aware of the promptings of the soul within. The soul is alert for openings in nature to cast its ray. It is one consciousness that is spread out, here concentrated, there dispersed. Moreover, in the average man, the mind and the heart are mixed up, the soul is hardly felt.

Question: Hypocrisy is really self-deception of a small mind that seeks justification in appearances.

Answer: No, hypocrisy has no element of self-deception in it. The person who practises hypocrisy is fully conscious of what he is doing, aware that he is putting out a falsehood on purpose. He derives a keen satisfaction from each movement of hypocrisy and weaves around himself a web of falsehood.

It is not the small mind that indulges in it, but a cunning vital mind.
With many it develops into a habit and they indulge even when nothing is to be gained thereby. It becomes their nature.

Question: Remembrance in the form of an articulate word belongs to memory; the heart remembers in the shape of a feeling. And how does the mind remember? As an idea? A Mother-thought? Can we say a constant remembrance of the mind amounts to concentration in the mind?

Answer: In many ways: an image, a thought, a feeling ensouling an idea. There is no concentration. It is a spontaneous coming up or surging forward.

Question: Is it possible for one to initiate another into a spiritual experience which he himself never had?

Answer: One cannot give to another what one does not have. But it is possible to launch another on a movement which may take him to quite new and unexpected experiences. The momentum is imparted; the general Grace is communicated; the rest follows the seeker's own line of evolution.

Question: Man lives in three parts: the inmost soul where all are equal, the inner human personality and the outer social person. The last two have really no inter-related gradations.

Answer: The last two are not always unconnected with each other. In developed persons, the outer is a projection of the inner. But normally there is a gulf; that is true.

Question: Can we say one who rises above time in consciousness could have lost nothing in the past when he might have been idling?

Answer: No, time wasted is time lost—under any circumstances. If one had not wasted time, one would have perhaps attained the timeless state much earlier. But of
course there is another point of view according to which it may be said that things come in their time and even the apparent 'waste' really prepared from behind the veil the condition for the timeless experience.

**Question:** "No words; acts." By words does Mother mean mentalisation or simply talking?

**Answer:** Both. Indulging in systematisation in terms of intellect, expounding it or talking about it without corresponding action to translate it into practice. Many go on formulating in their minds without relation to life.

**Question:** Can you tell me any feeling, sign or symbol in one's being that outwardly expresses the inner condition of egolessness?

**Answer:** Equality — no reaction to praise or censure, no sense of personal hurt or elation.

**Question:** When the memory loses hold of the being, certainly the mind does not disappear as memory is but a part of the mind and what is the stage the mind arrives at? Is it true that when mind loosens its grip of the being one is ushered into infinity?

**Answer:** No, it is loosened into chaos. The mind keeps the unconscious and the subconscious under check; if it looses its grip on the body, all those elements rush up and there is disorganisation in the consciousness. To widen into infinity, the mind must be silenced and trained to allow itself to be taken into the Vastness. Thereby it does not lose its functions of co-ordination, organisation; it acquires a larger vision and effective power.

Normally, when memory fails it means a failure of the mental faculty. It is not a condition of progress but an indication of division in its being.

**Question:** If someone is rough or unkind to another all that the act means is, the former is capable of roughness and the latter has had elements in him that deserved this attention.
Answer: No so. Many are rough and uncharitable by nature; it does not mean that everytime the victim is responsible in some way. Occasionally it may happen that one is provoked into these unedifying movements by something in another. But that is no excuse, under no circumstances are roughness and unkindness permissible for one who seeks the higher life of culture.

Question: The circle is the most perfect of shapes. But Sri Aurobindo says the square in his emblem symbolises perfection.

Answer: Four sides of the square stand for four aspects of the creation and the creative Powers. When they combine in the right proportion a perfect creation ensues.

The circle represents a different truth; there the truth symbolised is not perfection or perfect creation but extension from a centre, manifestation in which any point on the circumference has the same connection with the centre as any other.

Question: Mother speaks of 'controlled speech.' Would such a speech not disturb the Silence of the speaker? Or, are we to accept it as inevitable?

Answer: The Silence that Mother speaks of is not disturbed by speech or by action. It is a solid rocklike inner silence in which all speech is felt as a distant movement on the surface. 'Controlled speech' is to ensure that only the Truth, the Right, finds expression; it has more power.

Question: It is said nothing in this world moves in vain. It means what is detestable to man may be serving a purpose in God's scheme. From this angle can we say: Ignorance saves an incapable man from the adventure of which intelligence alone is capable; meanness is the explanation of a small mind in its own light; jealousy stings incapacity into action.
Answer: True, everything serves God's purpose directly or indirectly, positively or negatively. All the negative qualities you speak of conceal their positives which slowly displace the former as evolution proceeds and the nature is ready for them. These negative features are terms of transition from blank insconscience to full consciousness and nature utilises them for her ends.

Question: Absence of thought and absence of conscious awareness is the characteristic element of samadhi. Is this all that samadhi means?

Answer: Absence of thought-activity, yes. But awareness there can be and must be if the samadhi is to be conscious as required in our Yoga. In a yoga which aims at the fullest possible perfection of life in terms of the divine consciousness, trance can have real value only if it is a conscious communion with the Divine so that the waking state carries the same consciousness, as far as possible, more and more. If the trance is not conscious it has no special value for purposes of this yoga which aims to transform the human nature into divine nature. Trance must be a concentrated attunement of the human and the higher consciousness, in a way that there is no gulf, no break in the consciousness when the trance-state ceases.

Question: There is a moment in the life of a purposeful soul when whatever comes to him, whomever he meets is according to the higher plan. The same can be said in a general way about all life.

Answer: Yes, ultimately it can be said so of all, but in the case of the chosen it is particularly and always so. Every detail has a meaning. With the generality this truth applies in an overall manner.

Question: Things of life do need publicity for the world to know and accept them. But Truth, Sri Aurobindo says, is not to be
carried to another’s door. This is because when the vessel is ready, Truth can communicate itself on its plane, in its own way.

Answer: Yes, till one is ready it is no use speaking to him of the truth. When the general mind is prepared the Truth reaches out in many ways, external publicity being one of them. This publicity comes of its own, like Brunton’s *Search into Secret India* in the case Sri Ramana Maharishi. But one need not go out of the way to draw people. Those who are ripe will be attracted, those that are unripe will drop off or revert even if they are brought by human methods.

Question: Mother says it is best to hold one’s peace when one has nothing good to speak of anyone or anything in the Ashram. Perhaps it can be extended to all life in a general way. Are there not occasions when a judicious departure from Her injunction is called for?

Answer: Every rule has exceptions. Exceptional situations call for exceptional measures. What is stated is a general beneficent rule.

Question: Desiring to be alert, one collects oneself, holds in a poise. Would such a poise avoid the attention of hostiles? Would they not renew their attention as soon as the poise is relaxed?

Answer: After a time the poise gets stabilised and becomes natural. The hostiles are put away when one is vigilant and protected.

Question: On meeting certain people a certain dryness comes into the head. One feels the energy is being drained. What is this dryness? What is it due to?

Answer: Usually it is due to something in the other that draws vitality from people. It may also be due to something that is totally incompatible with oneself or inimical to one’s well-being. It is a warning either to avoid that contact or to guard oneself by prayer.
Question: Is there a calm great in its embrace that precedes silence?

Answer: Calm is a state in which there is no agitation or disturbance of any kind. Usually it precedes the advent of silence which is a positive, impelling condition. Calm may be disturbed by activity of thoughts etc., but silence is not. Calm is a step towards silence, though at times silence may come upon one without these intermediate steps.

Question: Ego is shameless, especially the vital ego.

Answer: Yes, this ego wants its demands to be met irrespective of any condition. Even when its professions are shown to it to be cloaks for naked self-aggrandisement and desire, it still sticks to its claims. The vital ego is the crudest of all the types of ego.

Question: For all men, even for those of a mental mould, it is the vital that is on the surface, ready to receive the first impact of events. This is so because mind’s supremacy over life is not yet fully established.

Answer: Mostly it is so. For the rule of the mind-power is not as well organised and as extensively as that of the life-force. Except in advanced mental types, it is the vital — at some level — that reacts.
FIFTH SERIES

I

PHILOSOPHY
Do you think the Mission of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will succeed this time?

This was the question put to me the other day. Not for the first time, to be sure. For I have sensed this query in many quarters though not formulated in so many words and my answer was what it will always be. There is no question of any likelihood of success or not. The Mission has succeeded already. It has become a part of the human heritage. Let me explain.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have come to reclaim Life for God, to link man to a Divine Power that not only liberates him from his manysided Ignorance but adds a new dimension to his being by reason of which he can embody the Divine and establish a Divine Consciousness as a ruling Power on the Earth. The Masters—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—have established this truth of Divine Manifestation as the sole meaning of the life-movement. Hereafter there can be no divorce, in the thought of man, between Nature and God, Matter and Spirit, Earth and Heaven. Man has been forced to realise that life is incomplete without the Divine even as the Divine is incomplete when truncated of its manifestation that is the universe. The balance between the two terms of the Creative Spirit which had been disturbed in the course of the ages-old evolution of humanity has been restored. Life can no longer be dismissed as a dream or a meaningless chimera. Life has been read in its due and true significance and given a direction. A new Divine Dynamis, the Truth-Consciousness, rta-cit of the Veda, has been successfully invoked from the higher worlds of the Spirit and established as an active Force in the Earth-Consciousness. The leap from the Iron
Age to the Golden Age has been effected. The godly Doors—devih dvaram—have been opened. The rest is a matter of the working out of the consequences—the total perfection of man, release of his body from the hold of disease and death, plenary revelation of the Divine Glory in the physical Universe etc. Necessarily that takes time, the extent of which depends largely on the readiness of the human soul.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother laid the foundations of the New Age in which the New Life is to manifest on the wings of the New Consciousness that has already begun to make itself felt in innumerable ways by those who are sensitive to subtler movements. It is now for the disciples, for those who believe and have some direct experience of the Truth of this Ideal, to demonstrate in their lives the verity of this Vision and build up the nucleus for the intended manifestation. The Way to do it, the path of Integral Yoga, has also been cleaved and perfected by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The best of the past has been caught up and canalised into the formation of the new Knowledge that forms the framework of this teaching. The Power that ensures progress and victory in this Yoga has been firmly set in motion.

The mental horizons of the world have expanded at an incredible pace and the Unity of mankind is a fact that none disputes today. But the way to realise this truth and make it effective in the dynamics of life is shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They have pointed out and left it as a fact for verification that this oneness of all is to be felt and realised first at the soul level. All other unities are a simulacrum. One has first to discover one’s own Self. In that Self one comes to find the meeting ground with the selves of others. That found, the rest is a matter for organisation at different levels of existence.
Thus the *practical* success or otherwise depends upon the sincerity of those who follow the great Teaching that bridges all gulfs, ignores nothing, appreciates everything in its true bearings. The pathfinders have discovered and laid the road. It is for the followers to speed up their pace and tread the path to the inevitable destination. To the extent they succeed in doing so they will have demonstrated the soundness of the Mission whose standard is in their hands. Each one who claims to be a disciple or devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has a responsibility devolving upon him to delve within and find his inner psychic centre, to break through the egobound walls of ignorance, to enlarge his consciousness more and more, to universalise himself and to open himself to the action and rule of the transcendent Shakti flowing from the Truth-World above.
Question: Can you tell me the role of the ritual with music and the collective meditation that follows it at the playground in the Ashram here?

Answer: We have no ritual here in any form. The music that you hear at the playground is no part of the meditation as such; we will come to it later. Let us first speak about the collective meditation.

The object of the inner life here is to effect a contact with the Divine and develop it into a growing relation. The Divine is indeed everywhere, within each individual, outside his being in the Universe, and also above the Universe. And it follows therefore that the Divine can be perceived and contacted in any of these three statuses. Yet it is found by experience that the easiest and the most direct way is to seek the Divine within oneself. Normally man lives on his surface and is hardly aware of the Divine in the inner recesses of his being. The way to become conscious of this Presence within and gradually unite oneself with the Divine entity, the soul or the psychic being, is called Yoga. Meditation, concentration, prayer—these are some of the effective means—limbs of the Yoga—to awaken to the reality of the Divine, to establish contact with it, to open more and more of one’s consciousness to it. In the Ashram each individual chooses the means that is natural to him to achieve this end. Meditation, in some form or other, forms an important part of the inner discipline. Individual meditation is sought to be supported and energised by group-meditations.

The role of collective meditation is to reinforce each other’s aspiration and evoke the Divine Presence by a collective seeking. A force of evocation is generated where a
number of people unite in a common aspiration. This is the rationale of collective prayer or worship in all traditions. Naturally each individual benefits by the impetus received from the collective aspiration. No doubt the advanced section finds its level pulled down somewhat due to dilution with the less mature, but there is recompense of contributing to the larger effort. In the process a certain solidarity of approach is built up on the subtler level of the being and a sort of magnetic field is created for the higher forces to flow to.

Formerly when the Mother used to preside over the meditations, they were being held twice a day, then once a day, till with the increase of numbers and more pressing demands on the Mother’s time the sittings were reduced to two a week. Now though the Mother is not physically present, the meditations continue under the auspices of Her subtle and yet unmistakable Presence. The music of which you speak is not an essential part; it was requested for by some devotees to help them to collect themselves for the meditation. Indeed the music came in at a very late stage in the history of the Ashram.

Music and other ceremonials are dispensable items in the communion with the Divine. They may be helpful to some at certain stages of development but it must be understood that they are only aids, physical help to concentration, aspiration, canalisation of thoughts and feelings.

This is not to say that form and ceremony have no part in spiritual life. In certain traditions they last to the very end, as in the lines of personal worship. Form serves as a physical nodus for the meeting between human aspiration and the Divine response. Broadly, however, one may say that these formal aspects are more related to the religious side than to the spiritual.
Question: *What is the provision for teaching this Yoga to the disciples? How do they set about it?*

*Answer:* The Teaching is laid down in the books. The Ideal of the Teaching, the aim of life in the light of this Ideal, the objective by way of Knowledge and practical realisation and the means therefor, are all set forth in concrete terms in their literature by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When an individual is accepted as a disciple or a person accepts the teacher of the path as his guru, and he follows what is laid down as the teaching he becomes a practicant of this Yoga. A special spiritual help is made available to him and he sees its effectivity in his inner life. Every situation has been anticipated and provided for in the voluminous tomes of letters on Yoga written by Sri Aurobindo and in the talks of the Mother.

Each one feels his way starting from the point where his evolutionary development has brought him to. The temperament of his nature generally decides the line of Yoga he is to pursue, whether it is to be one of meditation, concentration, knowledge or of service and self-consecration, or of devotion and love or all put together so that a synthetic path is forged in his person. It is understood that this discipline embraces the whole of one’s life, converting every detail of it into a part of the Yoga. In this sense, this Yoga is not a specialised technique like the others but an intensified application of the process pursued by Nature in the development of consciousness. The immediate aim is to cultivate the human consciousness so that it enlarges itself, breaks out of its human limitations and acquires a divine quality and a divine dimension. Any means that promotes this object is welcome and can form part of this discipline. All the branches of humanities, sciences, are welcome to enter into this scheme of spiritual evolution in so
far as they contribute to the subtilising and the heightening of one’s consciousness. There is no demarcation here between what is called a secular and spiritual, between the worldly and the godly. Both are reconciled on the common ground of the One Self that bases the All.

**Question:** Has the present pattern of the Ashram any special spiritual significance? What does it mean in the world context?

**Answer:** The aim here is not confined to individual liberation. It is related to the cosmic purpose, i.e. the evolution of humanity to higher levels of consciousness in the Divine creation. Things are planned and organised on a miniature world scheme. Apart from the advantages made available to each member of this society, by providing facilities to breathe and live in a dedicated atmosphere and to orientate his life in every detail God-ward, the special advantage in having such a variegated community of aspiring individuals from all walks of life, from all countries and traditions, is that all diverse natures that constitute humanity are assembled in one place. All the difficulties encountered in the process of the change of nature envisaged in this Yoga are faced squarely. This factor of multiplicities of natures, gradations in development among the population, indeed, raises enormous difficulties. The Masters have chosen to face them and push ahead. It is easy enough to shut oneself in a shell of spiritual isolation and liberate oneself into the freedom of the Spirit; but that leaves the world where it was. If ten individuals who have developed a higher spiritual consciousness live together and work spiritually in the service of the Divine’s manifestation, the occult force generated is of immense consequence for the rest of humanity.

**Question:** What is the place of the Mother in this organisation?
Answer: No spiritual life is possible without a guide. The Mother is our guide and much more than that. She represents and embodies the Mother-Soul in the universe which gathers up, develops and gives a concrete articulation to the aspiration of the Earth in the throes of evolution. In a sense the Ashram is an extension of Her body, the subtle envelope around Her physical frame. Everything that takes place in the Ashram, physically, mentally or otherwise, registers itself immediately in the Mother’s consciousness and evokes a response. The impact may be pleasant or unpleasant to Her physical body but it evokes a helpful—and where necessary corrective—reaction for the environment. Of her it is fully true, what the ancients said of the Guru, that the Guru holds his disciples in the womb of his consciousness.

The moment the Mother accepts one in Her spiritual charge or one accepts Her in the depths of his being as his guide or Mother, an individual emanation of Hers goes forth to the person and lives with him every moment thereafter. It is this personal Mother-emanation that protects, nourishes and guides the individual all his life, whatever his human failings, barring of course gross spiritual betrayals. This emanation goes on working on its own but when necessary it refers back to its source for the necessary special help. The Mother has said somewhere that she holds herself responsible for the spiritual welfare of a person even though he may have met her for only a second. If this is so of people in the common run, much more it is true of those who have chosen to cast their lot with Her, serve Her and follow Her all their life.

Question: What is the part of the samadhi of Sri Aurobindo here?
Answer: The Samadhi is the physical concentration of the consciousness that Sri Aurobindo embodied in his material body. Those who have faith can draw as much spiritual sustenance from the Samadhi as they did when he was physically present.

The Samadhi is not a tomb where the physical remains of the Master are preserved. It is a living reservoir of spiritual consciousness and force, emanating its vibrations incessantly. I hope I am not revealing any great secrets in recording here that there is in these vibrations a powerful sanction to every deep prayer that is offered at the Samadhi. I have known of countless instances where confirmed sceptics have returned men of faith after a visit to the Samadhi. Not all the prayers that are daily offered are of the spiritual kind. They are of all types, worldly, material, idealistic etc. Whatever the seeking the sanction goes forth. I desist from citing instances for obvious reasons.

Question: How do you envisage the Ashram in the distant future?

Answer: The Ashram will be what it is today. It is the physical centre of a dynamic spiritual circle that goes on expanding and will continue to expand till it embraces the whole globe. There is here a developing assemblage of certain liberative and fulfilling cosmic forces drawn from the spiritual hemisphere, the parardha of Creation, through the mighty tapasya of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is not a static centre of retreat for people who are tired of life. It is a unique kind of self-activating generator which is bound to go on radiating waves after waves of Truth-Consciousness that is stored here. The precise form of the Ashram may change with the changing needs of time but its essential character of a reservoir of spiritual energies
will always continue unchanged, very much like the physical sun radiating charges of light day after day.

**Question:** What is the meaning of Pranam? A ritual?

**Answer:** Outwardly it is a physical meeting between the Guru and the disciple. But in truth it is a meeting of two consciousnesses: the growing unit comes before the larger and whole unit and lays itself open to receive the nourishing influx from the latter. The exact form in which the meeting takes place is not of essential importance; what is decisive is the attitude of submission on the part of the disciple and the disposition of sanction and self-pouring on the part of the Guru.

With the Mother there is no one form of Pranam. People approach Her in the way that is natural to them: the old and the modern, the Easterns and the Western—all of them go to Her in different ways. But the inner communion takes the same mode.

**Question:** What is the meaning of Darshan?

**Answer:** Darshan is spiritual audience. The Mother gives Darshan on special occasions. When She appears before the congregation that has assembled, there is not only Her physical appearance which has its own spiritual impact, but a release of a consciousness and power from the higher realms of Superconscience enabling each one—in the words of the Mother—to fulfil his highest aspiration at that moment.

**Question:** What is the meaning of spirituality according to Sri Aurobindo?

**Answer:** The spirit is the essence of a thing, the reality within that gives significance to the form it inhabits. Every form or object has an outer physical reality and also an inner subtler reality. This inner reality in man is what is called the
soul, the spirit, the divine. To awaken to this inner reality, to take steps to unite with this reality, to fill one's consciousness and being more and more with this inner truth, to commune with it, to fuse oneself with it—this is the content of spirituality.

I have said this in the context of our discussion. Broadly of course, spiritual is what concerns the Spirit. What concerns the spirits (contacted in mediumistic seances and the like) does not form part of true spirituality.

**Question:** What does Sri Aurobindo mean by 'Divine'?

**Answer:** The Absolute as it lends itself to experience is the Divine. Put differently, our highest experience of the Reality is the Divine's. This formulation of the supreme Reality takes the form of a supreme Self-Existence, a supreme Consciousness, a supreme Bliss. This Divine or supreme God is not confined only to these original formulations. It manifests itself in several self-modifications and this universe is one such formulation.

In a word the Divine is the essence and the source of All—all that we see and do not see, all that exists in actuality or in potency.

**Question:** Do you hold that the Ideal held by this Ashram, the teaching of Sri Aurobindo, is the highest and the final truth?

**Answer:** No. Truth is dynamic by nature. An ideal is an expression of a truth that seeks to express at a particular moment when conditions are being made ready for it. When that ideal is realised, the truth embodied in it is worked out in manifestation, naturally a succeeding truth follows in its wake. This is specially true in a world like ours which is a field of evolution, of growth of consciousness. The manifestation of the Divine truth in Time is a continuing process. The horizons that beckon the ascent of man go on extending.
Coming to the immediate question, our ideal is the attainment of the Divine Truth-Consciousness in the human body attendant with its consequences of the transformation of human nature into the Divine. It is the governing objective of the present cycle of human evolution, but certainly not the ultimate. Beyond the realms of Truth-Consciousness, Truth-Power, there are the infinite vistas of Ananda, Delight, Chit, Consciousness, Sat, sheer Existence, and surely their characteristic truths are to be established in the terrestrial universe.

Our earth is the appointed field for evolution, for growth. Anything can live only as long as it participates in this movement of growth. To cease to grow is to stagnate and eventually to die. All here has to grow. Even ideals have to grow. As they are being translated into actuals the ideals pass into still higher ideals and live in their successors.

**Question:** Do you mean to say that the Divine also grows?

**Answer:** Yes. In the field of manifestation God also has to grow, i.e. his manifestation grows, the effectivity of the Divine Light and Power increase with the general progression of evolutionary movement. In this Yoga which seeks to put the great ideal of divinisation of man into practice, all have to grow: the Divine increases, the Guru grows in consciousness, the seeker progresses in his being.

**Question:** I have heard it said here that the Ashram is the kingdom of God on earth—do you agree?

**Answer:** Evidently the kingdom of God has first to be established within before it can extend itself without. The kingdom is to be realised first by a number of individuals before it can take a corporate form. The conception is ages old, perhaps it dates back to the very beginnings of man. It means the replacement of the human consciousness by the
Divine consciousness, the human nature by a Divine supernature, and a life lived on that basis. Viewed from this angle, the Ashram is certainly an earnest attempt to translate the high ideal into practice. The emphasis on collective realisation in this teaching gives a special significance to the effort in the Ashram.

*Question*: In India all teachings of saints are based upon some tradition or other. On what tradition is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo based?

*Answer*: This teaching is not based upon any single tradition as such. It is born out of a living inner experience of the founders. The Vision of this teaching has grown with a supporting and verifiable experience. In a sense this gospel of the perfection of man in a complete divinisation of his nature is the peak point of the human aspiration from a dateless past. The incessant urge for Light, Power, Immortality that has characterised man’s effort at progress in some form or other from the very dawn of his birth has taken many forms in the course of its development. The various civilisations and cultures and traditions are a testimony to this evolutionary effort worked out in diverse directions. Each tradition has contributed its mite to the general progress. I see the essence of all these traditions taken up in this teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which opens a new vista and guarantees a bright future if only man consents to collaborate with the effort of Mother-Nature to break through her earthly boundaries and annex the splendid realms of the Spirit waiting beyond.

*Question*: What is the attitude of the Ashram to other religious and organisation?

*Answer*: A benevolent good-will for all efforts that aim at human advancement in whatever sphere. We recognise
the useful role each unit in creation can play—individual or collective.

Essentially ours is a spiritual effort. We believe that those who are called to the Truth that we serve, come to it in whatever way. Our Master has said long ago that he does not believe in bringing the Truth to another's door. We have no propaganda or campaign for convincing others of the Truth of our ideal. Men are in varying stages of development; their needs vary; and in the scheme of providence each one gets what is best for him by way of faith and circumstance. Spirituality is not a matter to be discussed and thrust into unwilling or immature minds. When one needs it, when one has arrived at a stage in his evolutionary development where one cannot live without it, one spontaneously turns to the call of the Spirit. That is why we do not seek dialogues with other institutions, religious, theological or other.

But there are other fields of our work, subsidiary to the main, where contact and co-operation with other efforts is welcome and fruitful. There is, for instance, the movement of International World-Union. This Union has branches in many countries of the world and a sustained effort is made to contact and influence the advanced mind of humanity at many points in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Ideal of Human Unity. Similarly, there is the new project of Auroville, sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Society, the City of Dawn, which is intended to provide a forum to all men of goodwill who are prepared to outgrow the mental scaffoldings of narrow religion, nationality and individual egoism in order to forge a commonwealth of world citizens striving to usher in a new order of life based on Light and Love in the place of the present rule of Ignorance and strife.
ARE MACHINES SPIRITUAL?

You cannot resist Marilyn, the Editor, for long. All these months I had succeeded in giving her the slip acutely conscious as I was of the impossible standards she has set for contributions to the World Union. However, when she sallied in our office last week with an innocent query, “Are machines spiritual?”, the temptation was too much.

“Are machines spiritual? this is the question put to me. What does the Mother say?” I asked.

The Mother smiled beatifically, and said after a while: “To me all is spiritual”.

Finding me still expectant, She graciously explained what She meant. And here is the gist of it. All is spiritual because everything is a formulation of the Spirit. This Essence is the same in all. But the stress and the organisation of it is different; the Spirit may be less overtly expressed in some and more in others, higher in vibrations in humans and lower in certain other forms. However, the Spirit, the Consciousness is there in all. All come from the One Being. To awake to this truth of Consciousness of the Spirit in everything—not excluding the machines—and to establish contact with it there is only one direct way. And that way is to realise one’s identity with the One Origin of All. Once you are one with the Origin of things it comes naturally to be one with the things themselves. So one has to do Yoga to recognise and realise the existence of the Spirit, the pulsation of Consciousness in the machines and to draw it out.

At this point, I mentioned to the Mother that there was recently a report of a special machine that was used in a hospital to test a patient suffering from Hepatitis. It was found that after its use, in spite of stringent precautions by
way of disinfection, the machine infected everyone, on whom it was used later, with the same disease. The Mother heard it attentively and said it was interesting.

She observed in conclusion, that if a Yogi—one who has developed the consciousness of identity with the Origin of All—were to experiment upon some of the modern sophisticated machines, the results would be striking.

I was happy to get this confirmation of the faith with which I have grown since childhood. It had always occurred to me,—and something in me responded with a thrill to that perception—that all things have a life of their own and it was just that I should regard and respect their life even in what are called inanimate material objects. Later as I grew up, I became familiar with the outlook of the ancient Rishis who declared that all these have an inner consciousness,* _avatih sanjnah bhavanti_ etc. I also read about and came to know of instances of human mechanical objects responding to human approach, "inanimate" machines behaving erratically, almost humanly in certain situations. "Friendship" that grows between some railway engines and particular drivers is not a myth. I also experienced the response of these objects to a soulful relation. I had come to believe that an object whether animate or inanimate, could be meaningfully contacted from an inner poise. If I can raise the intensity of my consciousness to an appropriate level from where it can communicate with the subtle spirit in the object, the rapport would be established. Knowledge of the Tantric principle of _pratishta_, evocation of the Presence in the image of worship, enlightened my faith.

What I learned from the Mother, however, broadened my vision and gave a new perspective. Instead of trying to

* Consciousness and life are but gradations of the Spirit in its expression.
heighten one's own consciousness and enter therewith from outside into contact with the veiled spirit behind the exterior of the mechanism it is more natural and effortless to perceive the spirit activating the machine by realising one's oneness with the Spiritual Reality which is the common Origin of both.
SEX-PROBLEM

Among the interesting friends that I had the occasion to meet this month was a French doctor who is in the vanguard of the Sophrology movement in Europe. They perceive that most of the disorders of the body are due to imbalances in the consciousness and by restoring harmony in one's consciousness it is possible to set right the malady. "Tell me," he asked, "what is your position with regard to Sex. Sex is the most glaring problem in the West and we have been unable to fathom it. We, psychiatrists, are constantly faced with this problem and, frankly, we do not know how to meet it."

The doctor had an open mind and was looking for some fresh light from the Yogic tradition in the East. Eliminating all technical terminology, I explained to him our approach which, broadly stated, is this.

There is in the universe a mighty Force at work and this Force is a Conscious-Force, cit as it is called by our ancients. This cit is a Self-Power of the Creative Reality and it formulates itself variously on the different levels of this multi-graded Existence. The Power, sakti, works in different forms on different planes. On the plane of Matter it functions as material Energy, on the Life plane as vitality, on the Mind plane as thought Energy, on the plane of the soul as the power of Love and so on. Whatever the form, the fundamental Force is the same, one spiritual Power, and hence these several formulations are inter-connected, inter-changeable. Each is related to the others.

What is true of the universe is also true of the individual since both are terms of the same Reality. In the individual man also there is one cit, one conscious-force active in appropriate forms on the different levels of his being. Man
is thus endowed with soul energy, mental energy, life energy, physical energy. The last, the material energy, again takes its own form and perhaps the most important form of it is the sex energy. Nature lays great store by it because that is its one means of perpetuating the species.

Like all forms of energy, sex-energy has its legitimate claim in its own sphere. In the normal life of man in the world, it is allotted its province and as long as it is allowed its due expression there need be no problem. No doubt there are cases of abnormal concentrations of sex-energy—like concentration of other energies also in some others—and some aberrations in their expression are inevitable. Really there is nothing to bother about it over much. It is when men claim a special status for this energy and seek unbounded scope for its indulgence that the matter becomes a social problem. Somehow too much notice is taken of the matter and an exaggerated accent is placed upon sex instead of treating it like any other natural force seeking self-aggrandizement, e.g. ego. To isolate sex and lay a premium on its satisfaction for fear of untoward consequences otherwise is a totally wrong, misguided and ultimately a suicidal approach. Like all other energies of man, sex also can play its full part in society only when it is regulated and channeled in a wholesome way.

The problem, as it is posed, arises really when there is an attempt to conserve the sex energy for any reason. Why should it be conserved at all, some may ask. The normal store of energies of any kind, provided by Nature, is usually adequate to meet the normal requirements of life. But when an effort is made to heighten the level of life, to achieve higher results than on the average, when the system is yoked to a purpose that calls for greater and greater resources, then all available energy is sought to be harnessed to the effort. The sex-energy, when it is not thrown out gets collected in
the body, and as it gathers, it generates a powerful heat. The entire system is dynamised and there is felt a strong inflow of power. If this heat is built up, massed as it were, it turns into light; the mental faculties get illumined and their range is enormously increased. And this light too, properly cultured, converts itself into a spiritual dynamism that enables man to fulfil his manhood either by conquest of his nature or liberation into the freedom of the soul.

This in sum is the rationale. When this process of the conversion of sex-energy into spiritual energy is properly understood and put into operation with earnestness, there is really no problem. The problems arise when the attempt is halfhearted. If the sex-force is withheld from expression physically, but it is indulged in mentally—by way of imagination, desire etc.—there is an inevitable disharmony. That is forcible suppression. What is enjoined in Yoga is not suppression, but rejection. For greater gains of power, light, purity, the initiate decides to withhold his consent to the normal downward play of the sex-energy and turns it upward. As in all effort that aims at transcendence of normal nature, there is first a resistance; but if that resistance is opposed with an equal obstinacy and will, it flags and the way becomes smooth. It is really a question of the sincerity that is brought to bear on the situation.

Problems of unbalancing, frustration etc. arise due to division of will. Unnatural indulgence at one end and suppression at the other cannot but lead to abnormality.

Are all seekers of God required to observe celibacy?

Sex and spirituality cannot of course go together. Yet, it depends upon the stage in which one is, the goal that one sets for oneself, how far the rule is applicable. A certain leniency may be permissible in cases of householders who are
still preparing themselves for the higher life; a period to "work out" may be advisable for those who are somehow obsessed with the bugbear of sex. But once one takes up Yoga in earnest, there can be no compromise. Sex is firmly ruled out*

If all adopt this rule of celibacy, then one day all life will be extinct! This is the remark often made with an air of triumphant logic. The only answer is that such an eventuality will never arise for the simple reason that all humans will never take to spiritual life at the same time and submit themselves to that discipline. And in the impossible event of its taking place, it will perhaps be just as well, Man has made such a mess of his life and the life on earth that none will regret his departure.

* Sex, however, is only one of the many factors that are relevant in the spiritual context. Abstention from sex alone does not bring the crown. This observation is made because quite often people are peeved that in spite of life-long celibacy they have not achieved anything worthwhile. Sex is but one of the several limbs of Yoga.
REALITY

Question: What exactly is meant by Spirit, Self, Being, God; Purusha, Atma, Brahman, Ishwara?

Answer: Brahman is the Supreme Reality that is omnipresent. It is the Absolute which includes all relativities.

In itself the Reality is ineffable. But it reveals itself to us as certain truths or aspects of its being. That state or status which forms the basic ground of every determinate is the Self, Atman. What is the essence of everything, the conscious entity that lends significance to it is the spirit, conscious being, the Purusha.

The Divine Reality self-formulated as a Being is God, Ishwara.
DEITIES

Question: Why are the great Deities of the Veda like Indra, Varuna, Surya, who are so much adored by the Rishis and play such an important part in the Cosmos, reduced to ridiculous positions in the Puranas where they are represented as creatures of lust, envy and the like? Even the Sun-God — the God of Gayatri—is not spared. He too is enamoured of a she-monkey and begets a son by her.

Answer: The ancients of the Veda had an intuitive perception — natural to their state of uninhibited mentality — into the mysteries of the universe and they celebrated the presiding Powers of the Creation as manifestations of the Supreme Creator and adored them as such. In the course of evolution, however, as more and more parts of the being of that humanity came to be developed, their characteristic faculties of understanding and action came to the fore. Thus the first natural and direct, spiritual outlook and approach was gradually replaced by the psychological; the pure psychological yielded place to the psychomental which in turn was followed by the emotional-vital and so on, in keeping with the levels of consciousness that were brought up for cultivation by the Nature-Spirit. The character of the Gods that were worshipped and their relations with man underwent corresponding modifications and they came to be given all the physical and vital frills with which man is adorned. Man always tends to conceive of the Gods in his own image. The Gods correspond to the level of the mind or consciousness which figures them. By the time the age of the Puranas had arrived, the evolutionary stress was on the culturing of the physico-vital mentality and all life—religious and other — was cast in that mould.

Secondly, all that is stated in the Puranas is not to be taken literally. Very often profound truths are clothed
in the familiar physical imagery. At times the very absurdity of it draws attention to the symbolic character of the narration. Thus, Surya, the God of illumination, fertilises the life-dominated mentality and creates a mind buoyed by the mighty energies of life — marking a further step in the evolutionary progression.
KATHA U Panishad

A Query

Question: Would you please explain the full meaning of the following verses in the Katha Upanishad?

"Among many I walk the first, among many I walk midmost; something Death means to do which today by me he will accomplish" (1.5).

"Look back and see, even as were the men of old,—look round!—even so are they that have come first. Mortal man withers like the fruits of the field and like the fruits of the field he is born again." (1.6).

Answer: Vajashravas is giving away his wealth as religious gifts. Nachiketas, his son, observes the poor character of those gifts—old and useless ones—and thinks of offering himself as a gift. "Me, father," he asks, "to whom wilt thou give?" The father makes no reply; the son repeats his question, once more and still once more. Exasperated, the father bursts out: "to Death I give thee" (Verse 4).

The verses in question follow in sequence. They are explained differently by the commentators. Some say: Nachiketas was taken aback by this unexpected reply. He wondered: "Why, I am the first of the many who serve my father; I am at least in the middle of the line of his disciples—nowhere the last. And yet he wants to give me away to Death! Perhaps there is some higher purpose in all this. The God of Death is going to use me to accomplish something."

By that time the father had come to regret what he had said and before he could go back on his words, Nachiketas implores him to regard the shining example of those in the
past who were true to their word and again those who came later and did likewise. And after all, he seems to ask, what is the necessity of committing falsehood? All men are bound to die and be born and Nachiketas too has to follow suit.

Others would have it thus: "Very well," says Nachiketas, "I shall be at the head of the line of men that are going to the Lord of Death; may be in the middle of it but never at the end. I am no coward. Surely God Death has a purpose in me. At all times, on all sides, they are all constantly in the round of birth and death." "Why then hesitate?" he seems to ask his father.

Whatever the meaning one reads, it is not central to the teaching of the Upanishad and we may leave it at that.
UPANISHAD AND GITA

A Problem

Question: The Upanishad says
सम्मूला: इमा: सर्वः प्रज्ञा: सदायतना: सत्प्रतिष्ठा:।

and the Gita says
नान्तो न चादिन्तच संप्रतिष्ठा।

Please explain the contradiction.

Answer: There is really no contradiction between the statement in the Gita that “There is neither end nor beginning for foundation” (XV. 3) and the line in the Chhandogya (6-8-4) which runs, “All these creatures are rooted in the Existent, homed in the Existent, established in the Existent.” For when the Gita describes the Cosmic Tree (Asvattha) as without end or beginning, it clearly means without beginning or end in Time and Space. The cosmos has not originated in them nor is it going to end in them. Time and Space themselves are terms of this manifestation. Similarly when it declares that the Tree has no foundation, it means no material foundation. It does not mean that there is no foundation at all. The Gita announces in the very first line of the chapter that the foundation of the Tree is above urdhvamulam (IX. 1), the cosmos has its roots in the Infinite, above this finite existence.

This fits in very well with, in fact it is a reiteration of the Upanishadic text which declares that the Source of all creatures is the One Existent, Sat that is infinite, eternal. All are becoming of that One Supreme Being: all proceed from the one Being all really dwell in that One, all are firmly established in that Immutable.
SRADDHA

Regarding the Sraddha ceremonies, I would put it this way:

When a person dies, his soul crosses over to the worlds beyond the physical plane in its subtler body. This subtler body consists of many sheaths: 'the subtle-physical, the vital (Pranamaya), the mental (Manomaya) and so on. Each of these sheaths is to be shed on the plane to which it belongs and unless all are thus shed, the soul is not freed to go to its place of rest. Thus the vital sheath or the vital body is to be got rid of in the vital world and that is not possible until the karma that has attached itself to the vital body, during the the tenure on earth, due to desires, passions etc. is worked out. These are the periods of heaven or hell depending upon whether the karma to be exhausted is pleasurable or painful. The soul is obliged to remain in this state until its vital sheath or bond is thus dissolved. At times, the soul does not have to wait until all of the vital is dissolved; it is able to shed the fragment in the vital world after the working out has reached a point that makes this possible, and proceed on its way. That fragment continues to live, for some time, on its own.

The prayers and offerings in the Sraddha ceremonies are intended to smoothen the way for the soul in its transit; they are especially directed to these clamping sheaths or bodies. They are meant to make it easy for the shedding of the vital sheath particularly; also if the vital fragment remains active in the vital world after the departure of the soul, the prayers help that entity to get dissolved easily.

Now all depends upon the sincerity, the feeling, the active sense of helpfulness with which the prayers are made and offerings consecrated. If the descendent is aware of this
purpose and puts his heart into the ceremony making it meaningful, then certainly the Sraddha is helpful to the departed. Note, however, that these sheaths or fragments do not and cannot last for too long a period. The rule of 12 years in these matters is very sensible. Normally, however, 3 years is the earth-bound period.

All this applies to individual Sraddhas enjoined upon by the Hindu householder. The same truth underlies prayers done in certain months etc. These helpful thoughts and feelings are intended to help all those who are in those subtler worlds—not necessarily one's own ancestors.

This is the rationale. How far the ceremonies as practised at present serve this purpose is another matter.
II

YOGA
YOGA-SADHANA (I)

Question: I am harassed by unfriendly thoughts and imaginary fears, especially when I sit for meditation or go to sleep. Is this an outcome of the pressure of Yogic inclination or the effect of the combination of the heart line and the mind line on my palm as forecast by the astrologer?

Answer: Neither unfriendly thoughts nor fears are the result of turning to Yoga or the formations on the palm. These ideas are afloat in the air and impinge upon everybody at one time or other. If one gets nervous and agitated, they stay and dig themselves in. For behind them are forces of the hostile kind which try to upset order, peace, harmony, happiness etc. wherever they are found. By getting upset one plays into their hands. They come again and again and form sort of grooves in the atmosphere. And unless one wakes up and rejects these visitations either by one’s own strength of will or faith in the Divine, the system develops a habit of anticipating these disturbances and in the process inducting them in itself. The key lies in oneself. One has either to reject them or to ignore them on trusting oneself into the hands of the Divine.

Question: In the state of my mind, life and body as discussed above, how can I know that my adhar is fit for this Yoga?

Answer: Truth to tell, no one is wholly fit for this or any other Yoga. There are parts in each one that are ready, there are also other parts that are yet to be made ready. If one has the will to make oneself fit for Yoga and aspires for the necessary help from the Divine then it is only a question of time. Of course it is understood that a wrecked system or a deranged mind and the like disqualifies one from Yoga.

Question: Is there any `opening’ in me and shall I be able to carry on to the last?
**Answer:** The very fact that you persist in analysing yourself and aspiring for the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles shows that somewhere in you there is an opening and an aspiration. It is reasonable to suppose that if you are faithful to the call you will be able to walk the path to the last.

**Question:** The astrologer had suggested me to go through the Hanuman Chalisa regularly. When I start reading this book in front of a picture of Hanumanjee placed by the side of a photograph of the Mother, confusion creeps into my mind. What is the place of Hanumanjee among the different vibhutis of the Mother? What should I do in this circumstance?

**Answer:** I am afraid there is a little confusion here regarding the Vibhutis. Hanuman is not a Vibhuti of the Mother. Things need not be mixed up. I would suggest that for the dissipation of fear, averting of death, removal of illness etc. the long-sanctioned japa of Mrityunjaya mantra may be done. And as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, it will be in order for you to conceive of Sri Aurobindo as the Deity to be invoked. That will give you some feeling of intimacy and actuality to the procedure.

**Question:** How to distinguish between “desirable” and “undesirable” persons with whom a sadhak should avoid mixing?

**Answer:** I am afraid it will take long for me to describe the desirable type but it is easy enough to say who is the undesirable. He after some association with whom you feel dried up, your aspiration dulled and the mind generally pulled downwards, is undesirable. With such individuals even a conversation, a walk together, becomes enough to create an atmosphere of confusion and spiritual uneasiness whatever may be the vital elation that may ensue from such meetings. It goes without saying that persons who are antdivine come under this category.
Question: How to deal with the sex-appeal from the side of my wife?

Answer: This is the umpteenth time I read a question of this kind. The wife, it appears, is always the guilty party. If only man, the paragon of virtue, were to be sincere to himself and shut the door of sex in his own nature, no amount of appeal from the other side would really matter. Once it is known for certain that the man is not going to indulge under any circumstances, the situation undergoes a change. Things come as long as there is some opening or possibility of opening to them.

Question: Is tea-drinking permissible in this Yoga?

Answer: These things are of very minor importance in Yoga. All that is required is that no inebriating stuff is taken in. For that strikes at the root of the will whose development is of paramount importance in any kind of Yoga.

Question: What is the most suitable time for meditation and can I do this sitting on my sleeping-bed or on the floor?

Answer: Actually there is no fixed time as such for meditation. For the ideal condition is to be in meditation, in some part of the being, all the time. However, in the earlier stages it is necessary for the aspirant to fix some particular hours, say, twice or thrice a day for meditation. Traditionally, the dawn, the noon and the evening— junctures of transitions from one period of time to the other—are considered to be the most favourable. Whatever the timings, it is most important that there is regularity. For things form in the atmosphere at those particular hours and if the person is not present to receive them they recede.

Regarding the position, sleeping in bed is out of question till meditation becomes natural. One has to sit up,
erect, on a comfortable seat. It is not advisable to sit on the bare floor; some kind of asana may be used. Under no conditions should the head be allowed to rest against a support, nor the body allowed to lean on anything.

*Question:* What is the place of Asana and Pranayama in this yoga and should these precede or follow meditation?

*Answer:* Asana and Pranayama are no part of this Yoga though they may be used for help by the practitioners. Simple Asanas may be done to acquire stability in the body even as simpler Pranayama exercises could be practised for controlling the restlessness of the mind and the purification of the subtler channels of life-force—the nadis.

Naturally, if these are practised they are best done before meditation. They would promote helpful conditions for the gathering focusing of the mental faculties.
Question: It is said that the sadhana of Poorna Yoga can be started only after realising the soul. This is the true initiation and all attachments drop therewith on their own accord.

Answer: Broadly, this Yoga consists of three radical realisations in the consciousness: realisation of the individual Divine (the psychic realisation), realisation of the universal Divine, realisation of the transcendent Divine. Without the accomplishment of the first, the next two cannot be done. To find the soul within and establish it as the ruler of life is the base for all else to be built up. Self-realisation is the indispensable first step that makes the subsequent steps possible. And once you find this Divine within, you are no more attracted or attached to things of the external world. They drop away. You are separated from the nature in ignorance and established in the freedom of the soul — svarat.

Question: Are all the sadhaks of the Ashram souls that have realised themselves? And are only persons of such realisation admitted there?

Answer: Naturally not. The sadhaks of the Ashram are aspirants, seekers who have dedicated their lives to the Quest for the Divine. They are in varying stages of development.

No condition of soul-realisation is imposed for admission. The Mother admits those who—She sees—have a call for the higher life. May be some are more ready than others as a result of their development in this life or the past. Consequently the starting point of each varies. Some have to prepare themselves for the yoga proper, some start straightaway; all are given the needed opportunities and help to
tread their way. What is common to all is that each accepts the Ideal, the Guru and the collective life of the Ashram.

All the preliminary work of self-discipline, self-purification, self-dedication that is to be done before the first major realisation of the psychic can arrive is indeed part of the yoga, though the preparatory part. That is common enough in all the traditional lines of Yoga. What is distinctive of Poorna Yoga starts with the fulfilment of this condition—the psychic realisation. It is in this sense that Poorna Yoga is said to commence where the older disciplines leave off—at soul-realisation.

Question: How is the 'psychic call' perceived? Isn’t it like the Divine Command of which Sri Aurobindo has spoken? Is it audible sensibly?

Answer: The call of the soul makes itself felt in the consciousness as an insistent pressure to turn to the Divine. A feeling, a voice or an idea are not enough in themselves to assure the genuineness of the call. That may be a result of some external circumstances or a passing mood without the real push from within. When you deeply feel and realise that the usual life of the world does not satisfy you any more, when your mind and heart turn spontaneously to the Divine and to all that leads to the Divine, when you feel an oppressive dryness in the things of ordinary life, feel like a fish out of water without the breath of the Divine, when you are prepared—without any regrets—to sacrifice all else for the sake of the Divine, and a persistent urge to do so drives you from within—then you may be sure that the call is from the soul.

Naturally this call is quite different from the “Command from Above.” That is a rare phenomenon and its Origin, nature and purpose are of a different order.
I do not need here to go into the question of other possible 'commands' from doubtful sources and the way to detect their false character.

Question: A person like me longs for spiritual sadhana despite hundreds of adversities and weakness due perhaps to want of sincerity. What is this longing element in me—ego, mental Purusha, the real 'I' or the psychic itself?

Answer: The fact that the longing persists in spite of all discouraging circumstances and happenings shows that there is some deeper urge behind it. The soul is pushing forward and this movement translates itself in the external being as 'longing' for the Divine. If the source were the ego or something in the mind, then they would be discouraged by the very first failures and give up the attempt. This is what takes place normally.

Question: Does the failure indicate that I am unfit and unqualified?

Answer: No one is entirely fit for yoga at the outset. The sadhana is for the purpose of becoming fit. The failure comes as some parts are ready while others are not. This necessary readiness in all the parts of the being; disharmony leads to unsatisfactory results. The failures need not be total losses if they are seen in the proper perspective. They reveal the weakness, the leeway to be made up in some parts of the being. They show where one needs to get fit.

Question: How to liberate myself from such a state of travail and make progress? I imagine that in a homogeneous atmosphere like the Ashram and under the direct guidance of the Guru, sadhana is not difficult.

Answer: By persistence in aspiration. Not to be discouraged by adverse results or pressures but to endure
and continue the sadhana of self purification and inner surrender to the Divine.

It is certainly true that things are less difficult under the direct guidance of the Guru. But the difficulties of Nature are the same wherever you are. The lower nature reacts by throwing up its resistances to the pressure for change and the sadhaka has to face the situation. Each one has to go through this ordeal till a decisive turn is taken. Of course the help of the Guru, the assistance in the atmosphere where the Guru and other aspirations God-ward are gathered in strength, make a good deal of difference. But by and large, each individual has to work out his sadhana, solve the problem presented by his individual nature. The question of universal Nature comes in much later.
YOGA-SADHANA (III)

Question: They say the Japa of Gayatri cannot be performed at night. Is there any truth about it? Does it hold good in the case of Sri Aurobindo’s Gayatri?

Answer: Possibly such a belief is due to the fact that usually it is the physical sun that is taken to be the deity addressed in the mantra. It is understandable in such a case that the mantra cannot be used when its deity, the sun, has set, i.e. is not active. In truth, however, the physical sun is only a material symbol of the Truth-Sun that shines eternally in the skies of the Spirit. If one is conscious that this spiritual Sun is the Deity to whom one addresses oneself then the earthly day and night do not matter.

Question: Is there nothing like heaven and hell? The Mother says they are mere imaginations. But the Gita speaks of the large world of heaven, svargalokam visalam, dwelling in hell, narake vasah. Kindly explain.

Answer: What the Mother and Sri Aurobindo say is perfectly reconcilable with the statements in the Gita. For there are really no geographical locations—physical or subtle—for heaven and hell. In the system of worlds that constitute our Creation, there are no such worlds as heaven and hell.

Heaven and hell are states of being, subjective conditions of consciousness, of felicity and melancholy. They can be experienced on any plane of being. They are creations of the thoughts, imaginations and feelings of man. In the case of those who die, after they leave the earth scene they get into some kind of formations which are really the projections of their own thoughts, fears and samskaras during the life-time. They live, as it were, in these projections till
the actuating force is worked out and they are free to proceed on their journey to their place of rest. Thus heaven and hell are creations of one’s own mind. They are not permanent truth creations. When the Gita or any other scripture speaks of the worlds of heaven or hell, it is these psychological states that are meant; to the person who is involved in them they are as vivid as the physical world. In a revealing passage, an Upanishad observes that heaven is the company of the good while hell is association with the evil.

Question: In this month’s ‘Mother India,’ Sri Aurobindo is quoted as saying “one can realise the Self and attain moksha or liberation in spite of desires”. The answer puzzles me. Can light and darkness stay together? If one can get liberation in spite of desire where is the fun in such disciplines as yama, niyama, indriya nigraha etc? How can a desire-ful and therefore restless mind attain peace which comes of liberation?

Answer: Obviously this applies to him who can separate himself from his prakriti and station himself in a deeper consciousness aloof from Nature. The lower nature is allowed to run its course: the purusha withdraws himself, turns inward and pursues his quest for union with the Divine independent of the nature-part. In effect, there is a bifurcation in being. The progress and the achievement spiritward is in the purusha-consciousness. Even when liberation is effected and the purusha finds union with the Self, the outer nature may go on in its petty rounds without making any difference to the liberated part.

Of course such a course is not permissible in a yoga like ours which includes nature also in its scheme of liberation.

Note that it is possible for the mind to live in an established calm and peace even while there is the froth of agitation and disturbance on the outermost surface level.
Question: What happens to the vital being when a man is dead? Does it dissolve in the universal vital being? Does it come out at the time of next incarnation? Does the vital being retain the experiences of each incarnation till it evolves into something permanent?

Answer: Usually what we call the vital being is a euphemism for the vital sheath encasing a vital element. Mostly this sheath dissolves in the vital plane and when the soul comes to birth again it forms its vital accompaniment from the universal Vital. In the case of those who have developed a vital individuality and organised it around the psychic being, it stays with the psychic being in its place of rest. When the psychic being takes a fresh birth, this vital being also enters into the evolutionary progression.

It is also possible for a developed vital being to stay in the vital plane after shedding all its coatings till its presiding psychic being comes back to the terrestrial field. In such a case the vital being joins the psychic on its return.
CONTRADICTIONS

Question: Sri Aurobindo writes: "A person may have certain qualities, but not to perfection and there is the subconscious, the very contradiction of these qualities. If one does not take care to eliminate the contradictions then at any moment under the pressure of circumstances what is in the subconscious may rise up with force and bring about collapse, what is called a fall from yoga."

How to eliminate the contradictions?

Answer: First, to become aware of the contradictions. One must carefully and vigilantly observe oneself, one's movements, one's thoughts, one's tendencies and see how far and in what way any of them run counter to one's aspirations, higher movements in the being. Having found them out, the next step is to isolate them for special attention. When such opposite movements take place or rise up in the consciousness, there is more of alertness. The third step is to firmly reject them each time they raise their head. They may appear inconsequential and not worth the bother. But that is only an appearance. They must be seized at their roots and plucked out. For that purpose it is necessary that every contrary movement, big or small, must be conscientiously denied, rejected and thrown out. Gradually their frequency decreases and in due course they die away.

A positive way is to replace those negative movements by their opposite positive ones. Thus, for instance, if one is habitually generous there are times when a sudden impulse of meanness, miserliness, is seen. Not to give in to it is the usual way. But a more effective way is to counter it with a deliberate movement of generosity. That way the higher qualities and tendencies displace the lower ones without leaving a vacuum.
Ultimately it is a question of sincerity. To what extent is one sincere in his professions and how far does he exert himself in applying and cultivating the truth of his aspiration in life? This basic sincerity must be brought to bear on every situation and a habit created in the nature of not giving room to contrary impulses. So done, there is an automatic rejection.
PSYCHIC (I)

Question: In "The Elements of Yoga", Sri Aurobindo has said that the central being of man is the purusha and the psychic being is the soul. So far as I know the psychic being is the projection of the central being above; it is a deputy of the central being. If so, how can it be the purusha who is always above manifestation, neither born nor dies. Please explain.

Answer: The various beings, e.g. physical being, vital being, mental being, psychic being, are all the projections of the Purusha, the central being, in the Nature in evolution. The projection in physical nature is the physical purusha, annamaya purusha, etc. The psychic being or the soul is similarly the deputy of the central being, of the Purusha, in evolution. When this psychic entity attains sufficient growth, it begins to preside over the growth of other beings —physical, vital, mental etc— coordinates and synthesises them in its own direction.

The psychic being is the psychic representative of the Purusha, the central being that stands uninvolved in the movement.
PSYCHIC (II)

Question: What are the differences among psychic realisation, psychic awakening and having the psychic touch?

Answer: The psychic is the projection of your inmost self in the evolution. It is the developing divine element in you, what is called the soul. When this soul or psychic being is acted upon by any Power or Influence it may be said to be touched. Normally all that happens in life reaches the psychic being very indirectly filtered through so many passages that intervene between the outer personality that participates in the experience and the psychic within. The psychic is behind so many veils. When some contact or action that takes place in life has an impact on this psychic and evokes a response which sets into motion some movement of consequence, the psychic is touched. For instance, the contact with a source of spiritual consciousness or some deep aesthetic experience may cut across all the intermediate veils and strike at the springs of the psychic being. This results in the opening up of the possibility of spiritual life.

Psychic awakening takes place when this psychic Purusha is roused into activity either by aspiration or by contact with spiritually developed personages or by a direct action of the Grace. When it is so awakened, the psychic being is not content to witness and assimilate what is brought to it by the other members of the being from life experience. It asserts itself, imposes its choice and generally throws its glow on the activities of the whole being. This awakening is a landmark in the evolution of the human being: he passes into the phase of spiritual evolution.

Psychic realisation is the fulfilment of this movement. It means that the psychic is fully brought forward in the play
of nature; it assumes control over the movements of body, life and mind, and directs their course towards the Divine. Every movement proceeds from this psychic centre which is the station of inner Divine. This is called the psychisation of nature. All the impulsions and movements in life are actuated from this psychic source.

In the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this is the first capital realisation that makes the other necessary realisations possible.
GITA FOR THE COMMON MAN

What message can a philosophical treatise like the Gita have for the common man? The Gita has a message for everyman for the simple reason that it is not a philosophical or a religious text. It is a spiritual guide and in as much as the Divine Spirit informs everyone in some way or other, the Gita has a word to say, a direction to give to each man, be he a philosopher scaling the heights of Knowledge or a seeker plumbing the depths of his soul or the common man who is caught in the vortex of the currents and cross-currents of work-a-day life. No one is too high for its vision, no one too low for its consideration.

Do not leave your station in life, calls the Gita, in order to find your weal elsewhere. There is a purpose, a design, in your being where you are. You are being moulded in the crucible of Nature and those circumstances are chosen for you by the guiding Spirit which best promote your development. Regard the work that comes to your share as God-given. Whatever the work, it can be utilised for your progress, outer and inner, if only it is done in the right attitude. All work is equal, the true difference in value arises from the spirit in which each work is done.

Work done ignorantly forges the chain of Karma that binds; work done in the spirit of the Gita is a force for liberation. And what is the spirit of the Gita?

All work that you do, do it as a sacrifice, as a loving offering to God. And the true test of this offering is whether you entertain a claim for its fruits. Give up personal desire for the fruit and accept what comes with equality. But all the while do your work with all the care, all the zeal and perfection that a sacred consecration calls for. Slowly

24
your capacity for disinterested work will grow and you will be less and less involved in the consequences of the work. In place of desire and ego, detachment and selfless devotion will grow.

The first step is to offer the works to God.

The next is to give up the fruits of the work to God.

The third is to realise that what works is not your own force, but the Power of God. You perceive that you are only an instrument and the real worker is the Power of Him who is seated within the chariot of your being. The personal element is gradually replaced by an impersonal spirit and the first gates of inner liberation are opened.

It is not necessary for man to retreat from the world and leave his appointed work in order to attain liberation. The Gita prescribes a bold and practical discipline which can be successfully practised by everyone in the midst of life, in the centre of his Kurukshetra.
III

BOOK-SHELF
THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLE

Is it possible for one to lead a spiritual life and yet be a lawyer by profession? Does not arguing and pleading for a plaint which is not strictly true conflict with the demands of sadhana? This is a question that is often raised and a sincere seeker like Kodanda Rama Rao could not but ask Sri Aurobindo. And here is Sri Aurobindo’s reply reproduced in a frank and faithful book of reminiscences by Rao*

“It is true that the lawyer’s profession as practised by many in India is full of things which are not what they should be but it is not a necessary character of the legal profession. Even here many carry on the profession with a scrupulous honesty in all respects like Duraiswamy and succeed. A lawyer has to do his best for his client and make every point he legitimately can in his favour—to bring out the weak note of the case is the other party’s function, not his; but it is his best to which he is bound, he is not bound to do what the client demands as the best. It is a question of establishing an honourable but practical and common sense standard for the profession.”

Kodanda Rama Rao, it may be mentioned, came under the influence of Sri Aurobindo during the days of the Arya when he was yet a student in his teens. He came to Pondicherry along with a friend in the Christmas holidays of the year 1920 to see him. The meeting was made possible, he records, owing to the intercession of Paul Richard. Describing his first meeting, the author writes:

“Sri Aurobindo was seated behind an oblong table covered with a blue cloth in the verandah and was glancing

* At the Feet of the Master.
through the morning newspapers. We stood before him and saluted him with folded hands and he made a sign asking us to sit in the chairs before him. An effulgent personality he was...he looked deep into me and I felt a thrill passing through my being, and I became speechless. My friend asked some questions about Yoga and whether we should appear for the final B.A. degree examination, which was to come off in the next three months or give up our studies and join the political fray, or take to Yoga. He advised us to appear for the examination remarking that the question of Yoga, or politics could be finally decided afterwards. I asked whether Pranayama was quite necessary and whether Yoga could be practised without it. He replied in the affirmative and asked me to surrender everything to the Divine and call in the Higher Power to do the Sadhana. Several doubts I had, disappeared on seeing Him and so I could not further question him. After a short silence, he blessed us as we took leave of him. When departing I prayed for permission to see him whenever I wanted, which he granted graciously”.

“Sri Aurobindo had a dynamic force which could be felt in his presence, as he was radiating it all round and into those that could hold it. He......awakened the aspiring soul in me to go forward, more by his will than words, in the manner of the great Rishis of old, who worked wonders through their silence and look and will-power.”

A year and a half later, the young student completes his graduation course and comes to stay with Sri Aurobindo for Sadhana, for a year to begin with. How did he begin? What course was he asked to follow? How was he led?

“Sri Aurobindo did not impart instructions or give initiation through a mantra or a set code of spiritual practices, such as doing japa or pranayama or bhajan or
other methods of concentration or meditation. No rules were laid down to be followed, and no philosophy or religion to be accepted or studied. There was therefore full freedom for a sadhaka to pursue any method or all methods congenial to his or her nature.....The Divine Master's experiences in the shape of philosophy were to be found in his immortal writings in Arya for our theoretical and practical guidance. His divine personality was before the sadhaka like a full-blown lotus, radiating peace, power, light and bliss, to draw from. The only practical rule of sadhana was to surrender one's entire being to the Divine and invoke the Divine Shakti to purify and lighten up the being and transform the same from top to toe by ardent and sincere aspiration, rejecting all lower suggestions. 'All life is Yoga,' declared the Master. These are very simple rules, indeed, but when one enters the path all difficulties of the nature appear, and the divine cows representing Light have to be rescued from the tenebrous caverns in us where they are imprisoned and thereafter we have to yoke the divine horse representing Power to our chariot, win the battle against the Dasayus, representing evil forces, and drink the ambrosial Soma juice, after great labour and victory, at the completion of the sacrifice (Yoga-Yagna.)" 

"The Sadhana chalked out by Sri Aurobindo consists of an ascent to the highest plane of consciousness and a descent from there with the superconscient Light, Power and Ananda, to the conscient, subconscient and inconscient lower levels of mind, life and body, to effect a change of the lower being. It is a very hard Endeavour and only rare souls can achieve the complete victory of the supramentalization of the whole being as envisaged by the Divine Master. The plan was there before me and it had to be worked out patiently in all its details. The task seemed to
be tremendous when I thought of it slowly. But, having made a choice, there was no going back."

Among the many interesting and informative items that find place in the slender book are a description of Sri Aurobindo meditating while walking up and down his verandah for more than 6 hours a day, an account of the evening meetings with disciples when no topics were barred and Sri Aurobindo joked and laughed with them with disarming simplicity, the story of the poltergeist phenomenon that took place in 1921 and the way in which it was handled by the Mother.

There are, in these pages, brief accounts of the various experiences the author had during the course of the sadhana under the direct guidance of Sri Aurobindo. He was given a taste of the realisations recorded in the Rigveda and the Gita (including the Viswa Rupa). In a remarkable passage he writes:

"As I sat before the Master for meditation, the whole being used to become numb as his Force began to work in me and fill my nerves with light and force. I felt as if he was transmitting his divine force and light into me. In his presence, the Force was felt intensely and it began to work in the body day and night and was omnipresent."

After a stay of three years, Kodanda Rama Rao had to change his sphere of sadhana and he settled down in Andhra Pradesh where he has built up for himself special niche. He has been quietly responsible for reaching the message of the Master to many a needy soul.

The author concludes with a moving narration of the experience he had when the Master withdrew from his physical body. "On account of a serious bronchial trouble, I could not attend the Nov. 24, 1950 darshan. My disease
worsened, and it struck me that I must see the Master, and so I started for Madras on the 2nd of Dec. 1950. I got myself X-rayed and consulted my physician friend. He advised me to go back home and not to proceed to Pondicherry in my bad condition then. I hesitated and at last wended my way homewards, on the 4th. I prayed to the Master for my recovery. That night I had a dream about the passing away of a great and effulgent being, taking into himself the poison of the earth and devouring my illness also, and a bright goddess appeared by his side shedding peace and Light on the world. Next morning the papers announced the passing away of the Mighty Master and I was free from my ailment."
NIRODBARAN is a doctor without a penchant for medicine, a poet without conceit, a Bengali without exuberance. His literary skill is of the first order and his reportage of Sri Aurobindo’s Talks, in which he was an active participant, remains unexcelled for grace, accuracy and chaste expression. His portraiture of Sri Aurobindo are vivid to the core and his inspired writing after the passing of Sri Aurobindo under the tide ‘I am here, I am here’, will be always remembered by the devotees and disciples of the Master for its regenerating power. Lovers of literature will turn to his poems and essays, general readers and those interested in history may prefer his Talks, but spiritual aspirants will always treasure his Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo which contains extracts from his letters to the Guru and the Guru’s answers in a style and vein that was always reserved for Nirod. Superbly edited, this volume is divided into convenient sections dealing with Sri Aurobindo’s own life and yoga, his views on several topics of importance, Yoga Sadhana, Art and Literature, Matters Medical—altogether an incredibly extensive field.

To begin with the autobiographical observations of Sri Aurobindo.

Replying to a query about the action of Yogic Force in his own case, Sri Aurobindo writes: “Why was it that I, who never understood or cared for painting, suddenly in a single hour by an opening of vision got the eye to see and the mind of understanding about colour, line and design? How was it that I who was unable to understand and follow a metaphysical argument and whom a page of Kant or Hegel or Hume or even Berkeley left either dazed and uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested because I could not fathom or follow, suddenly began
writing pages of the stuff as soon as I started the Aryan and am now reputed to be a great philosopher? How is it that at a time when I felt it difficult to produce more than a paragraph of prose from time to time and more than a mere poem, short and laboured, perhaps one in two months, suddenly after concentrating and practising Pranayama, daily began to write pages and pages in single day and kept sufficient faculty to edit a big daily paper and afterwards to write 60 pages of philosophy every month?" He refers again to painting: "I understood nothing about painting before I did Yoga. A moment's illumination in Alipore Jail opened my vision and since then I have understood with the intuitive perception and vision. I do not know the technique, of course, but I can catch it at once if anybody with knowledge speaks of it. That would have been impossible to me before."

Voicing the doubt of many a disciple, Nirod asks Sri Aurobindo whether meditation or work is more important in Yoga and which discipline takes one earlier to the goal. Here is the answer:

"To set up an open competition or a closed one between work and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have all along been declaring an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, Works, light of Consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the Aryan all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of Works nor Works greater than Yoga by Knowledge—both are equal."

The right way is to combine the two; meditation must form the background of work and work the testing ground
for the assimilation of the fruits of meditation; each should balance the other.

"If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that can go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation, but to remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards. Half an hour's meditation in the day ought to be possible—if only to bring a concentrated habit into the consciousness which will help it, first to be less outward in work and, secondly, to develop a receptive tendency which can bear its fruits even in the work."

Giving a few practical hints on concentration, Sri Aurobindo notes:

"You need not meditate at once—but for a few moments take a concentrated attitude calling the Mother's presence for the day. At night, you have to pass into sleep in the concentration—you must be able to concentrate with the eyes closed, lying down and the concentration must deepen into sleep—that is to say, sleep must become a concentrated going inside away from the outer waking state. If you find it necessary to sit for a time you may do so, but afterwards lie down keeping the concentration till this happens."

What exactly is meant by works as a means of sadhana?

"I mean by work action done for the Divine and more and more in union with the Divine—for the Divine alone and nothing else......Works done in this spirit are quite as effective as bhakti or contemplation. One gets by the rejection of desire, rajas and ego a peace and purity into which the peace ineffable can descend—one gets by the
dedication of one’s will to the Divine, by the merging of one’s will in the Divine Will the death of ego and the enlarging into the cosmic consciousness or else the uplifting into what is above the cosmic—one experiences the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and is liberated from the shackles of the outer nature; one becomes aware of one’s inner being and sees the outer as an instrument; one feels the universal Force doing one’s works and the self or Purusha watching or witness but free; one feels all one’s works taken from one and done by the universal or the supreme Mother or by the Divine Power controlling and acting from behind the heart. By constant reference of all one’s will and works to the Divine, love and adoration grow, the psychic being comes forward. By the reference to the Power above one can come to feel it above and its descent and the opening to an increasing consciousness and knowledge. Finally, works, bhakti and knowledge join together and self-perfection becomes possible—what we call the transformation of nature.”

Regarding transformation, Sri Aurobindo points out:

“There are different statuses of the transformation. First is the psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the Divine through the individual psychic consciousness. Next is spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the last that there can begin the complete transformation of mind, life and body—in my sense of completeness.”

No doubt much depends upon the Grace in spiritual life, but Sri Aurobindo observes:

“One must yet do some enabling sadhana. The Divine gives the fruits not by the measure of the sadhana but by the measure of the soul and its aspiration.”
The course of sadhana is not smooth:

“Yoga is not a thing that goes by one decisive rush one way or the other—it is a building up of a new consciousness and is full of ups and downs. But if one keeps to it the ups have a habit of resulting by accumulation in a decisive change—therefore the one thing to do is to keep at it. After a fall don’t wall and say, ‘I am done for,’ but get up, dust yourself and proceed farther on the right path.”

It is helpful to look at the positive side instead of being preoccupied with the negative:

“It is always better to dwell on the good side of things within yourself. I do not mean in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence, calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable so that a constant positive growth can help in the rejected.”

“Cheerfulness is the salt of the sadhana. It is a thousand times better than gloominess.”

Yoga is supported by brahmacharya:

“In that physical support the ojas produced by brahmacharya counts greatly. The transformation of retas into ojas is a transformation of physical substance into a physical (necessarily producing also a vital physical) energy. The spiritual energy by itself can only drive the body, like the vital and mental, but in driving it, it would exhaust it if it has not a physical support.”

Among the many other important subjects touched upon is the truth of the Avatar:

“There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions of Nature and it uses it according to the rules
of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game."

Illnesses, the role of medicine and the use of the Yoga-force in effecting cures, Homeopathy and Allopathy, Poetry, Inspiration and the necessity of industry to support the action of inspiration, and many other fascinating subjects come in for treatment. All fields of life claim attention, not indeed on their own account but in order to participate in the Divine Manifestation. Declares Sri Aurobindo:

"Rasa of poetry, painting or physical work is not the thing to go after. What gives the interest in Yoga is the rasa of the Divine and of the divine consciousness which means the rasa of Peace, of Silence, of inner Light and Bliss, of growing inner Knowledge, of increasing inner Power, of the Divine Love, of all the infinite fields of experience that open to one with the opening of the inner consciousness. The true rasa of poetry, painting or any other activity is only found when these things are part of the working of the Divine Force in you, and you feel it is that and it exists in the joy of that working."
SPEECH IN YOGA

It was a long drawn out Telugu film, Sati Savitri, and it was screened at our playground in two parts on successive days. The picture had portrayed graphically the intense struggle undergone by Savitri of the Epic to reclaim Satyaván from the hands of the Lord of Death. The next day when there was a mention of the film before the Mother amongst a few of us. She remarked how fine it was at the end to see Savitri remain silent and answer with only a gesture the anxious enquiries of the royal search party as to why there was so much delay in their return. Savitri had indeed wrought a miracle but she did not feel it necessary to speak about it.

I was struck by this observation of the Mother. It was so characteristic of Her who always prefers not to speak but to do, an attitude which later found a mantric expression in a message given by Her for one of the New Year occasions: NO WORDS—ACTS. It is apposite that the recent publication brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Society containing excerpts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the power and control of speech should bear the same title. NO WORDS—ACTS.

Men rarely realise how much they talk and how little of it is really necessary for their day-to-day life. Stop for a moment and recall how much you have talked during the last one hour and ask yourself whether all of it was indispensable. You will see how wasteful you have been. Speech is a power given to man by Nature. Of all her creatures man alone has been gifted with this power because he is in a position,—he has attained that level of consciousness,—to use it fruitfully. If only he were to be as thoughtul in its use as with some of the other resources which he utilises with so
much economy, he is bound to see his energies remarkably augmented. It has been noted in some of our ancient texts how the centre that governs speech is connected with the centre that controls the vital energy. In a subtle sense, to dissipate speech energy in careless talk is as ruinous as throwing out of sex-energy.

The practical advantages of sparse talk in the affairs of the world are obvious. To think before one talks and to talk with economy of words leads to a certain precision and effectivity. It saves one from a good deal of avoidable involvement and complications. However, we are not concerned at the moment with this aspect of the matter. What is its relevance in Yoga? Does control of speech form part of the self-discipline of Yoga? If control of speech is recommended, then logically, the best counsel would be complete abstinence from speech, mounam, as practised in some of the older ascetic paths. These and allied questions are squarely answered by Sri Aurobindo in his letters.

Mouna, says Sri Aurobindo, is an extreme which is to be avoided for “it isolates too much”, it makes one too subjective. “Absolute silence and looseness of talk are two extremes; neither is good. I have seen many people practising mouna vrata, but afterwards they are just as talkative as before. It is self-mastery you must get.”

Speech is of two kinds, what is necessary and what is wasteful. It is the latter kind that is harmful in sadhana. For “Talk of the usual kind does very easily disperse or bring down the inner condition because it usually comes out of the lower vital and the physical mind only and expresses that part of the consciousness—it has a tendency to externalise the being.” Particularly if the talk relates to something of the past which is best left behind, it “brings back something of the past consciousness.” Even in talk, “the mind should
be free to shut off immediately as soon as the talk is done." In periods requiring greater concentration in sadhana, light talks or chats are specially harmful. "Chat of that kind has indeed a very tiring effect when one is at all in the stream of true experience, because it dissipates the energy uselessly and makes the mind movement a thing of valueless shreds and patches instead of gathered and poised in itself so as to receive."

The control has to be built up during the normal periods. Only then would it be spontaneously effective in times of special intensity. "Not to be under the control of the impulse of speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of the Yogic self-control. It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there it can be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind."

Vigilance is recommended. "Especially speech is a thing which in most people is largely automatic and not under their control. It is the vigilance that establishes the control, so one must be on guard against the danger, the slackening of the vigilance. Only, the more it can be a quiet unmixed, not an anxious vigilance, the better."

The first sign that the talk has been detrimental to the inner health is a feeling of fatigue, dryness. Sri Aurobindo explains: "Talking of an unnecessary character tires the inner being because the talk comes from the outer nature while the inner has to supply the energy which it feels squandered away." "Fatigue is always a sign that the consciousness no longer wants the outward going thought and speech and is even physically strained by it."
How to bring about this control of speech? Why is it so difficult? Sri Aurobindo answers: “It is difficult to bring the speech under control; for people are accustomed to speak what comes to them and not to supervise and control what they say. There is something mechanical about speech and to bring it to the level of the highest part of the consciousness is never easy. That is one reason why to be sparing in speech is helpful. It helps to a more deliberate control and prevents the tongue from running away with one and doing whatever it likes.

“To stand back means to become a witness of one’s own mind and speech, to see them as something separate from oneself and not identify oneself with them. Watching them as a witness separate from them, one gets to know what they are, how they act and then put a control over them, reject what one does not approve and think and speak only what one feels to be true. This cannot, of course, be done all at once. It takes time to establish this attitude of separateness, still more time to establish the control. But it can be done by practice and persistence.” And further: “It is really an inner silence that is needed—a something silent within that looks at outer talk and action but feels it as something superficial, not itself and is quite indifferent and untouched by it. It can bring forces to support speech and action or it can stop them by withdrawal or it can let them go on and observe without being involved or moved”.

In Yoga it is not enough to be sparing in speech one has also to be truthful in speech “Complete truth of speech is very important for the sadhak and a great help for bringing Truth into the consciousness.” Truth in speech is one of the rare ethical virtues that take on an added significance as one steps into spiritual life. What is truth, the jester may
ask. Philosophers may rush and argue that all truth iselative and what is truth today becomes a half-truth to-
tomorrow. There is some point in all these positions. To the
seeker, however, the experience is one of emerging truth
displacing a receding ignorance. He conforms to truth as he
sees it and experiences it at the highest attained level of his
consciousness; but all the while he knows that the truth to
which he subscribes corresponds to his present state of
consciousness and he is prepared to pass to a higher truth
that begins to operate when he reaches a correspondingly
higher level of consciousness in his being. To speak and to
act from the summit of his consciousness—that is the
Mother’s absolute rule for the sadhaka.

To be truthful does not mean to tell everything that
one knows to everybody. Apparent truthfulness in speech
but an intent to mislead does not fill the bill. A statement
made under the honest belief that it is true, but which later
proves to be untrue does not involve a spiritual lapse. Error
is to be distinguished from falsehood. Throwing light on
many of these subtle distinctions of practical import to the
seeker, Sri Aurobindo writes: “If you want to be an
instrument of the Truth, you must always speak the truth
and not falsehood. But this does not mean that you must
tell everything to everybody. To conceal the truth by silence
or refusal to speak is permissible, because the truth may be
misunderstood or misused by those who are not prepared for
it or who are opposed to it. But to speak falsehood is another
matter. Even in jest it should be avoided, because it tends
to lower the consciousness.”

“One is not bound to tell everything to everybody—it
might often do more harm than good. One has only to say
what is necessary. Of course what is said must be true and
not false and there must never be any intention to deceive.”
“There is a great difference between uttering as truth what one believes or knows to be false and uttering as true what one conscientiously believes to be true, but is not in fact true. The first is deliberate falsehood, the second is only error at worst or ignorance.”

“This is from practical point of view of truth speaking. From the point of view of higher Truth, it must not be forgotten that each plane of consciousness has its own standard — what is truth to the mind may be only partial truth to a higher consciousness but it is through the partial truth that the mind has to go in order to reach the wider, more perfect truth beyond. All that is necessary for it is to be open and plastic, to be ready to recognise the higher when it comes, not to cling to the lower because it is its own, not to allow the desires and passions of the vital to blind it to the Light or to twist or pervert things. When once the higher consciousness begins to act, the difficulty diminishes and there is a clear progress from truth to a greater truth.”

Thus one has to be plastic to recognise and adjust oneself to greater and wider revelations of Truth as one ascends the hill of one’s being. One has also to recognise and be charitable to concede the right of others to follow the truth or truths that command their adherence.

Finally, it should be remembered that the control over speech that the sadhaka, is called upon to develop is not of a mental character guided by text book rules but a living psychic self-control which in everyday Life means:

“(1) Not to allow the impulse of speech to assert itself too much or say anything without reflection, but to speak always with a conscious control and only what is necessary and helpful.
(2) To avoid all debate, dispute or too animated discussion and simply say what has to be said and leave it there. There should also be no insistence that you are right and the other wrong, but what is said should only be thrown in as a contribution to the consideration of the truth of the matter.

(3) To keep the tone of speech and the wording very quiet and calm and uninsistent.

(4) Not to mind at all if others are heated and dispute, but remain quiet and undisturbed and yourself speak only what can help things to be smooth again.

(5) If there is gossip about others and harsh criticism,* not to join—for these things are helpful in no way and only lower the consciousness from its higher level.

(6) To avoid all that would hurt or wound others."

*"The habit of criticism—mostly ignorant criticism of others—mixed with all sorts of imaginations, inferences, exaggerations, false interpretations, even gross inventions is one of the universal illnesses. It is a disease of the vital aided by the physical mind which makes itself an instrument of the pleasure taken in this barren and harmful pursuit of the vital. Control of speech, refusal of this disease and the itch of the vital is very necessary, if inner experience has to have any true effect of transformation in the outer life."—Sri Aurobindo.
The most appealing quality of this work is that it is not heavy though it deals, verse by verse, with texts like the Isha, Kena and Katha nor is it light and purfunctory as popular lectures of this kind are apt to be. Swamiji keeps to the golden mean and puts across profound ideas with good deal of fascinating dressing. He draws upon other texts of the spiritual tradition of India, the Veda, the Epics, Bhagavata, etc., and also on modern thought in Science and Religion to illustrate and confirm his explanations of the chosen texts of the Upanishad.

After giving a comprehensive survey of the background of the teaching of the Upanishads and an analysis of their influence on subsequent developments in Indian philosophical and religious thought, the author takes up the Isha Upanishad as it is the one text that boldly tackles the problem of God and the Universe. The very first verse proclaims that the universe is an habitation of God. The world is not falsehood to be rejected, but a truth to be cherished and lived in its right value as a manifestation of the Spirit. The writer observes: “If everything is the Atman or Brahman, the universe of name and form cannot be an illusion.” The Brihadaranyaka is emphatic in its statement: “The cosmic energy is, verily, truth; and This (the Atman) is the truth of that”, Satyasya satyam. (II. 1.20)

Both in the Katha Upanishad and the Gita, the universe is described as an eternal Aswattha Tree whose root is above in the Infinite. Swami Ranganathananda compares this conception with the Ash Tree of Scandinavian

mythology about which Carlyle observes: "All life is figured by them as a tree. Igdrasil, the Ash-Tree of Existence, has its roots deep down in the kingdom of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole universe: it is the tree of Existence. At the foot of it, in the Death-kingdom, sit three Nornas—Past, Present, Future, watering its roots from the Sacred Well."

Swamiji notes: "In spite of many similarities, there is one striking difference between the Scandinavian imageries: the Scandinavian tree of existence has its roots, conceived in the plural, below, in the world of Hela or Death, whereas the Indian tree has its roots, conceived in the singular, the tap-root, above in the world of the immortal and infinite Brahman, urdhvamulam adhah sakham asvatham. The world of Time is rooted in the world of Eternity, Brahman. And what the Scandinavian sages described as the roots below in the world of Death are but the secondary roots according to Indian sages."

Indeed, this world and the beings living therein partake of both these features—immortality and death. The writer quotes from the Mahabharata: "Immortality as well as mortality are both established in the body; by delusion, one reaches death; by truth, one attains immortality." (XII 169.28).

By the pursuit of Truth in life one walks the path that leads to Immortality and by following the false call of falsehood, one goes under. How to avoid the danger of falsehood? By alertness, by vigilance and sincerity to truth. Swamiji cites two striking verses on the need for this wakefulness. "Wakefulness is the way to immortality; heedlessness is the way to death. Those who are wakeful do not die, the heedless are already dead." (Dhammapada, Chap. II).
Also, "Heedlessness alone is death, I say; through constant wakefulness, I proclaim, is immortality (gained)" *(Sanatsujatiyam, Mahabharata, V. 42.4).

Among other interesting explanations is the doctrine of sphone explaining the origin of the world. The author quotes from Swami Vivekananda: "All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible sphone, the manifester, as Logos or World. This eternal sphone, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe. Nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the sphone, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This sphone as one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the Om. If properly pronounced, this Om will represent the whole phenomena of sound-production, and no other word can do this: all this, therefore is the fittest symbol of the sphone, which is the real meaning of the Om. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the Om and the sphone are one. And as the sphone, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearer to God, and is indeed the first manifestation of divine wisdom, this Om is truly symbolic of God."

* pramadam vai mrtvuraham bravimi, sadapramadat, amrtatvam bravimi.
Ramanuja and the Gita

To the Advaitin, karma and bhakti-works and devotion are subsidiary to jnana knowledge; they are preliminary stages preparing the seeker for entry into the high path of knowledge that alone liberates. To the Vishishtadvaitin, follower of Ramanuja, however, bhakti is the sole means for attainment to God, karma and jnana are steps of the discipline that prepares the being by way of purification and enlightenment. Liberation, makti, into the likeness of the Lord can come only by surrender, prapatti, which is the high water mark of bhakti, devotion. It is in this spirit of the great truth of Love for the Divine that the Gita has been approached and interpreted by Ramanuja. This teaching was part of a long tradition to which he was heir, a tradition that dates back in its origins to the hymns of the Rig Veda. The Gitabhasya of Ramanuja by Sri Sampatkumaran is a faithful rendering of the original in Sanskrit along with helpful notes (950 of them) based upon the Gloss, tatparyacandrika, of Sri Vedanta Desika. Each verse is followed by a free rendering in English, translation of the commentary and notes.

In an exhaustive Introduction, the translator sums up the teaching of the Gita under five heads arthapancaka: the nature of God, the nature of the individual soul, the state of final emancipation, the obstacles in the way and the means of attainment. In an interesting observation, he points out that Brahman, the Absolute, has been referred to as one with auspicious attributes. "God is spoken of in the Gita in all the seven or eight cases known to Sanskrit grammar. The Lord, dwelling in the heart, causes each being mounted on the machine of the body, to move through the workings

• Pub. Rangacharya Memorial Trust, Madras-5.
of the gunas of the Prakriti (18.61). To cross beyond the maya, one has to seek Him as refuge (7.14). When liberated from the bonds of karma, one attains Him (9.28). By Him the world is pervaded (9.4). Because Arjuna is dear to Krishna the latter speaks for his good (18-65). There is none higher than Him (7.7). Many births of His have passed away, all of which He knows (4.5) One will live in Him alone, if one’s attention is fixed on Him and one’s will directed to Him (12.8).

The central teaching of the Gita, according to Sri Ramanuja, is that God is the Soul of the universe: I am the Self seated in the heart of all creatures (10.20). Earlier (7.7) He has declared that the whole universe is strung on Him like gems in a necklace. He has two prakriti, a higher and a lower. The latter consists of the material universe while the souls which sustain the material universe, constitute the higher prakriti of the Lord (7.4-5).

There is then an interesting discussion on the difference between kaivalya* of the Vishishtadvaitins and their moksa. “In the case of moksa the primary experience is about God who has the soul for his attribute: in the case of kaivalya, the experience is about the individual soul, though God comes into the picture secondarily as the soul of the soul. There is difference of opinion between the two sects into which the followers of Sri Ramanuja are divided, about whether or not the state of kaivalya is final, though both agree that it is inferior to the full experience of God in the freedom of moksa. Those who follow the lead of Sri

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* "A state of the soul in which it is freed of all association with the prakriti and revels in its innate knowledge and bliss. (This kaivalya, ‘aloneness’) is to be distinguished from the kaivalya which is the final state of release of the Sankhyas and that which constitutes the moksa of the Advaitins."
Lokacharya take the view that *kaivalya* cannot lead to anything else. Sri Vedanta Desika, on the other hand, argues that *kaivalya* is a halfway house to salvation, whence progress to the highest *moksa* is possible and indeed inevitable.

The three stages of Bhakti (*para-bhakti*, intense devotion, *para-jnana*, direct knowledge, *parama-bhakti*, supreme devotion), the doctrine of surrender, *prapatti*, and its origins in the Upanishads, the indispensable intervention of Grace, the testimony of the Alvars to the preaching on self-surrender in the Gita, are some of the other points underlined by Sri Sampatkumaran in his writing introducing this work.
VAISHNAVA ICONOGRAPHY

While it is essentially true that Idols or Images are not significant by themselves but important for what they symbolise, yet the Form itself is not without a basis of its own. All Forms are expressions in shape and colour of their respective truths that seek to manifest. While the ensouling truth is of cardinal importance, the form in which it clothes itself serves its purpose only to the extent it answers in its composition to the quality and vibrations of that truth. If that were not so, any form would do for any truth for purposes of manifestation.

The Form also has an importance of its own. Particularly in the case of images, icons, etc., their function is not merely to serve as a symbol drawing the attention of the mind to the thing symbolised. It acts as a body, as a physical nodus for the human consciousness at one end and the Divine at the other to meet. The form is a transcription in physical substance of the self-figuration of the Divine in the course of its manifestation; that configuration is perceived by the adepts in their subtle vision and transmitted in terms that are appropriate to the human understanding. Each limb of the Image expresses an inner truth and the proportions in the general figure correspond to certain realisations on the subtler planes. It is when all these requirements are fulfilled that the infusion of Consciousness in the Figure, pranapratishta, is done with success.

Vaishnava Iconography* is a splendid treatise on the subject with special reference to the Idols and Icons used in the Pancaratra Religion. The author, who has already written

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widely on some of the practical features of this system, has examined a large number of texts, selected and edited appropriate excerpts from them—not only those in nagari, but also in Telugu and grantha script—and arranged them attractively under suitable headings prefaced with symbolic surveys. Dr. Narasimachary mentions in his learned introduction: "The first four chapters meet the first requirements in iconography—of material, manner and measurement—whereas the remaining four follow the order supported by the Pancaratra texts—starting with Iconographical descriptions of the Lord, the Pivotal Principle lodged in the temple, and then proceeding outwards to cover other deities, chief and secondary, in 'ever-expanding circles,' to use the phrase of the Editors. The opening chapter justifies the importance and usage of images from theological and speculative points of view. The second chapter deals with the materials that can be used for different types of icons. This is followed by chapters on iconometry and pedestals that support the icons. This leads to an elaborate fifth chapter dealing with iconographic details of the several types of manifestations of the Lord such as Vyuha and Avatara, and the Female Deities. This is followed by another chapter on some subsidiary and rare forms of the Lord and His direct attendants like Ananta and Garuda. The seventh chapter provides an insight into the inner divinities: iconographical representations of abstract principles like Dharma and Adharma also find a place in this chapter. In the trial chapter passages bearing upon the decorations, weapons, articles of worship, etc. are presented."

In an interesting note on the temple, Dr. Smith writes:

"The temple residence—its various structural parts and its precincts are analogies to His Being in its visible, subtle and transcendent modes—a veritable symbol of God’s
Presence in the world. Even the names of the various elements in the structural buildings are called by names that signify His bodily parts. If this is so—if the temple is the Body of the Lord—then no temple is ‘alive’ without the vital Presence of the Divine Spirit in its innermost recesses, namely the Lord in His iconic form, the image of the God in the sanctum sanctorum. As Vasishtha Samhita puts it: “For all temples, the pratima-image is the animating jiva-spirit. Therefore by all means a wise man should prepare a pratima-image (of the Lord.)”
SPIRITUALISM

That death is not the end but only a process of the renewal of life, that on shedding his physical body man passes in his subtler body to other worlds from where he comes back to earth, after the necessary period of rest and assimilation, to continue his evolution is a knowledge that is as old as the Upanishads and has been a part of most of the traditions of old. This knowledge has been lost in the West and it is only of late that attempts are being made to revive it. One of the ways in which the reality of life after death is sought to be studied is Spiritualism. Spiritualism, in this context, refers to all those experiments and phenomena in which spirits of the dead are invoked and contacted through mediums. The spirits or 'guides' as they are called, participate in these meetings either through the spoken word or automatic writing. Spiritualism Today* by Maurice Barbanell is a notable book describing this phenomena in its various types. Mr. Barbanell is a long-standing editor of the Psychic News in England and has played a prominent part in popularising this movement for the last few decades. He describes (with documented details) the various experiments conducted by himself and his colleagues, the fight put up by them against interested opposition as from the Church, and the solace brought to suffering humanity by men like Harry Edwards, the famous Healer.

Writing under the title 'Materialisation', The writer describes how those who materialise themselves, in the ectoplasm drawn from the body of the medium, give the full feel of flesh and blood. They have a pulse-beat which can be tested. He quotes Dr. Baker saying that these materialisations had "weight, could be embraced, had pulse beats,

* Herbert Jenkins Ltd. 2 Clements Inn, London, WC-2.
breathed, had intelligence of their own and personalities. Not one materialisation objected to his examination. He felt the pulse of several. Their heart beat at 72 to the minute. He even applied his stethoscope.” The book contains a few vivid photographs of the persons so materialised. The author states: “I want to stress they are not ghosts, apparitions, phantoms or spectres. They speak, move and have heart and pulse beats. Nerve, sinew, muscle and cell are all there. The hand is solid when you grasp it; the finger-nails are complete. The features can be identified, as also can the voice. They are swathed and garbed in dazzling white raiment composed of the mysterious substance known as ectoplasm which mainly extrudes from the medium. Even when the materialisation moves many feet or yards away from the medium there is an invisible lifeline, the equivalent to an umbilical cord, which is attached to the materialisation.”

The writer has several interesting things to say on the subject of Healing and Psychic surgery. Healing is done by 'contact-healing' or by 'treatment-at-a-distance.' In either case, the healer is in contact with a spirit or guide whose vibrations manifest through the hands or the thoughts of the healer and effect the cure. They also "perform bloodless operations and remove growths and tumours from the bodies of patients". These cures have been subjected to exacting medical scrutiny and confirmed by practising surgeons. In cases of 'Psychic surgery', the movements of surgical operations with instruments are gone through by means of bare fingers. The "surgeon" acts through the medium. Entirely rational are some of the explanations given in these pages on the subject. "He performs these operations, not on the patient’s physical body, but on its etheric counterpart. In some cases he uses ectoplasm from the medium to build or repair affected organs. Some patients find, after treatment, there are
marks on their bodies which seem identical to normal operation scars. These appear because his treatment of the ethereal body is reflected in the physical one. Just as the cure is registered in the physical body so the scars appear on it."

Another absorbing section is on what is called Psychometry. By holding an object in hand it is possible, for some gifted persons, to trace its associations, the scenes to which the object has been a witness or events in which it has been a participant, the persons who have touched it at some time or other and so on. The truth of the matter is that each object has a consciousness of its own and all contacts to which it has been exposed leave their own impressions on that consciousness. One who knows how to contact this element in the object automatically receives those impressions in the form in which they are stored there. The author of this book narrates how he once brought two tiny stones from an old Greek temple (of Zeus) and gave them to two mediums both of whom reported scenes and figures of gods and men that belonged to the dead civilisation of Greece. It appears that this particular temple (which dates back to 1000 B.C.) was destroyed during an earthquake. When this writer handed the stones to Estelle Roberts, "her immediate sensation on handling these was of a terrific shock. She could hear clairaudiently the equivalent of a tremendous explosion. Clairvoyantly, she said, she had a vision of a man, aged 30 or 40, who was familiar with psychic matters. He was a teacher who had disciples; She could identify him as 'the man who drank the hemlock.'"

Another observation of interest is the difference in the states of consciousness experienced when the psychic faculties open up by themselves and those that come about on taking drugs like Mescaline. Rosamond Lehmann, a distinguished literary figure in Britain, describes how she had once a natu-
ral visual experience; "Hills, woods, clouds, cornfields, pastures—all had 'come alive'; they were rhythmically moving and interrelating without pause." The light suffusing earth and sky was like 'a universal softly golden incandescence.' These experiences, she notes, were the very opposite of those she had had under mescaline. "That world had been hard-edged, semi-petrified; the spectrum had shrunk, and I discerned only greys, greens, a curious wine-pink. Under the drug I had been hallucinated; now I was, unaccountably but certainly, being given intimations of reality."
SIXTH SERIES

I

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AND INTEGRAL YOGA

It is a common notion that yoga is a movement away from life. Life as it is, is imperfect, enveloped in ignorance, a field of endless labour and suffering. That is so, we are told, because this world has no basis in Truth. This Truth is beyond. And wisdom lies in a conscious withdrawal from this life and attaining union with the Reality that is supra-mundane. Yoga is the means to this end.

In the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this world is as real as the Divine whose creation it is. The whole universe is a progressive manifestation of the Spirit and life is the field of this evolutionary effort. If life is imperfect, unhappy, painful, it is because we do not know how to live it. If the key to right living is found, life changes its hue. And this key lies in the discovery of this source of all life — the Divine.

The centre of each existence is the soul which is an individualised form of the Divine Consciousness. The soul is a growing flame of Light. To discover this true centre of oneself is the first object of yoga. Having discovered it, to make the soul effective in one's life by organising all the parts of the being around it, is the next step. Thus yoga is the science of discovering the true centre of life and the art of building that life around it.

The yoga that is practised in our Ashram has this integral object in view. No part of nature is left out of this scheme as false, inferior or incorrigible. All is recognised to be potentially divine and a conscious effort is made to change the whole in terms of the divine. It is this totality of perspective that gives the title of integrality to our yoga.
Broadly, the being of man is constituted of the physical body, the life-force that activates it, the mind that governs both and the soul which presides over the entire organism. Each of these parts is taught to develop and perfect itself in this scheme of Purna Yoga.

To begin with, the physical body is recognised to be the base of the whole edifice of the perfect man. The body is looked upon as a vehicle of God and cherished as such. It is part of this yoga to train the body to become more and more conscious and develop into a vibrant vehicle of the spirit within. By a judicious combination of physical culture and psychological cleansing, the body is taught to divest itself of retarding elements of inertia, obscurity and disease.

There is then the sphere of vitality, the life-force, that demands fulfilment. Normally it is driven by desire and spends itself in the satisfactions and aggrandisements of the ego and the lower self. In our Ashram a field of work has been organised where this energy of life is yoked to an object higher than the satisfaction of the desire-self. Each one undertakes to do some part of the community work in a spirit of disinterested service. No service is paid for because the monetary motive is totally absent within the Ashram community. Each sadhak is provided for by the Guru once he is accepted as a disciple. He works in the spirit of the Gita to consecrate himself to the Divine and grows in his consciousness according to the sincerity he brings to bear on his effort. Apart from being a means of inner growth, work is also a testing ground for him to develop relations of harmony, spiritual good-will and unselfish love.

Then there is the mind which, naturally, comes in for a good deal of attention. There is a vast literature written by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother covering an incredible range of the higher interests of man. Members are encouraged to
study this literature which is not by any means religious or credal but universal in its range. Philosophy, history, mysticism, politics, sociology, culture, linguistics are some of the faculties that are being built up in the Library and the International Centre of Education that is developing under the aegis of the Ashram. Study groups at various levels are active and care is taken to see that the mind grows with the growth of the inner Consciousness in yoga. The higher Knowledge, *para vidya*, is first imbibed and the lower knowledge, *apara vidya*, is then assimilated in its true value. The mind is cultured and prepared to exceed itself.

At the centre of it all is the soul-culture on which all else depends. It is accepted that in each person there is a divine Presence. If man is not conscious of it, it is because his awareness is always turned outwards. There are veils of desire, ego and ignorance intervening between the surface consciousness and the divine Centre within. A continuous effort is called for to break through these barriers and shift one's centre of consciousness from the surface to the soul-level. For this purpose there is an elastic scheme of inner discipline that is presented to the aspirants. Meditation, concentration, prayer, aspiration, rejection, self-surrender to the Divine are the main lines on which this yoga proceeds. There is no hard and fast system of rules which everyone has to follow. It is recognised here that human nature is extremely variable and each nature should be helped to proceed in the way that suits it best. Each one starts from where he is, chooses the line that is most natural to him—the way of Works, the way of Meditation, the way of Knowledge, the way of Love or a combination of all of them in some measure. Further, the living guidance of the Guru, the Grace of the Divine and the Yoga-Power specially active for the purpose, are all kept at the disposal of the sadhak.
Thus the yoga that is practised in our Ashram under the guidance of the Mother is not a technique to achieve a limited result, whether it be a silencing of the mind or an immersion of the being in Brahman. It is a fourfold way of life by which the physical body, the vital force, the mind, the psychic being are all simultaneously developed in the figure-of a greater, a divine Consciousness, with a view to integrating them around the awakened soul and lifting them into a new dimension of spiritual dynamism that beckons to the mature man. The Ashram aims to evolve a total man whose perfection includes the perfection of his outer life and ensures an effective participation in the universal movement as a centre and channel of the Divine Puissance.
Are you God?

This was the question put to the Mother by an exasperated intellectual from abroad on a visit to the Ashram.

The Mother replied

"This question may be asked of every human being. And the answer is:

Yes, potentially.

And the task of each one is to make a fact of it."

The Mother comes to help man to achieve his own godhood. After ages of evolution, man has shed his animality; the time has come for him to grow into his destined divinity.

This divinity is not something to be sought and attained from outside. It is there within himself, in the deepest core of his own being—the soul. Man is lost in the preoccupations of his surface nature, lives with only a fraction of his potential. For behind his limited physical energy, restricted life-force and the fragmentary consciousness of the mind, there are sources of illimitable energies and consciousness in the deeper ranges of his being, the root source of all being the soul which is the centre of divinity in man. The Mother points the way to arrive at this true centre of existence from where the character of life can be changed in terms of light, power and bliss in place of the present rule of obscurity, limitations and suffering.
Once man becomes conscious of his soul—which is the embodiment of the Divine in the individual—he also finds the true secret of life, LOVE. He realises his unity with the rest of the world as he comes to experience that the self which is the base of his existence and the self which is the base of others are one. There ensues a spontaneous movement of Harmony, Love, Oneness.

This spreads from man to man. The perspective of life undergoes a radical change preparing man for a gradual transformation of his humanity into divinity. The initial condition of this process, however, is that man must consent to discard his present, narrow, ego-based way of life in ignorance and replace it by a soul-oriented life of which psychological purity, equality and enlargement of consciousness are the essential requisites.

The Mother shows the natural way to do it.
DOUBTS OF A VISITOR

We in the Ashram are used to many kinds of questions, some flippant, some rising from idle curiosity, some undisguisedly hostile, a few sincere queries based upon a genuine desire to know. A letter received recently contains questions to the Mother which may strike as offensive, but on a second reading, they betray the difficulties of a mind conditioned by the beliefs and general samskaras of a by-gone age in adjusting itself to the new Time-Spirit that is pressing upon us. It is in this context that these questions are taken up for discussion which might prove helpful to many others in the same situation.

**Question:** On the 15th August which was Sri Aurobindo's birthday, no specific celebrations were made for him. Also during meditation time in the playground, your slides were shown rather than Sri Aurobindo's. Do you permit this publicity?

**Answer:** Darshan here does not mean a physical showing of oneself. Right from the beginning of the Ashram, the Darshan has meant a special invocation of the Divine Consciousness and its conscious projection among those who are present. Certain dates have been chosen for this purpose, the choice being governed by various considerations, some of them of an occult character and some with a view to proper periodicity of the influx. Thus there is little that is personal in the usual sense about the Darshan occasion. Formerly both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother used to receive the devotees. Now naturally the Mother receives them. The celebration is of the Ideal, the Truth they stand for and embody. The occasion marks a special canalisation of that Truth-consciousness to those who seek it and are present.

The slides are shown at the Playground in response to the specific request of devotees who experience a certain
spiritual upliftment during that period and hence always look forward to such occasions with eagerness. Sri Aurobindo had not permitted any photo slides to be taken during his physical life and hence there are no slides of his to be shown.

**Question:** For every Ashramite Mother, that is your kind self, is not only Guru but God. No other God is worshipped or considered for worship. Is this belief permissible?

**Answer:** This is not a belief enjoined upon anyone admitted in the Ashram. It is a fact of experience on the part of each individual. Everyone here who cherishes the Mother as the Divine does so because at sometime, in some way, he has deeply felt or seen or realised that She embodies the Divine for him. It is our experience that in our adoration and inner worship of the Divine Mother all the gods and goddesses receive their share.

**Question:** Does it not increase fatalism to have everything to you? Whatever Mother desires will be done—it is said.

**Answer:** On the contrary, one submits not to fatalism but to the Supreme Will acting in the person of the Mother. A spiritual seeker of the integral path does not resign himself to circumstances and “leave everything” to some extraneous agency. He lifts up his will and initiative for action from the normal subjection to the lower, ignorant ego-nature, and gears it to the higher Divine Will. In acting thus, he frees himself from the lower determinism and aims at becoming an uninvolved instrument of the Divine Will. He breathes the freer air of the Spirit. Naturally this is a long process but every step taken on the path is a step away from subjection to fatalism. There is no indifference to result but there is, first, a wide equality to the results whatever they may be, next, a tranquil joy in whatever results are ordained by the foreseeing Will.
Question: Is it not developing Personality Cult? If so what will happen when this Personality disappears from this external scene of this noble institute (Ashram)?

Answer: There are two aspects of the Divine in manifestation, the Impersonal and the Personal. Whether one approaches the Divine as a vast Impersonality of Peace, Light, Power or pure Consciousness, or whether one approaches the Divine as formulated in a particular embodiment, depends upon the nature and the goal of the seeker. According as the seeking is, the Divine yields itself to be experienced and realised. The Personal and the Impersonal are both complementary truths of the Divine. In the history of the creation, the Divine has chosen to manifest itself in certain personalities who have left an indelible mark on the evolution of the human consciousness. Their physical bodies may have been shed in the normal course—according to the rules of the game—but that has not made any difference to the spiritual and occult participation and governance by those personalities in the continued evolution of the human race. The stamp of Rama is as living today as it was thousands of years ago. The call of Krishna is as enchanting today as it was when he was physically present. Divine personalities do not cease to be present with their withdrawal from the physical scene in a physical way. In fact it has been testified all the world over that their impact is greater when their workings are not circumscribed by the limitations of the physical instrumentation.

Question: Why is non-vegetarian cooking and eating allowed in Auroville City which is going to be developed as a spiritual city?

Answer: What is wrong with non-vegetarian diet? What has it got to do with spirituality? Do you mean that all vegetarians are spiritual and all non-vegetarians unspiritual? One takes the kind of food to which one is
accustomed. If spiritual consciousness is helped, promoted, and nourished by food at all, it is not by physical food. The Upanishad is clear on this point. It is psychological intake that decides the question. The kind of thoughts one thinks, the kind of influences one is open to from the environment, the type of emotions one harbours and develops—these are really the factors that help or retard the growth of one’s consciousness truthward. Food as such plays a very small part in this context. As long as it serves to maintain the physical body and its life energies in a healthy condition, it really matters little whether it is vegetarian or non-vegetarian or mixed. One takes what best suits one’s constitution.

**Question:** Why are there different symbols of Mother and Sri Aurobindo when actually there is no difference between their philosophies?

**Answer:** Though the Truth is One, its manifestation takes many forms; its workings reveal many aspects each of which has its own perspective. Each working is represented by a figure that renders it best to the perceiving eye. Thus the Mother’s symbol presents the truth of Creation in terms of the one primal Puissance emanating out of itself four major Powers which in turn put out twelve subsidiary powers of creation. Sri Aurobindo’s symbol represents another aspect of the same Creation. The triple higher truth of Satchidananda represented by the descending triangle met by the triple truth of the lower hemisphere—matter, life and mind—represented by the ascending triangle, the junction of both forming the perfect creation of the supramental consciousness symbolised by the square.

Thus the two symbols stand for two fundamental facts of this Creation.
THE MAN I LOVE

Someone had asked Mother for the meaning of Her message, "Cling to Truth". What is truth? was the query.

The Mother turned to each one who was around and looked for the answer; She passed from person to person till the turn came of this one. He replied:
"There is no need to define truth; if one is sincere, one knows what truth is."

"Exactly," said the Mother who was pleased with the straight answer.

That is my man. Straightforward in nature, he always goes straight to the heart of things. He may protest that he is not learned in philosophy and such-like high subjects. But that is his virtue. Give him any piece of writing, make him listen to any discourse, he will immediately react to the right note if there be one.

Raso vai sah. Nothing is too high or too low for him. He will listen to the talk of a child with as much concentration and glow on his face as to a profound conversation by the Mother. Music, painting (classical and futurist), handwork, manual labour—all claim his impartial and entire attention when they come before him. He exercises no preferences; to him all is samam brahma, the watchword of every yoga.

He will again protest that he does not know yoga and say that he is only a worker whose Mantra is Service. True, he is the embodiment of Service and the manner and the extent to which he has been privileged to serve both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for over five decades has no parallel. Neither food nor sleep has claims over his time.
But the quantum of service has no value for him. Did he not one day say to the Mother in the anguish of his soul: “Mother, all these years, I have served as I wanted to serve; now I want to serve as you would want me to do.” Hanuman could hardly have bettered this.

And why has he chosen to serve? Because it is his spiritual Dharma. In his very childhood he perceived that Service to the Divine was the mould of his soul. He serves the Divine in and as the Guru, the Mother Supreme; but he also serves the Divine in the endless humanity that comes to the Mother’s Feet. Yes, he serves you and me also. He will never allow a wrong to pass unrighted, however humble be the victim involved. I have always held that he is the one man in our world here who stands for principles and who will fight for them, no matter what the consequences be.

No doubt certain elements tend to exploit his nature and at times do succeed. But that is not because he is really deceived. He deliberately allows the benefit of the doubt to others, sees some good or deliverance coming to them through whatever apparent evil.

All of us know he will not suffer fools and knaves for a moment; they call out his wrath in an ample measure. But Rudra soon yields to Shiva. He feels immediately sorry for his temper and makes up for it abundantly and gracefully. Like a child, balavat, he will tell you how anger has been his curse, how he cannot help it until you begin to feel sorry for creating a situation that caused the flare-up!

Can you help loving such a man? So evolved, so privileged, and yet so transparent, so humble!

I have watched him from a distance, come into closer contact with him for some time, and what I have seen, felt and experienced made me exclaim one day, in his presence,
to a friend: "He is the one man who can be an atmaratih (one whose delight and contentment is in the Self) of the Upanishad. He is so impersonal in attitude, he is attached to nothing". He, however, came down on me. He started cataloguing all his supposed defects, and vehemently disclaimed what I said. I was moved by his humility and strengthened in my conviction.

Why don't you tell us his name, you might ask. Is it really necessary to do so? Is there any other like him?

Don't ask me if it is not CHAMPAKLAL!

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1 Not even the standards by which he lays great store normally. In moments of crises, I have seen him overpass them, in deference to the Divine Will, without the least regret. He has not studied Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita, to be sure, but he acts spontaneously in the spirit of the Master's Call.
II

YOGA
INTEGRAL
YOGA & THE TRIPLE PATH

I do not know if I understand the relation between the yoga of Self-Perfection and the Triple Path. Are you aware of it? Does one make one’s entry into the ‘stream of sadhana’ through one door of the Triple Path, and when that widens into the other two and there is a descent, does the Yoga of Self-Perfection then begin? Or is Self-Perfection a fourth entry into the sadhana?

The Yoga of self-perfection begins when one accepts the Ideal of an integral self-perfection and dedicates oneself to its realisation. Unlike the Yogas of the Triple Path, the Yoga of Works, the Yoga of Devotion, the Yoga of Knowledge, which aim at Liberation from Ignorance and Union with the Divine—a goal of which fulfilment in the world is no part—this Yoga envisages a progressive perfection of all the parts of the being with a view to manifesting the Divine Consciousness in life here on earth. Liberation from Ignorance, Union with the Divine, are the first indispensable steps in this Path. Naturally the three Yogas that are referred to enter into the practice of this pervading Yoga from the very beginning. Each of these Yogas is not a door of eventual escape into the Spirit, but a discipline to purify and culture the apposite part of the being. One does not start here at one place only. One makes a start at every point: the body and the life-force learn to consecrate themselves to the Divine in work; the emotions, the heart and its love, pour themselves at the altar of the Divine; the faculties of the mind train themselves in discrimination, rejection of falsehood and acceptance of truth in knowledge. It is a simultaneous movement on all fronts impelled by a fiery aspiration and led by the Yoga Power active for the purpose. Ascent of aspiration and the descent of Grace in the form of the
effectuating Shakti are the two wheels of the vehicle of Poorna Yoga.

It will be thus clear that the Yoga of self-perfection is not a fourth door that opens after the three others have been crossed through; it is not a way that succeeds the completion of others. It is a comprehensive Path which includes in its technique not only the three but even other lines of advance. The very goal of the triple path undergoes a change when it is made part of the Integral Yoga. The fusion starts taking place earlier in the frame of the larger Yoga.
MONEY

He is a considerable figure in the spiritual world of today. One day a number of devotees, who had come for his darshan, laid before him some currency notes by way of offering, in keeping with the age-old custom that one should not go empty-handed to elders worthy of respect. After the visitors went away, I learn, the Swami pushed aside with his foot the money lying in front and asked an attendant to remove it. Another Swami would not condescend to touch money-offerings even with his foot. He had a broom brought to clear the pedestal on which they had been heaped.

Both these incidents come to me with something of an unpleasant shock. For it is a time-honoured ancient tradition in our land to look upon money as goddess Lakshmi and cherish it as such. This is not a mere superstition to be given a go-by as one grows into the ways of the world or gains enlightenment of the Spirit. It is a spiritual truth that Money represents a power of the Divine in this Creation. It is one of the main powers and it is intended to be used for the furtherance of the Divine Manifestation. May be it is at present—like some other powers—in the hands of the Anti-Divine. But, like them, it is meant to be won back from its present possessors and laid exclusively at the service of the Divine. No one, least of all a seeker of God, has a right to look down upon this money power. The fact that money tends to draw one away from God by creating an exclusive greed for itself in its possessor is no reason why it should be shunned. Does not all power corrupt? It is the duty of the awakened man to learn to use power—in the present context, money-power—in the right spirit, put it to the right use without getting deflected from its true purpose. It is only so that this power can be claimed back from the hostile
agencies and utilised for the purpose for which it has been released into this Manifestation. It is the enlightened and the awakened who have to set an example and give a lead in the proper use of money. If they shy away, then a great power for the betterment of material conditions of the world continues to be lost.

In the present conditions of the world, money-power controls the working of the material forces to a great extent. Like all powers in Nature, it moves and is drawn more towards those who cherish it. Where money is respected, received and tended with sincerity, there it tends to flow. An affinity is created. This is an occult truth which is behind the well-known phenomena of the rich getting richer. This is not to say that money always goes into the right hands. There are no ethical rules governing the movement of money. It is drawn wherever a magnetic field is created for it. Hitherto, under a certain ascetic inspiration, money has been looked down upon. That is why most spiritual causes have been denied help by this power. It is time that one learns to look at things in the proper perspective and make full use of the resources placed by the Divine at the disposal of man.

The fault lies not in the things that are abused, e.g., wealth (money is a power of wealth), material power, woman, etc., but in those who raise a hue and cry against them in the name of spirituality. It all depends really upon the attitude with which one approaches them. Commenting once on the old foolish adage that woman is the door to hell, Sri Aurobindo remarked that it is so only with men in whom the door is wide open in themselves. All depends upon the spirit one brings to bear on these things. I remember a devotee once asking the Mother if marriage would be a hindrance to her future spiritual life. The
Mother replied that it depended on her attitude to marriage. Whether a thing is a help or a hindrance depends upon the attitude one takes towards it.

A healthy respect for money, for the control it exercises in the material domain, a becoming humility in the use of it as a trustee for the Divine who is the ultimate possessor of all money, is the right spiritual attitude in the matter.

"Do not despise Matter; increase Matter." This is the injunction of the ancient seers to the son of Earth.

Money is a Force in the material organisation of the world. It should be drawn, nourished and put to the use for which it is meant — the service of the Divine Manifestation. It must not be denied or bottled up or misused. A seeker of the Divine has a special responsibility in the acquisition and right use of it without the taint of ego, desire or greed.
RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR THE SADHAKA

1. You write that you had a problem before you for the past one year and that you had submitted it to the Mother in prayer and had hoped that it would be solved in a particular way. But it has happened otherwise. You are intrigued that such a thing should happen in spite of the Mother’s protection. You wonder if it is due to any failing on your part.

Well, there are many factors that are to be taken into account in such matters. The Karmic load that you carry, the bearings of the problem on those around you and their own Karmic pulls, the extent to which the matter touches the larger will in the collectivity, the extent to which you have put forward the right energies for the achievement of the objective you have in view, and above all, the choice of your soul of which you may or may not be aware. When a person prays to the Mother sincerely in such matters Her Blessings go forth for the effectuation of what is best for the soul, whether it coincides with the expectations of the mind or not. If your submission of the difficulty to the Divine has been sincere and your reliance on the Divine’s will is genuine, then you have to accept the result—such as has come to be—as the best for you in the long run. After all, as Sri Aurobindo says, God is wiser than man and He knows what is best for His children.

You can take it that if you surrender inwardly to the Divine Will and conduct yourself in conformity with it according to your best lights, what happens will always be the best possible under the prevailing circumstances.

You say that such an explanation satisfies your mind but not your heart. Permit me to say that it is not the heart
that declines; the heart is almost always more enlightened than the mind and more readily responsive to the Divine guidance. For the heart centre is very near the station of the individual Divine in the body, the psychic. What is raising the difficulty is the vital being which is obviously disappointed at the turn of things. Once the mind really accepts the situation in the right spirit, the vital will reconcile itself to it sooner or later.

2. You ask how to get the Divine’s help in solving problems in higher mathematics. You have been told that when a problem is set before you, you should enquire into it, question it etc., that is to keep the mind active. You are wondering whether you shouldn’t rather keep the mind silent.

Truth to tell, both are necessary. In the first place the mind must be centred round the problem. The faculties of the intellect must be gathered up and made to seize the problem. Mental activity is to be organised in such a way that the mind is soaked in all the bearings of the problem so that a certain affinity is created between the veiled truth behind the problem and the seeking intelligence. Once this is done one has just to drop the activity and keep silent, receptive. That prepares the way for the solution to communicate itself either in a swift flash of intuition or in a series of graded steps leading to the true answer.

When the mind is kept silent, one should be careful not to strain oneself, not to remain expectant. One has just to submit the problem to the Higher Power and remain trustfully quiet. If necessary one can forget for the moment the problem and keep the outer mind engaged in some other light occupation. Very often the solution comes at the most unexpected moment.
In this and similar matters the ideal attitude is to leave nothing undone by way of effort at the human end, but to leave the consummation to the Higher Intelligence.

3. The present state of affairs in India with the fall in standards, corruption at all levels, spread of communism, is alarming. How is the Mother working in this context? How does She protect the sadhaks?

The Mother is certainly aware of the confusion caused by the play of forces, not only in India but elsewhere also. She does not take too local a view of the situation but works from an overall stand-point, exerting pressure in Her own way for the displacement of falsehood by Truth. It is naturally a long process and the results take a good deal of time to appear, especially since She does not believe in sudden transformations or miracles. She helps things to grow naturally, in terms of spiritual evolution.

Regarding the sadhaks: Those who are inwardly surrendered to Her automatically enjoy a circle of protection around them. Unless the person concerned cuts across this circle by any wrong movement of thought or action, the best possible under the circumstances happens to him. He is guarded from harm. Note that in the Divine Wisdom lesser evils are allowed at times to keep greater evils at bay. When something unexpected and wrong takes place, the right attitude is to thank the Divine that a worse thing has not happened.

4. How to maintain a higher consciousness all the time, say even while reading newspapers? Is it good to read newspapers?

Higher consciousness means a consciousness that is not tied down to lower nature, sense-mind, ego. There is a state of being that is deeper than the nature of passions, desires and emotions; there is a state that is higher than
the physical or the sensational mind which are always preoccupied with creature comforts, sense-objects etc. This consciousness that is not involved in the limited round of humdrum life is to be cultivated. It lifts one to levels that lead to inner liberation.

If this state of consciousness is cultivated and stabilised within, it does not matter much what activity is done on the surface. The mind may be engaged in reading, the body in movement, the life-force in action; the inner consciousness is not affected. All that is necessary is to keep part of the attention fixed on the inner consciousness, in the background.

In this context, it is immaterial what one reads. Usually it is found that whatever one reads with attention helps the general consciousness to gather itself into focus. The surface mind is engaged in reading, the rest of the awareness is collected and ready for a deeper movement. Of course if the matter that is read is too exciting and the vital mind participates in the excitement, there is some agitation in the being. One must learn to read without involving the whole being in the act.

5. What can be done to get over any deep-rooted weakness in the system?

To do what Patanjali advises: to cultivate the opposite movement; not to fight with the weakness but to build up the corresponding strength. Impurity must be countered with purity, ignorance with knowledge, Tamas with Rajas and so on. Positive movements must be cultivated; they naturally displace the negative ones. For instance, attraction to the opposite sex and similar lower pulls must be offset by attractions to some higher pursuits e.g., idealistic, literary, religious, spiritual etc. As the being throws itself in these higher movements, the lower ones lose their edge. Of course
the will must be exercised in favour of the right choice in every situation.

6. How to get over attraction to the female form, for instance? The eye and the mind run to it.

It is difficult to get rid of habits that have been there and dug themselves into the nature for long. The best way is to localise the movement. That is to say, not to dwell upon the sight once it has physically passed by. It is the pouring of the mental energies, manasa-bhoga, that is more harmful than a physical indulgence of this type for a moment. As other interests—higher or inner—claim the being more and more, this tendency slowly peters away.

7. Why is writing a diary recommended for a sadhaka?

Because that gives an opportunity to the person to look into himself and see the kind of movements that are finding expression in his daily life. If he is sincere, he must record faithfully his activities of the day, the main thoughts that have coursed through his mind, the experiences he has had, his reactions to impacts from outside. While recollecting and recording these things, he comes face to face with his own nature, comes to know how far he has been sincere to his professions—idealistic or spiritual—, the leeway to be made up etc.

More important is the form he gives to his aspirations and thoughts. In clothing them with words, he gives them a certain concreteness which generates a force for their realisation: Writing gives a precision and a direction to vague movements of mind and heart.
SADHANA IN LIFE

What is living from moment to moment?

In the spiritual context it means not to have anxiety about what is to happen next. One meets the situations as they present themselves. There is no looking back to the past; there is no anticipatory look at the future either. One is not worried as to what may happen at the next moment or how to provide for future contingencies. One leaves everything to the Divine and lives in the firm faith and trust that the Divine knows what is best and the best possible will happen at each moment. What comes is taken as the Divine Will and worked out to the best of one’s lights.

This way of life is possible only if there is complete surrender to the Divine will and full trust in the Divine’s help.

What is meant by ‘Remember and offer’?

This is the process of consecration. Once the central decision to surrender to the Divine is taken, the next step is to apply that decision in life to each part and form of one’s activity. Thus, for instance, one offers all the work one does to the Divine. At the outset, before commencing the work, the Divine is invoked and what is going to be done is offered to the Divine through a dedication of the heart and the mind. But, it is seen that as the work goes on, the worker is lost in the work and the Divine to whom the act is offered is either forgotten or pushed away into the background. The sadhaka has to remember the Divine again and again and renew his dedication. That way the intensity of the offering is maintained and the contact with the Divine through the idea of consecration is kept unbroken. This repeated remembrance and repeated affirmation of dedication builds
up a natural habit and ultimately one does not have to make this effort; it proceeds spontaneously.

This holds good in all spheres of life where there is an output of one's energies, physical, vital, mental or psychic.

*What is wideness and how to get it?*

Man is normally limited in the range of his thoughts and feelings and emotions—not to speak of his physical activities—by his immediate, personal interests. His world is small, his consciousness is severely limited. It is a part of culture to extend the range of interests and consciousness. In spiritual life it is an imperative. To become conscious of the limited air one breathes, the walls of the ego within which one is usually shut up, is the first step. The next step is to mentally conceive of the larger expanses of mind and life that are open for the enlargement of one's personality and consciousness. To think widely, to feel largely, to consciously extend the area of one's awareness and identify oneself with the Infinity that is around, is the way. With the breakdown of the barriers of separativeness in consciousness man begins to expand into his universal Self.

One begins at home. Personal considerations must be subordinated to those of others around, as a discipline. The habitual outlook based upon self-centredness must yield to a newer and wider perspective. With the cultivation of this mental and vital wideness, the doors are opened to spiritual wideness which means a breakthrough of the individual beyond the shell of the sense-governed thought-mind.

*DURING MEDITATION, THE MIND SEEMS TO FALL SILENT FOR SOME TIME. HOW TO REMAIN CONSCIOUS WHEN THE MIND IS THUS SILENT?*

The mind is really conscious only during periods of silence. During periods of thought-activity, the consciousness
is obscured; there is only the froth on the surface. When the outer mind falls silent, the real consciousness of the mind emerges by itself and becomes alive. If one is not aware of this phenomenon it is because a kind of immobility comes over the surface mind and induces the feeling of sleep. If one persists, slowly the dormant layer yields to the vibrant layers of the mind-consciousness that reveal themselves.
MIND AND YOGA

How to kill the mind in Yoga? By catching each thought as it comes and throwing it out?

No part of the being is to be killed in this Yoga of perfection and transformation, much less the mind which has been developed by Nature after aeons of evolution. It is mind that makes man what he is and places him at the head of the march of spiritual evolution.

The mind is to be changed, spiritualised, transformed ultimately into its original Principle of Truth-Consciousness.

Normally man lives very much in the surface-mind and is lost in its movements. The first step is to become conscious of one’s mental activity. One must take note of the thoughts, tendencies and habits that are formed in the mind. In the process of this self-observation there comes a slow, natural division between the part of the mind that observes and watches and the part that is active. This division develops into a practical bifurcation. Once this separation is effected, the next step is to exercise control and check from the un-involved part of the mind over the running mind. The thought-movements are regulated; those that are inimical to the aspiration, or wasteful are eliminated and the right ones encouraged. By such a change, the mind gets enlarged; its larger and deeper ranges that are open to greater calm, peace, knowledge etc., come into operation. The mind gets open to what is beyond it—the spirit.

To become conscious, to observe, to regulate and to change the direction of the mind-operations is the way.
SELF - CONTROL

How to control movements like anger, excitement? They say one must repeat the name of God for this purpose.

One must first make a willed determination, *samkalpa*, not to give room to excitement, passions like anger, violence etc. Once that is done, the next step is to be always conscious. By being vigilant, self-aware, one can detect the rise of these movements even before they take shape in the being. The moment one becomes aware of the stir of these unwelcome movements, one must impose one's will on them and finally reject them. In the beginning one suppresses them; later one knows how to reject them. Here comes the element of sincerity. If one is sincere there is no problem. If, however, this sincerity is lacking, other elements like the vital, the ego, advance specious arguments for indulgence in the wrong movements and one is carried away.

The know is easy, to carry into execution is difficult,

Sincerity creates a habit of automatic rejection in the course of time.

The root of all such unspiritual movements like anger, jealousy, violence etc., lies in desire and ego. Desire denied provokes anger, depression; the claims of ego unrecognised or unfulfilled lead to dark reactions. To tackle the problem at the roots of desire and ego is the radical solution.

Eliminate desire and ego, there will be no reactions; instead there will be calm equality in all conditions.

Japa of the name can be helpful in quieting the distorting vibrations, but the main remedy lies in one’s own hands.
HUMAN LOVE & DIVINE LOVE

Is human love an impediment to divine love?

Not always. It depends upon how one loves, though humanly. Normally human love is a name for a transaction between two individuals in mutual interest; there is an exchange of energies that is satisfying to both. The bond that ensures this interchange is called love. Clearly, it is self-regarding; there is always a claim, a demand on the other for response and movements that buttress one’s own life-enjoyment. If one remains satisfied with this arrangement, one stays at this level, satisfied or frustrated.

But if this human love is to lead one to the divine love, it is necessary that it be gradually purified by ridding it of the selfish element. One must learn not to demand, not to expect, but only to give oneself to the other. Irrespective of the response from the other, one must surrender oneself in love. This movement of self-giving, without expectation of recompense, purifies the emotion, deepens it and turns it towards the true soul-relation. Human love deepens into something more than human and eventually turns into the divine.

It is really a question of sincerity. If love is made a cover for indulgence there is no hope. But if it is made a training ground for self-giving and increasing the capacity to love another instead of loving oneself,* then it can be the jumping board to divine Love.

* Most human love is self-love. Even in the much lauded love of a mother for her child, it is attachment to what is one’s own; the child is loved not because it is lovable in itself but because it is one’s own child, born of one’s own body and to that extent it is oneself in another form. What happens to the child affects one very personally because one is involved in many ways in the life of the child; it is this personal involvement that expresses itself in various forms, one of which is ‘love’ from which one’s claim is not entirely absent though it may not be readily pressed.
ILLUSION & THE WORLD

The Mother uses the word 'Illusion' to describe this world in some of her Prayers and Meditations. For instance, "Upon this world of illusion, this sombre nightmare, Thou hast bestowed Thy divine reality," (13-1-1914) and "O Lord, Thou alone art real and all else is illusion." (19-1-1914).

Is this not contrary to Sri Aurobindo’s view that the world is real?

No, it confirms Sri Aurobindo’s perception and experience that the Universe is real because it is a manifestation of the Divine. The Divine is the sole Reality and whatever emanates from the Divine, manifests from the Divine, shares that reality. All that exists is real because the Divine is the sole Existent and all is a Becoming of his Infinite Being. Anything conceived as apart from the Divine is necessarily un-real, an illusion of the conceiving mind.

It is in this sense of something real by itself, without its divine content, that the world is not real. Whatever is real is so because the Divine is in it. The atom is real because, as the Mother says, (in the same sentence of 13-1-1914) "each atom of matter contains something of Thy absolute."

Everything is an illusion when conceived as distinct from the ensouling Divine. When the world is so conceived and lived in, its true character of the Reality is missed. Life becomes a fruitless exercise and a vain illusion. But if the true nature of the world as a divine manifestation is grasped and life lived in that context, every experience testifies to the Reality that invests the world-movement with deep significance.

Advocates of the Illusionist theory do not admit at all that the world is a manifestation of the Divine. To them it
is an imposition by Maya on the pure Being of Brahman; it may be true to those who are involved in the world—as long as they are in it—but it has no intrinsic reality that the Divine has. In the vision and realisation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the world is a Becoming of the Being of the Divine and naturally is as true and as real as the Divine is.
PHYSICAL—VITAL—MENTAL

The Upanishad speaks of five bodies, sheaths, kosas, of man. They are the annamaya, material, pranamaya, vital, manomaya, mental, vijnanamaya, causal or ideal, anandamaya, blissful. The physical body of man is not all. There are as many bodies, sheaths as they are expressively called, as there are principles of existence seeking embodiment in him.

Thus the material body is the organisation of the principle of Matter and it is governed by the laws of Matter. This is the physical part of the being of man.

Vivifying and activising the physical body is the life-force, prana. This life-energy builds its own vehicle in the being of man and that organisation of prana is what Sri Aurobindo calls the vital. The vital derives from the principle of Prana, Vital, in the Universe, even as the material body derives from the Material principle in Creation. The vital expresses itself as life-energy, forms its own subtle vehicle, the vital body. This vital body is not independent of the physical in which it functions. It touches the other, in fact a part of it is embedded in the physical: the vital-physical. So also a part of the vital is projected into the mental above it: the vital-mental.

Above both the physical and the vital, leading them, prana-sariraneta, is the mind. This is the organisation of the mental principle, the vehicle of mental energy. Derived from the Cosmic Mental principle, the mind is many-tiered. A part of it is embedded in the vital and the physical: the physical mind and the vital mind. Of the mind itself there are many layers. There is, for instance, the sense-mind, which is known commonly as manas; there is the thought-mind, the ideative mind and so on, expressing the particular faculty of the Mind that is active at that level.
This is, however, only a broad classification of the three different principles that are embodied in man. But they are not demarcated from each other as so many independent powers or bodies. It is really a graded formulation of one Substance with varying degrees of subtlety appropriate to the principles of existence that seek embodiment. Thus between the physical proper and the vital, there is the subtle-physical which partakes of the character of the physical to a certain extent and also of the vital.

This subtle-physical body is what is described as the astral body in Theosophy. Most of the sorties in the subtler worlds take place while in this body.

There is one important distinction between the descriptions of the different bodies of man in the Upanishad and in the Yoga-system of Sri Aurobindo. In the older classification, the pranamaya sarira, the vital body, is within the material body, annamaya; it is smaller. Still smaller is the manamaya sarira, the mental body which is enclosed within the vital; similarly the ideal and the blissful are tinier and tinier. In our system, the subtle-physical body is like an envelope over the physical. Nothing can touch the physical body without first passing through the subtle-physical body.* The vital body is larger than the subtle-physical, the mental vaster than the vital and so on. It is a series of expanding circles as it were.

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* That is why one can stop illnesses from attacking the body by preventing them from entering the subtle-physical envelope where one's will can be more effective than in the physical body.
In saying that Yajna, Dana and Tapa are treated as three different concepts both by the Gita and Sri Aurobindo, you are correct. Dana, giving, relates to the field of Karma in which man is engaged. Perforce he puts out certain energies from his being in the execution of any work. His giving is a part of the many givings from many individuals that participate in the situation. Without this giving of something of himself man cannot achieve anything in this field of Karma. It is obligatory.

Yajna, sacrifice, on the other hand, is not obligatory on everyone—obligatory in the sense of an enforced giving. Sacrifice, self-consecration, comes in at a stage when man is sufficiently developed in his consciousness. It is a willing offering of oneself and one’s exertions to the higher power, universal or transcendent, in a sheer joy of consecration. This sacrifice does not form part of the operations of the field of Karma in which man is placed. It is a conscious act leading to a gradual transcendence of Nature and its sphere of many-sided Karma.

I hope the distinction is clear.
ON TANTRA

What is the meaning of kula? Why is the Tantric discipline called kulapatha?

Kula has several meanings but the one relevant in this context is Shakti, Divine Power. All tantric paths are not called kulapatha. Only that path which leads to the Divine Mother is the kula-patha, the path that leads to kula, the Shakti, is kula, Shiva is akula. The relation between the Two, especially the relation of harmony, samarasya, is kaula.

Are the panchamakararas only symbolic? or are they material objects as well? Perhaps they are symbolic in divyacara and physical for the pasu. Is that right?

The Five Ms. viz. Wine, Meat, Fish, Cereal, Woman, are indeed fully material ingredients in the particular ritual. They have a symbolic significance like all the materials used in outer worship. But the pasu, unregenerate man, is not permitted to practise this rite. He is given substitutional worship. The deva, the godly man, has no need of outer ritual and his worship and sacrifice are inner, psychological. It is to the middle nature, the hero, the vira, that this procedure is permitted and prescribed. He is given a way to proceed towards the Divine through his own nature. His rajasic qualities and powers are yoked to the Purpose, he is called upon to act at the highest level of sincerity he is capable of and force nature to yield the bliss of the Divine at every level.
CHAKRAS—REINCARNATION

First regarding the Chakras:

There are in each individual centres of energies of different kinds. They are located in the subtle body, not the physical. Each such centre is a storehouse of a particular dynamism which springs into action when it is activated by special means. As each centre is thus opened the consciousness undergoes a corresponding change. This system of energy centres in the subtle body is in a way reproduced in the physical body, along the spinal column, in the nervous organism. It is the configuration of particular nerve channels at these focii that have the appearance of Chakras or Lotuses. Actually there are no physical Lotuses or Chakras. Treatises on Yoga call these centres Lotuses or Chakras because of this pattern of the nerve channels. When they speak of leaves and the letters on each of the leaves, what is meant is that those particular powers and principles function from there, subsidiary to the main principle that is rooted in that region.

Your second question on reincarnation, especially as to who it is that reincarnates, the mind or the ego or the Jiva or the Atman.

It is the soul that passes from body to body.

The soul is the divine element in man. In the beginning it is a tiny spark. It grows into an entity by experience, by evolution. And the spiritual evolution of the soul is the crux of the truth of reincarnation. For, obviously, the soul cannot get all the experience it needs for its evolution into a full-fledged personality in the course of one life. It travels from life to life, taking on body after body, absorbing experience in each life and growing in stature in the process.
The soul it is that takes birth again and again. The mind, the ego, the life-force are all its necessary instruments for the purpose of evolution.

Note that the Self is different from the soul. The Self is the Atman that stands behind the process. The soul is a projection of it in evolution. The soul evolves, the Self stands behind watching and supporting.

The Self, Atman, and the Supreme Reality, Brahman, are the same. The soul is potentially divine. It becomes fully divine when it ripens through the evolution of its consciousness.
III

BOOK-SHELF
YOGA & MYSTICISM

"Once I asked Dr. Suzuki: 'Doctor, don't you believe in spiritual disciplines and meditation?'

'Of course, we do', he answered.

Then I told him that one of his disciples, who was a great student of his writings, was preaching that it was not necessary to practise any disciplines.

'I wish I could burn all my books,' Dr. Suzuki said with a sigh."

Swami Prabhavananda cites this incident, in these instructive lectures,* to cry a halt to the gathering tendency today to dismiss all spiritual discipline as superstition and to preach Yoga as something that can be successfully practised without any element of the denial of the senses of rejection of desires. For, as Swamiji observes, "Some teachers have recently been speaking about meditation, which, of course, is the very core and central truth of spiritual life. But the kind of meditation to which these teachers refer has no real basis, but is more than anything pure confusion. They point out meditation to be simple and easy, demanding hardly any sacrifice or self-restraint. Continue to live as you have been living, they tell us, it does not really matter. Is it any wonder then they have attracted a large number of followers! Let me quote one of them from a recent issue of a popular American magazine: 'To qualify as a meditator, a prospective convert needs no preparation, no intellectual background; meditation requires no repudiation of the past and no promise to behave in the future.'"

* YOGA AND MYSTICISM: By Swami Prabhavananda.
Real meditation requires the mind to be sufficiently freed from its normal outward tendencies so that it can flow inwards towards the object of the seeking. As the author points out, "Most of us cannot meditate, but we can concentrate, if only for a short time and through the practice of concentration we reach a stage where we begin to meditate; that is, where there is no break in our thought. In order for us to reach this stage in our meditation we must create an interest in God; that interest causes us to continue thinking about God until love grows within; without love, meditation is not possible."

In order to fulfil the precondition of such a gathered state of consciousness, Patanjali prescribes a course of purification and discipline, outer and inner. They are the limbs of *yama* and *niyama*, restraint and observance. In an interesting passage on the cultivation of *ahimsa*, abstention from hurting others, the writer describes an incident in the life of his guru, Swami Brahmananda, who "was once walking with two of us down the road. Suddenly we heard a cry: 'get out of the way, get out of the way! a mad bull is coming!' In order to protect our master both of us stepped in front of him to face the charging bull. But Maharaj suddenly grabbed both of us and thrust us behind him. He simply stood there and stared directly at the charging bull. Then an amazing thing happened. The bull almost at once came to a halt directly in front of us, shook its head and quietly trotted off."

Speaking of *asteya*, abstention from theft, he observes: "Although nobody would call us common thieves we are, according to Patanjali, thieves in a certain respect. Everything in this world really belongs to God, yet don't we label this 'mine' and that 'yours'? Patanjali does not ask us to be beggars or give away all we own; but instead consider ourselves trustees."
While on pranayama, Swamiji sounds a strong note of warning against practising it on one’s own. The close supervision and guidance of the guru is necessary. He cites several instances, within his personal knowledge, of persons who suffered brain injuries, incurable headaches and loss of reason due to wrong practice or excessive exercise.

Lastly, he makes a profound observation in explaining the procedure of dharana “Concentration or holding the mind in one of the centres of spiritual consciousness in the body. Or we may fix the mind on some divine form outside the body—whichever is simplest. If you begin to think of Him outside, gradually bring Him inside. There is no uniform rule for everyone; temperaments differ and so must the teaching. That is why you need the help of a guru.”

Finally, he quotes a memorable verse from the Upanishad: “The supreme heaven shines in the lotus of the heart; they enter there who struggle and aspire. Retire into solitude; seat yourself on a clean spot, and in erect posture, with the head and neck in a straight line.”
GURU NANAK

“There was a large crowd bathing in the river. Nanak saw them face eastwards and throw palmfuls of water to the sun. Nanak entered the stream and started throwing water westwards.

‘In the name of Rama!’ exclaimed the shocked pilgrims, ‘who is this man who throws water to the west? He is either mad or a Mussalman.’

They approached Nanak and asked him why he offered water in the wrong direction. Nanak asked them why they threw it eastwards to the sun.

We offer it to our dead ancestors.
Where are your dead ancestors?
With the gods in heaven.
How far is the abode of the gods?
49 crore kos from here.
Does the water get that far?
Without doubt! But why do you throw it westwards?

My home and lands are near Lahore. It has rained everywhere except on my land. I am therefore watering my fields.

Man of God, how can you water your fields near Lahore from this place?

If you can send it 49 crore kos to the abode of the gods, why can’t I send it to Lahore which is only a couple of hundred kos away?”

Citing this incident in the life of Guru Nanak,* Sardar Khushwant Singh describes how the Guru turned his

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* HYMNS OF GURU NANAK By Khushwant Singh.
back on all ritual and ceremony and pleaded for direct, individual approach to the Creator. The story is telling for the purpose the author has in mind, though the argument does not quite hold good. For behind the ‘superstitions’ belief of the common people there is an occult truth in the matter: the water poured in memory of the ancestors, with faith and feeling, does act as a physical channel for a subtler communication with the departed. Sincere good wishes, prayers and concentrated thoughts from those living on the earth do reach and assist those who have gone beyond, as long as they are still earth-bound or their souls have not retired to their place of rest, the psychic world.

However, the incident highlights the attitude of the Master to traditional beliefs of this kind and, it is recorded, “a large number of Hindu pilgrims foregathered at Hardwar became disciples of the Guru.”

Guru Nanak, writes the author, was a force for synthesis of what was rational and progressive in both Hinduism and Islam. “He criticised exclusiveness and intolerance and meaningless ritual of both Hinduism and Islam; he lauded what they had in common; belief in the One indefinable God, and the casteless equality of mankind; the necessity of taking a guide (guru of the Hindus, peer of the Muslims); the futility of ascetic isolation and penance; the possibility of combining religious life with domestic and social obligations; and the mystic realisation of God through singing hymns of praise in still, quiet hours of early dawn.”

The basic creed of his teaching, the mulamantra, is as follows:

There is One God.
His Name is Truth.
He is without fear and without hate.
He is beyond time, Immortal.
His Spirit pervades the Universe.
He is not born.
Nor does He die to be born again.
He is self-existent.
By the Guru’s grace shalt thou worship Him.

God is indeed nameless, but if he is to be signified to the human intelligence at all, that is best done by the Omkar: “The mystic syllable said to contain all the consonants in the range of human voice and hence ‘all speech’ became the perfect word to represent God. ‘As all parts of a leaf are held together by a central rod’, says the Chandogya Upanishad, ‘so all speech is held together by Om.’ Nanak describes Omkar as the ‘Creator of Brahma’, consciousness, time and space and the Vedas; the emancipator and the essence of the three worlds.”

To realise God the first condition is to have the grace of a Guru. The Guru guides and is in a position to reach the seeker to God because he breathes the spirit of God.

The guru’s word has the sage’s wisdom,
The guru’s word is full of learning,
For though it be the guru’s word,
God Himself speaks therein. (Japji, verse 5).

Next to the Guru, company of the godly, sadh sangat, is important, Guru Nanak calls upon men to have good-will for each other, to draw upon the strength and benevolence of each other, not to shun and avoid society as impure. The bonds to be broken are inner not outer, ‘Be of the world but not worldly’ is the sage counsel.

The central discipline to reach God is Nama Japa, worship of the Name of the Lord. “To Nanak nam implies understanding of the words of the prayer and making them
the rule of life. The path of Nam—namamarga—requires three things: realisation of the truth within the heart (hrday jnan), its expression in prayer (mukh-bhakti) and detachment from worldly things (vartan vairag).

The chief obstacle in the way of union with God is one’s own ego, haumain (I am). “This ego is the root of all sins; It produces lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. But its power to do evil is more than matched by its power to do good. Under the guidance of the guru it can be canalised into overcoming itself, of stilling the wayward flights of fancy and thus preparing it for the mystic experience which reveals God.” Nama japa is the most potent means to cure this disease of the ego.

Necessarily the path is long, progress slow, and the journey proceeds through several stages of the growth of spiritual consciousness. “Starting from the earth which is the dharma khand—the realm of law—man proceeds to acquire learning in gyan khand—the realm of knowledge. The third stage is sarma khand—the realm of beauty—and the fourth, karma khand—the realm of action. The journey ends in sach khand—the realm of truth, and merger with God.”
RAMANUJA ON THE GITA

In his scholarly introduction,* the author classifies modern writers on the Gita in three categories. The Indologists who discuss "the age of the present text, and its homogenous or heterogenous character, tackling the question whether it is a composite product brought into its present shape by successive additions to a primitive and simple core" etc., the faithful who approach "the Gita as the supreme Gospel of spiritual wisdom" those like Annie Besant, Radhakrishnan and Huxley who seek to interpret Gita by way of comparative study with a view to finding in it elements for spiritual reconstruction of the world. The writer puts the work of Vivekananda, Tilak, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo in a separate class by itself. He observes: "Sri Aurobindo was an immense power in politics, was an intellectual of soaring genius and later on devoted himself and his unique talents to a life of complete and integral Yoga. He evolved out of his reflections and the life of Yoga, a metaphysics and a system of spirituality, deeprooted in the ancient tradition but striking and original in its new form, at once profound and comprehensive."

Speaking of the traditional commentaries of the Acharyas, Prof. Raghavachar laments that no modern exposition has taken adequate notice of these commentaries. He seeks to rectify the position, with considerable success, as far as the commentary by Ramanuja is concerned. All may not agree with the reasons he advances for the superior claims of Ramanuja's Bhashya on modern scholarship vis-a-vis the commentaries of Shankara and Madhva. All the same it is good to read this lucid exposition of Ramanuja's interpretation of the Gita.

* SRI RAMANUJA ON THE GITA: By S. S. Raghavachar.
"The fundamental factor in the situation is God. He is the supreme Reality and attaining Him is the Supreme goal. The nature of the Supreme Reality is brought out in a systematic array of significant adjectives. That the infinite Reality is the object of all spiritual aspiration and endeavour is brought out in the very statement of the nature of God. God in His fundamental nature is beyond the reach of souls caught up in the meshes of Maya. This theory of Maya is to be elucidated in the Gita itself in the sequel. To resolve this crisis, God descends to the realm of mortals out of His compassion by His own initiative and reveals Himself in numberless incarnations. The motive behind such self-disclosures is to sustain the souls in the agony of search for Him by furnishing them with the object of their adoration. The unknown and inaccessible Deity presents itself before its seekers and nourishes their devotion by setting before them the object of their devotion. It is a self-gift on God's part and He is the active principle in the resulting communion and worship. This conception of Avatar is also to be elucidated in the sequel. God in His particular incarnation as Krishna is the teacher of the Gita. While imparting his message to Arjuna, he is addressing the whole world of creatures struggling for liberation. The theme of the message is Bhakti directed towards Him and Bhakti that has been enunciated in Vedanta as the supreme pathway to God-realisation. This Bhakti is to be developed through Jnana and Karma. While the general purpose of incarnation is to make Himself accessible to devotion, the special function discharged by Krishna as the teacher of the Gita is an additional one of imparting wisdom concerning devotion. God is indeed the central fact of the situation. He is the supreme Being, the supreme goal. He is the compassionately active object of devotion descending to the vision of the mortals to sustain their devotion by self-revelation and the teacher of
the pathway of devotion to be directed to Him. Thus does God in his descent as Krishna effectuate the descent of the Yoga of Bhakti to our world."

In an excellent note on the light shed by Ramanuja on Sadhana, the writer underlines the liberating role of Bhakti in the growth of which Karma and Jnana play a contributory part. Bhakti should lead to *prapatti*; *mukti* is incidental.
GOPINATH KAVIRAJ

A profound work on a profound subject. This is a remarkable study* (in Hindi) of the life and labour of Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj by an unusually perceptive mind open to the realm of the Spirit beyond mind.

Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj has become a legend in his own life-time. The author narrates the external life-story of the savant in the first fifty pages covering his education, career and work in various capacities in different universities. There are chapters on the writings of the Pandit in Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali and English and his correspondence with eminent persons on diverse topics of literary and spiritual interest. The most interesting pages, however, are those that dwell on the yogic and mystic side of his life. The writer records in detail the large number of contacts that Gopinathji has had with saints, yogis, mystics and seers over a long stretch of five decades. It is a world of Light and Glory of the Divine Puissance in which the reader is admitted.

The author records the circumstances under which Gopinathji came under the influence of Paramahamsa Vishuddhananda at a young age and was initiated by that illustrious personality in the yogic path. This Guru had received special knowledge of creation by means of the Cosmic Rays of the Sun while in Tibet and many incidents are described detailing the demonstrations of this method. Pandit Gopinath came into close touch with many yogis practising different disciplines of Yoga and some of the best portions of this book are those that are devoted to his accounts of the lives and teachings of these adepts. To note

*MANISHI KI LOKAYATRA by Bhagavati Prasad Sinha.
only of a few of these important contents is all that we can do at the moment:

Swami Vishuddhananda: Karma, action, is the crucible, knowledge arises from this action. From knowledge in the form of consciousness sprouts bhakti, devotion, from bhakti comes Love and from Love the Realisation. To this truth all yoga stands testimony. Action is the foundation, the first step of Yoga. Love can be attained only by treading the path of Yoga. Ordinary love among humans is only a deformation of the mind. Only a yogi can love truly.

Bejoy Krishna Goswami: Moksha, liberation, is not the final step of yoga-sadhana. There is an end greater than Moksha, and that is Divine Love, Love for which even liberated beings strive.

Naga Baba: The debt to the Mother must be paid. Prakriti, Nature, is the Mother. It is not enough that the Purusha attains freedom. The attainment must be shared with the Prakriti. Prakriti, Nature, must be uplifted and transformed into the very state that is claimed by the Purusha. The Purusha uses Prakriti for his growth and liberation; he owes it to her to elevate her to his station above Ignorance.

Navinananda: Yoga is really the esoteric side of Yajna. The awakening of the Kundalini is the gomedha yajna; to direct it into the navel centre is the asvamedha yajna; to lead it into the heart centre is the syena or the vajapeya yajna; to reach it to the crown centre, the sahasrara, is the soma yajna whereby there is the flow of universal delight and the complete eradication of the Ego.

Kishori Bhagavan: How to get the Guru? The way to get the Guru is by preparing to be a fit disciple. He who is
ready to be a disciple gets the Guru without difficulty. To become a disciple, is more difficult than to attain a Guru. First comes the disciple, then the Guru. How then to become a disciple? To learn to have complete trust and faith, to cultivate implicit obedience to the Guru, is the way. When one is ready thiswise, the Guru appears.

What about the philosophy and yoga sadhana of the Kaviraj himself? In two illuminating chapters on the Thought and Sadhana of Gopinathji, the author presents the outlines of the Akhanda Maha yoga to which he has dedicated himself. In brief, this system regards the Infinite Brahman as the Integral Reality. All is a manifestation of this Reality that is entire. To realise it one has to transcend in one's consciousness the belt of Time. It is difficult but possible to enter into the Being of this Reality. What is distinctive of this Path is that after effecting this ascent, one must establish complete self-identification with the Cosmic Puissance, the Mahashakti, become one with her in consciousness and being, and then descend into the world for the manifestation of the great Divine Love. This sadhana of Divine Love is possible on earth alone, not in other worlds.

The technique of this mahayoga is in the harmonisation of various states of being and activity in the one truth of the Divine. Harmonisation of Shiva and Shakti, Atman and Paramatman, self and self, cosmic Power and Self, plane and plane of existence, the worlds and what is beyond the worlds—all these are implied in the mahayoga. All are induced to find their unity in the One Reality that is realised in one's deepest consciousness.

A chapter on communications from the supraphysical worlds records some of the messages received at sittings in which the Pandit was present. Claiming to be communication from particular departed persons, these describe the
constitution and movement of the worlds to which the dead arrive on the shedding of the physical body. Not all of it can be taken to be genuine, to be sure. For in these matters there are many cases of impersonation by entities and beings that amuse themselves by misleading the humans below.

There is a specially valuable appendix giving explanations of some of the technical terms and concepts that are used in this Thought and Philosophy. For instance, *Nityasiddha*: The *siddhas* are of three kinds. He who becomes a siddha by doing sadhana is a *sadhana-siddha*. He who attains siddhi by Divine Grace is a *krpa-siddha*. He who is a *siddha* from the time without beginning is a *nitya siddha*; he does not have to be a sadhaka.

*Akasa*: The material sky in which all is seen by the physical eye is *bhuta akasa*, the elemental. Beyond the elements is the subtle extension of *citta* in which lies the world of states of thought and feeling, *bhava*; this is *citta-akasa*. Beyond both is the pure extension of Consciousness, free from the waves of elements, free from the movements of mentality, vibrating with pure consciousness; this is the *cid-akasa*.

*Hrdaya akasa*: When the inner sight is open one perceives a sky-like extension in the heart. This is called *dahara-akasa* in the Sruti. Each heart is in truth in the form of a sky. The Cosmic Heart is indeed one, but it manifests itself in the form of each individual heart.

Read also: Four states or stages in sadhana: (1) When the sadhaka does not perceive the Deity and the Deity does not regard the sadhaka; this is the common worldly state, *samsara-avastha*. (2) When the sadhaka does not look at the Deity but the Deity looks at the sadhaka; this is the state of the sadhaka, *sadhaka-avastha*, brought about by Initiation, *diksa*. (3) When the sadhaka sees the Deity and the Deity
sees the sadhaka; this is the state of attainment, **siddha-avastha**. (4) When the sadhaka looks at the Deity but the Deity does not look at the sadhaka. The sadhaka is, at this stage, in the realm of Ishvara; the Deity too is there but the sadhaka is awake and sees, while the Deity is involved in delusion.

Finally, about the Shaktis. The Supreme Parameshwara is sat-cit-ananda and hence his innate Shakti also is of the nature of sat-cit-ananda. She who is of *sat* is the *sandhini sakti*, she who is of *cit* is the *samvit sakti* and she who is of *ananda* is the *alhadini sakti*.

An authentic presentation of living spiritual thought and yoga as exemplified in the person of Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj and the tradition on which he draws.
INDO-ENGLISH POETRY

After explaining the historical background of Indo-English literature generally, the author traces rapidly the growth of Poetry written in English by Indian writers beginning with Kashi Prosad Ghosh in the 19th Century up to the present day marked by two distinct tendencies which he distinguishes as one dominating the Quest group (of which the Writers' Workshop is an important constituent) and the other of those following the lead of Sri Aurobindo.

In brief chapters, Dr. Kotoky studies the output of Toru Dutt, Monmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu and Harin-dranath Chattopadhyaya and records their contribution.

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** Regarding Toru Dutt, the author approvingly quotes the tribute of Edmund Gosse: “Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who at the age of 21, and in a language separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth. The 'mellow sweetness' was all that Toru lacked to perfect her as an English poet, and of no other Oriental who has ever lived can the same be said. When the history of the literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page in it dedicated to this fragile exotic blossom of song.”

Monmohan Ghose: “Monmohan’s is an example of a pure poet. His poetry is rather aristocratic, or purely aesthetic in temper and intellectual in tone. His poetic output is small just because his sense of standard was high. It was he who first gave Indo-English poetry a European bias. As a poet Monmohan has grace and restraint and shows a genuine poetic quest and a fine and cultivated feeling for poetic values. The two brothers, Monmohan and Sri Aurobindo, between themselves may share the credit of giving Indo-English poetry a distinct status, and Monmohan will suffer in comparison only with this younger brother who was a better scholar, a greater intellectual, and a mightier poet.”
to the tradition before proceeding to make a detailed analysis of the literary works of Sri Aurobindo viz. Poems, Epics, Dramas, Translations. The writer rightly devotes more space and attention to Sri Aurobindo for as he observes, “It is only with the mature works of this poet that original Indo-English poetry may be said to have begun."

In the prefatory chapter on Sri Aurobindo, the author notes the original approach to Poetry by the “seer and poet” who “may be called a modern approximation of the Vedic ideal of the poet as the Seer of the Truth (kavyah satyadrstarah).” He divides Sri Aurobindo’s poetry into three groups viz. that written in England and Baroda; that written during the political period and the first few years in Pondicherry; that written thereafter.

He writes: “Sri Aurobindo, who cannot be pinned down to any particular tradition of poetry, also defies in his mature poetry all classification in terms of romantic or classical. His characteristic poetry springs from a direct mystic experience which is visionai and real to him. This poetry is intuitive and revelatory—it reveals visions, symbolic or mystic. It is also mantric and philosophical...Sri Aurobindo wrote poetry that accepted the transitoriness of the

Sarojini Naidu: “Here is not poetry that stirs the soul to its depths. It is poetry that only charms and delights. Sarojini was not moved to interpret life, ‘a clear and happy presentation was her business’. But this presentation does not give us abundance of life; nor does it rise to the level of vision. She gives us only poetry of external life. But what she wrote of that which is transient is beautiful. For this, and for her love of life and colour, her poetry will be long admired."

Harindranath: “The only Indo-English poet to make a deep probe into Indian life and thought, his main contribution to Indo-English poetry lies in widening its field and enriching its store with a considerable number of fine poems."
world with all its poignancy and he could dissolve the hard
concepts and theories of philosophy into the blood of poetry.
The absence, in his poetry, of a direct transcript of his times
with all their sad doubts and distractions, may be attributed
to his rising above them, although it will not be correct to
say that the poet totally ignored them. Confident of man’s
evolution into the superman, he looked on, beyond the local
and the contemporary, to the universal and the eternal; the
world was, there, not of the sole interest. It is mainly by
virtue of this insistence on man’s more glorious future that
Sri Aurobindo’s later poetry is futurist.”

He takes up a number of poems and shows how
Sri Aurobindo emerges not as a ‘philosophical thinker’ but
as a ‘poet seer of truth’. He quotes Sri Aurobindo’s remarks
on the treatment of philosophical subjects in poetry: “The
poet has emerged here not as a ‘philosophical thinker’, but
as a ‘poet seer of truth’. In this connection, his views on the
treatment of philosophical subjects in poetry may be quoted
with advantage: “…the poet may express precisely the same
thing in essence as the philosopher or the man of religion,
or the man of science, may even give us truth of philosophy,
truth of religion, truth of science, provided he transmutes it,
abstracts from it something on which the others insist in
their own special form and gives us the something more which
poetic sight and expression bring. He has to convert it into
truth of poetry, and it will be still better for his art if he saw
it originally with the poetic insight, the creative, intuitive,
directly perceiving and interpreting eye; for then his
utterance of truth is likely to be more poetic, authentic,
inspired and compelling.”

After a brief comparison of the poetry and spirit of Sri
Aurobindo with those of Rilke and Blake, Dr. Kotoky devotes
the longest chapter in his book to the epic Savitri, which has
forty-nine cantos including the Epilogue and they cover nearly 24 thousand lines in blank verse, thus making Savitri the biggest ever epic in the English language.’ He shows how this Poem fits in with the anticipations of Abercrombie who wrote: The one thing ‘which can master the perplexed stuff of epic material into unity is an ability to see in particular human experience some significant symbolism of man’s general destiny.’ “It is of man, and man’s purpose in the world, that the epic poet has to sing; not of the purpose of gods. The gods must only illustrate man’s destiny; and they must be kept within the bounds of beautiful illustration.” “The amazing image of the sublime mind of Lucretius is exactly the kind of lofty symbolism that the continuation of epic purpose now seems to require—a subjective symbolism.”

In the course of his earnest study of the epic the author writes: “There is, in Savitri, a sense of double time and double action—the terrestrial and the cosmic, corresponding respectively to the legend and the symbol. The conflict, in which the core of an epic lies, has been clearly defined, and raised to the cosmic plane. It is confined to two persons only—Savitri and Death. Though the poet has laid greater emphasis on the cosmic implication of the conflict, he has not neglected the legend which is the prop of the symbol. The epic should be viewed not in terms of these two separately, but as one integrated whole, for the two planes of the action almost merge into each other...Sri Aurobindo’s is a unique epic, and one must think twice before applying to it canons of criticism which are generally applicable to other epics. It is great, not in detail, but in concept, range and depth. Earth and Heaven here unite to liberate mankind.”

Among the few reservations made by the writer in the course of his sincere appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s poetry,
is his objection to the occasional use of images from Greek and other European mythology in Indian settings. It may be pointed out that, generally, Sri Aurobindo’s characters are types evolved in the cosmic evolution and they are heir to the common traditions of mankind without any hard and rigid distinctions of geographical or racial kind.

A delightful and scholarly study of Sri Aurobindo’s Poetry.
"The freedom of India is assured, as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun. Most likely there will be no need for bloodshed." This was the definite assurance given by Sri Aurobindo in 1918 to a patriot in despair. Recalling this incident, the author of this book (in Kannada)* draws attention to the political foresight of the Seer who is today remembered, especially by the younger generation, as a Yogi and a Philosopher but rarely as the revolutionary and apostle of nationalism that he was in the early formative years of the Indian Independence Movement. Sri Chennabasappa is well qualified to write upon Sri Aurobindo by reason of his close study of the writings of the Master and also his own literary gifts and critical acumen. In this work he narrates the life of Sri Aurobindo from his infancy up to his departure for Pondicherry in 1910.

The periods covered are the early beginnings in Darjeeling, education in England, Service at Baroda and the hectic political activity in the Bengal partition years. He describes the active interest taken by Sri Aurobindo as a student in the political movement for the liberation of India among the Indian student population in England; his writing of the famous series of NEW LAMPS FOR OLD in Indraprakash in which he castigated the prayer and petition policies of the Congress; his organisation of the secret political and revolutionary movement, first in Bengal and then elsewhere in the country; his incarceration in Jail and acquittal; his blazing a new trail in Indian journalism.

The writer points out that Sri Aurobindo's interest in the political developments did not cease with his retirement

*SWATANTRYA YODHA SRI ARAVINDA, By K. Chennabasappa.
to Pondicherry. He kept himself in touch with the current, gave his advice when sought e.g., to C.R. Das, Lajpatrai etc., and went on to lay the guidelines for free India to follow. How far the leadership of the country has chosen to benefit by his foresight is another question. He warned the world, as early as 1950, against the rising danger of Chinese Communism. Sri Chennabasappa cites the famous statement made by Sri Aurobindo on the outbreak of the Korean war. It says, among other things, "It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to dominate and take possession first of these Northern parts and then of South East Asia as a preliminary to their manoeuvres with regard to the rest of the continent—in passing Tibet as a gate into India." The statement is dated June 28, 1950. It will be of interest to know that when President Kennedy was shown this statement, some time after the Chinese aggression of India, he would not believe that it was written not in 1960 as he (Kennedy) thought but in 1950. He was convinced only when he was told that Sri Aurobindo had passed away in December 1950.
IV

MISCELLANY
SOME EXPLANATIONS

ABSOLUTE & RELATIVE

A thing that exists by itself, depending on no other, not definable in any term is the absolute. Self-existent, indefinable, infinite.

The relative is what depends on something else for its existence.

Brahman is the absolute; the universe is relative (because it depends on Brahman for its existence).

THEOS OUK ESTIN ALLA GIGNETAI

The Divine is not yet in being, but in becoming.

(The Life Divine Vol. II. Chap. 4)

The Cosmos, as it is at present, represents a stage in the becoming of the Divine. That is not its final, intended form. When the process of becoming arrives at its fruition, then will Cosmos reveal itself as the Divine being. It will have put on the complete character of the Divine as it is.

The present is a partial, developing figure growing into a complete manifestation of the Divine Verity in the fullness of time.

COSMIC

Cosmos is the universe seen as an order, as a connected whole.

Acosmic is what relates to the cosmic. A philosophy or view which pertains to and affirms the reality of this cosmos is acosmic. If the Divine is conceived in relation to the cosmos it is acosmic. Conceived as apart the cosmos without relation to it, it is extra-cosmic. Above the cosmos but related to it, it is supra-cosmic. Within the cosmos penetrating it all through, it is intra-cosmic.
THE EATER EATING IS HIMSELF EATEN

This utterance of the Upanishad underlines the character of interchange that governs the evolution of this material world.

The life-force in each physical body constantly draws upon the universal forces for its sustenance; in turn it is being attacked and drawn upon by the universal forces for their operation. Thus in the very process of feeding upon the universal supplies, the individual life-force itself becomes a feeder for the universal.

Secondly, the life-force brings and provides sustenance to the material body. The body in turn supports the life-force. Each gives something of itself in the process of drawing from the other.

While building up the body, the life-force uses something of the matter for its own operation. While assimilating the provision of the life-force, the physical body automatically loses something of itself to that life-force. This is what is called 'wear and tear' in popular language. While eating and digesting the 'food', there is a simultaneous using up of part of the stored energy. The eater is eaten while he eats.

WHICH IS PRIOR, EXISTENCE OR BEING?

In the final analysis both are the same. If Existence is taken to be the primal reality, one may ask 'existence' of what? Existence of something that exists—the Existent, the Being.

The Existence and the Existent are two aspects of the same Reality.

Sachidananda is a state, an Existence and a being.

* Taittiriya, II, I.
MENTALITY
Mentality is what constitutes the mind.
The characteristics that create in their ensemble the formation of mind comprise mentality.
In the common usage, mentality is the flow of the mind.

PANTHEOS
There is a Greek doctrine, pantheism, according to which all in the world is God. God is all that is here. Nature and God are identical in this sense.
This All-God is Pantheos.

REALISATIONS
One may realise the Divine at the level of the Self within and live absorbed in that Self, leaving his outer nature to carry on its mechanical activity till the body is shed.
It is possible to proceed upon this realisation of the Self to a larger realisation, union with the Divine Nature manifest in the universe. Basing oneself on the truth of the divine Self within, one enlarges the mind, the life, the physical consciousness (and other faculties and powers of one's nature), tunes them into harmony with the universal Mind, Life, etc., and attains an effective identity with them. This results in participation of one's nature giving integrality to one's realisation.

SHAKTI AND ENERGY
Shakti is the one Force of which all other forces are derivations. Thus for instance the Adya Shakti formulates itself into Jnana Shakti, Ichha Shakti, Kriya Shakti etc.
Any Shakti in movement is Energy.
Mind-power is different from mind-energy. In the former the element of will is dominant, in the latter the element of flow, activity.
UNITY IN SELF AND UNITY IN SPIRIT

The self is the basic ground of each. It is the core that supports all existence, all movement. It is the atman. One must realise one’s unity with others first at this base of the self which is the same in all.

The spirit is what constitutes the form. It pervades every form like a subtle ether and makes its existence possible. If the self is the fundamental reality of the individual, the spirit can be said to be the expressional aspect of the same reality. Unity with others must be realised in this dimension as well.

This spirit manifests itself at its level in the mind, in the life, in the body. One has to awaken to this spread of the spirit in oneself and from there enter into communion with the spirit formulated in others.

BHAVA

If the feeling arises in the mind when I see a man or woman as God or Mother, and if I feel so often, will it one day become permanent?

Feeling, bhava, can be built up into a constant experience and then into a realisation, by repeated dwelling upon it, cultivating it, naturalising it in one’s consciousness.

MENTAL REALISATION

Mental realisation is what is true only to the mind. The mind understands and accepts the truth of a statement or an idea but this knowledge or perception which is in the mind is not experienced by the rest of the being. The mind, for instance, accepts the truth of ‘All is Brahman’. Till the rest of the being experiences this truth and lives in it by acting and reacting in a consciousness lit by that truth, the realisation remains mental.
PENEAL GLAND

A gland in the brain whose precise functions are not yet determined. However, it is found to play an important part in the workings of the body organism.

CARDIAC CENTRE

The Centre of the chest where the yogic heart-centre is located. It is the seat of emotions. (behind it is the centre of the psychic.)

PSEUDO-SCIENCE

A set of beliefs and practices that have the appearance of an organised system governed by certain laws that are verifiable, a codification of processes that regulate the working of any nature, but in reality is not that at all. Its appearance is deceptive, imitative in its elements; it is no true science. It cannot stand scrutiny. It misleads into error.
DEFINITIONS AND CONNOTATIONS

Compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo
DEFINITIONS AND CONNOTATIONS

AIM. To return to the truth of the Divine now clouded over by Ignorance is the soul's aim in life.

ANANDA. The Divine Bliss which comes from above. It is not joy or pleasure, but something self-existent, pure and fully beyond what any joy or pleasure can be.

ASPIRATION. The call in the being for the Divine or for the higher things that belong to the Divine Consciousness.

ASURA. A mighty exhibition of an overwhelming force, a self-possessed, self-held, even, it may be, an ascetically self-restrained mind-capacity and life-power, strong, calm or cold or formidable in collected vehemence, subtle, dominating, a sublimation at once of the mental and vital ego.

BEING. Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence.

Non-Being, affirmation of its freedom from all cosmic existence.

BHAKTI. The mental bhakti is simply worship in the thought and idea without love in the heart.

The vital bhakti is egoistic, usually full of claims and demands on the Divine and revolting when they are not satisfied.

The psychic bhakti which gives itself asks nothing by the Divine, is always turned to the Divine alone.

CONCENTRATION. Consciousness is fixed in a particular state or movement.

DHARMA. That which one lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life.
Discipline. To live and act under control or according to a standard of what is right; not to allow the vital or the physical to do whatever they like and not to let the mind run about according to its fancy without truth or order.

Divine. That from which all comes, in which all lives. In its supreme Truth, the Divine is absolute and infinite peace, consciousness, existence, power and Ananda.

Divine Living. To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight of being and to live in this integrated completeness is the divine living.

Ego. A device of nature which holds together her action in the mind and body.

Endurance. The power to go through effort, difficulty or trouble without getting fatigued, depressed, discouraged or impatient and without breaking off the effort or giving up one's aim or resolution.

Faith. Faith is a feeling in the whole being; belief is mental; confidence means trust in a person or in the Divine or a feeling of surety about the result of one's seeking or endeavour.

Mental faith combats doubt and helps to open to the true knowledge; vital faith combats doubt and helps to open to the true spiritual will and action; physical faith keeps one firm through all physical obscurity, inertia or suffering and helps to open to the foundation of the true consciousness; psychic faith opens to the direct touch of the Divine and helps to bring union and surrender.

Three elements of complete mental faith—assent of mind, consent of the will and the heart's delight and submission.
GNOMES. The effective principle of the Spirit, a highest dynamis or the spiritual existence.

KNOWLEDGE. Power and act of consciousness.

LAW. All true law is the right motion and process of a reality, an energy or power of being in action fulfilling its own inherent movement self-implied in its own truth of existence.

Logos. The Supermind using the Word is the creative Logos.

MATTER. A self-energy put forth by the Brahman, a form and substance of Brahman?

Causal matter—in which the fundamental operations of the Will-to-live are conducted.

Subtle matter—the material in which thought and feeling work.

NERVOUS BEING. A thing enslaved to habit and in itself the means devised by Nature for fixing constancy of reaction, sameness of experience, the settled scheme of man’s relations to life.

MEDITATION. The inner mind looking at things to get the right knowledge.

OPENING. It is an opening when the consciousness is able to receive the Divine Consciousness or Force (or whatever else it opens to) and feel its effects.

Means that the consciousness becomes opened to the Truth or the Divine to which it is now shut—it indicates a state of receptivity.

PHILOSOPHY. A way of formulating to ourselves intellectually in their essential significance the psychological and physical
facts of existence and their relation to any ultimate reality that may exist.

Pralaya. The end of a cycle of aeons, the temporary disintegration of a universal form of existence and of all the individual forms which move in its rounds.

Psychic Love. The love that comes direct from the soul not mixed with vital desire or ego.

Psychic Fire. The fire of aspiration, purification and tapasya which comes from the psychic being. It is not the psychic being, but a power of the psychic being.

Psychology. The science of consciousness and its states and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its states and operations beyond what we know as nature.

Pulling. When one is open and too eager and tries to pull down the force, experience, etc., instead of letting it descend quietly, that is called pulling.

Purification. Purification from desire, ego, falsehood and ignorance.

Purity. More a condition than a substance. Peace helps to purity. Divine purity is that in which there is no mixture of the turbid ignorant movements of the lower nature.

Real-Idea. A truth-perception which is self-effective; for it is the idea and will of the spirit in direct action and originates a movement of the substance of being which must inevitably effectuate itself in state and act of being.

Realisation. When something for which you are aspiring becomes real to you.
Receptivity. To feel the urge to give and the joy of giving to the Divine’s Work all one has, all one is, all one does.

Sadhana. The opening of the consciousness to the Divine, the change of the present consciousness to the psychic and the spiritual consciousness. In this yoga it means also the offering of all consciousness and its activities to the Divine for possession and use by the Divine and for transformation.

Sastra. The knowledge and teaching laid down by intuition, experience and wisdom, the science and art and ethic of life, the best standards available to the race.

Self. The Self is being, not a being. By Self is meant the conscious essential existence, one in all.

Self-Consecration. The acceptance of a new spiritual idea-force and upward orientation in the being, an illumination, a turning or conversion seized on by the will and heart’s aspiration.

Silence. A state of the consciousness which comes of itself from above when you open to the Divine Consciousness.

Sincerity. To respond to the Divine alone.

Spirit. What stands behind mind, life and body is the Spirit.

Spiritual Man. One who has discovered his soul: he has found his self and lives in that, is conscious of it, has the joy of it; he needs nothing external for his completeness of existence.

Tapasya. When the will and energy are concentrated and used to control the mind, vital and physical and change them or bring down the higher consciousness or for any other yogic purpose or high purpose, that is called tapasya.
UNIVERSALISATION. To see all things in the self and the self in all things—to be aware of one being everywhere, aware directly of the different planes, their forces, their beings.

WILL. Force of being in conscious action. Conscious Power and conscious act of force of being.

WORK. Disinterested work is work done with no other motive than that of doing as well as possible the Divine work.

WRONG. What departs from truth, from the higher consciousness and the higher self, from the way of the Divine.
Philosophy - Yoga
Yoga - Philosophy

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"A book that is shut is but a block"

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