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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

THE TWO PATHS OF YOGA

Section 1: The Two Paths

THE TWO PATHS	...	669
IT IS HE WHO DOES THE YOGA	...	669
OBJECT OF YOGA: CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS	...	670
TWO ELEMENTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS	...	670
GOD, NATURE AND THE HUMAN SOUL	...	671
SYNTHETIC METHOD AND INTEGRAL YOGA	...	671
WITHDRAWAL AND PERFECTION	...	672
THE STAGES OF YOGA	...	672
YOGA AND FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE UNIVERSE	...	674
CHOOSING TO MAKE THE SURRENDER TOTAL AT EVERY MOMENT	...	674
THE TWO POSSIBILITIES	...	676
TWO WAYS OF DOING YOGA	...	677
NOT SO EASY TO BE THE BABY CAT	...	677
THE YOGI AND THE BHAKTA	...	678
WHEN ALL IS TRULY READY	...	679
TWO PHASES	...	679
EACH ONE HIS OWN WAY	...	680
WILL AND FAITH	...	681
TO GO ON TILL THE STRUGGLE IS OVER	...	681
GOD BECOMES THE SADHAKA	...	682
EQUALITY TO BLISS	...	682

Section 2: Tapasya

SOME TERMS EXPLAINED	...	685
TAPAS	...	685
WHAT IS TAPASYA	...	685
TAPASYA AND ASPIRATION	...	685
YOGA IS A TAPASYA, NOT A FANTASIA	...	686
TAPASYA AND THE BRAIN	...	686
TAPASYA	...	686
VALUE OF TAPASYA	...	686
BEYOND ALL PERSONAL EFFORT	...	687
TAPASYA AND GRACE	...	687
DEFINITIONS	...	687
TRUE LOVE AND CONSECRATION	...	688
FOUR AUSTERITIES	...	688
THE BUD OPENING INTO A FLOWER	...	689
PREPARATION AND REALISATION	...	690
ACTIVITY AND PASSIVITY IN SADHANA	...	691
OUTER DISCIPLINE	...	692
OUTER AND INNER TAPASYA	...	692
NEED TO BE EARNEST ABOUT YOGA	...	693
A PROCESS OF YOGA	...	693
ABSOLUTE SELF-GIVING	...	694
TAMASIC, RAJASIC AND SATTWIC TAPASYA	...	694
MAKE EACH ACT A SACRIFICE	...	696

Section 3: Effort

EFFORT	...	699
THE FIRST PERIOD OF EFFORT	...	699
HAVING EXPERIENCES	...	700
EFFORT AND THE SENSE OF A SEPARATE PERSON	...	700
IT IS EFFORT WHICH GIVES JOY	...	700
FINDING THE BEST IN ONESELF	...	701
UNSHAKABLE PATIENCE	...	703
ARM YOURSELF WITH ENDLESS PATIENCE	...	703

A CONSTANT BATTLE	...	704
PROGRESS AND DIFFICULTIES	...	705
TO PERSIST	...	705
WHY NO EFFORT	...	705
A GENERAL RULE	...	707
STEADY EFFORT	...	707
NOT TO BE DISCOURAGED	...	708
INNER EFFORT	...	710
THINKING ABOUT THE VICTORY GAINED	...	710
WHY PEOPLE DO NOT PRACTISE	...	711
BLAMING HUMAN NATURE	...	711
JUSTIFYING ONE'S WEAKNESS	...	712
INERTIA	...	712
OPINION OF MEN AND THE DIVINE WILL	...	713
THE DIVINE WHO WILLS IN YOU	...	714
ARDENT WILL FOR PROGRESS	...	715
PERSONAL WILL AND GOD'S WILL	...	716
SPRINGING INTO THE LIGHT	...	716
SINCERITY AND HAPPINESS	...	716
EFFORT TO BECOME PASSIVE	...	717
TO BE TOTALLY SINCERE	...	718
MAKING AN EFFORT	...	718

Section 4: Surrender

SURRENDER	...	721
TAPASYA AND SURRENDER	...	722
SURRENDER ITSELF IS A TAPASYA	...	722
BE EXCEEDINGLY CAREFUL	...	723
TAMASIC PASSIVITY	...	723
FORMS OF SURRENDER	...	723
OFFERING AND SURRENDER	...	724
SURRENDER, SELF-GIVING, CONSECRATION, OFFERING	...	726
OBEDIENCE TO THE GUIDE	...	727
SURRENDER AND SACRIFICE	...	727
SURRENDER, SELF-OFFERING AND CONSECRATION	...	732
SURRENDER — ACTIVE AND PASSIVE	...	733

Section 5: Grace

THE MATERIALIST'S <i>A PRIORI</i> DENIAL	...	737
GRACE IS NOT AN INVENTION	...	737
DIVINE COSMIC WORKING	...	738
WORKING OF GRACE AND THE HUMAN MIND	...	738
ABOUT THE DIVINE GRACE	...	738
THREE MAIN POSSIBILITIES	...	739
WHAT IS CALLED "GRACE"	...	740
FULL ASSENT OF SADHAK NEEDED	...	740
NO DOUBT ABOUT DIVINE GRACE	...	740
WORK TAKEN UP BY THE GRACE	...	741
GOD KNOWS PERFECTLY WHAT HE WANTS OF US	...	741
CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE BETWEEN THE GRACE AND ONESELF	...	741
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS	...	743
THE DIVINE IS THERE TO HELP, BUT	745
PUSHING THE GRACE AWAY	...	745
WITHOUT THE GRACE ONE IS NOTHING	...	745
IT IS HAPPENING EVERY MINUTE	...	747
DIVINE GRACE AND DIFFICULTIES	...	747
THE DIVINE GRACE — GIVER OF DELIGHT	...	747
THE DIVINE GRACE	...	748
WHAT IS NEEDED	...	748
FAITH IN THE DIVINE GRACE	...	749
TRUST IN THE DIVINE GRACE AND HELP	...	750
ACTION OF FORCE CANNOT BE REDUCED TO RULES	...	750
THE GRACE OF THE GURU	...	750
AN INFINITE GRACE IN THE WHOLE MANIFESTATION	...	752
THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY	...	752

The Two Paths

of

Yoga

There are as many paths to the Divine as there are seekers after the Divine.

Yet tradition has classified sadhanas as broadly falling under the two categories namely reliance on one's personal effort or Tapasya and reliance on the Divine Grace leading to surrender to Guru and God. At first the two methods appear disparate.

How to reconcile the ideal of self-mastery with the seemingly opposite ideal of self-surrender?

The Yoga of Mother and Sri Aurobindo seeks to effectuate this reconciliation.

The initial steps of the sadhak however generally follow one or the other line.

In this issue of Mother India we present a selection on these paths and other allied issues. We hope that the readers will find it useful.

Note

The following abbreviations have been used to indicate the source of the passages selected:

- C — Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo
- M — Collected Works of the Mother, 2nd edition
- S — Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library

The references at the end of the quotations are given thus:

Name of the set, followed by the volume number, followed by the page number.

The Two Paths:

— *Tapasya and Surrender* —

— *Effort and Grace* —

Section One

The Two Paths

Section One: The Two Paths

The Two Paths

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline), and the other of surrender. The path of *tapasyā* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure. It is here, however, that the Western people find their difficulty. They have been taught to fear and avoid all that threatens their personal independence. They have imbibed with their mothers' milk the sense of individuality. And surrender means giving up all that. In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty. The question is to be sincere. If you are not sincere, do not begin Yoga. If you were dealing in human affairs, then you could resort to deception; but in dealing with the Divine there is no possibility of deception anywhere. You can go on the Path safely when you are candid and open to the core and when your only end is to realise and attain the Divine and to be moved by the Divine. (M3: 4-5)

It is He Who Does the Yoga

“There are two paths of Yoga, one of tapasyā (discipline) and the other of surrender.”

What is surrender?

It means that one gives oneself entirely to the Divine.

Yes, and then what happens? If you give yourself entirely to the Divine, it is He who does the Yoga, it is no longer you; hence this is not very difficult; while if you do tapasya, it is you yourself who do the yoga and you carry its whole responsibility —

it is there the danger lies. But there are people who prefer to have the whole responsibility, with its dangers, because they have a very independent spirit. They are not perhaps in a great hurry — if they need several lives to succeed, it does not matter to them. But there are others who want to go quicker and be more sure of reaching the goal; well, these give over the whole responsibility to the Divine. (M4: 72)

Object of Yoga: Change of Consciousness

The very object of yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and Bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that Ananda and Bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of Ananda and Bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of Bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and Tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspersed, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior yoga-capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the Divine Influence. (S23: 785)

Two Elements of Consciousness

Consciousness is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious-power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth; but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and a Force that make the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place, but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force, but for want of a right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the true consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of the mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect and not definitive. It is only in the supermind that Awareness, Will, Force are always one movement and automatically effective. (S22: 238)

God, Nature and the Human Soul

In practice three conceptions are necessary before there can be any possibility of Yoga; there must be, as it were, three consenting parties to the effort, — God, Nature and the human soul or, in more abstract language, the Transcendental, the Universal and the Individual. If the individual and Nature are left to themselves, the one is bound to the other and unable to exceed appreciably her lingering march. Something transcendent is needed, free from her and greater, which will act upon us and her, attracting us upward to Itself and securing from her by good grace or by force her consent to the individual ascension. (C23: 31-32)

Synthetic Method and Integral Yoga

As regards X's question — this is not a yoga of bhakti alone; it is or at least it claims to be an integral yoga, that is, a turning of all the being in all its parts to the Divine. It follows that there must be knowledge and works as well as bhakti, and in addition, it includes a total change of the nature, a seeking for perfection, so that the nature also may become one with the nature of the Divine. It is not only the heart that has to turn to the Divine and change, but the mind also — so knowledge is necessary, and the will and power of action and creation also — so works too are necessary. In this yoga the methods of other yogas are taken up — like this of Purusha-Prakriti, but with a difference in the final object. Purusha separates from Prakriti, not in order to abandon her, but in order to know himself and her and to be no longer her plaything, but the knower, lord and upholder of the nature; but having become so or even in becoming so, one offers all that to the Divine. One may begin with knowledge or with works or with bhakti or with Tapasya of self-purification for perfection (change of nature) and develop the rest as a subsequent movement or one may combine all in one movement. There is no single rule for all, it depends on the personality and the nature. Surrender is the main power of the yoga, but the surrender is bound to be progressive; a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, but only a will in the being for that completeness, — in fact it takes time; yet it is only when the surrender is complete that the full flood of the sadhana is possible. Till then there must be the personal effort with an increasing reality of surrender. One calls in the power of the Divine Shakti and once that begins to come into the being, it at first supports the personal endeavour, then progressively takes up the whole action, although the consent of the sadhak continues to be always necessary. As the Force works, it brings in the different processes that are necessary for the sadhak, processes of knowledge, of bhakti, of spiritualised action, of transformation of the nature. The idea that they cannot be combined is an error.

(S23: 525-26)

Withdrawal and Perfection

There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the Universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

(C12: 96)

The Stages of Yoga

The process of the integral Yoga has three stages, not indeed sharply distinguished or separate, but in a certain measure successive. There must be, first, the effort towards at least an initial and enabling self-transcendence and contact with the Divine; next, the reception of that which transcends, that with which we have gained communion, into ourselves for the transformation of our whole conscious being; last, the utilisation of our transformed humanity as a divine centre in the world. So long as the contact with the Divine is not in some considerable degree established, so long as there is not some measure of sustained identity, *sâyujya*, the element of personal effort must normally predominate. But in proportion as this contact establishes itself, the sadhaka must become conscious that a force other than his own, a force transcending his egoistic endeavour and capacity, is at work in him and to this Power he learns progressively to submit himself and delivers up to it the charge of his Yoga. In the end his own will and force become one with the higher Power; he merges them in the divine Will and its transcendent and universal Force. He finds it thenceforward presiding over the necessary transformation of his mental, vital and physical being with an impartial wisdom and provident effectivity of which the eager and interested ego is not capable. It is when this identification and this self-merging are complete that the divine centre in the world is ready. Purified, liberated, plastic, illumined, it can begin to serve as a means for the direct action of a supreme Power in the larger Yoga of humanity or superhumanity, of the earth's spiritual progression or its transformation.

Always indeed it is the higher Power that acts. Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force. It persists in applying to experience on a supernormal plane the ordinary terms of mentality which it applies to its normal experiences in the world. In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal will, wisdom, force, virtue the selective, formative, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and body. Enlightenment brings to us

the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our supreme and integral Self, one with the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. Our limitations and distortions are our contribution to the working; the true power in it is the Divine's. When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation. The apparent freedom and self-assertion of our personal being to which we are so profoundly attached, conceal a most pitiable subjection to a thousand suggestions, impulsions, forces which we have made extraneous to our little person. Our ego, boasting of freedom, is at every moment the slave, toy and puppet of countless beings, powers, forces, influences in universal Nature. The self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment; its surrender to that which transcends it is its liberation from bonds and limits and its perfect freedom.

But still, in the practical development, each of the three stages has its necessity and utility and must be given its time or its place. It will not do, it cannot be safe or effective to begin with the last and highest alone. It would not be the right course, either, to leap prematurely from one to another. For even if from the beginning we recognise in mind and heart the Supreme, there are elements of the nature which long prevent the recognition from becoming realisation. But without realisation our mental belief cannot become a dynamic reality; it is still only a figure of knowledge, not a living truth, an idea, not yet a power. And even if realisation has begun, it may be dangerous to imagine or to assume too soon that we are altogether in the hands of the Supreme or are acting as his instrument. That assumption may introduce a calamitous falsity; it may produce a helpless inertia or, magnifying the movements of the ego with the Divine Name, it may disastrously distort and ruin the whole course of the Yoga. There is a period, more or less prolonged, of internal effort and struggle in which the individual will has to reject the darkness and distortions of the lower nature and to put itself resolutely or vehemently on the side of the divine Light. The mental energies, the heart's emotions, the vital desires, the very physical being have to be compelled into the right attitude or trained to admit and answer to the right influences. It is only then, only when this has been truly done, that the surrender of the lower to the higher can be effected, because the sacrifice has become acceptable.

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

But there is still a sort of gulf or distance which necessitates an obscure process of transit, not always accurate, sometimes even very distorting, between the divine Origin and the emerging human current. At the end of the process, with the progressive disappearance of egoism and impurity and ignorance, this last separation is removed; all in the individual becomes the divine working. (C23: 58-61)

Yoga and Fulfilling God's Purpose in the Universe

That Yoga is full or perfect which enables us to fulfil entirely God's purpose in us in this universe.

All Yoga which takes the soul entirely out of world-existence, is a high but narrow specialisation of divine tapasya.

God's purpose in us is that we should fulfil His divine being in world-consciousness under the conditions of the Lila.

With regard to the universe God manifests Himself triply, in the individual, in the universe, in that which transcends the universe.

In order to fulfil God in the individual, we must exceed the individual. The removal of limited ego and the possession of cosmic consciousness is the first aim of our sadhana.

In order to fulfil God in the cosmos, individually, we must transcend the universe. The ascension into transcendent consciousness is the second aim of our sadhana. (C12: 359-60)

Choosing to Make the Surrender Total at Every Moment

Sri Aurobindo says here, “. . . The aspiration and tapasya needed [are] too constant. . .”¹

Yes, one cannot do the yoga if one does not take it seriously. For one must be very serious to have a constant aspiration and do tapasya. If one is not serious, for five minutes one has an aspiration and for ten hours one hasn't; for one day there is a great urge and for a month nothing, and so on. Well, one can't do yoga in these conditions. It must be a continuous, constant thing which does not flag. If one forgets or slackens, one cannot do yoga.

1. *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1310.

Should not one be born with a great aspiration?

No, aspiration is a thing to be developed, educated, like all activities of the being. One may be born with a very slight aspiration and develop it so much that it becomes very great. One may be born with a very small will and develop it and make it strong. It is a ridiculous idea to believe that things come to you like that, through a sort of grace, that if you are not given aspiration, you don't have it — this is not true. It is precisely upon this that Sri Aurobindo has insisted in his letter and in the passage I am going to read to you in a minute. He says you must choose, and the choice is constantly put before you and constantly you must choose, and if you do not choose, well, you will not be able to advance. You must choose; there is no "force like that" which chooses for you, or chance or luck or fate — this is not true. Your will is free, it is deliberately left free and you have to choose. It is you who decide whether to seek the Light or not, whether to be the servitor of the Truth or not — it is you. Or whether to have an aspiration or not, it is you who choose. And even when you are told, "Make your surrender total and the work will be done for you", it is quite all right, but to make your surrender total, every day and at every moment you must choose to make your surrender total, otherwise you will not do it, it will not get done by itself. It is you who must want to do it. When it is done, all goes well, when you have the Knowledge also, all goes well, and when you are identified with the Divine, all goes even better, but till then you must will, choose and decide. Don't go to sleep lazily, saying, "Oh! The work will be done for me, I have nothing to do but let myself glide along with the stream." Besides, it is not true, the work is not done by itself, because if the least little thing thwarts your little will, it says, "No, not that! . . ." Then?

. . .

How can one know whether the surrender is total or not?

This does not seem to me difficult. One may try out a little exercise. One may say, "Let me see, I surrender to the Divine, I want Him to decide everything in my life." This is your starting point. A little exercise: the Divine is going to decide that such and such a thing happens, precisely something in contradiction with your feeling. Then one tells oneself, "Well, and if the Divine tells me, 'You are going to give that up' " — you will see quite easily, immediately, what the reaction is; if it causes a little prick like this, inside, you may tell yourself, "The surrender is not perfect" — it pricks, it pricks. . . .

[The Mother then reads the following passage from Sri Aurobindo:]

“On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, the light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards; in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance, obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or superhuman consciousness and creation, or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine, — for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible, — affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which every one will have to choose.

“For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance; it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.”

*Letters on Yoga, pp. 1310-11
(M4: 342-47)*

The Two Possibilities

There are two possibilities, one of purification by personal effort, which takes a long time, another by a direct intervention of the Divine Grace which is usually rapid in its action. For the latter there must be a complete surrender and self-giving and for that again usually it is necessary to have a mind that can remain quite quiet and allow the Divine Force to act supporting it with its complete adhesion at every step, but otherwise remaining still and quiet. This last condition which resembles the baby-cat attitude spoken of by Ramakrishna, is difficult to have. Those who are accustomed to a very active movement of their thought and will in all they do, find it difficult to still the activity and adopt the quietude of mental self-giving. This does not mean that they cannot do the yoga or cannot arrive at self-giving — only the

purification and the self-giving take a long time to accomplish and one must have the patience and steady perseverance and resolution to go through. (S23: 591)

Two Ways of Doing Yoga

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

The practice of rejection prevails in the end; but with personal effort only, it may take a long time. If you can feel the Divine Power working in you, then it should become easier.

There should be nothing inert or tamasic in the self-giving to the guidance and it should not be made by any part of the vital into a plea for not rejecting the suggestions of lower impulse and desire.

There are always two ways of doing the yoga — one by the action of a vigilant mind and vital seeing, observing, thinking and deciding what is or is not to be done. Of course it acts with the Divine Force behind it, drawing or calling in that Force — for otherwise nothing much can be done. But still it is the personal effort that is prominent and assumes most of the burden.

The other way is that of the psychic being, the consciousness opening to the Divine, not only opening the psychic and bringing it forward, but opening the mind, the vital and the physical, receiving the Light, perceiving what is to be done, feeling and seeing it done by the Divine Force itself and helping constantly by its own vigilant and conscious assent to and call for the Divine working.

Usually there cannot but be a mixture of these two ways until the consciousness is ready to be entirely open, entirely submitted to the Divine's origination of all its action. It is then that all responsibility disappears and there is no personal burden on the shoulders of the sadhak. (S23: 594)

Not so Easy to be the Baby Cat

You remember, we spoke once of the attitude of the baby cat and that of the baby monkey. If you agree to be like a docile baby cat (there are also baby cats which are very undisciplined, I have seen them), like a docile little child, this may go very fast. Note that it is very easy to say, "Choose the attitude of the baby cat", but it is not so easy to do. You must not believe that adopting the attitude of the baby cat lets you off from all personal effort. Because you are not a baby cat, human beings are not baby cats! There are in you innumerable elements which are accustomed to trusting only themselves, which want to do their own work, and it is much more

difficult to control all these elements than to let oneself go in all circumstances. It is very difficult. First of all, there is always that wonderful work of the mind which likes so very much to observe, criticise, analyse, doubt, try to solve the problem, say, "Is it good thus?", "Would it not be better like that?", and so on. So that goes on and on, and where is the baby cat? . . . For the baby cat does not think! It is free from all this and hence it is much easier for it!

Whatever be the way you follow, personal effort is always necessary till the moment of identification. At that moment all effort drops from you like a worn-out robe, you are another person: what was impossible for you becomes not only possible but indispensable, you cannot do otherwise. (M4: 94)

The Yogi and the Bhakta

Peace was the very first thing that the yogis and seekers of old asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind — and that always brings peace — that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda, or what prepares it, is an obstacle to the Divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, "Practise the yoga with an undespondent heart — *anirvinṇacetāsā*." I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and accesses of despair are natural — though not inevitable on the way — not because they are helps but because they are imposed on us by the darkness of this human nature out of which we have to struggle into the Light. I do not suppose Ramakrishna or Vivekananda would have recommended the incidents you allude to as an example for others to follow — they would surely have said that faith, fortitude, perseverance were the better way. That after all was what they stuck to in the end in spite of these bad moments. . . . At any rate Ramakrishna told the story of Narada and the ascetic yogi and Vaishnava Bhakta with approval of its moral. I put it in my own language but keep the substance: Narada on his way to Vaikuntha met a yogi practising hard tapasya on the hills. "O Narada," cried the yogi, "you are going to Vaikuntha and will see Vishnu. I have been practising terrific austerities all my life and yet I have not even now attained to him. Ask him at least for me when I shall reach him." Then Narada met a Vaishnava, a bhakta who was singing songs to Hari and dancing to his own singing, and he cried also: "O Narada, you will see my Lord Hari. Ask him when I shall reach him and see his face." On his way back Narada came first to the yogi. "I have asked Vishnu," said the sage, "you will realise him after six more lives." The yogi raised a cry of loud lamentation: "What! So many austerities! Such gigantic endeavours! And how hard

to me is the Lord Vishnu!" Next Narada met again the bhakta and said to him: "I have no good news for you. You will see the Lord but only after a lakh of lives." But the bhakta leapt up with a great cry of rapture: "Oh, I shall see my Lord Hari! After a lakh of lives I shall see my Lord Hari! How great is the grace of the Lord!" And he began dancing and singing in a renewed ecstasy. Then Narada said, "Thou hast attained. Today thou shalt see the Lord." Well, you may say: "What an extravagant story and how contrary to human nature!" Not so contrary as all that and in any case hardly more extravagant than the stories of Harishchandra and Shivi. Still, I do not hold up the bhakta as an example, for I myself insist on the realisation in this life and not after six or a lakh of births more. But the point of these stories is in the moral and surely when Ramakrishna told it, he was not ignorant that there was a sunlit path of yoga. He even seems to say that it is the quicker way as well as the better. So the possibility of the sunlit path is not a discovery or original invention of mine. The very first books on yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the latter over the former. (S23: 789-90)

When All is Truly Ready

If it is bhakti that one insists on, it is by the bhakti that it comes and bhakti in its fullness is nothing but an entire self-giving. But then all meditation, all tapasya, all means of prayer or mantra must have that as its end and it is when one has progressed sufficiently in that that the Divine Grace descends and the realisation comes and develops till it is complete. But the moment of its advent is chosen by the wisdom of the Divine alone and one must have the strength to go on till it arrives, for when all is truly ready it cannot fail to come. (S23: 799)

Two Phases

(*Mother unfolds a sheet of paper.*) Here I have a question referring to what we said last time about effort, personal effort.

The question is this:

"In the inner life, why are there periods when one can no longer make a conscious effort, and if one enforces it, parts of the nature revolt or else everything in the being seems to become petrified; effort becomes the mechanical repetition of past movements. What should be done at such times?"

This has been very well observed.

What is not mentioned here is the nature of the effort, for it is a certain kind of effort which leads to the result described here, which is either a revolt or a sort of — yes, petrification, truly, something that becomes absolutely insensible and no longer responds at all to this effort. This happens when the effort is almost exclusively mental and quite arbitrary, in the sense that it does not at all take into account the state of the rest of the being; it has its own idea, its own will, and without any consideration for the rest of the being, it imposes this will on the being as a whole. This is what usually brings about the revolt or the petrification. And the only thing to do is to make the mind quiet. And this is the time to make a movement of self-giving, full of peace, quietude, confidence. If one makes this movement of self-giving, of complete surrender to the divine Will, all the tension arising from the effort, an effort which could be called premature or unconsidered — all the tension arising from this effort gives way. There is a relaxation in the being. And the progress one could not make by this purely mental effort usually comes about almost automatically, by the very fact that one has relaxed in confidence and self-giving to the divine Will.

And then, this is what follows:

“At other times, one has the impression of making no effort, but of feeling only the presence of a consciousness due to which in many circumstances of daily life a means of progress is found. One wonders then what effort is and what its value? What we call effort — isn't it too mental a movement?”

That is exactly what I have just explained, which shows that the observation is quite correct.

It is an arbitrary decision of the mind, and being arbitrary and not in conformity with the truth of things, it naturally brings about these wrong reactions. This does not imply that no effort must ever be made but the effort also must be spontaneous. So too I told you once that for meditation to be effective, it must be a spontaneous meditation which takes hold of you rather than one you make an effort to have; well, effort, that kind of tension of the will in the being, must also be something spontaneous, and not the result of a more or less inopportune mental decision. (M8: 369-71)

Each One His Own Way

Each mind can have its own way of approaching the supreme Truth and there is an entrance for each as well as a thousand ways for the journey to it. It is not necessary to believe in the Grace or to recognise a Godhead different from one's highest Self — there are ways of yoga that do not accept these things. Also, for many no form of yoga is necessary — they arrive at some realisation by a sort of pressure of the mind

or the heart or the will breaking the screen between it and what is at once beyond it and its own source. What happens after the breaking of the screen depends on the play of the Truth on the consciousness and the turn of the nature. There is no reason, therefore, why X's realisation of his being should not come in its own way by growth from within, not by the Divine Grace, if his mind objects to that description, but, let us say, by the spontaneous movement of the Self within him.

For, as to this "Grace", we describe it in that way because we feel in the infinite Spirit or Self-existence a Presence or a Being, a Consciousness that determines, — that is what we speak of as the Divine, — not a separate person, but the one Being of whom our individual self is a portion or a vessel. But it is not necessary for everybody to regard it in that way. Supposing it is the impersonal Self of all only, yet the Upanishad says of this Self and its realisation: "This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body". Well, that is the same thing as what we call the Divine Grace, — it is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movement. We can call it the Divine Grace; we can call it the Self within choosing its own hour and way to manifest to the mental instrument on the surface; we can call it the flowering of the inner being or inner nature into self-realisation and self-knowledge. As something in us approaches it or as it presents itself to us, so the mind sees it. But in reality it is the same thing and the same process of the being in Nature. (S23: 608-09)

Will and Faith

The eventual omnipotence of Tapas and the infallible fulfilment of the Idea are the very foundation of all Yoga. In man we render these terms by Will and Faith, — a will that is eventually self-effective because it is of the substance of Knowledge and a faith that is the reflex in the lower consciousness of a Truth or real Idea yet unrealised in the manifestation. It is this self-certainty of the Idea which is meant by the Gita when it says, *yo yac-chraddhah sa eva saḥ*, "whatever is a man's faith or the sure Idea in him, that he becomes." (C23: 44)

To Go On Till the Struggle is Over

Whether by tapasya or surrender does not matter, the one thing is to be firm in setting one's face to the goal. Once one has set one's feet on the way, how can one draw back from it to something inferior? If one keeps firm, falls do not matter, one rises up again and goes forward. If one is firm towards the goal, there can be on the way to the Divine no eventual failure. And if there is something within you that

drives as surely there is, falterings or falls or failure of faith make no eventual difference. One has to go on till the struggle is over and there is the straight and open and thornless way before us. (S23: 629)

God Becomes the Sadhaka

The method we have to pursue, then, is to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His. Thus in a sense God Himself, the real Person in us, becomes the sadhaka of the sadhana as well as the Master of the Yoga by whom the lower personality is used as the centre of a divine transfiguration and the instrument of its own perfection. In effect, the pressure of the Tapas, the force of consciousness in us dwelling in the Idea of the divine Nature upon that which we are in our entirety, produces its own realisation. The divine and all-knowing and all-effecting descends upon the limited and obscure, progressively illumines and energises the whole lower nature and substitutes its own action for all the terms of the inferior human light and mortal activity. (C23: 45-46)

Equality to Bliss

Since the nature of suffering is a failure of the conscious-force in us to meet the shocks of existence and a consequent shrinking and contraction and its root is an inequality of that receptive and possessing force due to our self-limitation by egoism consequent on the ignorance of our true Self, of Sachchidananda, the elimination of suffering must first proceed by the substitution of *titikṣā*, the facing, enduring and conquest of all shocks of existence for *jugupsā*, the shrinking and contraction: by this endurance and conquest we proceed to an equality which may be either an equal indifference to all contacts or an equal gladness in all contacts; and this equality again must find a firm foundation in the substitution of the Sachchidananda consciousness which is All-Bliss for the ego-consciousness which enjoys and suffers. The Sachchidananda consciousness may be transcendent of the universe and aloof from it, and to this state of distant Bliss the path is equal indifference; it is the path of the ascetic. Or the Sachchidananda consciousness may be at once transcendent and universal; and to this state of present and all-embracing Bliss the path is surrender and loss of the ego in the universal and possession of an all-pervading equal delight; it is the path of the ancient Vedic sages. But neutrality to the imperfect touches of pleasure and the perverse touches of pain is the first direct and natural result of the soul's self-discipline and the conversion to equal delight can, usually, come only afterwards. The direct transformation of the triple vibration into Ananda is possible, but less easy to the human being. (C21: 117-18)

Section Two

Tapasya

Section Two: Tapasya

Some Terms Explained

Sadhana is the practice of yoga. Tapasya is the concentration of the will to get the results of sadhana and to conquer the lower nature. Aradhana is worship of the Divine, love, self-surrender, aspiration to the Divine, calling the name, prayer. Dhyana is inner concentration of the consciousness, meditation, going inside in Samadhi. Dhyana, Tapasya and Aradhana are all parts of sadhana. (S23: 541)

Tapas

Tapas means literally heat, afterwards any kind of energism, askesis, austerity of conscious force acting upon itself or its object. The world was created by Tapas in the form, says the ancient image, of an egg which being broken, again by Tapas, heat of incubation of conscious force, the Purusha emerged, Soul in Nature, like a bird from the egg. It may be observed that the usual translation of the word *tapasyā* in English books, “penance”, is quite misleading, — the idea of penance entered rarely into the austerity practised by Indian ascetics. Nor was mortification of the body the essence even of the most severe and self-afflicting austerities; the aim was rather an overpassing of the hold of the bodily nature on the consciousness or else a supernormal energising of the consciousness and will to gain some spiritual or other object. (C21: 591)

What is Tapasya

When the will and energy are concentrated and used to control the mind, vital and physical and change them or to bring down the higher consciousness or for any other yogic purpose or high purpose, that is called Tapasya. (S23: 596)

Tapasya and Aspiration

What is the true meaning of “tapasya”?

Tapasya is the discipline one imposes upon oneself to arrive at the discovery of the Divine.

Are tapasya and aspiration the same thing?

No, you can't do tapasya without aspiration. Aspiration is first, the will to attain something. Tapasya is the process — there is indeed a process, a method. (M4: 343)

Yoga is a Tapasya, not a Fantasia

Yoga is an endeavour, a tapasya — it can cease to be so only when one surrenders sincerely to a Higher Action and keeps the surrender and makes it complete. It is not a fantasia devoid of all reason and coherence or a mere miracle. It has its laws and conditions and I do not see how you can demand of the Divine to do everything by a violent miracle.

I have never said that this yoga is a safe one — no yoga is. Each has its dangers as has every great attempt in human life. But it can be carried through if one has a central sincerity and a fidelity to the Divine. These are the two necessary conditions. (S23: 612)

Tapasya and the Brain

Brain concentration is always a tapasya and necessarily brings a strain. It is only if one is lifted out of the brain mind altogether that the strain of mental concentration disappears. (S23: 727)

Tapasya

Askesis, tapasya, patience and faithfulness and rectitude of knowledge and will are the things required until a greater Power than our mental selves directly intervenes to effect a more easy and rapid transformation. (C24: 739)

Value of Tapasya

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere that if we surrender to the Divine Grace, it will do everything for us. Then what is the value of tapasya?

If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little,

one sees that all the contradictions complement one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis.

Here is another quotation by Sri Aurobindo which will show you that your question is an ignorant one. There are many others which you could read to advantage and which will make your intelligence more supple:

“If there is not a complete surrender, then it is not possible to adopt the baby cat attitude, — it becomes mere tamasic passivity calling itself surrender. If a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, it follows that personal effort is necessary.”

(M16: 309-10)

Beyond All Personal Effort

Sri Aurobindo has written in Savitri:

*“Yes, there are happy ways near to God’s sun;
But few are they who tread the sunlit path;
Only the pure in soul can walk in light.”*

What a joy it would be to possess the required purity!

When one is living among men with all their miseries, it is only the Grace that can bestow this state — even in those who by Tapasya have abolished their ego.

It is beyond all personal effort. (M16: 379)

Tapasya and Grace

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

Blessings. (M15: 72)

Definitions

Tapasya: a discipline imposed by the will for any spiritual end is tapasya.

Tapasya: a discipline aiming at the realisation of the Divine.

*

Mental tapasya: the process leading to the goal.

*

Vital tapasya: the vital undergoes a rigorous discipline in order to transform itself.

*

Integral tapasya: the whole being lives only to know and serve the Divine.

*

Perfect tapasya: that which will reach its goal. (M14: 45)

True Love and Consecration

True love and consecration lead much quicker to the Divine than an arduous Tapasya.
(M14: 100)

Four Austerities

... we shall have recourse to the four austerities which will result in four liberations within us. The practice of these austerities will constitute a fourfold discipline or tapasya which can be defined as follows:

- 1) Tapasya of love
- 2) Tapasya of knowledge
- 3) Tapasya of power
- 4) Tapasya of beauty

These terms have been listed from top to bottom, so to say, but their order should not be taken to indicate anything superior or inferior, or more or less difficult,

or the order in which these disciplines can and ought to be practised. The order, importance and difficulty vary with each individual and no absolute rule can be formulated. Each one must find and work out his own system according to his personal needs and capacities. (M12: 50)

The Bud Opening into a Flower

Sweet Mother, here I would like an explanation: “In the last period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed sadhana; the place of endeavour and tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 81

It is in a poetic form.

But what is it you don’t understand? Why he speaks about the bud and the flower?

I am asking this because the bud opens into a flower without any effort, but we have to make an effort, haven’t we?

He says that this happens when one is ready; it is precisely to make you think “but the bud opens without effort”; so, when the nature is ready, the same thing happens as with the bud.

“Effort”, I don’t know what we call effort, it is not certain whether the plant makes an effort or not. And in any case, it has an aspiration; plants grow because they aspire for the light, for the sun, for open air.

And it’s a kind of competition. If one goes into a wood, for instance, into a park where there are many different plants, one can observe very clearly that there is a sort of competition among plants to pass each other and reach the light and open air above. It is indeed quite wonderful to see.

Now, Sri Aurobindo means that when one is well prepared and the nature is ready, then the last movement is like a spontaneous blossoming — it’s no longer an effort, it’s an answer. It is a truly divine action in the being: one is prepared and the moment has come, then the bud opens. (M8: 24)

Preparation and Realisation

And one can't say that one "experiences" this reversal — there is no "feeling", it is almost a mechanical fact — it is extraordinarily mechanical. (*Mother takes an object from the table beside her and turns it upside down. . . .*) There would be some very interesting things to say about the difference between the moment of realisation, of *siddhi* — like this reversal of consciousness for example — and all the work of development, the *tapasya*; to say how it comes about. . . . For the sadhana, *tapasya* is one thing and the *siddhi* another, quite a different thing. You may do *tapasya* for centuries, and you will always go as at a tangent — closer and closer to the realisation, nearer and nearer, but it is only when the *siddhi* is given to you . . . then, everything is changed, everything is reversed. And this is inexpressible, for as soon as it is put in words it escapes. But there is a difference — a real difference, essential, total — between aspiration, the mental tension, even the tension of the highest, most luminous mind and realisation: something which has been decided above from all time, and is absolutely independent of all personal effort, of all gradation. Don't you see, it is not bit by bit that one reaches it, it is not by a small, constant, regular effort, it is not that: it is something that comes suddenly; it is established without one's knowing how or why, but all is changed.

And it will be like that for everybody, for the whole universe: it goes on and on, it moves forward very slowly, and then one moment, all of a sudden, *it will be done*, finished — not finished: it's the beginning!

(*Silence*)

It is usually the first contact with the psychic being which brings this experience, but it is only partial, only that *part* of the consciousness — or of the activity in any part of the being — that part of the consciousness which is united with the psychic has the experience. And so, at the moment of that experience, the position of that part of the consciousness, in relation to the other parts and to the world, is completely reversed, it is different. And that is never undone. And if you have the will or take care or are able to put into contact with this part all the problems of your life and all the activities of your being, all the elements of your consciousness, then they begin to be organised in such a way that your being becomes one unity — a single multiplicity, a multiple unity — complex, but organised and centralised around a fixed point, so well that the central will or central consciousness or central truth has the power to govern *all* the parts, for they are all in order, organised around this central Presence.

It seems to me impossible to escape from this necessity if one wants to be and is to be a conscious instrument of the divine Force. You may be moved, pushed into action and used *as unconscious* instruments by the divine Force, if you have a

minimum of goodwill and sincerity. But to become a conscious instrument, capable of identification and conscious, willed movements, you must have this inner organisation; otherwise you will always be running into a chaos somewhere, a confusion somewhere or an obscurity, an unconsciousness somewhere. And naturally your action, even though guided exclusively by the Divine, will not have the perfection of expression it has when one has acquired a conscious organisation around this divine Centre.

It is an assiduous task, which may be done at any time and under any circumstances, for you carry within yourself all the elements of the problem. You don't need anything from outside, no outer aid to do this work. But it requires great perseverance, a sort of tenacity, for very often it happens that there are bad "creases" in the being, habits — which come from all sorts of causes, which may come from atavistic malformation or also from education or from the environment you have lived in or from many other causes. And these bad creases you try to smooth out, but they wrinkle up again. And then you must begin the work over again, often, many, many, many a time, without getting discouraged, before the final result is obtained. But nothing and nobody can prevent you from doing it, nor any circumstance. For you carry within yourself the problem and the solution. (M8: 172-74)

Activity and Passivity in Sadhana

I did not understand very well "the real meaning of activity and passivity in sadhana".

You don't know what activity and passivity are? Do you know what the two words mean?

Yes.

Yes! So, when you are active, what does it mean?

When I work.

Work? Good! And when are you passive, when you sleep? (*Laughter*)

When I am lazy, I cannot do . . .

No, my child, not necessarily. Passivity is not laziness. An active movement is one in which you throw your force out, that is, when something comes out from you — in a movement, a thought, a feeling — something which goes out from you to

others or into the world. Passivity is when you remain just yourself like this, open, and receive what comes from outside. It does not at all depend on whether one moves or sits still. It is not that at all. To be active is to throw out the consciousness or force or movement from within outwards. To be passive is to remain immobile and receive what comes from outside. So it is said here . . . I don't know what is written . . . (*Mother turns the pages of the book.*) It is very clear! "Activity in aspiration", that means that your aspiration goes out from you and rises to the Divine — in the tapasya, the discipline you undertake and when there are forces contrary to your sadhana you reject them. This is a movement of activity. (M6: 111-12)

Outer Discipline

But doesn't some outer discipline help?

If you impose a discipline upon yourself and if it isn't too stupid, it may help you. A discipline, I tell you — disciplines, tapasyas, all ascetic disciplines are, as ordinarily practised, the best means of making you proud, of building up in you such a terrific pride that never, never will you be converted. It will have to be broken down with hammer-strokes.

The first condition is a healthy humility which makes you realise that unless you are sustained, nourished, helped, enlightened, guided by the Divine, you are *nothing at all*. There now. When you have felt that, not only understood it with your mind, but felt it down to your very body, then you will begin to be wise, but not before. (M6: 302)

Outer and Inner Tapasya

What does "inner tapasya" mean, exactly?

Inner tapasya? It means the tapasya for the character, and for changing the psychological movements of the being, precisely to conquer the desires, conquer the passions, overcome egoism, get rid of fears. This is the inner tapasya.

Outer tapasya is all the ascetic or hathayogic methods; to make use of physical means for one's yoga is an outer tapasya. But inner tapasya consists of attending to one's character and trying to change it. (M6: 409-10)

Need to be Earnest about Yoga

This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature.

Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1310

Everybody knows this; those who do not want to change their way of doing things or their way of being always say, “Oh! What do you expect, it is human nature.” This is what is called a “wilful indulgence”. That is to say, instead of becoming conscious that these are weaknesses and difficulties on the way, one justifies these things, saying, “Oh! It can’t be helped, it is human nature.” One wants to continue to do what one is doing, without changing, one is full of a wilful indulgence of one’s demands. For the lower nature of man always demands things; it says, “These are necessities, these are needs, I can’t do without them.” Then, the instincts — a sort of instinct for one’s own satisfaction — and pretensions: the lower being claims that it has a considerable importance and must be given what is necessary for it, otherwise it won’t be able to live; it asserts that it alone is important, and so on. It is all this which creates obstacles, all these obscure, ignorant movements, all these justifications of the old ways of being: those who fly into a temper and say, “What do you expect, it can’t be helped”, and everything one does saying, “Oh! It is human nature”, everything one justifies saying, “What can be done, people are like that, there is nothing to be done about it.” It is the old idea that we are born with a particular nature and must get adjusted to it, for we cannot change it.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that if one cannot change the nature it is not worth the trouble of doing yoga, for yoga is done precisely in order to change the nature, otherwise it has no meaning. (M4: 331-32)

A Process of Yoga

“Having put outside of himself all outward touches and concentrated the vision between the eyebrows and made equal the *prāṇa* and the *apāna* moving within the nostrils, having controlled the senses, the mind and the understanding, the sage devoted to liberation, from whom desire and wrath and fear have passed away is

ever free.” Here we have a process of Yoga that brings in an element which seems quite other than the Yoga of works and other even than the pure Yoga of knowledge by discrimination and contemplation; it belongs in all its characteristic features to the system, introduces the psycho-physical askesis of Rajayoga. There is the conquest of all the movements of the mind, *cittavṛttinirodha*; there is the control of the breathing, Pranayama; there is the drawing in of the sense and the vision. All of them are processes which lead to the inner trance of Samadhi, the object of all of them *mokṣa*, and *mokṣa* signifies in ordinary parlance the renunciation not only of the separative ego-consciousness, but of the whole active consciousness, a dissolution of our being into the highest Brahman. Are we to suppose that the Gita gives this process in that sense as the last movement of a release by dissolution or only as a special means and a strong aid to overcome the outward-going mind? Is this the finale, the climax, the last word? We shall find reason to regard it as both a special means, an aid, and at least one gate of a final departure, not by dissolution, but by an uplifting to the supracosmic existence. For even here in this passage this is not the last word; the last word, the finale, the climax comes in a verse that follows and is the last couplet of the chapter. “When a man has known Me as the Enjoyer of sacrifice and tapasya (of all askesis and energisms), the mighty lord of all the worlds, the friend of all creatures, he comes by the peace.” The power of the Karmayoga comes in again; the knowledge of the active Brahman, the cosmic supersoul, is insisted on among the conditions of the peace of Nirvana. (C19: 238-39)

Absolute Self-giving

This absolute self-giving, this one-minded surrender is the devotion which the Gita makes the crown of its synthesis. All action and effort are by this devotion turned into an offering to the supreme and universal Godhead. “Whatever thou doest, whatever thou enjoyest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever energy of tapasya, of the soul’s will or effort thou puttest forth, make it an offering unto Me.” Here the least, the slightest circumstance of life, the most insignificant gift out of oneself or what one has, the smallest action assumes a divine significance and it becomes an acceptable offering to the Godhead who makes it a means for his possession of the soul and life of the God-lover. (C19: 333)

Tamasic, Rajasic and Sattvic Tapasya

Tamasic tapasya is that which is pursued under a clouded and deluded idea hard and obstinate in its delusion, maintained by an ignorant faith in some cherished falsehood, performed with effort and suffering imposed on oneself in pursuit of

some narrow and vulgar egoistic object empty of relation to any true or great aim or else with a concentration of the energy in a will to do hurt to others. That which makes this kind of energism tamasic is not any principle of inertia, for inertia is foreign to tapasya, but a darkness in the mind and nature, a vulgar narrowness and ugliness in the doing or a brutish instinct or desire in the aim or in the motive feeling. Rajasic energisms of askesis are those which are undertaken to get honour and worship from men, for the sake of personal distinction and outward glory and greatness or from some other of the many motives of egoistic will and pride. This kind of askesis is devoted to fleeting particular objects which add nothing to the heavenward growth and perfection of the soul; it is a thing without fixed and helpful principle, an energy bound up with changeful and passing occasion and itself of that nature. Or even if there is ostensibly a more inward and noble object and the faith and will are of a higher kind, yet if any kind of arrogance or pride or any great strength of violent self-will or desire enters into the askesis or if it drives some violent, lawless or terrible action contrary to the Shastra, opposed to the right rule of life and works and afflicting to oneself and to others, or if it is of the nature of self-torture and hurts the mental, vital and physical elements or violates the God within us who is seated in the inner subtle body, then too it is an unwise, an Asuric, a rajasic or rajaso-tamasic tapasya.

Sattwic tapasya is that which is done with a highest enlightened faith, as a duty deeply accepted or for some ethical or spiritual or other higher reason and with no desire for any external or narrowly personal fruit in the action. It is of the character of self-discipline and asks for self-control and a harmonising of one's nature. The Gita describes three kinds of sattwic askesis. First comes the physical, the askesis of the outward act; under this head are especially mentioned worship and reverence of those deserving reverence, cleanness of the person, the action and the life, candid dealing, sexual purity and avoidance of killing and injury to others. Next is askesis of speech, and that consists in the study of Scripture, kind, true and beneficent speech and a careful avoidance of words that may cause fear, sorrow and trouble to others. Finally there is the askesis of mental and moral perfection, and that means the purifying of the whole temperament, gentleness and a clear and calm gladness of mind, self-control and silence. Here comes in all that quiets or disciplines the rajasic and egoistic nature and all that replaces it by the happy and tranquil principle of good and virtue. This is the askesis of the sattwic dharma so highly prized in the system of the ancient Indian culture. Its greater culmination will be a high purity of the reason and will, an equal soul, a deep peace and calm, a wide sympathy and preparation of oneness, a reflection of the inner soul's divine gladness in the mind, life and body. There at that lofty point the ethical is already passing away into the spiritual type and character. And this culmination too can be made to transcend itself, can be raised into a higher and freer light, can pass away into the settled godlike energy of the supreme nature. And what will remain then will be the spirit's

immaculate Tapas, a highest will and luminous force in all the members acting in a wide and solid calm and a deep and pure spiritual delight, Ananda. There will then be no farther need of askesis, no tapasya, because all is naturally and easily divine, all is that Tapas. There will be no separate labour of the lower energism, because the energy of Prakriti will have found its true source and base in the transcendent will of the Purushottama. Then, because of this high initiation, the acts of this energy on the lower planes also will proceed naturally and spontaneously from an innate perfect will and by an inherent perfect guidance. There will be no limitation by any of the present dharmas; for there will be a free action far above the rajasic and tamasic nature, but also far beyond the too careful and narrow limits of the sattwic rule of action. (C19: 488-90)

Make Each Act a Sacrifice

Cease to regard your works as your own; as you have abandoned the fruits of your work, so you must surrender the work also to the Lord of action and sacrifice. Recognise that your nature determines your action; your nature rules the immediate motion of your Swabhava and decides the expressive turn and development of your spirit in the paths of the executive force of Prakriti. Bring in no longer any self-will to confuse the steps of your mind in following the Godward way. Accept the action proper to your nature. Make of all you do from the greatest and most unusual effort to the smallest daily act, make of each act of your mind, each act of your heart, each act of your body, of every inner and outer turn, of every thought and will and feeling, of every step and pause and movement, a sacrifice to the Master of all sacrifice and Tapasya. (C19: 587)

Section Three

Effort

Section Three: Effort

Effort

It is not possible to get rid of the stress on personal effort at once — and not always desirable; for personal effort is better than tamasic inertia.

The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into a movement of the Divine Force. If you feel conscious of the Divine Force, then call it in more and more to govern your effort, to take it up, to transform it into something not yours, but the Mother's. There will be a sort of transfer, a taking up of the forces at work in the personal Adhar — a transfer not suddenly complete but progressive.

But the psychic poise is necessary: the discrimination must develop which sees accurately what is the Divine Force, what is the element of personal effort, and what is brought in as a mixture from the lower cosmic forces. And until the transfer is complete which always takes time, there must always be as a personal contribution, a constant consent to the true Force, a constant rejection of any lower mixture.

At present to give up personal effort is not what is wanted, but to call in more and more the Divine Power and govern and guide by it the personal endeavour.

(S23: 589-90)

The First Period of Effort

In the first movement of self-preparation, the period of personal effort, the method we have to use is this concentration of the whole being on the Divine that it seeks and, as its corollary, this constant rejection, throwing out, *katharsis*, of all that is not the true Truth of the Divine. An entire consecration of all that we are, think, feel and do will be the result of this persistence. This consecration in its turn must culminate in an integral self-giving to the Highest; for its crown and sign of completion is the whole nature's all-comprehending absolute surrender. In the second stage of the Yoga, transitional between the human and the divine working, there will supervene an increasing purified and vigilant passivity, a more and more luminous divine response to the Divine Force, but not to any other; and there will be as a result the growing inrush of a great and conscious miraculous working from above. In the last period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed sadhana; the place of endeavour and tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature. These are the natural successions of the action of the Yoga. (C23: 87)

Having Experiences

So the first question is: "How to have the experience?"

To go within yourself, that is the first step.

And then, once you have succeeded in going within yourself deeply enough to feel the reality of that which is within, to widen yourself progressively, systematically, to become as vast as the universe and lose the sense of limitation.

These are the first two preparatory movements.

And these two things must be done in the greatest possible calm, peace and tranquillity. This peace, this tranquillity brings about silence in the mind and stillness in the vital.

This effort, this attempt must be renewed very regularly, persistently. And after a certain lapse of time, which may be longer or shorter, you begin to perceive a reality that is different from the reality perceived in the ordinary, external consciousness.

Naturally, by the action of Grace, the veil may suddenly be rent from within, and at once you can enter the true truth; but even when that happens, in order to obtain the full value and full effect of the experience, you must maintain yourself in a state of inner receptivity, and to do that, it is indispensable for you to go within each day. (M10: 19-20)

Effort and the Sense of a Separate Person

Generally, the lower nature is always active. It is only when one has surrendered completely that it stops being active. When one is no longer in his lower consciousness, when one has made a total surrender, then the lower nature is no longer active. But so long as it is active, personal effort is necessary.

In fact, so long as one is conscious of one's own self as a separate person, personal effort has to be made. It is only when the sense of separation is lost, when one is not only completely surrendered, but completely fused in the Divine that there is no longer any need of personal effort. But so long as one feels that one is a separate being, one must make a personal effort. This is what he calls the activity of the lower consciousness. (M6: 220-21)

It is Effort which Gives Joy

An aim gives a meaning, a purpose to life, and this purpose implies an effort; and it is in effort that one finds joy.

Exactly. It is the effort which gives joy; a human being who does not know how to make an effort will never find joy. Those who are essentially lazy will never find joy — they do not have the strength to be joyful! It is effort which gives joy. Effort makes the being vibrate at a certain degree of tension which makes it possible for you to feel the joy. (M4: 31)

Finding the Best in Oneself

One must pay attention and do the right thing in the right way. But there are other things still. When one is at a critical moment of one's development, and it is absolutely necessary to cross the step in order to go forward — at that moment, there are always two possibilities: that of crossing the step, and then one immediately makes a terrific progress; or else to become slack, and then this indeed is more than a halt, even more than a set-back, it can be a very serious fall into a chasm. There are abysses from which one does not come up again; and so, in this case it means a life lost.

But if one has within oneself, besides the part that has given way and fallen, if somewhere one has a very ardent flame, if one is ready for anything, all possible suffering, all possible effort, all possible sacrifices to redress what one has done, in order to climb back from the bottom of the abyss, to find the path again, one can do it. This flame has the power to call the Grace. And with the Grace there is nothing impossible. But it must be a real flame, something very powerful, because when one is at the bottom of the hole it is not easy to come out of it. Between the first kind, which is simply a little halt on the way and which makes the next step just a little more difficult, and the last one I am speaking about, there are many degrees; and so one can't say that if one leaves the path it is for a lifetime. That would be only an extreme case.

But if one leaves the path, it is even very difficult to find it again. What is strange is that in leaving it one loses it. There are legends of this kind in all countries: of people who have left the path and then later searched for it and never found it again. It was as if it had vanished. They lost it and this truly is a very sad thing.

But when you are on the path, I said this — I was just saying it — when you are on the path, do not ever leave it. Wait a little, you can hesitate as long as you want before taking it; but the minute you set your foot on it, it is finished, don't leave it. Because this has consequences which can even extend to several lives. It is something very serious. That is why, besides, I never push anyone to enter the path of Yoga. You are quite a number of children here; I have never asked anyone — only those who came to me and told me, "I want it." And to these also, unless I am absolutely sure of them because it is written in their destiny that they have come for that, I always say, "Think about it, think, be quite sure that this is what you want and

nothing else.” And when they have reflected and decided, it is finished. One should no longer move away, one should go straight to the end. I mean, one should not leave the path any more. One should go forward at all costs and try not to stop too often on the way, because it is easier to continue even if it is hard, you see, than to begin all over again when one has stopped. A much greater effort is needed to get going again than to continue on the way. And you see, logically I should not say it, but I have already warned all who are here, I have told them, “Don’t ever take lightly all the circumstances of each day, all the tiny little things of life, all the small events, you know; never take all this lightly.” Never react with your lower being. Each time you are told to do something or not to do it — you are not told this very often, but each time you are told, before reacting think a little, try to find in yourself the part which reacts. Do not react just like that with what is most commonplace in you. Enter within yourself, try to find the best in yourself and with this you must react. *It is very important, it is very important.*

There are people who mark time for years because they haven’t done this. There are others who seem to fly, so fast do they go, because they pay attention to this. And those who don’t do that throw the blame always on the Divine. They accuse the Grace. They tell her, “It is You who deceived me, it is You who put me into difficulty, it is You who made me stumble, it is You who are a monster”, not exactly in these words, but their thought is like this. And so, naturally, they make their case worse because they push away even the help they could have had in their difficulty. There we are.

I could tell you many more things, but it will come gradually. In any case, if you can keep within yourself a confidence, a candid trust which does not argue, and the sense of . . . yes, it is truly a kind of trust that what is done for you, in spite of all appearances, is always the best thing to lead you in the quickest way possible out of all your difficulties and towards the goal . . . if you can keep that strong in you, well, your path will become tremendously easier.

You will tell me that it is very difficult to keep it, but children keep it very well. They must have truly come upon particularly detestable parents to lose it; but if their parents are simply good enough, they keep this very well. Well, it is this attitude; if you can tell yourself, “Good, perhaps the divine Grace deserves our confidence”, simply this, nothing else, you will avoid many difficulties, many. In fact this avoids many difficulties even in ordinary life, and many worries. And particularly here, if you can do that, well, you will see things which seemed formidably difficult dissolving suddenly like clouds. (M6: 443-45)

Unshakable Patience

When one begins, one must begin with an unshakable patience. One must say, “Even if it takes fifty years, even if it takes a hundred years, even if it takes several lives, what I want to accomplish, I shall accomplish.”

Once you have decided upon this, once you are quite conscious that it is so and that the goal is worth the trouble of a constant and sustained effort, you may begin. Otherwise, after a time you will fall flat; you will get discouraged, you will tell yourself, “Oh! It is very difficult — I do it and then it is undone, I do it again and it is once again undone, and then I do it again and it is perpetually undone. . . . Then what? When will I get there?” One must have plenty of patience. The work may be undone a hundred times, you will do it again a hundred and one times; it may be undone a thousand times, you will re-do it a thousand and one times, until finally it is no longer undone. And finally it is no longer undone. (M4: 334-35)

Arm Yourself with Endless Patience

One must wait long, very long, before one can say, “Ah! It is done and finished.” Sometimes one must wait for years, many years. . . .

I am not saying this to discourage you, but to give you patience and perseverance — for there is a moment when you do arrive. And note that the vital is a small part of your being — a very important part, we have said that it is the dynamism, the realising energy, it is very important; but it is only a small part. And the mind! . . . which goes wandering, which must be pulled back by all the strings to be kept quiet! You think this can be done overnight? And your body? . . . You have a weakness, a difficulty, sometimes a small chronic illness, nothing much, but still it is a nuisance, isn't it? You want to get rid of it. You make efforts, you concentrate; you work upon it, establish harmony, and you think it is finished, and then Take, for instance, people who have the habit of coughing; they can't control themselves or almost can't. It is not serious but it is bothersome, and there seems to be no reason why it should ever stop. Well, one tells oneself, “I am going to control this.” One makes an effort — a yogic effort, not a material one — one brings down consciousness, force, and stops the cough. And one thinks, “The body has forgotten how to cough.” And it is a great thing when the body has forgotten, truly one can say, “I am cured.” But unfortunately it is not always true, for this goes down into the subconscious and, one day, when the balance of forces is not so well established, when the strength is not the same, it begins again. And one laments, “I believed that it was over! I had succeeded and told myself, ‘It is true that spiritual power has an action upon the body, it is true that something can be done’, and there! it is not true. And yet it was a small thing, and I who want to conquer immortality! How will I

succeed? . . . For years I have been free from this small thing and here it is beginning anew!" It is then that you must be careful.

You must arm yourself with an endless patience and endurance. You do a thing once, ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times if necessary, but you do it till it gets done. And not done only here and there, but everywhere and everywhere at the same time. This is the great problem one sets oneself. That is why, to those who come to tell me very light-heartedly, "I want to do yoga", I reply, "Think it over, one may do the yoga for a number of years without noticing the least result. But if you want to do it, you must persist and persist with such a will that you should be ready to do it for ten lifetimes, a hundred lifetimes if necessary, in order to succeed." I do not say it will be like that, but the *attitude* must be like that. Nothing must discourage you; for there are all the difficulties of ignorance of the different states of being, to which are added the endless malice and the unbounded cunning of the hostile forces in the world. . . . They are there, do you know why? They have been tolerated, do you know why? — simply to see how long one can last out and how great is the sincerity in one's action. For everything depends upon your sincerity. If you are truly sincere in your will, nothing will stop you, you will go right to the end, and if it is necessary for you to live a thousand years to do it, you will live a thousand years to do it. (M4: 250-52)

A Constant Battle

But the state of the world is such that this is a constant battle. Very few people can escape from this hold. Everyone generally has a tiny little corner in him — at times quite small, at times bigger, sometimes quite unconscious, sometimes a little conscious, sometimes superbly, completely conscious — which likes destroying, likes spoiling. And the state of the world is such that when one gives way to that, one is helped by an onrush of forces which lie waiting for the opportunity, waiting for the moment to be able to manifest, which need human collaboration to be able to manifest and seek it. As soon as the opportunity comes, they rush forth, throwing out a formidable amount of energy. And so one feels stronger as soon as one begins to do evil. That is why it is easier, whilst if one wants to react, refuses to become the instrument of these forces, one must fight hard, be very strong, very straight, very pure, very sincere, and above all, not egoistic. One must not turn round upon oneself, and must never be afraid. And this is not easy. That is, the world is in such a state that in order never to be moved by the adverse forces — the forces of darkness, destruction, wickedness, hatred — one must be a hero, a true hero, who is not afraid of blows and fears nothing, who never turns round upon himself and doesn't have that kind of self-pity which is so despicable a thing. That is why. . . in order not to do evil, think evil, wish evil, never, under any circumstances, one must be a hero. . . . It is not always easy to be a hero. The days one

is tired, the days one wants to rest, not to make any effort, one slips, everything slips down. It is terribly slippery. It is more slippery than a children's toboggan. One slides down, down like that, down in a whirlwind. And it is only when one is right at the bottom that one realises that one has come down. Then one must climb back. That is not always comfortable.

But for one who has faith in the Divine Grace, the return to the Light becomes easy.¹ (M5: 233-34)

Progress and Difficulties

... it is always like that, for every time one wants to realise something, the first difficulty one meets is the opposition of all that was inactive before and now rises up to resist. All that does not want to accept this change naturally wakes up and revolts. But that is of no importance. It is the same thing as in the individual being: when you want to progress, the difficulty you want to conquer immediately increases tenfold in importance and intensity in your consciousness. There is but to persevere, that's all. It will pass. (M9: 175)

To Persist

To do a work, how is one to know whether one is capable of doing it or not?

How can one know whether one is capable of doing it or not! By *trying*. That's the best thing. And if you do not succeed immediately, persevere. And you must know that if a strong urge, a very strong urge to do something comes to you, that means this work has something to do with you and you are capable of doing it. But one can have powers which are so well hidden that one has to dig long before finding them. So you must not get discouraged at the first setback, you must persist. (M5: 319)

Why no Effort

You said that because we are here and have everything, it seems very natural to us. Why doesn't effort also come naturally?

It is because the physical nature in ordinary men is, as Sri Aurobindo writes, rather tamasic. Naturally it does not make any effort. But the vital makes an effort. Only,

1. This last sentence was added by Mother in September 1969 when this talk was published for the first time.

it makes the effort usually for its own satisfaction. Yet it is quite capable of making an effort because that is in its nature. In fact, I can't say that you don't make any effort, you make a lot of effort for many things, when it pleases you or when you have understood that it is necessary for one reason or another. What you mean is to make a continuous effort for yoga. There are even people who have come here for yoga or at least thinking that they came for yoga and who don't make much effort, who take things easy, as they come. I don't think that the physical nature, left to itself, is spontaneously pushed into any effort. It needs a certain amount of activity, but it is very little. You see, the great thing here is that the principle of education is a principle of freedom, and to put it briefly, the whole life is organised on the maximum possible freedom in movement; that is, the rules, regulations, restrictions are reduced absolutely to the minimum. If you compare this with the way in which parents usually educate their children, with a constant "Don't do this", "You can't do that", "Do this", "Go and do that", and, you know, orders and rules, there is a considerable difference.

In schools and colleges everywhere there are infinitely more strict rules than what we have here. So, as one doesn't impose on you the absolute condition of making progress, you make it when it pleases you, you don't when it doesn't, and then you take things as easy as you can. There are some — I do not say this absolutely — there are some who try, but they try spontaneously. Of course from the spiritual point of view this is infinitely more valuable. The progress you will make because you feel within yourself the need to make it, because it is an impulsion that pushes you forward spontaneously, and not because it is something imposed on you like a rule — this progress, from the spiritual point of view, is infinitely greater. All in you that tries to do things well, tries to do it spontaneously and sincerely; it is something that comes from within you, and not because you have been promised rewards if you do well and punishments if you do badly. Our system is not based on this.

It is possible that at a certain moment something comes along to give you the impression that your effort has been appreciated, but the effort was not made in view of that; that is, these promises are not made beforehand nor are they balanced by equivalent punishments. This is not the practice here. Usually things are such, arranged in such a way, that the satisfaction of having done well seems to be the best of rewards and one punishes oneself when one does badly, in the sense that one feels miserable and unhappy and ill at ease, and this is indeed the most concrete punishment one has. And so, all these movements, from the point of view of the inner spiritual growth, have an infinitely greater value than when they are the result of an outer rule. (M6: 430-32)

A General Rule

As a general rule, and so that the experience may have its full benefit, when one has undertaken something one must do it with persistence, without caring for obstacles and difficulties, until an absolutely irrefutable event indicates that one no longer has to do it. This happens very rarely. Usually, things follow their own curve and when they reach an issue — either they have come to an end or have produced the desired result — one becomes aware of the reason for doing them. But the obstacles, oppositions — or encouragements — should not be considered as irrefutable signs to be followed, for these things may have very different meanings according to the case, and it is not at all on the basis of these outer events that one must judge the validity of one's undertaking.

When one is very attentive and very sincere, one can have an indication, an inner but perceptible indication, of the value of what one has undertaken or the action one is doing. Truly, for someone who has an entire goodwill, that is, who in all sincerity, with the whole conscious part of his being, wants to do the right thing in the right way, there is always an indication; if for some reason or other one launches upon a more or less fatal action, one *always* feels an uneasiness in the region of the solar plexus; an uneasiness which is not violent, which doesn't compel recognition dramatically, but is very perceptible to someone who is attentive — something like a sort of regret, like a lack of assent. It may go as far as a kind of refusal to collaborate. But I must stress it, without violence, without brutal self-assertion: it makes no noise, does not hurt, it is at the most a slight uneasiness. And if you disregard it, if you pay no attention, attach no importance to it, after a little while it will completely disappear and there will be nothing any longer. (M9: 31-32)

Steady Effort

Ambitious plans generally fall flat. It is better to go slow and steady.

*

Be steady and patient — everything will be all right.

*

You must keep your aspiration steady and be patient in your endeavour — and you are sure of success.

*

Steady efforts always bring great results.

*

Remaining steady in our effort and quiet and firm in our determination, we are sure to reach the goal.

*

Effort well-directed breaks down all obstacles.

Be steady in your aspiration and it is sure to be granted.

Love.

*

No effort is lost. There is always an answer, even if it is not perceived.

*

Personal effort is indispensable; without it nothing can be done. When the personal effort is sincere the help is always there.

*

All sincere effort to progress and get rid of dangerous habits is answered and supported by an active help from the Grace — but the effort must be *steady* and the aspiration must be *sincere*. (M14: 160-61)

Not to be Discouraged

Sweet Mother, when we make an effort to do better but don't see any progress, we feel discouraged. What is the best thing to do?

Not to be discouraged! Despondency leads nowhere.

To begin with, the first thing to tell yourself is that you are almost entirely incapable of knowing whether you are making progress or not, for very often what seems to us to be a state of stagnation is a long — sometimes long, but in any case not endless — preparation for a leap forward. We sometimes seem to be marking time for weeks or months, and then suddenly something that was being prepared makes its appearance, and we see that there is quite a considerable change and *on several points* at a time.

As with everything in yoga, the effort for progress must be made for the love of the effort for progress. The joy of effort, the aspiration for progress must be enough in themselves, quite independent of the result. Everything one does in yoga must be done for the joy of doing it, and not in view of the result one wants to obtain. . . . Indeed, in life, always, in all things, the result does not belong to us. And if we want to keep the right attitude, we must act, feel, think, strive spontaneously, for *that* is what we must do, and not in view of the result to be obtained.

As soon as we think of the result we begin to bargain and that takes away all sincerity from the effort. You make an effort to progress because you feel within you the need, the *imperative* need to make an effort and progress; and this effort is the gift you offer to the Divine Consciousness in you, the Divine Consciousness in the Universe, it is your way of expressing your gratitude, offering your self; and whether this results in progress or not is of no importance. You will progress when it is decided that the time has come to progress and not because you desire it.

If you wish to progress, if you make an effort to control yourself for instance, to overcome certain defects, weaknesses, imperfections, and if you expect to get a more or less immediate result from your effort, your effort loses all sincerity, it becomes a bargaining. You say, "See! I am going to make an effort, but that's because I want this in exchange for my effort." You are no longer spontaneous, no longer natural.

So there are two things to remember. First, we are incapable of judging *what* the result ought to be. If we put our trust in the Divine, if we say. . . if we say, "Well now, I am going to give everything, everything, all I can give, effort, concentration, and *He* will judge what has to be given in exchange or even whether anything should be given in exchange, and I do not know what the result should be." Before we transform anything in ourselves, are we quite sure of the direction, the way, the form that this transformation should take? — Not at all. So, it is only our imagination and usually we greatly limit the result to be obtained and make it altogether petty, mean, superficial, relative. We do not know what the result can truly be, what it ought to be. We know it later. When it comes, when the change takes place, then if we look back, we say, "Ah! That's it, that is what I was moving towards" — but we know it only later. Before that we only have vague imaginations which are quite superficial and childish in comparison with the true progress, the true transformation.

So we say, first point: we have an aspiration but we don't really know the true result we ought to obtain. Only the Divine can know that.

And secondly, if we tell the Divine, "I am giving you my effort, but, you know, in exchange I must make progress, otherwise I won't give you anything at all!" — that is bargaining. That's all.

(*Silence*)

A spontaneous act, done because one cannot do otherwise, and done as an offering of goodwill, is the only one which truly has any value. (M9: 316-18)

Inner Effort

What happens most often when one makes the inner effort that's needed to discover one's soul, to unite with it and allow it to govern one's life, is a kind of marvellous enchantment with this discovery, as a result of which the first instinct is to tell oneself, "Now I have what I need, I have found infinite delight!" and no longer to be concerned with anything else.

In fact this is what has happened to almost all those who have made this discovery, and some of them have even set up this experience as a principle of realisation and said, "When you have done that, everything is done, there is nothing more to do; you have reached the goal and the end of the road."

Indeed, a great courage is necessary to go farther; this soul one discovers must be an intrepid warrior soul which does not at all rest satisfied with its own inner joy while comforting itself for the unhappiness of others with the idea that sooner or later everybody will reach that state and that it is good for others to make the same effort that one has made or, at best, that from this state of inner wisdom one can, with "great benevolence" and "deep compassion" help others to reach it, and that when everybody has attained it, well, that will be the end of the world and that's so much the better for those who don't like suffering!

But . . . there is a "but". Are you sure that this was the aim and intention of the Supreme when he manifested?

(Silence)

The whole creation, the whole universal manifestation appears at best like a very bad joke if it only comes to this. Why begin at all if it is only to get out of it! What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, of having created something which, at least in its external appearance, is so tragic and dramatic, if it is simply to teach you how to get out of it — it would have been better not to begin at all.

(M9: 425-26)

Thinking about the Victory Gained

This is something very well known in yoga. The simple fact of observing the victory one has gained — observing it mentally, you see, thinking about it — is enough to destroy the effect of the yoga which may have existed for years. A mental silence

strong enough to prevent all outer vibrations from coming in, is indispensable. Well, that is something so difficult to achieve that one must really have passed from what Sri Aurobindo calls “the lower hemisphere” to the higher, exclusively spiritual hemisphere, for it not to happen. (M9: 125-26)

Why People do not Practise

Well, I am going to ask a question: “Why don’t people practise?” Do you know why they don’t practise? (*Mother asks others in turn.*) And you? And you? . . . Bah! Do you know?

Perhaps because one is lazy!

That is one of the main reasons. And so one conceals one’s laziness behind fine reasons, the first of which says, “I can’t, I don’t know” or else, “I have tried and not succeeded” or “I don’t know where to begin!” Any reason whatever, isn’t that true? The first that comes to you. Or else, one doesn’t practise because one doesn’t find it worthwhile to make the effort — that is part of the laziness also, it asks for too much effort! But one can’t live without effort! If one were to refuse to make any effort, one would not even be able to stand on one’s legs or walk or even eat.

I believe that one doesn’t practise first of all because this doesn’t have a sufficiently *concrete* reality to dominate other things in life, because the effort seems out of proportion to the result. But this kind of effort is only a beginning: once one gets into it, it is no longer the same thing. (M8: 295)

Blaming Human Nature

To say, “Oh, human nature is like this. Oh, we are in the inconscience. Oh, we are in the ignorance” — all this is laziness and weakness. And behind this laziness and weakness there is a huge bad will. There!

I say this because many people have made this remark to me, many. And it is always a way of justifying oneself: “Oh, we are doing what we can.” It is not true. Because if you are sincere, once you have seen — as long as you have not seen, nothing can be said — but the moment you see is the moment when you receive the Grace, and once you have received the Grace, you no longer have the right to forget it. (M10: 34-35)

Justifying One's Weakness

To justify one's weaknesses is a kind of laziness and inertia.

Well, when one doesn't want to make an effort to correct oneself, one says, "Oh, it is impossible, I can't do it, I don't have the strength, I am not made of that stuff, I don't have the necessary qualities, I could never do it." It is absolute laziness, it is in order to avoid the required effort. When you are asked to make progress: "Oh, it is beyond my capacity, I am a poor creature, I can do nothing!" That's all. It is almost ill-will. It is extreme laziness, a refusal to make any effort. One accepts all one's defects and incapacities in order not to have to make the necessary effort to overcome them. One says, "I am like that, I can't be otherwise!" It is a refusal to let the divine Grace work in you. It is a justification of your own ill-will. (M6: 267)

Inertia

"The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul.

"Souls that do not aspire are God's failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.

"Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.

"Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

"God has made the world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of a great wrestle and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

"Distrust a perfect-seeming success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

“There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting-place.”

Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses* (C13: 208-09)

All that Sri Aurobindo says here is aimed at fighting against human nature with its inertia, its heaviness, laziness, easy satisfactions, hostility to all effort. How many times in life does one meet people who become pacifists because they are afraid to fight, who long for rest before they have earned it, who are satisfied with a little progress and in their imagination and desires make it into a marvellous realisation so as to justify their stopping half-way.

In ordinary life, already, this happens so much. Indeed, this is the bourgeois ideal, which has deadened mankind and made man into what he is now: “Work while you are young, accumulate wealth, honour, position; be provident, have a little foresight, put something by, lay up a capital, become an official — so that later when you are forty you “can sit down”, enjoy your income and later your pension and, as they say, enjoy a well-earned rest.” — To sit down, to stop on the way, not to move forward, to go to sleep, to go downhill towards the grave before one’s time, cease to live the purpose of life — to sit down!

The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. Life is movement, it is effort, it is a march forward, the scaling of a mountain, the climb towards new revelations, towards future realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in the march forward that repose must be found, the true repose of complete trust in the divine Grace, of the absence of desires, of victory over egoism.

True repose comes from the widening, the universalisation of the consciousness. Become as vast as the world and you will always be at rest. In the thick of action, in the very midst of the battle, the effort, you will know the repose of infinity and eternity. (M9: 65-66)

Opinion of Men and the Divine Will

There are times when God seems to be sternly on the side of the past; then what has been and is, sits firm as on a throne and clothes itself with an irrevocable “I shall be”. Then persevere, though thou seem to be fighting the Master of all; for this is His sharpest trial.

All is not settled when a cause is humanly lost and hopeless; all is settled, only when the soul renounces its effort.

Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (C12: 459)

This is to encourage us not to allow ourselves to be influenced by appearances and to persist in our effort even if it seems to have no result.

In life, we must do what is revealed to us as the true thing to be done, even if others mock and criticise; for the opinion of men has no value, the Divine Will alone is true and will triumph. (M10: 291)

The Divine Who Wills in You

First of all you must will it.

For all things, first you must understand, will, and then begin to practise — begin by just a very little. When you catch yourself in the act of doing something because someone else wanted it or because you are not very sure of what you want to do and are in the habit of doing what this one or that one or tradition or customs make you do — because, among the influences under which you live, there are collective suggestions, social traditions, many! . . . Social habits are something terrible; your consciousness is stuffed with them from the time you are quite small; when a baby you are already told: “This should be done, that should not be done, you must do this in this way, you must not do it in that way”, and all that; these are ideas which usually parents or teachers have received in the same way when they were very young and to which they are accustomed and submit by habit; these are the most dangerous influences because they are subtle, they are not expressed outwardly by words; your head was stuffed with them and your feelings and reactions, when you were very small, and it is only later, much later, when you begin to reflect and try to know what the truth is . . . as soon as you understand that there is something which must be put above all the rest, that there is something which can truly teach you to live, which must form your character, rule your movements . . . when you understand that, you can look at yourself doing, objectivise yourself, laugh a little at all those multiple small bondages of habit, traditions, the education you have received, and then put the light, consciousness, aspiration for surrender to the Divine on these things, and try to receive the divine inspiration to do things as it’s necessary, not according to habits, not according to one’s vital impulses, not according to all the vital impulses and personal wills which one receives from others and which push him to do things which perhaps he would not have done without all that.

One must observe all these things, look at them attentively and put them one after another in front of the divine Truth as one can receive it — it is progressive, one receives it purer and purer, stronger and stronger, more and more clear-sightedly — put all these things before it and with an absolute sincerity will that *this* may guide you and nothing else. You do this once, a hundred times, a thousand times, millions of times and after years of sustained effort you can gradually become aware

that at last you are a free being — because this is what's remarkable: that when one is perfectly surrendered to the Divine one is perfectly free, and *this is* the absolute condition for freedom, to belong to the Divine alone; you are free from the whole world because you belong only to Him. And this surrender is the supreme liberation, you are also free from your little personal ego and of all things this is the most difficult — and the happiest too, the only thing that can give you a constant peace, an uninterrupted joy and the feeling of an *infinite* freedom from all that afflicts you, dwarfs, diminishes, impoverishes you, and from all that can create the least anxiety in you, the least fear. You are no longer afraid of anything, you no longer fear anything, you are the supreme master of your destiny because it is the Divine who wills in you and guides everything. But this does not happen overnight: a little time and a *great deal* of ardour in the will, not fearing to make any effort and not losing heart when one doesn't succeed, knowing that the victory is certain and that one must last out until it comes. There you are. (M7: 241-42)

Ardent Will for Progress

What is indispensable in every case is the *ardent* will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance: to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, and to set out into the unknown with the ardent faith that this is the truth of tomorrow, *inevitable*, which must necessarily come, which nothing, nobody, no bad will, even that of Nature, can prevent from becoming a reality — perhaps of a not too distant future — a reality which is being worked out now and which those who know how to change, how not to be weighed down by old habits, will *surely* have the good fortune not only to see but to realise.

People sleep, they forget, they take life easy — they forget, forget all the time. . . . But if we could remember . . . that we are at an exceptional hour, a *unique* time, that we have this immense good fortune, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, we could easily get rid of everything that impedes and hinders our progress.

So, the most important thing, it seems, is to remember this fact; even when one doesn't have the tangible experience, to have the certainty of it and faith in it; to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to wake up with this perception; to do all that one does with this great truth as the background, as a constant support, this great truth that we are witnessing the birth of a new world.

We can participate in it, we can become this new world. And truly, when one has such a marvellous opportunity, one should be ready to give up everything for its sake. (M9: 159-60)

Personal Will and God's Will

If everything is God's will, what is the use of personal will?

In the universe and more particularly upon earth everything is part of the divine plan executed by Nature and everything is necessary for its fulfilment. Personal will is one of Nature's means of action and indispensable for her working. So personal will is in a way part of God's will.

However, to understand properly, we must first agree on the meaning that is given to the word "will".

Will, as it is usually conceived, is the elaboration of a thought, to which is added a force, a power of fulfilment accompanied by an impulse to carry it out. That is the description of human will. Divine will is quite another thing. It is a vision united with a power of realisation. Divine will is omniscient and omnipotent, it is irresistible and immediate in its execution.

Human will is uncertain, often wavering, always in conflict with opposing wills. It is effective only when for some reason or other it is in accord with the will of Nature — itself a transcription of the divine will — or with the divine will itself, as a result of Grace or Yoga.

So one can say that personal will is one of the means that God uses to bring us back to Him. (M10: 54)

Springing into the Light

Instead of falling asleep in an easy quietude and letting things happen according to their own rhythm, if one strains to the utmost one's will, ardour, aspiration and springs up into the light, then one can hold one's head higher; one can have, in a higher region of consciousness, enough room to live, to breathe, to grow and develop above the passing cyclone.

This is possible. In a very small way, this was already done during the last war, when Sri Aurobindo was here. It can be done again. But one must want it and each one must do his own work as sincerely and completely as he can. (M9: 170-71)

Sincerity and Happiness

Sweet Mother, how can we make our submission gladly?

It must be sincere. If it is truly sincere, it becomes happy. So long as it is not — you may reverse the thing — so long as it is not happy, you may be sure it is not

perfectly sincere; for if it is perfectly sincere, it is always happy. If it is not happy, it means that there is something which holds back, something which would like things to be otherwise, something that has a will of its own, a desire of its own, its own purpose and is not satisfied, and therefore is not completely surrendered, not sincere in its surrender. But if one is sincere in one's surrender, one is perfectly happy, automatically; rather, one automatically enjoys an ineffable happiness. Therefore, as long as this ineffable happiness is not there, it is a *sure* indication that you are not sincere, that there is something, some part of the being, larger or smaller, which is not sincere.

Sweet Mother, how to discover this part?

Aspire, insist, put the light on it, pray if necessary. There are many ways. Sometimes surgical operations are necessary, putting a red hot iron on the wound, as when there is a nasty abscess somewhere which will not burst. (M6: 210-11)

Effort to Become Passive

But Mother, to be able to become passive an effort has to be made, hasn't it?

Not necessarily, that depends upon people. An effort? One must, yes, one must want it. But is the will an effort? . . . Naturally, one must think about it, must want it. But the two things can go together, you see, there is a moment when the two — aspiration and passivity — can not only be alternate but simultaneous. You can be at once in the state of aspiration, of willing, which calls down something — exactly the will to open oneself and receive, and the aspiration which calls down the force you want to receive — and *at the same time* be in that state of complete inner stillness which allows full penetration, for it is in this immobility that one can be penetrated, that one becomes permeable by the Force. Well, the two can be simultaneous without the one disturbing the other, or can alternate so closely that they can hardly be distinguished. But one can be like that, like a great flame rising in aspiration, and at the same time as though this flame formed a vase, a large vase, opening and receiving all that comes down.

And the two can go together. And when one succeeds in having the two together, one can have them constantly, whatever one may be doing. Only there may be a slight, very slight displacement of consciousness, almost imperceptible, which becomes aware of the flame first and then of the vase of receptivity — of what seeks to be filled and the flame that rises to call down what must fill the vase — a very slight pendular movement and so close that it gives the impression that one has the two at the same time. (M6: 113)

To be Totally Sincere

Fundamentally, whatever be the path one follows — whether the path of surrender, consecration, knowledge — if one wants it to be perfect, it is always equally difficult, and there is but one way, one only, I know of only one: that is perfect sincerity, but *perfect* sincerity!

Do you know what perfect sincerity is? . . .

Never to try to deceive oneself, never let any part of the being try to find out a way of convincing the others, never to explain favourably what one does in order to have an excuse for what one wants to do, never to close one's eyes when something is unpleasant, never to let anything pass, telling oneself, "That is not important, next time it will be better."

Oh! It is very difficult. Just try for one hour and you will see how very difficult it is. Only one hour, to be *totally, absolutely* sincere. To let nothing pass. That is, all one does, all one feels, all one thinks, all one wants, is *exclusively* the Divine.

"I want nothing but the Divine, I think of nothing but the Divine, I do nothing but what will lead me to the Divine, I love nothing but the Divine."

Try — try, just to see, try for half an hour, you will see how difficult it is!

(M6: 132-33)

Making an Effort

I would advise the same thing to everyone: Make an effort, work, open yourself, give yourself up entirely to the new Force, and a day will come when you will have the experience.

With the experience you will understand precisely how useless the questions were. (M9: 319)

Section Four

Surrender

Section Four: Surrender

Surrender

And now, surrender. In English the word is “surrender”, there is no French word which gives exactly that sense. But Sri Aurobindo has said — I think we have read this — that surrender is the first and absolute condition for doing the yoga. So, if we follow what he has said, this is not just one of the necessary qualities: it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. If one has not decided to make a total surrender, one cannot begin.

But for this surrender to be total, all these qualities are necessary. And I add one more — for so far we have only four — I add endurance. For, if you are not able to face difficulties without getting discouraged and without giving up, because it is too difficult; and if you are incapable . . . well, of receiving blows and yet continuing, of “pocketing” them, as they say — when you receive blows as a result of your defects, of putting them in your pocket and continuing to go forward without flagging — you don’t go very far; at the first turning where you lose sight of your little habitual life, you fall into despair and give up the game.

The most . . . how shall I put it? the most material form of this is perseverance. Unless you are resolved to begin the same thing over again a thousand times if need be. . . . You know, people come to me in despair, “But I thought it was done and now I must begin again!” And if they are told, “But that’s nothing, you will probably have to begin again a hundred times, two hundred times, a thousand times; you take one step forward and think you are secure, but there will always be something to bring back the same difficulty a little farther on. You think you have solved the problem, you must solve it yet once again; it will turn up again looking just a little different, but it will be the same problem”, and if you are not determined that: “Even if it comes back a million times, I shall do it a million times, but I shall go through with it”, well, you won’t be able to do the yoga. This is absolutely indispensable.

People have a beautiful experience and say, “Ah, now this is it! . . .” And then it settles down, diminishes, gets veiled, and suddenly something quite unexpected, absolutely commonplace and apparently completely uninteresting comes before you and blocks your way. And then you say, “Ah! what’s the good of having made this progress if it’s going to start all over again? Why should I do it? I made an effort, I succeeded, achieved something, and now it’s as if I had done nothing! It’s indeed hopeless.” For you have no endurance.

If one has endurance, one says, “It’s all right. Good, I shall begin again as

often as necessary; a thousand times, ten thousand times, a hundred thousand times if necessary, I shall begin again — but I shall go to the end and nothing will have the power to stop me on the way.”

This is most necessary. Most necessary.

So here's my proposal: we put surrender first, at the top of the list, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said — that to do the integral yoga one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, this is *the* way. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, five psychological perfections, and we say that these perfections are:

Sincerity or Transparency
 Faith or Trust (Trust in the Divine, naturally)
 Devotion or Gratitude
 Courage or Aspiration
 Endurance or Perseverance.

One form of endurance is *faithfulness*, faithfulness to one's resolution — being faithful. One has taken a resolution, one is faithful to one's resolution. This is endurance.

There you are.

If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious.

Victory is to the most persistent. (M8: 41-42)

Tapasya and Surrender

Tapasya has predominated in your sadhana, for you have a fervour and active energy which predisposes you to that. No way is entirely easy, and in that of surrender the difficulty is to make a true and complete surrender. Once it is made, it certainly makes things easier — not that things are all done in no time or that there are no difficulties, but there is an assurance, a support, an absence of tension which gives the consciousness rest as well as strength and freedom from the worst forms of resistance. (S23: 595)

Surrender itself is a Tapasya

Yes, of course you are right. The process of surrender is itself a Tapasya. Not only so, but in fact a double process of Tapasya and increasing surrender persists for a long time even when the surrender has fairly well begun. But a time comes when one feels the Presence and the force constantly and more and more feels that that is doing everything — so that the worst difficulties cannot disturb this sense and personal effort is no longer necessary, hardly even possible. That is the sign of the full surren-

der of the nature into the hands of the Divine. There are some who take this position in faith even before there is this experience and if the Bhakti and the faith are strong it carries them through till the experience is there. But all cannot take this position from the beginning — and for some it would be dangerous since they might put themselves into the hand of a wrong Force thinking it to be the Divine. For most it is necessary to grow through Tapasya into surrender. (S23: 595-96)

Be Exceedingly Careful

Surrender does not ensure a smooth and unruffled and continuous progression. The reason is that your being is not yet one, nor your surrender absolute and complete. Only a part of you surrenders; and today it is one part and the next day it is another. The whole purpose of the Yoga is to gather all the divergent parts together and forge them into an undivided unity. Till then you cannot hope to be without difficulties — difficulties, for example, like doubt or depression or hesitation. The whole world is full of the poison. You take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him. It is sufficient for you to come near a place where there is plague in order to be infected with its poison; you need not know at all that it is there. You can lose in a few minutes what it has taken you months to gain. So long as you belong to humanity and so long as you lead the ordinary life, it does not matter much if you mix with the people of the world; but if you want the divine life, you will have to be exceedingly careful about your company and your environment. (M3: 6-7)

Tamasic Passivity

If there is not a complete surrender, then it is not possible to adopt the baby-cat attitude, — it becomes mere tamasic passivity calling itself surrender. If a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, it follows that personal effort is necessary. (S23: 593-94)

Forms of Surrender

What is the place of training or discipline in surrender? If one surrenders, can he not be without discipline? Does not discipline sometimes hamper?

Maybe. But a distinction must be made between a method of development or discipline and a willed action. Discipline is different; I am speaking of willed action.

If you surrender you have to give up effort, but that does not mean that you have to abandon also all willed action. On the contrary, you can hasten the realisation by lending your will to the Divine Will. That too is surrender in another form.

What is required of you is not a passive surrender, in which you become like a block, but to put your will at the disposal of the Divine Will. (M3: 18)

Offering and Surrender

Are not offering and surrender to the Divine the same thing?

They are two aspects of the same thing, but not altogether the same. One is more active than the other. They do not belong to quite the same plane of existence.

For example, you have decided to offer your life to the Divine, you take that decision. But all of a sudden, something altogether unpleasant, unexpected happens to you and your first movement is to react and protest. Yet you have made the offering, you have said once for all: "My life belongs to the Divine", and then suddenly an extremely unpleasant incident happens (that can happen) and there is something in you that reacts, that does not want it. But here, if you want to be truly logical with your offering, you must bring forward this unpleasant incident, make an offering of it to the Divine, telling him very sincerely: "Let Your will be done; if You have decided it that way, it will be that way." And this must be a willing and spontaneous adhesion. So it is very difficult.

Even for the smallest thing, something that is not in keeping with what you expected, what you have worked for, instead of an opposite reaction coming in — spontaneously, irresistibly, you draw back: "No, not that" — if you have made a complete surrender, a total surrender, well, it does not happen like that: you are as quiet, as peaceful, as calm in one case as in the other. And perhaps you had the notion that it would be better if it happened in a certain way, but if it happens differently, you find that this also is all right. You might have, for example, worked very hard to do a certain thing, so that something might happen, you might have given much time, much of your energy, much of your will, and all that not for your own sake, but, say, for the divine work (that is the offering); now suppose that after having taken all this trouble, done all this work, made all these efforts, it all goes just the other way round, it does not succeed. If you are truly surrendered, you say: "It is good, it is all good, it is all right; I did what I could, as well as I could, now it is not my decision, it is the decision of the Divine, I accept entirely what He decides." On the other hand, if you do not have this deep and spontaneous surrender, you tell yourself: "How is it? I took so much trouble to do a thing which is not for a selfish purpose, which is for the Divine Work, and this is the result, it is not successful!" Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, it is like that.

True surrender is a very difficult thing.

For self-surrender, should one continue to do what one ought to do?

Continue to do what one *ought* to, what is clearly shown as the thing that ought to be done, what is to be done — whether one succeeds or does not succeed, whether the result is what one thinks or expects or isn't — that has no importance; one continues.

But when one tries, if one makes a mistake unconsciously, how can one know?

If you are quite sincere, you know. Not to know one's fault is always the sign of an insincerity somewhere. And generally, it is hidden in the vital. When the vital consents to collaborate (which is already a big step), when it decides that it too is going to work, to devote all its effort and all its energy to accomplish the work, even then there is underneath, well hidden somewhere, a sort of — how shall we call it? — an expectation that things will turn out well and the result will be favourable. And that veils the complete sincerity. For this expectation is an egoistic, personal thing, and this veils the full sincerity. Then you do not know.

But if one is altogether, absolutely sincere, as soon as what one is doing is not exactly what should be done, one feels it very clearly — not violently but very clearly, very precisely: “No, not this.” And then if one has no attachment, immediately it stops, instantaneously it stops.

But one has attachment, even for a disinterested work. That's what you must understand. You have given your life for a cause that is not egoistic, but the ego is there all the same. And you have a way of doing the thing which is special, personal to you; and you have within you a hope (not to speak of a desire) that the result will be like this, that you will get this and it will be done. Even a work that is not done for yourself but which you have undertaken, you expect that it will succeed, that you will have success — not personally — for the thing you have undertaken, the work that you are doing. Well, that brings in just a little bit of something like that, down below, quite hidden, quite a tiny thing which is a little . . . not very straight, a little bent, twisted. And then you do not know. But if that were not there, as soon as you failed to do exactly what should be done, you would know. You would know it absolutely precisely. It is as delicate a movement as the thousandth part of a millimetre would be. Yes, it is there, and that is sufficient, you know: “I was mistaken.” But you must have that absolute sincerity which precisely does not want at any cost to blunder, which will do anything, give up everything, everything, rather than live in any kind of illusion. But it is very difficult; it takes time and much labour. When you are doing a thing, always those two, the mind and the vital are there, trying to draw some benefit or other out of what you are doing: the benefit of personal

satisfaction, the benefit of happiness, the benefit of a good opinion that you have of yourself. It is difficult not to deceive oneself. (M5: 52-55)

Surrender, Self-giving, Consecration, Offering

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between self-giving, consecration and surrender?

. . .

We could add “offering” also!

I think they are closely synonymous, that they are rather shades than differences. Because one can very well replace one by another in a sentence. It depends on how the sentence sounds and on the word that fits best into it. It is a literary point. If one wants, one can find a difference, but all this depends entirely on what one wants to put into the words.

I said, didn't I, that “*soumission*” is not a good word? We use in French “*soumission*” to translate “surrender”, because there is no word which translates “surrender”. “*Soumission*” always gives the impression of something which accepts reluctantly, which does not give complete adherence, does not collaborate fully. And so, that is what makes the difference with the word in the sense of “surrender” in which there is the meaning of a perfect adherence. Which means that though one uses this word “*soumission*”, it is not a good one. . . .

(*Silence*)

One can — if one wants to split hairs, as it is said — one can make a distinction between self-giving, consecration and offering. These are three . . . they may be three different phases. But that is if truly one wants to create complications; because in writing, as I said, one can very well use one word in place of another, according to the rhythm of the sentence, and this keeps the meaning intact. For if you want to make a distinction, you are immediately obliged to put adjectives, aren't you? . . . Take the word in itself, “self-giving, offering, consecration”. . . Now, if you want to make a distinction, you say “a total consecration”, “a partial self-giving”. . . You see, you are obliged to use adjectives: they are synonyms.

Who asked the question? It was you? Now, it depends on the sentence you are going to write — you will use one word or another. But you must know: the word “*soumission*” does not have the precise meaning that's necessary. “*Soumission*” (“*submission*”) compared with “surrender” gives the same difference that there is — perhaps less strongly — but a difference analogous to that between obedience

and collaboration. In one case there is a perfect adherence, and in the other there is an acceptance which perhaps reserves itself; it accepts because it realises that it can't do otherwise, but it does not collaborate entirely. . . . One does not give total adherence. (M6: 227-29)

Obedience to the Guide

For this penetration into the luminous crypt of the soul one has to get through all the intervening vital stuff to the psychic centre within us, however long, tedious or difficult may be the process. The method of detachment from the insistence of all mental and vital and physical claims and calls and impulses, a concentration in the heart, austerity, self-purification and rejection of the old mind movements and life movements, rejection of the ego of desire, rejection of false needs and false habits, are all useful aids to this difficult passage: but the strongest, most central way is to found all such or other methods on a self-offering and surrender of ourselves and of our parts of nature to the Divine Being, the Ishwara. A strict obedience to the wise and intuitive leading of a Guide is also normal and necessary for all but a few specially gifted seekers. (C22: 940-41)

Surrender and Sacrifice

Is not surrender the same as sacrifice?

In our Yoga there is no room for sacrifice. But everything depends on the meaning you put on the word. In its pure sense it means a consecrated giving, a making sacred to the Divine. But in the significance that it now bears, sacrifice is something that works for destruction; it carries about it an atmosphere of negation. This kind of sacrifice is not fulfilment; it is a deprivation, a self-immolation. It is your possibilities that you sacrifice, the possibilities and realisations of your personality from the most material to the highest spiritual range. Sacrifice diminishes your being. If physically you sacrifice your life, your body, you give up all your possibilities on the material plane; you have done with the achievements of your earthly existence.

In the same way you can morally sacrifice your life; you give up the amplitude and free fulfilment of your inner existence. There is always in this idea of self-immolation a sense of forcing, a constriction, an imposed self-denial. This is an ideal that does not give room for the soul's deeper and larger spontaneities. By surrender we mean not this but a spontaneous self-giving, a giving of all your self to the Divine, to a greater Consciousness of which you are a part. Surrender will not diminish, but increase; it will not lessen or weaken or destroy your personality, it

will fortify and aggrandise it. Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give, with grudging or with pain and effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving. When you do anything with the sense of a compression of your being, be sure that you are doing it in the wrong way. True surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before: you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.

There is no ambiguity or vagueness in the movement, it is clear and strong and definite. If a small human mind stands in front of the Divine Universal Mind and clings to its separateness, it will remain what it is, a small bounded thing, incapable of knowing the nature of the higher reality or even of coming in contact with it. The two continue to stand apart and are, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, quite different from each other. But if the little human mind surrenders, it will be merged in the Divine Universal Mind; it will be one in quality and quantity with it; losing nothing but its own limitations and deformations, it will receive from it its vastness and luminous clearness. The small existence will change its nature; it will put on the nature of the greater truth to which it surrenders. But if it resists and fights, if it revolts against the Universal Mind, then a conflict and pressure are inevitable in which what is weak and small cannot fail to be drawn into that power and immensity. If it does not surrender, its only other possible fate is absorption and extinction. A human being, who comes into contact with the Divine Mind and surrenders, will find that his own mind begins at once to be purified of its obscurities and to share in the power and the knowledge of the Divine Universal Mind. If he stands in front, but separated, without any contact, he will remain what he is, a little drop of water in the measureless vastness. If he revolts, he will lose his mind; its powers will diminish and disappear. And what is true of the mind is true of all the other parts of the nature. It is as when you fight against one who is too strong for you — a broken head is all you gain. How can you fight something that is a million times stronger? Each time you revolt, you get a knock, and each blow takes away a portion of your strength, as when one who engages in a pugilistic encounter with a far superior rival receives blow after blow and each blow makes him weaker and weaker till he is knocked out. There is no necessity of a willed intervention, the action is automatic. Nothing else can happen if you dash yourself in revolt against the Immensity. As

long as you remain in your corner and follow the course of the ordinary life, you are not touched or hurt; but once you come in contact with the Divine, there are only two ways open to you. You surrender and merge in it, and your surrender enlarges and glorifies you; or you revolt and all your possibilities are destroyed and your powers ebb away and are drawn from you into That which you oppose.

There are many wrong ideas current about surrender. Most people seem to look upon surrender as an abdication of the personality; but that is a grievous error. For the individual is meant to manifest one aspect of the Divine Consciousness, and the expression of its characteristic nature is what creates his personality; then, by taking the right attitude towards the Divine, this personality is purified of all the influences of the lower nature which diminish and distort it and it becomes more strongly personal, more itself, more complete. The truth and power of the personality come out with a more resplendent distinctness, its character is more precisely marked than it could possibly be when mixed with all the obscurity and ignorance, all the dirt and alloy of the lower nature. It undergoes a heightening and glorification, an aggrandisement of capacity, a realisation of the maximum of its possibilities. But to have this sublimating change, he must first give up all that, by distorting, limiting and obscuring the true nature, fetters and debases and disfigures the true personality; he must throw from him whatever belongs to the ignorant lower movements of the ordinary man and his blind limping ordinary life. And first of all he must give up his desires; for desire is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. Men have the impression that their desires are born within; they feel as if they come out of themselves or arise within themselves; but it is a false impression. Desires are waves of the vast sea of the obscure lower nature and they pass from one person to another. Men do not generate a desire in themselves, but are invaded by these waves; whoever is open and without defence is caught in them and tossed about. Desire by engrossing and possessing him makes him incapable of any discrimination and gives him the impression that it is part of his nature to manifest it. In reality, it has nothing to do with his true nature. It is the same with all the lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence. These too are movements that seize you, waves that overwhelm and invade; they deform, they do not belong to the true character or the true nature; they are no intrinsic or inseparable part of yourself, but come out of the sea of surrounding obscurity in which move the forces of the lower nature. These desires, these passions have no personality, there is nothing in them or their action that is peculiar to you; they manifest in the same way in everyone. The obscure movements of the mind too, the doubts and errors and difficulties that cloud the personality and diminish its expansion and fulfilment, come from the same source. They are passing waves and they catch anyone who is ready to be caught and utilised as their blind instrument. And yet each goes on believing that these movements are part of himself

and a precious product of his own free personality. Even we find people clinging to them and their disabilities as the very sign or essence of what they call their freedom.

If you have understood this, you will be ready to understand the difference, the great difference between spirituality and morality, two things that are constantly confused with each other. The spiritual life, the life of Yoga, has for its object to grow into the divine consciousness and for its result to purify, intensify, glorify and perfect what is in you. It makes you a power for manifesting of the Divine; it raises the character of each personality to its full value and brings it to its maximum expression; for this is part of the Divine plan. Morality proceeds by a mental construction and, with a few ideas of what is good and what is not, sets up an ideal type into which all must force themselves. This moral ideal differs in its constituents and its ensemble at different times and different places. And yet it proclaims itself as a unique type, a categoric absolute; it admits of none other outside itself; it does not even admit a variation within itself. All are to be moulded according to its single ideal pattern, everybody is to be made uniformly and faultlessly the same. It is because morality is of this rigid unreal nature that it is in its principle and its working the contrary of the spiritual life. The spiritual life reveals the one essence in all, but reveals too its infinite diversity; it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that diversity. Morality lifts up one artificial standard contrary to the variety of life and the freedom of the spirit. Creating something mental, fixed and limited, it asks all to conform to it. All must labour to acquire the same qualities and the same ideal nature. Morality is not divine or of the Divine; it is of man and human. Morality takes for its basic element a fixed division into the good and the bad; but this is an arbitrary notion. It takes things that are relative and tries to impose them as absolutes; for this good and this bad differ in differing climates and times, epochs and countries. The moral notion goes so far as to say that there are good desires and bad desires and calls on you to accept the one and reject the other. But the spiritual life demands that you should reject desire altogether. Its law is that you must cast aside all movements that draw you away from the Divine. You must reject them, not because they are bad in themselves, — for they may be good for another man or in another sphere, — but because they belong to the impulses or forces that, being unilluminated and ignorant, stand in the way of your approach to the Divine. All desires, whether good or bad, come within this description; for desire itself arises from an unilluminated vital being and its ignorance. On the other hand you must accept all movements that bring you into contact with the Divine. But you accept them, not because they are good in themselves, but because they bring you to the Divine. Accept then all that takes you to the Divine. Reject all that takes you away from it, but do not say that this is good and that is bad or try to impose your outlook on others; for, what you term bad may be the very thing that is good for your neighbour who is not trying to realise the Divine Life.

Let us take an illustration of the difference between the moral and the spiritual

view of things. The ordinary social notions distinguish between two classes of men, — the generous, the avaricious. The avaricious man is despised and blamed, while the generous man is considered unselfish and useful to society and praised for his virtue. But to the spiritual vision, they both stand on the same level; the generosity of the one, the avarice of the other are deformations of a higher truth, a greater divine power. There is a power, a divine movement that spreads, diffuses, throws out freely forces and things and whatever else it possesses on all the levels of nature from the most material to the most spiritual plane. Behind the generous man and his generosity is a soul-type that expresses this movement; he is a power for diffusion, for wide distribution. There is another power, another divine movement that collects and amasses; it gathers and accumulates forces and things and all possible possessions, whether of the lower or of the higher planes. The man you tax with avarice was meant to be an instrument of this movement. Both are important, both needed in the entire plan; the movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses. Both, if truly surrendered to the Divine, will be utilised as instruments for its divine work to the same degree and with an equal value. But when they are not surrendered both are alike moved by impulses of ignorance. One is pushed to throw away, the other is pulled towards keeping back; but both are driven by forces obscure to their own consciousness, and between the two there is little to choose. One could say to the much-praised generous man, from the higher point of vision of Yoga, “All your impulses of generosity are nothing in the values of the spirit, for they come from ego and ignorant desire.” And, on the other hand, among those who are accused of avarice, you can see sometimes a man amassing and hoarding, full of a quiet and concentrated determination in the work assigned to him by his nature, who, once awakened, would make a very good instrument of the Divine. But ordinarily the avaricious man acts from ego and desire like his opposite; it is the other end of the same ignorance. Both will have to purify themselves and change before they can make contact with the something higher that is behind them and express it in the way to which they are called by their nature.

In the same way you could take all other types and trace them to some original intention in the Divine Force. Each is a diminution or caricature of the type intended by the Divine, a mental and vital distortion of things that have a greater spiritual value. It is a wrong movement that creates the distortion or the caricature. Once this false impulsion is mastered, the right attitude taken, the right movement found, all reveal their divine values. All are justified by the truth that is in them, all equally important, equally needed, different but indispensable instruments of the Divine Manifestation. (M3: 114-20)

Surrender, Self-offering and Consecration

Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Without this decision nothing is at all possible; if you do not surrender, the Yoga is entirely out of the question. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender. You can surrender either through knowledge or through devotion. You may have a strong intuition that the Divine alone is the truth and a luminous conviction that without the Divine you cannot manage. Or you may have a spontaneous feeling that this line is the only way of being happy, a strong psychic desire to belong exclusively to the Divine: "I do not belong to myself," you say, and give up the responsibility of your being to the Truth. Then comes self-offering: "Here I am, a creature of various qualities, good and bad, dark and enlightened. I offer myself as I am to you, take me up with all my ups and downs, conflicting impulses and tendencies — do whatever you like with me." In the course of your self-offering, you start unifying your being around what has taken the first decision — the central psychic will. All the jarring elements of your nature have to be harmonised, they have to be taken up one after another and unified with the central being. You may offer yourself to the Divine with a spontaneous movement, but it is not possible to give yourself effectively without this unification. The more you are unified, the more you are able to realise self-giving. And once the self-giving is complete, consecration follows: it is the crown of the whole process of realisation, the last step of the gradation, after which there is no more trouble and everything runs smoothly. But you must not forget that you cannot become integrally consecrated at once. You are often deluded into such a belief when, for a day or two, you have a strong movement of a particular kind. You are led to hope that everything else will automatically follow in its wake; but in fact if you become the least bit self-complacent you retard your own advance. For your being is full of innumerable tendencies at war with one another — almost different personalities, we may say. When one of them gives itself to the Divine, the others come up and refuse their allegiance. "We have not given ourselves," they cry, and start clamouring for their independence and expression. Then you bid them be quiet and show them the Truth. Patiently you have to go round your whole being, exploring each nook and corner, facing all those anarchic elements in you which are waiting for their psychological moment to come up. And it is only when you have made the entire round of your mental, vital and physical nature, persuaded everything to give itself to the Divine and thus achieved an absolute unified consecration that you put an end to your difficulties. Then indeed yours is a glorious walk towards transformation, for you no longer go from darkness to knowledge but from knowledge to knowledge, light to light, happiness to happiness. . . . The complete consecration is undoubtedly not an easy matter, and it might take an almost indefinitely long time if you had to do it all by yourself, by your own independent effort. But when the Divine's Grace

is with you it is not exactly like that. With a little push from the Divine now and then, a little push in this direction and in that, the work becomes comparatively quite easy. Of course the length of time depends on each individual, but it can be very much shortened if you make a really firm resolve. Resolution is the one thing required — resolution is the master-key. (M3: 126-27)

Surrender — Active and Passive

You have said: “If you surrender you have to give up effort, but that does not mean that you have to abandon also all willed action.” Questions and Answers 1929-1931 (21 April 1929)

But if one wants to do something, it means personal effort, doesn't it? What then is the will?

There is a difference between the will and this feeling of tension, effort, of counting only on oneself, having recourse to oneself alone which personal effort means; this kind of tension, of something very acute and at times very painful; you count only on yourself and you have the feeling that if you do not make an effort every minute, all will be lost. That is personal effort.

But the will is something altogether different. It is the capacity to concentrate on everything one does, do it as best one can and not stop doing it unless one receives a very precise intimation that it is finished. It is difficult to explain it to you. But suppose, for example, through a concurrence of circumstances, a work comes into your hands. Take an artist who has in one way or another got an inspiration and resolved to paint a picture. He knows very well that if he has no inspiration and is not sustained by forces other than his own, he will do nothing much. It will look more like a daub than a painting. He knows this. But it has been settled, the painting is to be done; there may be many reasons for that, but the painting has to be done. Then if he had the passive attitude, well, he would place his palette, his colours, his brushes, his canvas and then sit down in front of it and say to the Divine: “Now you are going to paint.” But the Divine does not do things this way. The painter himself must take up everything and arrange everything, concentrate on his subject, find the forms, the colours that will express it and put his whole will for a more and more perfect execution. His will must be there all the time. But he has to keep the sense that he must be open to the inspiration, he will not forget that in spite of all his knowledge of the technique, in spite of the care he takes to arrange, organise and prepare his colours, his forms, his design, in spite of all that, if he has no inspiration, it will be one picture among a million others and it will not be very interesting. He does not forget. He attempts, he tries to see, to feel what he wants his painting to

express and in what way it should be expressed. He has his colours, he has his brushes, he has his model, he has made his sketch which he will enlarge and make into a picture, he calls his inspiration. There are even some who manage to have a clear, precise vision of what is to be done. But then, day after day, hour after hour, they have this will to work, to study, to do with care all that must be done until they reproduce as perfectly as they can the first inspiration. . . . That person has worked for the Divine, in communion with Him, but not in a passive way, not with a passive surrender; it is with an active surrender, a dynamic will. The result generally is something very good. Well, the example of the painter is interesting, because a painter who is truly an artist is able to see what he is going to do, he is able to connect himself to the divine Power that is beyond all expression and inspires all expression. For the poet, the writer, it is the same thing and for all people who do something, it is the same. (M5: 45-47)

Section Five

Grace

Section Five: Grace

The Materialist's *a priori* Denial

Why I call the materialist's denial an *a priori* denial is because he refuses even to consider or examine what he denies but *starts* by denying it like Leonard Woolf with his "quack, quack" on the ground that it contradicts his own theories, so it can't be true. On the other hand, the belief in the Divine and the Grace and yoga and the Guru etc. is not *a priori*, because it rests on a great mass of human experience which has been accumulating through the centuries and the millenniums as well as the personal intuitive perception. Therefore it is an intuitive perception which has been confirmed by the experience of hundreds and thousands of those who have tested it before me. (S22: 167)

Grace is not an Invention

There is nothing unintelligible in what I say about strength and Grace. Strength has a value for spiritual realisation, but to say that it can be done by strength only and by no other means is a violent exaggeration. Grace is not an invention, it is a fact of spiritual experience. Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace; illiterate, without mental power or training, without "strength" of character or will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere. I do not see why these facts which are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience should be discussed and denied and argued as if they were mere matters of speculation.

Strength, if it is spiritual, is a power for spiritual realisation; a greater power is sincerity; the greatest power of all is Grace. I have said times without number that if a man is sincere, he will go through in spite of long delay and overwhelming difficulties. I have repeatedly spoken of the Divine Grace. I have referred any number of times to the line of the Gita:

"I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve." (S23: 611)

Divine Cosmic Working

It is a question to which no clear-cut answer can be given because it puts two sides each of which is a truth. Without the Grace of the Divine nothing can be done, but for the full Grace to manifest the sadhak must make himself ready. If everything depends on the Divine intervention, then man is only a puppet and there is no use of sadhana, and there are no conditions, no law of things — therefore no universe, but only the Divine rolling things about at his pleasure. No doubt in the last resort all can be said to be the Divine cosmic working, but it is through persons, through forces that it works — under the conditions of Nature. Special intervention there can be and is, but all cannot be special intervention. As for the experience stated it was probably in the vital plane and such suddennesses and vividnesses of experience are characteristic of the vital — but they are not lasting, they only prepare. It is when one has got into contact with what is beyond mind and vital and body and risen there that the great lasting fundamental realisations usually come. (S23: 611-12)

Working of Grace and the Human Mind

It is not indispensable that the Grace should work in a way that the human mind can understand, it generally doesn't. It works in its own "mysterious" way. At first usually it works behind the veil, preparing things, not manifesting. Afterwards it may manifest, but the sadhak does not understand very well what is happening; finally, when he is capable of it, he both feels and understands or at least begins to do so. Some feel and understand from the first or very early; but that is not the ordinary case. (S23: 610-11)

About the Divine Grace

I should like to say something about the Divine Grace — for you seem to think it should be something like a Divine Reason acting upon lines not very different from those of human intelligence. But it is not that. Also it is not a universal Divine Compassion either, acting impartially on all who approach it and acceding to all prayers. It does not select the righteous and reject the sinner. The Divine Grace came to aid the persecutor (Saul of Tarsus), it came to St. Augustine the profligate, to Jagai and Madhai of infamous fame, to Bilwamangal and many others whose conversion might well scandalise the puritanism of the human moral intelligence; but it can come to the righteous also — curing them of their self-righteousness and leading to a purer consciousness beyond these things. It is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law — for all spiritual seers have distinguished

between the Law and Grace. Yet it is not indiscriminate — only it has a discrimination of its own which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another vision than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individual often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind and when the state of Grace comes, then the Grace itself acts. There are these three powers: (1) The Cosmic Law, of Karma or what else; (2) the Divine Compassion acting on as many as it can reach through the nets of the Law and giving them their chance; (3) the Divine Grace which acts more incalculably but also more irresistibly than the others. The only question is whether there is something behind all the anomalies of life which can respond to the call and open itself with whatever difficulty till it is ready for the illumination of the Divine Grace — and that *something* must be not a mental and vital movement but an inner somewhat which can well be seen by the inner eye. If it is there and when it becomes active in front, then the Compassion can act, though the full action of the Grace may still wait attending the decisive decision or change; for this may be postponed to a future hour, because some portion or element of the being may still come between, something that is not yet ready to receive.

But why allow *anything* to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident? When you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.

What value have mental ideas about the Divine, ideas about what he should be, how he should act, how he should not act — they can only come in the way. Only the Divine himself matters. When your consciousness embraces the Divine, then you can know what the Divine is, not before. Krishna is Krishna, one does not care what he did or did not do: only to see him, meet him, feel the Light, the Presence, the Love and Ananda is what matters. So it is always for the spiritual aspiration — it is the law of the spiritual life. (S23: 609-10)

Three Main Possibilities

There are three main possibilities for the sadhak — (1) To wait on the Grace and rely on the Divine. (2) To do everything himself like the Adwaitin and the Buddhist. (3) To take the middle path, go forward by aspiration and rejection etc. helped by the Force. (S23: 607-08)

What is Called “Grace”

For, as to this “Grace”, we describe it in that way because we feel in the infinite Spirit or Self-existence a Presence or a Being, a Consciousness that determines, — that is what we speak of as the Divine, — not a separate person, but the one Being of whom our individual self is a portion or a vessel. But it is not necessary for everybody to regard it in that way. Supposing it is the impersonal Self of all only, yet the Upanishad says of this Self and its realisation: “This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body”. Well, that is the same thing as what we call the Divine Grace, — it is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movement. We can call it the Divine Grace; we can call it the Self within choosing its own hour and way to manifest to the mental instrument on the surface; we can call it the flowering of the inner being or inner nature into self-realisation and self-knowledge. As something in us approaches it or as it presents itself to us, so the mind sees it. But in reality it is the same thing and the same process of the being in Nature. (S23: 608-09)

Full Assent of Sadhak Needed

The Divine Grace and Power can do everything, but with the full assent of the sadhak. To learn to give that full assent is the whole meaning of the sadhana. It may take time either because of ideas in the mind, desires in the vital or inertia in the physical consciousness, but these things have to be and can be removed with the aid or by calling in the action of the Divine Force. (S23: 583)

No Doubt about Divine Grace

There can be no doubt about the Divine Grace. It is perfectly true also that if a man is sincere, he will reach the Divine. But it does not follow that he will reach immediately, easily and without delay. Your error is there, to fix for God a term, five years, six years, and doubt because the effect is not yet there. A man may be centrally sincere and yet there may be many things that have to be changed in him before realisation can begin. His sincerity must enable him to persevere always — for it is a longing for the Divine that nothing can quench, neither delay nor disappointment nor difficulty nor anything else. (S23: 625)

Work Taken up by the Grace

Or again one may start a process of one kind or another for the purpose which would normally mean a long labour and be seized, even at the outset, by a rapid intervention or manifestation of the Silence with an effect out of all proportion to the means used at the beginning. One commences with a method, but the work is taken up by a Grace from above, from That to which one aspires or an irruption of the infinitudes of the Spirit. It was in this last way that I myself came by the mind's absolute silence, unimaginable to me before I had its actual experience. (S22: 179)

God Knows Perfectly What He Wants of Us

Does not God know what He wants for us? Why should He want to pull us in two opposite directions?

God knows perfectly well what He wants for us. He wants to bring us all back to Him in a perfect union. The goal is one, the same for all; but the means, the methods and the procedures for reaching it are innumerable. There are just as many as there are beings on earth; and each one of these means is an exact expression of the will of the Supreme Lord, who, in his integral vision and perfect wisdom, does what is needful for each person.

So if someone needs a contradiction, an inner opposition to intensify his aspiration and effort, the Lord, in His infinite Grace, even while drawing this being upward and giving him the power to rise, will at the same time hold him down to create in him the resistance needed to intensify his aspiration and effort.

And if, like Sri Aurobindo, you can see that both movements have the same divine origin, then, instead of lamenting and being alarmed, you rejoice and keep a firm and luminous faith. (M10: 66)

Creating a Psychological Distance between the Grace and Oneself

Mother, in the Letters Sri Aurobindo says somewhere that the Grace does not choose the just and reject the sinner. It has its own discernment which is different from the mind's. That is how, for example, the Grace came to St. Augustine's help. Then, why does Sri Aurobindo say here: "But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth. . . ."?

Yes, I noticed that. When I read it, I thought about this.

I thought about it. I think he wrote the sentence in this way so that it would be

more easily understandable. But in fact, what he meant he has said here: you are yourself rejecting the Grace . . . Isn't that it? He says — where is it? what page? page four? Yes, “. . . pushing the divine Grace from you”, yes; “. . . you are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you.” No, it is not that; it is . . . (*The child begins reading: “the Grace . . .”*) No, after that, my child . . . “It will not act . . .” (*To another child*) This is what we have explained. That is something else. You see, this is what I have explained: you ask the Grace to do something for you, but this thing is a falsehood. It won't do it, because It always acts only in the truth.

But then how can It come to the help of the sinner?

It doesn't help the sinner to be a sinner! It helps the sinner to give up his sin; that is to say, It does not push away the sinner, saying, “I won't do anything for you.” It is there, always, even when he is sinning, to help him to come out of it, but not to continue in his sin.

There is a great difference between this and the idea that you are bad and so “I won't look after you, I shall throw you far away from me, and whatever is to happen to you will happen, I am not concerned about it.” This is the common idea. One says, “God has rejected me”, you know. It is not that. You may not be able to feel the Grace, but It will always be there, even with the worst of sinners, even with the worst of criminals, to help him to change, to be cured of his crime and sin if he wants to be. It won't reject him, but It won't help him to do evil. It wouldn't be the Grace any longer. You understand the difference?

But there is a sentence here that's . . . here we are, it is absolutely true: “You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you”, and then there is a . . . I thought it was here . . . (*She finds the sentence and reads*) “Then . . .” here we are, “. . . always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.” You see, this . . . (*silence*) It is not the Grace which recedes from you, it is you who recede from the Grace. It is a feeling, and the expression of the fact. For in the sentence . . . a preceding sentence, we have: “You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you.” This is just the thing. You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you. But after having pushed It away, you have the impression that It has receded from you; and it is rather this: “. . . then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.” It is not a fact that It recedes from you, you have the impression that It recedes from you.

While reading it I noticed this. I don't know what it is in English. Here it is on page seven. I don't know, it must be approximately on the same page, I suppose: “If you call for the Truth . . .”, something like that.

(Someone looks up the required sentence in the English book and reads: “the Grace will recede from you.”)

Ah, yes. “Recede from you . . .” “. . . then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.”

It expresses one’s impression. But it is not that the Grace withdraws. For it is written here, you see, just a little before, “it is not the divine Grace you must blame”, it is you who push It away from you.

In one case he takes the position of the Grace and in the other he takes the attitude of the person who says, “The Grace recedes from me.” But it is not the Grace that recedes, it is he himself who pushes It away, that is, he has put a distance between himself and the Grace. In fact, even “pushing away” doesn’t give the correct picture; you see, this is not written, it was not written to a philosopher, and it is not in philosophical terms. In one case, you see, he has taken this particular attitude, but the phenomenon is the same; that is, there is a kind of psychological distance created between the Grace and the individual. And due to this psychological distance the individual cannot receive the Grace and feels that It is not there. But It *is* there, in fact; only, as he has established this distance between the two, he doesn’t feel It any longer. This is the real phenomenon. It isn’t that the Grace goes away, it isn’t even that he has the power to push It away, for if It doesn’t want to go, no matter how much he tries, It won’t go. But he makes himself incapable of feeling It and receiving its effect. He creates a psychological barrier between himself and the Grace. (M6: 216-18)

Opportunities for Progress

With the touch of the divine Grace, how do difficulties become opportunities for progress?

Opportunities for progress? Yes! Well, this is something quite obvious. You have made a big mistake, you are in great difficulty: then, if you have faith, if you have trust in the divine Grace, if you really rely on It, you will suddenly realise that it is a lesson, that your difficulty or mistake is nothing else but a lesson and that it comes to teach you to find within yourself what needs to be changed, and with this help of the divine Grace you will discover in yourself what has to be changed. And you will change it. And so, from a difficulty you will have made great progress, taken a considerable leap forward. This, indeed, happens all the time. Only, you must be truly sincere, that is, rely on the Grace and let It work in you — not like this: one part of you asking to be helped and another resisting as much as it can, because it doesn’t want to change . . . this is the difficulty.

All that he is saying, all the time, is: completely, totally, sincerely, without reserve. For there is one part of the being which has an aspiration, there is one part of the being which gives itself, and there are other parts — sometimes a small part, sometimes a

big one which hides nicely, right at the bottom, and keeps absolutely quiet so that it may not be found out, but which *resists* with *all* its might, so as not to change.

And so one wonders . . . with, “Oh, I had such a beautiful aspiration, I had so much goodwill, I had such a great desire to change, and then, see, I cannot! Why?” Then, of course, your mental arrogance comes in and says, “I didn’t get the response I deserved, the divine Grace doesn’t help me, and I am left all alone to shift for myself”, etc., etc.

It is not that. It is that hidden somewhere there is a tiny something which is well coiled up, in there, *doubled up, turned in* upon itself and well hidden, right at the bottom, as at the bottom of a box, which refuses to stir. (*Mother speaks very softly.*) So when the effort, the aspiration wane, die down, this springs up like that, gently, and then it wants to impose its will and it makes you do exactly what you did not want to do, what you had decided you would not do, and which you do without knowing how or why! Because that thing was there, it had its turn — for small things, big things, for the details, even for the direction of life.

There are people who see clearly, who know so well what they ought to do, and who feel that they can’t. . . . They don’t know why. It is nothing else but that. There is a little spot which doesn’t want to change and this little spot awaits its hour. And the day it is allowed, through laxity, fatigue, somnolence, through a little inertia, allowed to show itself, it will show itself with all concentrated, accumulated energy, and will make you do, will make you say, make you feel, make you act *ex-act-ly* contrary to what you had decided to do! And you will stand there: “Ah, how discouraging this is! . . .” Then some people say, “Fate!” They think it is their fate. It is not fate, it is themselves! . . . It is that they don’t have, haven’t used, the light, the searchlight. They have not turned the searchlight into the small hidden corners of their being, they haven’t discovered what was well hidden. They have left it there, and then have done this (*Mother turns away her head*) so as not to see it. How many times one suddenly feels one is on the point of catching something, “Hup!” It hurts a little. . . . It is troublesome. . . . So one thinks of something else, and that’s all! The opportunity has gone. One must wait for another occasion, again commit a few stupidities, before being able to find an opportunity to catch the thing by the tail, like this, or by the ear or the nose, and hold it firmly and say, “No! You won’t hide any longer now, I see you as you are, and you must either get out or change!”

One must have a strong grip and an unshakable resolution. As in our Japanese story of the other day, that soldier who had a knife in his knee in order to make sure of not falling asleep . . . and when he felt very sleepy, he turned the knife in such a way that it hurt him still more. One must have something like that. This, *this* is determination: to know what one wants and to do it. (M6: 242-44)

The Divine is there to Help, but . . .

He [the Divine] is there to help. But what is said here means to sit idly not doing anything, not making the shadow of an effort, nor even aspiring or willing, nothing, and then say, “Well, God will do this for me; the Divine will do everything for me. The Divine Grace will give me aspiration. If I need aspiration, It will give it to me. If I need surrender, It will give me that”, and so on. “I have to do nothing except to remain passively seated, without stirring and without willing anything.” Well, there are people like that, many! They are told “Aspire.” “Give me aspiration.” (*Laughter*) They are told, “Be generous.” “Oh, make me generous; and I shall give everything!” (*Laughter*) (M6: 208-09)

Pushing the Grace Away

Sweet Mother, do we push the divine Grace away from us every time we make a mistake?

Eh? You push it away every time you make a mistake?

Well, there are two different kinds of mistakes. There is the fault committed through ignorance. That remains a fault, and it puts a veil between the Grace and you, but it is a fault made without knowing that one is making a mistake. But as soon as one knows that it is a mistake, one must absolutely refrain from making it, because each time one makes it, it is true that one builds a wall between oneself and the divine Grace.

There is a very big difference between the mistake made through ignorance which one will not make again as soon as one knows it is a mistake, and the mistake made knowing that it is a mistake. And this, indeed, is called *obstinacy*! And this is more serious, it is even very serious! It veils the consciousness very much, veils it so much that after some time one no longer knows at all that one is making mistakes. One makes them thinking that one doesn't. One gives so many excuses and justifications for everything one does, that one ends up by believing that one is no longer making any mistakes at all. Then, here, it becomes very serious, because one is incorrigible! (M6: 236-37)

Without the Grace One is Nothing

You have said that one must know that without the divine Grace one is nothing. Then why make such a great effort to know that one is nothing?

Why make such a great effort? In what sense? You want to make this effort for a personal reason? Is it for your personal satisfaction that you want to make this effort? It is like those people who say, “But if it is not *I* who work and if it is not *my* work, how can I work?” It is the same thing, and yet it is like that. If you feel like that, it means that you still need, need very much, your ego and that if your ego were suddenly taken away from you, you could no longer do anything. If you need a personal motive in order to do something, it means that you are still entirely in your ego, you understand. So long as it is necessary, one has to remain in it. Only, you must not then think that you can go fast. It takes a very long time, sometimes several lives, sometimes a great number of lives. If you need personal reasons for doing things, you have only to wait till you grow out of it and understand that it is not for a personal reason that you must do things.

For example, it is not for a personal reason that you must want perfection, it is not for a personal reason that you must want union with the Divine, it is not for a personal reason that you must want the supramental transformation. If it is for your own good and for a personal reason, well, follow your path; I tell you, you will get there — after a certain number of lives. You see, there is a state in which one can’t even understand how one can exist without a personal reason. So long as it is like that. . . . If perchance I were suddenly to take away from you your personal consciousness and reason, you would exist no longer. So you must wait quietly till you can realise within yourself that this is not the true cause of things.

Is there nothing to be done but to wait?

Eh? Nothing to be done but wait? For me! . . . It is *I* who mark time waiting for you to be ready! (*Mother laughs.*)

It is a very delicate problem, because for a very long time if someone does not feel, does not have this personal aspiration to perfect himself, the personal aspiration to enter into contact with the Divine, the personal aspiration to realise the supramental consciousness, well, he says as you were just saying, “Then what’s the use of doing anything? The only thing is to remain quiet.” Well, as long as it is like that, and as long as you have not developed in yourself enough consciousness for it to be otherwise, there is nothing to say and nothing to do. I have only to wait.

“Wait” means some lives?

Yes.

For some it can go faster; if suddenly something is reversed within them and they have an experience — even if it be only the experience of identification with the psychic — then all of a sudden they understand. Identification with the psychic means an identification with the divine Consciousness. So, immediately they

understand; they understand and this even makes them laugh. One feels how foolish one was! (*Mother laughs.*) (M6: 330-32)

It is Happening Every Minute

Here it is said: “The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving. . . .”

Yes, this is something that happens every minute! (M6: 211)

Divine Grace and Difficulties

It is only by remaining perfectly peaceful and calm with an unshakable confidence and faith in the Divine Grace that you will allow circumstances to be as good as they can be. *The very best happens always* to those who have put their entire trust in the Divine and in the Divine alone.

*

When, in your life, you meet with a hardship, take it as a Grace from the Lord and, indeed, it will become so.

*

In any case and whatever happens, always consider events as a gift from the Divine Grace which is leading you by swift paths towards the spiritual goal of your life.

(M14: 94-95)

The Divine Grace — Giver of Delight

How can one “learn of pure delight”?

First of all, to begin with, one must through an attentive observation grow aware that desires and the satisfaction of desires give only a vague, uncertain pleasure, mixed, fugitive and altogether unsatisfactory. That is usually the starting-point.

Then, if one is a reasonable being, one must learn to discern what is desire and refrain from doing anything that may satisfy one’s desires. One must reject them

without trying to satisfy them. And so the first result is exactly one of the first observations stated by the Buddha in his teaching: there is an infinitely greater delight in conquering and eliminating a desire than in satisfying it. Every sincere and steadfast seeker will realise after some time, sooner or later, at times very soon, that this is an absolute truth, and that the delight felt in overcoming a desire is incomparably higher than the small pleasure, so fleeting and mixed, which may be found in the satisfaction of his desires. That is the second step.

Naturally, with this continuous discipline, in a very short time the desires will keep their distance and will no longer bother you. So you will be free to enter a little more deeply into your being and open yourself in an aspiration to . . . the Giver of Delight, the divine Element, the divine Grace. And if this is done with a sincere self-giving — something that gives itself, offers itself and expects nothing in exchange for its offering — one will feel that kind of sweet warmth, comfortable, intimate, radiant, which fills the heart and is the herald of Delight.

After this, the path is easy. (M9: 21)

The Divine Grace

The Supreme has sent his Grace into the world to save it. (M14: 83)

What is Needed

But if only once the soul has made an appeal, if once it has made contact with the Grace, then in the following life, one immediately finds oneself in conditions where everything can be swept away at one stroke. At that moment you need to have a great courage, a great endurance, though at times a true love is sufficient. And if there is faith — a little, a very very little is enough — then everything is swept away. But in most cases what you need is a great stoic courage, a capacity to endure and to hold out: the resistance, especially in the case of a previous suicide, resistance to the temptation to again begin this foolishness — because it makes a terrible formation. There is also this habit of not looking the difficulty straight in the face, which is translated by taking flight. When suffering comes, fly, fly, instead of absorbing the difficulty, instead of holding tight, that is to say, not stirring within, not yielding, yes, above all, not yielding when you feel within: “I cannot bear it any longer.” Hold your head as quiet as possible, do not follow the movement, do not obey the vibration.

That is what is needed, just that: faith in the Grace, perception of the Grace, or else, intensity of call, or better still, the response, the response, the knot opening, breaking, the response to this wonderful love of the Grace. (M15: 372)

Faith in the Divine Grace

Have a steady faith in the divine Grace.

*

Continue to have full faith in the Divine's Grace, Will and Action and all will be all right.

*

The Grace is always there ready to act but you must let it work and not resist its action. The one condition required is faith. When you feel attacked, call for help to Sri Aurobindo and myself. If your call is sincere (that is to say, if you sincerely want to be cured) your call will be answered and the Grace will cure you. (M14: 87)

*

The Grace will never fail us — such is the faith we must keep constantly in our heart.

*

It is our lack of faith that creates our limitations. (M14: 88)

In an ardent faith lies salvation.

In the final analysis, it is the Supreme Lord who does all.

We must be faithful instruments.

*

Have faith and unshaken confidence. The Divine Grace will do the rest.

*

Let us offer our will to the Divine Grace; it is the Grace that accomplishes all.

(M14: 90-91)

Trust in the Divine Grace and Help

The Grace is infinite for him who sincerely trusts the Grace.

*

The Divine Grace is always with you and by your trust you allow its action to be effective. (M14: 91)

Action of Force cannot be Reduced to Rules

The action of the Force does not exclude tapasya, concentration and the need of sadhana. Its action rather comes as an answer or a help to these things. It is true that it sometimes acts without them; it very often makes a response in those who have not prepared themselves and do not seem to be ready. But it does not always or usually act like that, nor is it a sort of magic that acts in the void or without any process. Nor is it a machine that acts in the same way on everybody or in all conditions and circumstances; it is not a physical but a spiritual Force and its action cannot be reduced to rules.

About the limitation of the power of the Guru to that of a teacher who shows the way but cannot help or guide, that is the conception of certain paths of yoga such as the pure Advaitin and the Buddhist which say that you must rely upon yourself and that no one can help you; but even the pure Advaitin does in fact rely upon the Guru and the chief mantra of Buddhism insists on *śaraṇam* to Buddha. For other paths of sadhana, especially those which, like the Gita, accept the reality of the individual soul as an “eternal portion” of the Divine or which believe that Bhagavan and the bhakta are both real, the help of the Guru has always been relied upon as an indispensable aid. (S23: 619)

The Grace of the Guru

I think this saying¹ of Ramakrishna expresses a certain characteristic happening in sadhana and cannot be interpreted in a general and absolute sense, for in that sense it is hard for it to be true. All difficulties disappearing in a minute? Well, Vivekananda had the grace of Ramakrishna from the beginning, but I think his difficulty of doubt lasted for some time and to the end of his life the difficulty of the control of his

1. “With the Guru’s grace all difficulties can disappear in a flash even as agelong darkness does the moment you strike a match.”

anger was there — making him say that all that was good in him was his Guru's gift, but these things (anger etc.) were his own property. But what could be true is that the central difficulty may disappear by a certain touch between the Guru and the disciple. But what is meant by the *kṛpā*? If it is the general compassion and grace of the Guru, that, one would think, is always there on the disciple; his acceptance itself is an act of grace and the help is there for the disciple to receive. But the touch of grace, divine grace, coming directly or through the Guru is a special phenomenon having two sides to it, — the grace of the Guru or the Divine, in fact both together, on one side and a “state of grace” in the disciple on the other. The “state of grace” is often prepared by a long tapasya or purification in which nothing decisive seems to happen, only touches or glimpses or passing experiences at the most, and it comes suddenly without warning. If this is what is spoken of in Ramakrishna's saying, then it is true that when it comes, the fundamental difficulties can in a moment and generally do disappear. Or, at the very least, something happens which makes the rest of the sadhana — however long it may take — sure and secure.

This decisive touch comes most easily to the “baby cat” people, those who have at some point between the psychic and the emotional vital a quick and decisive movement of surrender to the Guru or the Divine. I have seen that when that is there and there is the conscious central dependence compelling the mind also and the rest of the vital, then the fundamental difficulty disappears. If others remain they are not felt as difficulties, but simply as things that have just to be done and need cause no worry. Sometimes no tapasya is necessary — one just refers things to the Power that one feels guiding or doing the sadhana and assents to its action, rejecting all that is contrary to it, and the Power removes what has to be removed or changes what has to be changed, quickly or slowly — but the quickness or slowness does not seem to matter since one is sure that it will be done. If tapasya is necessary, it is done with so much feeling of a strong support that there is nothing hard or austere in the tapasya.

For the others, the “baby monkey” type or those who are still more independent, following their own ideas, doing their own sadhana, asking only for some instruction or help, the grace of the Guru is there, but it acts according to the nature of the sadhak and waits upon his effort to a greater or less degree; it helps, succours in difficulty, saves in the time of danger, but the disciple is not always, is perhaps hardly at all aware of what is being done as he is absorbed in himself and his endeavour. In such cases the decisive psychological movement, the touch that makes all clear, may take longer to come.

But with all the *kṛpā* is there working in one way or another and it can only abandon the disciple if the disciple himself abandons or rejects it — by decisive and definitive revolt, by rejection of the Guru, by cutting the painter and declaring his independence, or by an act or course of betrayal that severs him from his own psychic being. Even then, except perhaps in the last case if it goes to an extreme, a return to grace is not impossible.

That is my own knowledge and experience of the matter. But as to what lay behind Ramakrishna's saying and whether he himself meant it to be a general and absolute statement — I do not pronounce. (S23: 620-22)

An Infinite Grace in the Whole Manifestation

In the whole manifestation there is an infinite Grace constantly at work to bring the world out of the misery, the obscurity and the stupidity in which it lies. From all time this Grace has been at work, unremitting in its effort, and how many thousands of years were necessary for this world to awaken to the need for something greater, more true, more beautiful.

Everyone can gauge, from the resistance he meets in his own being, the tremendous resistance which the world opposes to the work of the Grace.

And it is only when one understands that *all* external things, all mental constructions, all material efforts are vain, futile, if they are not entirely consecrated to this Light and Force from above, to this Truth which is trying to express itself, that one is ready to make decisive progress. So the only truly effective attitude is a perfect, total, fervent giving of our being to That which is above us and which alone has the power to change everything.

When you open to the Spirit within you it brings you a first foretaste of that higher life which alone is worth living, then comes the will to rise to that, the hope of reaching it, the certitude that this is possible, and finally the strength to make the necessary effort and the resolution to go to the very end.

First one must wake up, then one can conquer. (M9: 419-20)

The Best Possible Way

The best possible way is to allow the Divine Grace to work in you, never to oppose it, never to be ungrateful and turn against it — but to follow it always to the goal of Light and Peace and unity and Ananda. (S23: 613)