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CONSCIOUSNESS

(The Creative Essence)

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Consciousness

(The Creative Essence)

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial : *The word Consciousness is among the most used word in both spiritual and scientific literature. At the same time it is also among the most misunderstood term. Yet Consciousness is central to everything in life. An understanding of what Consciousness is, both intellectually and spiritually, is important to understand life and creation, the spiritual journey and the evolution of life itself. Given its immense importance in Sri Aurobindo's yoga and the metaphysics of creation, we focus on this key word so that Light can be cast upon that which is actually the very source of Light!*



O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to God.
O radiant fountain of the world's delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwelst deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find,

Savitri, p.345

Sri Aurobindo

What is Consciousness

Power of awareness and dynamic energy

Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti.

Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound—for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious, —supramental or overmental and submental ranges.

When Yajnavalkya says there is no consciousness in the Brahman state, he is speaking of consciousness as the human being knows it. The Brahman state is that of a supreme existence supremely aware of itself, *svayamīprakāśa*, — it is Sachchidananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Even if it be spoken of as beyond that, *parātparam*, it does not mean that it is a state of Non-existence or Non-consciousness, but beyond even the highest spiritual substratum (the “foundation above” in the luminous paradox of the Rig Veda) of cosmic existence and consciousness. As it is evident from the description of Chinese Tao and the Buddhist Shunya that that is a Nothingness in which all is, so with the negation of consciousness here. Superconscient and subconscient are only relative terms; as we rise into the superconscient we see that it is a consciousness greater than the highest we yet

have and therefore in our normal state inaccessible to us and, if we can go down into the subconscious, we find there a consciousness other than our own at its lowest mental limit and therefore ordinarily inaccessible to us. The Inconscious itself is only an involved state of consciousness which like the Tao or Shunya, though in a different way, contains all things suppressed within it so that under a pressure from above or within all can evolve out of it — “an inert Soul with a somnambulist Force”.

The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality; rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to its typical nature or its evolutionary stage.

It will be evident that by consciousness is meant something which is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation, in which in some grades or conditions the activities we call consciousness can exist either in a suppressed or an unorganised or a differently organised state; while in other states some other activities may manifest which in us are suppressed, unorganised or latent or else are less perfectly manifested, less intensive, extended and powerful than in those higher grades above our highest mental limit.

CWSA 28: 15-17

Awareness and Force

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 ef-

fective. 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 psychic 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.

CWSA 28: 24-25

If consciousness and energy are the same thing, there would be no use in having two different words for them. In that case instead of saying, "I am conscious of my defects", one can say, "I am energetic of my defects." If a man is running fast, you can say of him, "He is running with great energy." Do you think it would mean the same if you said, "He is running with great consciousness"? Consciousness is that which is aware of things — energy is a force put in action which does things. Consciousness may have energy and keep it in or put it out, but that does not mean that it is only another word for energy and that it has to go out when the energy goes out and that it cannot stand back and observe the energy in action. You have plenty of inertia in you but that does not mean that you and inertia are the same and when inertia rises and swamps you it is you who rise and swamp yourself.

CWSA 28: 25

Sri Aurobindo



In each one's life a moment comes when he has to choose between the Path and the muddle. You cannot put one foot here and one foot there. If you try to, you will be torn to pieces. A heart that does not choose is a heart that will die.

CWM 14: 29

The Mother

A Fundamental Reality

Consciousness is a fundamental thing, it is the fundamental thing in existence — it is the energy, the action, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it — not only the macrocosm, but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance when consciousness in its movement, or rather a certain stress of movement, forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently “unconscious” energy; when it forgets itself in the form it becomes the electron, the atom, the material object. In reality it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form. When it wants to liberate itself, slowly, evolutionarily, out of matter, but still in the form, it emerges as life, as the animal, as man and it can go on evolving itself still farther out of its involution and become something more than mere man. If you can grasp that, then it ought not to be difficult to see farther that it can subjectively formulate itself as a physical, a vital, a mental, a psychic consciousness — all these are present in man, but as they are all mixed up together in our external being and their real status is hidden behind in our inner secret nature one can only become fully aware of them by releasing the original limiting stress of the consciousness which makes us live in our external selves and becoming awake and centred within in the inner being. As the consciousness in us, by its external concentration or stress, has put all these things behind — behind a wall or veil — it has to break down the wall or veil and get back in its stress into these inner parts of existence — that is what we call living within; then our external being seems to us something small and superficial, we are or can become aware of the large and rich and inexhaustible kingdoms within. So also consciousness in us has drawn a lid or covering or whatever

one likes to call it between the lower planes of mind, life, body supported by the psychic and the higher planes which contain the spiritual kingdoms where the self is always free and limitless,— and it can break or open the lid or covering and ascend there and become the Self free and wide and luminous or else bring down the influence, reflection, finally even the presence and power of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

Now that is what consciousness is — it is not composed of parts, it is fundamental to being and itself formulates any parts it chooses to manifest — developing them from above downward by a progressive coming down from spiritual levels towards the evolution in matter or formulating them in an upward working in the front by this process that we call evolution. If it chooses to work in you through the sense of ego, you think that it is the clear-cut individual I that does everything; if it begins to release itself from that limited working, then you too either begin to expand your sense of I till it bursts into infinity and no longer exists or to shed it and flower into spiritual wideness.

CWSA 28: 22-23

Scientific views of consciousness

The ordinary view of consciousness is based on normal superficial experience plus science. For physical science consciousness is a temporary phenomenon in an unconscious world, something evolved in an animate organisation that somehow develops in an originally inanimate and unconscious Matter. It is not inherent in life, for the plant has it not, it is rather a growing flicker that, once established, lasts intermittently through sleep and waking while life lasts and disappears with the dissolution of life. The ordinary mind identifies consciousness with human waking consciousness

possibly shared by the animal — though that is not certain, for many refuse consciousness to the animal. A man is conscious while he lives, when he is dead consciousness disappears, when he is asleep, stunned, drugged, an aesthetised, in trance, then his consciousness is suspended; he is temporarily unconscious. How far is this scientific-superficial view correct or maintainable? For it raises two fundamental questions — is the waking surface consciousness the only form of consciousness possible? and again, is the consciousness synonymous with mind, is all consciousness mental or are other forms of it, supramental or submental, possible?

CWSA 28: 19

Consciousness and phenomenon

Consciousness is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, e.g., a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha.

Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the

surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious and inanimate.

CWSA 28: 15

Sri Aurobindo

Creative essence of the universe

What is consciousness?

... it is the creative essence of the universe — without consciousness, no universe; for consciousness means objectification. I could also say that consciousness is what “is”, because without consciousness nothing is — this is the best reason. Without consciousness no life, no light, no objectification, no creation, no universe.

Perhaps there is in the unmanifest Supreme a consciousness (but when one speaks of these questions one begins to say impossible things); it is said that, to begin with, the Supreme became aware of himself (which would mean that he was not conscious of himself before! that he was in a state we cannot call “conscious”), that his first movement was to become aware of himself and once having become conscious of himself, he projected this consciousness, which formed the creation. At least, this is what old tradition says. Grant that there never was a beginning, for it is a human way of putting it: the “beginning” is the Supreme — the unmanifest Supreme becoming aware of himself. Perhaps he found that this consciousness was not altogether satisfactory (!) and he projected it, not outside himself for nothing is outside him, but he changed it into an active consciousness so that it would become an objectification of himself. Consequently, it can be said with certitude that Consciousness is the origin of all creation; there you are as exact as you can ever

be with words. Consciousness is the origin of all creation — without consciousness, no creation. And what we call “consciousness” is just a far-off contact, without precision and exactness, with the supreme Consciousness. Or if you like, it is the reflection, in a not very exact or pure mirror, of the original Consciousness. What we call our consciousness is this original Consciousness reflected in a somewhat foggy mirror (sometimes very foggy, sometimes very deformed), a reflection in the individual mirror. Then through this reflection, if we go back slowly to the origin of what is reflected, we can enter into contact with the Consciousness — the True Consciousness. And once we come into contact with the True Consciousness, we become aware that it is the same everywhere, that it is only deformation which divides it; without deformation everything is contained in one and the same Consciousness. That is, it is only distortion, the reflection in a distorting mirror, which brings about difference and division in the Consciousness, otherwise it is one single Consciousness.

CWM 4: 233-34

Knowledge by the identification of consciousness

Consciousness is the faculty of becoming aware of anything whatsoever through identification with it. But the divine consciousness is not only aware but knows and effects. For, mere awareness is not knowledge. To become aware of a vibration, for instance, does not mean that you know everything about it. Only when the consciousness participates in the divine consciousness does it get full knowledge by identification with the object. Ordinarily, identification leads to ignorance rather than knowledge, for the consciousness is lost in what it becomes and is unable to envisage proper causes, concomitants and consequences.

Thus you identify yourself with a movement of anger and your whole being becomes one angry vibration, blind and precipitate, oblivious of everything else. It is only when you stand back, remain detached in the midst of the passionate turmoil that you are able to see the process with a knowing eye. So knowledge in the ordinary state of being is to be obtained rather by stepping back from a phenomenon, to watch it without becoming identified with it. But the divine consciousness identifies itself with its object and knows it thoroughly, because it always becomes one with the essential truth or law inherent in each fact. And it not only knows, but, by knowing, brings about what it wants. To be conscious is for it to be effective — each of its movements being a flash of omnipotence which, besides illumining, blazes its way ultimately to the goal dictated by its truth-nature.

CWM 3: 167

Self-limitation of the one Consciousness

One could say that only limits make differences — differences in time, differences in space, differences in size, differences in power. It is only the limits. And as soon as the consciousness goes outside its limits at any point in the manifestation, whatever the dimension of this manifestation — yes, the dimension of this manifestation has absolutely no importance — at any point in the manifestation, if one goes outside the limits, it is *the* Consciousness.

From this standpoint one could say that it is the acceptance of limits that has made the manifestation possible. The possibility of manifestation came with the acceptance of the sense of limits.... It is impossible to express. Always, as soon as one begins to speak, one has the impression of something which does this (*same gesture of reversal*), a kind of tipping

over, and it is finished, the essential thing has gone. Then the metaphysical sense comes along and says, "One could put it like this, one could put it like that...." To use words: every point contains the Consciousness of Infinity and Eternity — these are words, nothing but words. But the possibility of this experience is there. It is like stepping back out of space.... It might be amusing to say that even stone, even... oh, water certainly, fire certainly, has *the* power of Consciousness — the original — all the words that come are stupid — essential, primordial — all that means nothing — eternal, infinite Consciousness....

CWM 10: 219-20

Freedom and predeterminism

There is a plane of divine consciousness in which all is known absolutely, and the whole plan of things foreseen and predetermined. That way of seeing lives in the highest reaches of the Supramental; it is the Supreme's own vision. But when we do not possess that consciousness, it is useless to speak in terms that hold good only in that region and are not our present effective way of seeing things. For at a lower level of consciousness nothing is realised or fixed beforehand; all is in the process of making. Here there are no settled facts, there is only the play of possibilities; out of the clash of possibilities is realised the thing that has to happen. On this plane we can choose and select; we can refuse one possibility and accept another; we can follow one path, turn away from another. And that we can do, even though what is actually happening may have been foreseen and predetermined in a higher plane.

The Supreme Consciousness knows everything beforehand, because everything is realised there in her eternity. But for the sake of her play and in order to carry out actually on

the physical plane what is foreordained in her own supreme self, she moves here upon earth as if she did not know the whole story; she works as if it was a new and untried thread that she was weaving. It is this apparent forgetfulness of her own foreknowledge in the higher consciousness that gives to the individual in the active life of the world his sense of freedom and independence and initiative. These things in him are her pragmatic tools or devices, and it is through this machinery that the movements and issues planned and foreseen elsewhere are realised here.

It may help you to understand if you take the example of an actor. An actor knows the whole part he has to play; he has in his mind the exact sequence of what is to happen on the stage. But when he is on the stage, he has to appear as if he did not know anything; he has to feel and act as if he were experiencing all these things for the first time, as if it was an entirely new world with all its chance events and surprises that was unrolling before his eyes.

CWM 3: 28-29

Consciousness is multidimensional

Freedom and fatality, liberty and determinism are truths that obtain on different levels of consciousness. It is ignorance that makes the mind put the two on the same level and pit one against the other. Consciousness is not a single uniform reality, it is complex; it is not something like a flat plain, it is multidimensional. On the highest height is the Supreme and in the lowest depth is matter; and there is an infinite gradation of levels of consciousness between this lowest depth and the highest height.

In the plane of matter and on the level of the ordinary consciousness you are bound hand and foot. A slave to the mechanism of Nature, you are tied to the chain of Karma,

and there, in that chain, whatever happens is rigorously the consequence of what has been done before. There is an illusion of independent movement, but in fact you repeat what all others do, you echo Nature's world-movements, you revolve helplessly on the crushing wheel of her cosmic machine.

But it need not be so. You can shift your place if you will; instead of being below, crushed in the machinery or moved like a puppet, you can rise and look from above and by changing your consciousness you can even get hold of some handle to move apparently inevitable circumstances and change fixed conditions. Once you draw yourself up out of the whirlpool and stand high above, you see you are free. Free from all compulsions, not only you are no longer a passive instrument, but you become an active agent. You are not only not bound by the consequences of your action, but you can even change the consequences. Once you see the play of forces, once you raise yourself to a plane of consciousness where lie the origins of forces and identify yourself with these dynamic sources, you belong no longer to what is moved but to that which moves.

CWM 3: 29-30

Consciousness and its instruments

There are two things to be considered: consciousness and the instruments through which consciousness manifests. Let us take the instruments: there is the mental being which produces thoughts, the emotional being which produces feeling, the vital being which produces the power of action and the physical being that acts.

The man of genius may use anything at all and make something beautiful because he has genius; but give this genius a perfect instrument and he will make something won-

derful. Take a great musician; well, even with a wretched piano and missing notes, he will produce something beautiful; but give him a good piano, well-tuned, and he will do something still more beautiful. The consciousness is the same in either case but for expression it needs a good instrument — a body with mental, vital, psychic and physical capacities.

If physically you are badly built, badly set up, it will be difficult for you, even with good training, to do gymnastics as well as one with a beautiful well-built body. It is the same with the mind — one who has a well-organised mind, complex, complete, refined, will express himself much better than one who has a rather mediocre or badly organised mind. First of all, you must educate your consciousness, become conscious of yourself, organise your consciousness according to your ideal, but at the same time do not neglect the instruments which are in your body.

CWM 4: 40-41

Awake and asleep consciousness

You find, don't you, that there are days when everything goes well — you are eloquent, your students listen to you and understand you easily. But there are other days when what you have to teach does not come, they do not listen to you — that is, you are bored and are boring. This means that in the former case your consciousness is awake and concentrated upon what you are doing, while in the second it is more or less asleep — you are left to your most external means. But in this case, if you have a fund of knowledge you can tell your students something; if you have a mind trained, prepared, a good instrument responding well when you want to make use of it, and if you have also gathered all necessary notes and notions all will go very well. But if you

have nothing in your head and, besides, you are not in contact with your higher consciousness, then you have no other recourse than to take a book and read out your lesson — you will be obliged to make use of someone else's mind.

CWM 4: 41

Different states of consciousness

For example, your physical consciousness or your subtle physical consciousness, your vital consciousness or the consciousness of your higher or lower vital, your psychic consciousness, your mental consciousness, each one is completely different! So when you sleep you have one consciousness, and when you are awake you have another. In your waking state you look at things projected outside you, in your sleep state you see them interiorised. So it is as though in one case you were pushed altogether outside yourself, in front, and in the other it is as though you were looking at yourself in an inner mirror.

Don't understand? Not very well!

Well, it's something one must learn to distinguish, one's states of consciousness, because otherwise one lives in a perpetual confusion.

In fact, it is the first step on the path, it is the beginning of the thread, if one doesn't hold on to the end of the thread, one is lost on the way. This is only to hold the end of the thread.

CWM 7: 131

Each element is a part of the whole

Get rid of the ignorance, enter the knowledge.

First of all you must know what I have just told you, that you are a part of the whole, that this whole is a part of a greater whole, and that this greater whole is a part of a

still greater whole, right up to its forming one single totality. Once you know that, you begin to become aware that in reality there cannot be any separation between you and something greater than you of which you are a part. This is the beginning. Now, you must come to the point not only of thinking this but of feeling it and even living it, and then the wall of ignorance tumbles: one feels this unity everywhere and realises that he is only a more or less fragmentary part of a whole much vaster than he, which is the universe. Then one begins to have a more universal consciousness.

CWM 7: 233

The Mother

Individual and Universal Consciousness

Consciousness is inherent in Being, though it is here involved and concealed in things so that it has to emerge out of an apparent unconsciousness and organise itself in individual life. But this is only on the surface which is all of which we are aware because we live on the surface of ourselves. This surface (the ordinary waking mind of man) is what we think to be ourselves, the whole of us, because living awake on the surface we are conscious of that only. But within, with a sort of wall of obscurity or oblivion between it and the outer being, there is an inner being, an inner mind, vital, physical and an inmost or psychic being of which we are not aware. We are only aware of what comes up from there to the surface and do not know its source or how it comes. By Yoga the wall is slowly broken down and we become aware of this inner and inmost being — by doing so we build up a new, a Yogic, consciousness which is able to communicate direct with the universal consciousness around and the higher spiritual above.

As the individual has a consciousness of his own, so too there is a universal consciousness, a cosmic Being, a univer-

sal Mind, a universal Life, a universal physical conscious Nature. We are unaware of it because we are shut up in our outer physical selves. By the inner awakening and the opening above we become aware of this cosmic consciousness, cosmic Nature and cosmic Self and its movements; our consciousness can widen and become one with it. The forces of universal Nature are always working on us without our knowing how they act or being able to get any general control over their action on us. By becoming conscious of the universal we are able to detect this working and control it.

CWSA 28: 19-20

Stress of consciousness makes the difference

It all depends upon where the consciousness places itself and centralises itself. If the consciousness places or associates itself within the ego, you are identified with the ego — if in the mind, it is identified with the mind and its activities and so on. If the consciousness puts its stress outside, it is said to live in the external being and becomes oblivious of its inner mind and vital and inmost psychic; if it goes inside, puts its centralising stress there, then it knows itself as the inner being or, still deeper, as the psychic being; if it ascends out of the body to the planes where self is naturally conscious of its wideness and freedom, it knows itself as the self and not the mind, life or body. It is this stress of consciousness that makes all the difference. That is why one has to concentrate the consciousness in heart or mind in order to go within or go above. It is the disposition of the consciousness that determines everything, makes one predominantly mental, vital, physical or psychic, bound or free, separate in the Purusha or involved in the Prakriti.

CWSA 28: 20-21

The double nature in man

There are always two different consciousnesses in the human being, one outward in which he ordinarily lives, the other inward and concealed of which he knows nothing. When one does sadhana, the inner consciousness begins to open and one is able to go inside and have all kinds of experiences there. As the sadhana progresses, one begins to live more and more in this inner being and the outer becomes more and more superficial. At first the inner consciousness seems to be the dream and the outer the waking reality. Afterwards the inner consciousness becomes the reality and the outer is felt by many as a dream or delusion, or else as something superficial and external. The inner consciousness begins to be a place of deep peace, light, happiness, love, closeness to the Divine or the presence of the Divine, the Mother. One is then aware of two consciousnesses, this inner one and the outer which has to be changed into its counterpart and instrument — that also must become full of peace, light, union with the Divine. At present you are moving between the two and in this period all the feelings you have are quite natural. You need not be at all anxious about that, but wait for the full development of the inner consciousness in which you will be able to live.

*

There is always a double nature in human beings, the inner (psychic and spiritual) which is in touch with the Divine; the outer, mental, vital and physical, which has been brought up in the Ignorance and is full of defects, imperfections and impurities. It is for this reason that in sadhana things cannot be changed in a moment. The inner experience grows and extends and fills more and more of the nature, but till all is filled, the imperfections remain somewhere.

CWSA 28: 89-90

The Environmental Consciousness around the Individual

Everyone carries around him an environmental consciousness or atmosphere through which he is in relation with others or with the universal forces. It is through this that these forces or the thoughts or feelings of others enter.

*

The individual is not limited to the physical body — it is only the external consciousness which feels like that. As soon as one gets over this feeling of limitation, one can feel first the inner consciousness which is connected with the body but does not belong to it, afterwards the planes of consciousness above the body — also a consciousness surrounding the body, but part of oneself, part of the individual being, through which one is in contact with the cosmic forces and with other beings. This last is what I have called the environmental consciousness.

*

Each man has his own personal consciousness entrenched in his body and gets into touch with his surroundings only through his body and senses and the mind using the senses.

Yet all the time the universal forces are pouring into him without his knowing it. He is aware only of thoughts, feelings etc. that rise to the surface and these he takes for his own. Really they come from outside in mind waves, vital waves, waves of feeling and sensation etc. which take particular forms in him and rise to the surface after they have got inside.

CWSA 28: 213

Sri Aurobindo

Consciousness of the body

When the body needs something and is aware that this is what it needs, and the vital wants something else and the mind yet another, well, there may very well be a discussion

among them, and contradictions and conflicts. And one can discern very clearly what the poise of the body is, the need of the body in itself, and in what way the vital interferes and destroys this equilibrium most often and harms the development so much, because it is ignorant. And when the mind comes in, it creates yet another disorder which is added to the one between the vital and the physical, by introducing its ideas and norms, its principles and rules, its laws and all that, and as it doesn't take into account exactly the needs of the other, it wants to do what everybody does. Human beings have a much more delicate and precarious health than animals because their mind intervenes and disturbs the equilibrium. The body, left to itself, has a very sure instinct. For instance, never will the body if left to itself eat when it doesn't need to or take something which will be harmful to it. And it will sleep when it needs to sleep, it will act when it needs to act. The instinct of the body is very sure. It is the vital and the mind which disturb it: one by its desires and caprices, the other by its principles, dogmas, laws and ideas.

CWM 5: 294-95

Zones of consciousness

The first zone you encounter is the zone of painting, sculpture, architecture: everything that has a material form. It is the zone of forms, colored forms that are expressed as paintings, sculptures, and architecture. They are not forms as we know them, but rather typical forms; you can see garden types, for instance, wonderfully colored and beautiful, or construction types.

Then comes the musical zone, and there you find the origin of the sounds that have inspired the various composers. Great waves of music, without sound. It seems a bit strange, but that's how it is....

Beyond the musical zone lies thought: thoughts, organized thoughts for plays and books, abstractions for philosophies. But what used to interest me particularly were the combinations that give birth to novels or plays.

That is the third zone....

Higher up, there is a fourth zone, a zone of colored lights, plays of colored lights. That's the order: first form, then sound, then ideas, then colored lights. But that zone is already more distant from humanity; it is a zone of forces, a zone which appears as colored lights. No forms — colored lights representing forces. And one can combine these forces so that they work in the terrestrial atmosphere and bring about certain events. It's a zone of action, independent of form, sound and thought; it is above all that. A zone of active power and might you can use for a particular purpose — if you have the capacity to do so.

That's the highest zone.

Thus we have form, expressed in painting, sculpture or architecture; sound, expressed in musical themes; and thought, expressed in books, plays, novels, or even in philosophical and other kinds of intellectual theories (that's where you can send out ideas that will affect the whole world, because they influence receptive brains in any land, and are expressed by corresponding thoughts in the appropriate language). And above this zone, free of form, sound and thought, is the play of forces appearing as colored lights. And when you go there and have the power, you can combine those forces so that they eventually materialise as creations on earth (it takes some time, it's rarely immediate).

The Mother: Conversation with a disciple, October 27, 1962

The Centres of Consciousness or the chakras

The centres or Chakras are seven in number —

- (1) The thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head.
- (2) In the middle of the forehead — the Ajna Chakra — (will, vision, dynamic thought).
- (3) Throat centre — externalising mind.
- (4) Heart-lotus — emotional centre. The psychic is behind it.
- (5) Navel—higher vital (proper).
- (6) Below navel — lower vital.
- (7) Muladhara — physical.

All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal cord; but in fact all these things are in the subtle body, *sūkṣma deha*, though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake.

CWSA 28: 229

The Chakras in Reference to Yoga

One can speak of the chakras only in reference to Yoga. In ordinary people the chakras are not open, it is only when they do sadhana that they open. For the chakras are the centres of the inner consciousness and belong organically to the subtle body. So much as is active in ordinary people is very little — for in them it is the outer consciousness that is active.

*

The centres of consciousness [*are meant by the term "centres"*], the chakras. It is by their opening that the Yogic or inner consciousness develops — otherwise you are bound to the ordinary outer consciousness.

*

One does not pass through the psychic centre or any centre [during the sadhana]. The centres open under the pressure of the sadhana. You can say that the Force descends or ascends into a centre.

CWSA 28: 231-32

Sri Aurobindo

Seat of the Divine Consciousness in man

The psychic world or plane of consciousness is that part of the world, the psychic being is that part of the being which is directly under the influence of the Divine Consciousness; the hostile forces cannot have even the remotest action upon it. It is a world of harmony, and everything moves in it from light to light and from progress to progress. It is the seat of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Self in the individual being.

CWM 3: 62

Gnostic consciousness

There is a state of consciousness which may be called “gnostic”, in which you are able to see *at the same time* all the theories, all the beliefs, all the ideas men have expressed in their highest consciousness — the most contradictory notions, like the Buddhistic, the Vedantic, the Christian theories, all the philosophical theories, all the expressions of the human mind when it has managed to catch a little corner of the Truth — and in that state, not only do you put each thing in its place, but everything appears to you marvellously true and quite indispensable in order to be able to understand anything at all about anything whatsoever.

CWM 4: 157

The Mother

The fourfold Brahman

This single consciousness itself, the I of the waking man, is only a division or rather a state of a still wider consciousness more independent of gross matter which gets some play in the condition of dream (and of dream hypnosis is only a particular and capricious form), but is more permanently & coherently liberated from the gross body at or after death. This wider consciousness is called the Dream Condition and the body or upadhi in which it works is called the Subtle Body.... The Dream Consciousness is itself [surrounded] by a still wider consciousness which we call the Sleep Condition or the Causal Body and from this & by this it is selected for life before birth & after death. This Sleep Condition is again surrounded by Brahman from whom & by whom it is selected for causal purposes, — just as a robe surrounds its wearer.

*

By departing from the physical life one does not disappear out of the Movement, but only passes into some other general state of consciousness than the material universe.

These states are either obscure or illuminated, some dark or sunless.

By persisting in gross forms of ignorance, by coercing perversely the soul in its self-fulfilment or by a wrong dissolution of its becoming in the Movement, one enters into states of blind darkness, not into the worlds of light and of liberated and blissful being.

CWSA 17: 105, 20

Sri Aurobindo

***You take up the spiritual path only when
you feel you cannot do otherwise.***

CWM 14: 29

The Mother

Changing One's Consciousness

Consciousness approach to dealing with difficulties

Difficulties always arise from the ego, that is, from your more or less egoistic personal reaction to circumstances, events and people around you, to the conditions of your life. They also come from that feeling of being closed up in a sort of shell, which prevents your consciousness from uniting with higher and vaster realities. ...

But if, when you have to face anguish, suffering, revolt, pain or a feeling of helplessness — whatever it may be, all the things that come to you on the path and which precisely are your difficulties — if physically, that is to say, in your body consciousness, you can have the feeling of widening yourself, one could say of unfolding yourself—you feel as it were all folded up, one fold on another like a piece of cloth which is folded and refolded and folded again—so if you have this feeling that what is holding and strangling you and making you suffer or paralysing your movement, is like a too closely, too tightly folded piece of cloth or like a parcel that is too well-tied, too well-packed, and that slowly, gradually, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, and you lie flat and make yourself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading yourself out as far as you can, opening yourself and stretching out in an attitude of complete passivity with what I could call “the face to the light”: not curling back upon your difficulty, doubling up on it, shutting it in, so to say, into yourself, but, on the contrary, unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light — the Light which comes from above — if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don't succeed in doing it

— for it is sometimes difficult — if you can imagine yourself doing this *physically*, almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that more than three-quarters of the difficulty is gone. And then just a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.

This is much easier than struggling against a difficulty with one's thought, for if you begin to discuss with yourself, you will find that there are arguments for and against which are so convincing that it is quite impossible to get out of it without a higher light. Here, you do not struggle against the difficulty, you do not try to convince yourself; ah! you simply stretch out in the Light as though you lay stretched on the sands in the sun. And you let the Light do its work. That's all.

CWM 8: 285-87

Need for including the physical consciousness

For most aspirants the way of meditation, concentration, withdrawal from physical life, rejection of physical activities is certainly easier than the way of action. But they leave the physical consciousness just as it is, without ever changing it, and unless one becomes like a sadhu or an ascetic who leaves behind all active life and remains in constant concentration or meditation, one achieves nothing at all. That is to say, an entire part of the being is never transformed. And for them the solution is not at all to transform it, it is simply to reject it, to get out of their body as quickly as possible. That is how yoga was conceived of formerly, for, obviously, it is much easier. But this is not what we want.

What we want is the transformation of the physical consciousness, not its rejection.

And so, in this case, what Sri Aurobindo has recom-

mended as the most direct and most total way is surrender to the Divine — a surrender made more and more integral, progressively, comprising the physical consciousness and physical activities. And if one succeeds in this, then the physical, instead of being an obstacle, becomes a help.

CWM 8: 299-300

Experiencing the change of consciousness

Mother, how to change one's consciousness?

Naturally, there are many ways, but each person must do it by the means accessible to him; and the indication of the way usually comes spontaneously, through something like an unexpected experience. And for each one, it appears a little differently.

For instance, one may have the perception of the ordinary consciousness which is extended on the surface, horizontally, and works on a plane which is simultaneously the surface of things and has a contact with the superficial outer side of things, people, circumstances; and then, suddenly, for some reason or other — as I say for each one it is different — there is a shifting upwards, and instead of seeing things horizontally, of being at the same level as they are, you suddenly dominate them and see them from above, in their totality, instead of seeing a small number of things immediately next to yourself; it is as though something were drawing you above and making you see as from a mountain-top or an aeroplane. And instead of seeing each detail and seeing it on its own level, you see the whole as one unity, and from far above.

There are many ways of having this experience, but it usually comes to you as if by chance, one fine day.

Or else, one may have an experience which is almost its

very opposite but which comes to the same thing. Suddenly one plunges into a depth, one moves away from the thing one perceived, it seems distant, superficial, unimportant; one enters an inner silence or an inner calm or an inward vision of things, a profound feeling, a more intimate perception of circumstances and things, in which all values change. And one becomes aware of a sort of unity, a deep identity which is one in spite of the diverse appearances.

Or else, suddenly also, the sense of limitation disappears and one enters the perception of a kind of indefinite duration beginningless and endless, of something which has always been and always will be.

These experiences come to you suddenly in a flash, for a second, a moment in your life, you don't know why or how....

CWM 8: 402-03

Intervention of a higher consciousness

It is in this way that what are called miracles happen. The world is made up of innumerable planes of consciousness and each has its own distinct laws; the laws of one plane do not hold good for another. A miracle is nothing but a sudden descent, a bursting forth of another consciousness and its powers — most often it is the powers of the vital— into this plane of matter. There is a precipitation, upon the material mechanism, of the mechanism of a higher plane. It is as though a lightning flash tore through the cloud of our ordinary consciousness and poured into it other forces, other movements and sequences. The result we call a miracle, because we see a sudden alteration, an abrupt interference with the natural laws of our own ordinary range, but the reason and order of it we do not know or see, because the source of the miracle lies in another plane.

CWM 3: 31

Growth of consciousness

The way to attain to this perfect consciousness is to increase your actual consciousness beyond its present grooves and limits, to educate it, to open it to the Divine Light and to let the Divine Light work in it fully and freely. But the Light can do its full and unhindered work only when you have got rid of all craving and fear, when you have no mental prejudices, no vital preferences, no physical apprehensions or attractions to obscure or bind you.

CWM 3: 101

Finding the true consciousness

What is necessary is an aspiration which burns in the being like a constant fire, and every time you have a desire, a preference, an attraction it must be thrown into this fire. If you do this persistently, you will see that a little gleam of true consciousness begins to dawn in your ordinary consciousness. At first it will be faint, very far behind all the din of desires, preferences, attractions, likings. But you must go behind all this and find that true consciousness, all calm, tranquil, almost silent.

Those who are in contact with the true consciousness see all the possibilities at the same time and may deliberately choose even the most unfavourable, if necessary. But to reach this point, you must go a long way.

Should preferences be neutralized or forgotten?

One should not have them!

When the mind becomes silent, when it stops judging, pushing itself forward with its so-called knowledge, one begins to solve the problem of life. One must refrain from judging, for the mind is only an instrument of action, not

an instrument of true knowledge — true knowledge comes from elsewhere.

If one refrained from judging, one would arrive at an ever more precise knowledge of the Truth and nine-tenths of the world's misery would disappear.

The great disorder in the world would to a large extent be neutralized if the mind could admit that it does not know.

CWM 4: 2-3

The chick and the egg

We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities.

Formerly, when one spoke of transformation one meant solely the transformation of the inner consciousness. One tried to discover in oneself this deep consciousness and rejected the body and its activities like an encumbrance and a useless thing, in order to attend only to the inner movement. Sri Aurobindo declared that this was not enough; the Truth demanded that the material world should also participate in this transformation and become an expression of the deeper Truth. But when people heard this, many thought that it was possible to transform the body and its activities without bothering in the least about what was happening within — naturally this is not quite true. Before you can undertake this work of physical transformation, which of all things is the most difficult, your inner consciousness must be firmly established, solidly established in the Truth, so that this transformation may be the final expression of the Truth — “final” for the moment at least.

The starting-point of this transformation is receptivity, we have already spoken about it. That is the indispensable condition for obtaining the transformation. Then comes the change of consciousness. This change of consciousness and

its preparation have often been compared with the formation of the chicken in the egg: till the very last second the egg remains the same, there is no change, and it is only when the chicken is completely formed, absolutely alive, that it itself makes with its little beak a hole in the shell and comes out. Something similar takes place at the moment of the change of consciousness. For a long time you have the impression that nothing is happening, that your consciousness is the same as usual, and, if you have an intense aspiration, you even feel a resistance, as though you were knocking against a wall which does not yield. But when you are ready within, a last effort — the pecking in the shell of the being — and everything opens and you are projected into another consciousness.

I said that it was a revolution of the basic equilibrium, that is, a total reversal of consciousness comparable with what happens to light when it passes through a prism. Or it is as though you were turning a ball inside out, which cannot be done except in the fourth dimension. One comes out of the ordinary three dimensional consciousness to enter the higher four-dimensional consciousness, and into an infinite number of dimensions. This is the indispensable starting-point.

CWM 4: 18-19

Consciousness and technique

If, for example, you find yourself facing someone who has trained himself slowly, seriously, with patience and endurance, and who all of a sudden has a strong aspiration, well, this one will beat you in spite of your aspiration unless your aspiration is very much superior to that of your adversary. If you have opposite you someone who knows only the technique of the game but has no conscious aspi-

ration, while you are in a fully conscious state, evidently it is you who will defeat him because the quality of consciousness is superior to the quality of technique. But one cannot replace the other. The one which is superior is more important, granted, but you must also have nerves which respond quickly, spontaneous movements; you must know all the secrets of the game to be able to play perfectly. You must have both the things. What is higher is the consciousness which enables you to make the right movement at the right moment but it is not exclusive. When you seek perfection, you must not neglect the one under the pretext that you have the other.

CWM 4: 41-42

Being above suffering

One may have sufferings and not feel them, be as if they did not exist. That is, a misfortune, a “cross” touches only the outer consciousness, the physical, the mental, the vital, but the psychic — in truth, the psychic is above all suffering. Let us take a very simple example: an illness. A physical disorder brings suffering, at times much suffering, but there are people who are in such a state of consciousness that their physical sufferings do not exist, they are not real for them. It is the same thing with separation; if you love someone and are separated from that person, you suffer — this is one of the most common of sufferings, it is the ties which are broken — well, in a certain state of consciousness the real link between two beings cannot be broken, for it does not belong to the domain where things break. Therefore one is above what may happen.

CWM 4: 45-46

What is best for us

What appears to you good, favourable, is not always what's best for you from a spiritual point of view. It is this which must be learnt from the beginning, that the divine perception of what will lead you fastest to the goal is absolutely different from yours, and that you cannot understand it. That is why you must say to yourself from the beginning, "It is all right. I shall accept everything and I shall understand later on."

So often you come across persons who, before they began yoga, had a relatively easy life, and as soon as they come to yoga, all the circumstances to which they were particularly attached break away from them more or less brutally. Then they are troubled; they do not perhaps have the frankness to admit it to themselves, they perhaps take recourse to other thoughts and other words, but it comes to this: "How is it? I am good and I am not treated kindly!"

The entire human notion of justice is there. "You try to become good and what cataclysms befall you! All the things you loved are taken away from you, all the pleasures you have had are taken away from you, all the people whom you loved leave you; it is indeed not worth the trouble to be good and to have made an effort." And if you follow your reasoning far enough, all of a sudden you come upon the canker — so, you wanted to do yoga out of self-interest, you wanted to be good out of self-interest, you thought your situation would be better and you would be given a bonbon for your wisdom! And that does not happen!... Well, this refusal is the best lesson that could ever be given to you. For as long as your aspiration hides a desire and as long as in your heart there is the spirit of bargaining with the Divine, things will come and give you blows till you wake up to the true consciousness within you which makes no conditions, no bargains. That's all.

CWM 4: 101-02

Keeping the consciousness high during activity

You may be engaged in the most active action, for example, in playing basketball, which needs a great deal of movement, and yet not lose the attitude of inner meditation and concentration upon the Divine. And when you get that, you will see that all you do changes its quality; not only will you do it better, but you will do it with an altogether unexpected strength, and at the same time keep your consciousness so high and so pure that nothing will be able to touch you any longer. And note that this can go so far that even if an accident occurs, it will not hurt you. Naturally, this is a peak, but it is a peak to which one can aspire.

Do not fall into the very common error of believing that you must sit in an absolutely quiet corner where nobody passes by, where you are in a classical position and altogether immobile, in order to be able to meditate — it is not true. What is needed is to succeed in meditating under all circumstances, and I call “meditating” not emptying your head but concentrating yourself in a contemplation of the Divine; and if you keep this contemplation within you, all that you do will change its quality — not its appearance, for apparently it will be the same thing, but its quality. And life will change its quality, and you, you will feel a little different from what you were, with a peace, a certitude, an inner calm, an unchanging force, something which never gives way.

In that state it will be difficult to do you harm — the forces always try, this world is so full of adverse forces which seek to upset everything... but they succeed in a very small measure, only in the measure necessary to force you to make a new progress.

Each time you receive a blow from life, tell yourself immediately, “Ah, I have to make a progress”; then the blow

becomes a blessing. Instead of tucking your head between your shoulders, you lift it up with joy and you say, “What is it I have to learn? I want to know. What is it I have to change? I want to know.” This is what you should do.

CWM 4: 121-22

Widening the consciousness

One must, if one can, widen one’s consciousness.

I knew somebody who wanted to widen his consciousness; he said he had found a way, it was to lie flat on his back at night, out-of-doors, and look at the stars and try to identify himself with them, and go away deep into an immense world, and so lose completely all sense of proportion, of the order of the earth and all its little things, and become vast as the sky — you couldn’t say as vast as the universe, for we see only a tiny bit of it, but vast as the sky with all the stars. And so, you know, the little impurities fall off for the time being, and one understands things on a very vast scale. It is a good exercise.

CWM 5: 151-52

Identification through concentration

When I was in Paris, I used to go to many places where there were gatherings of all kinds, people making all sorts of researches, spiritual (so-called spiritual), occult researches, etc. And once I was invited to meet a young lady (I believe she was Swedish) who had found a method of knowledge, exactly a method for learning. And so she explained it to us. We were three or four (her French was not very good but she was quite sure about what she was saying!); she said: “It’s like this, you take an object or make a sign on a blackboard or take a drawing — that is not important — take whatever is most convenient for you. Suppose, for instance, that

I draw for you... (she had a blackboard) I draw a design." She drew a kind of half-geometric design. "Now, you sit in front of the design and concentrate all your attention upon it — upon that design which is there. You concentrate, concentrate without letting anything else enter your consciousness — except that. Your eyes are fixed on the drawing and don't move at all. You are as it were hypnotised by the drawing. You look (and so she sat there, looking), you look, look, look.... I don't know, it takes more or less time, but still for one who is used to it, it goes pretty fast. You look, look, look, you become that drawing you are looking at. Nothing else exists in the world any longer except the drawing, and then, suddenly, you pass to the other side; and when you pass to the other side you enter a new consciousness, and you know."

CWM 5: 218

Understanding others

It is an excellent method of learning "how" to identify oneself.

For instance, you are with someone. This person tells you something, you tell him the contrary (as it usually happens, simply through a spirit of contradiction) and you begin arguing. Naturally, you will never come to any point, except a quarrel if you are ill-natured. But instead of doing that, instead of remaining shut up in your own ideas or your own words, if you tell yourself: "Wait a little, I am going to try and see why he said that to me. Yes, why did he tell me that?" And you concentrate: "Why, why, why?" You stand there, just like that, trying. The other person continues speaking, doesn't he? — and is very happy too, for you don't contradict him any longer! He talks profusely and is sure he has convinced you. Then you concentrate more

and more on what he is saying, and with the feeling that gradually, through his words, you are entering his mind. When you enter his head, suddenly you enter into his way of thinking, and next, just imagine, you understand why he is speaking to you thus! And then, if you have a fairly swift intelligence and put what you have just come to understand alongside what you had known before, you have the two ways together, and so can find the truth reconciling both. And here you have truly made progress. And this is the best way of widening one's thought.

If you are beginning an argument, keep quiet immediately, instantaneously. You must be silent, say nothing at all, and then try to see the thing as the other person sees it — that won't make you forget your own way of seeing it, not at all! but you will be able to put both of them together. And you will truly have made progress, a real progress.

CWM 5: 219

Working together

It is the same for everything. In all that you do together with others, if you do not agree, take it as a divine Grace, a marvellous opportunity given you to make a progress. And it is simple: instead of being on this side, you are on the other; instead of looking at yourself, you enter the other person and look. You must have just a little bit of imagination, a little more control over your thoughts, over your movements. But that is not very difficult. When you have tried it out a little, after a while you find it very easy.

You must not just look and then make a mental effort, telling yourself: "Why is it like this and like that? Why does he do that? Why does he say that?" You will never arrive at anything. You won't understand, you will imagine all kinds of explanations which will be worthless and teach you

nothing at all except to tell yourself: “That person is stupid or else wicked” — things that lead nowhere. On the other hand, if you only make that little movement, and instead of looking at him as an object quite alien to you, you try to enter within, you enter within, into that little head that’s before you, and then, suddenly, you find yourself on the other side, you look at yourself and understand quite well what he is saying — everything is clear, the why, the how, the reason, the feeling which is behind the whole thing.... It is an experiment you have the opportunity of making a hundred times a day.

At first you won’t succeed very well, but if you persist, you will end up by succeeding admirably. This adds a lot of interest to life. And besides it is a work which really makes you progress, for it makes you come out of that little armour of yours in which you are nicely shut up, in which you knock against everything. You have seen moths knocking against the light, haven’t you?... Everyone’s consciousness is like that, it goes along knocking here, knocking there, for these are things foreign to it. But instead of knocking about, one enters within, then it becomes a part of oneself. One widens oneself, breathes freely, has enough space to move in, one doesn’t knock against anything, one enters, penetrates, understands. And one lives in many places at the same time. It is very interesting, one does it automatically.

CWM 5: 220-21

Making the consciousness vast

The easiest way is to identify yourself with something vast. For instance, when you feel that you are shut up in a completely narrow and limited thought, will, consciousness, when you feel as though you were in a shell, then if you begin thinking about something very vast, as for ex-

ample, the immensity of the waters of an ocean, and if really you can think of this ocean and how it stretches out far, far, far, far, in all directions, like this (*Mother stretches out her arms*), how, compared with you, it is so far, so far that you cannot see the other shore, you cannot reach its end anywhere, neither behind nor in front nor to the right or left... it is wide, wide, wide, wide... you think of this and then you feel that you are floating on this sea, like that, and that there are no limits.... This is very easy. Then you can widen your consciousness a little.

Other people, for example, begin looking at the sky; and then they imagine all those spaces between all those stars, and all... that kind of infinity of spaces in which the earth is a tiny point, and you too are just a very tiny point, smaller than an ant, on the earth. And so you look at the sky and feel that you are floating in these infinite spaces between the planets, and that you are growing vaster and vaster to go farther and farther. Some people succeed with this.

There is a way also by trying to identify yourself with all things upon earth. For example, when you have a small narrow vision of something and are hurt by others' vision and point of view, you must begin by shifting your consciousness, try to put it in others, and try gradually to identify yourself with all the different ways of thinking of all others. This is a little more ... how shall I put it?... dangerous. Because to identify oneself with the thought and will of others means to identify oneself with a heap of stupidities and bad wills, and this may bring consequences which are not very good. But still, some people do this more easily. For instance, when they are in disagreement with someone, in order to widen their consciousness they try to put themselves in the place of the other and see the thing not from their own point of view but from the point of view of the

other. This widens the consciousness, though not as much as by the first ways I spoke about, which are quite innocent.

CWM 6: 344-45

Intellectual ways of widening the consciousness

There are lots of intellectual ways of widening the consciousness. These I have explained fully in my book. But in any case, when you are bored by something, when something is painful to you or very unpleasant, if you begin to think of the eternity of time and the immensity of space, if you think of all that has gone before and all that will come afterwards, and that this second in eternity is truly just a passing breath, and that it seems so utterly ridiculous to be upset by something which in the eternity of time is... one doesn't even have the time to become aware of it, it has no place, no importance, because, what indeed is a second in eternity? If one can manage to realise that, to... how to put it?... visualise, picture the little person one is, in the little earth where one is, and the tiny second of consciousness which for the moment is hurting you or is unpleasant for you, just this — which in itself is only a second in your existence, and that you yourself have been many things before and will be many more things afterwards, that what affects you now you will have probably completely forgotten in ten years, or if you remember it you will say, "How did I happen to attach any importance to that?" ... if you can realise that first and then realise your little person which is a second in eternity, not even a second, you know, imperceptible, a fragment of a second in eternity, that the whole world has unfolded before this and will unfold yet, indefinitely — before, behind — and that... well, then suddenly you sense the utter ridiculousness of the importance you attach to what happened to you.... *Truly* you feel... to what

an extent it is absurd to attach any importance to one's life, to oneself, and to what happens to you. And in the space of three minutes, if you do this properly, all unpleasantness is swept away. Even a very deep pain can be swept away. Simply a concentration like this, and to place oneself in infinity and eternity. Everything goes away. One comes out of it cleansed. One can get rid of *all* attachments and even, I say, of the deepest sorrows — of everything, in this way — if one knows how to do it in the right way. It immediately takes you out of your little ego. There we are.

CWM 6: 345-46

Developing the cosmic consciousness

The cosmic consciousness means that, instead of feeling that one is an altogether separate, isolated being, different from all others, one feels that he is only a part of an immense whole and in relation with the whole totality, receiving the movements and vibrations of all others and transmitting to all others its own vibrations, that the movements of consciousness, the psychological vibrations do not stop inside a small individual enclosed in himself, who is as in a shell, without any contact with the rest; the forces pass across, going from one to another, touching one here, another there, and these forces are so complex and multiple that we can no longer tell where one begins and another ends. One has exactly the impression of an immense whole moving within itself. It is something like that — the cosmic consciousness.

So, first of all, you must think of this; you must first become aware that you are a point in the universal immensity, and not isolated but altogether joined with it. And then you must study yourself, observe yourself. You will immediately have the opportunity of seeing the vibrations

which come from outside and pass through you but are not generated in you, which you receive and express. So gradually, by studying, looking, observing, you become aware of that which is not limited. This is how you begin to acquire the universal or cosmic consciousness.

CWM 6: 419-20

Reversal of consciousness

There is a moment — because it is a question which becomes more and more intense and more and more acute — when you have even the feeling, precisely, that things are strange, that is, they are not real; a moment comes when this sensation that you have of yourself, of being yourself, becomes strange, a kind of sense of unreality. And the question continues coming up: “But then, what is myself?” Well, there is a moment when it comes up with so much concentration and such intensity that with this intensity of concentration suddenly there occurs a reversal, and then, instead of being on this side you are on that side, and when you are on that side everything is very simple; you understand, you know, you are, you live, and then you see clearly the unreality of the rest, and this is enough.

You see, one may have to wait for days, months, years, centuries, lives, before this moment comes. But if one intensifies his aspiration, there is a moment when the pressure is so great and the intensity of the question so strong that something turns over in the consciousness, and then this is absolutely what one feels: instead of being here one is there, instead of seeing from outside and seeking to see within, one is inside; and the minute one is within, absolutely everything changes, completely, and all that seemed to him true, natural, normal, real, tangible, all that, immediately, — yes, it seems to him very grotesque, very queer, very

unreal, quite absurd; but one has touched something which is supremely true and eternally beautiful, and this one never loses again.

Once the reversal has taken place, you can glide into an external consciousness, not lose the ordinary contact with the things of life, but that remains and it never moves. You may, in your dealings with others, fall back a little into their ignorance and blindness, but there is always something there, living, standing up within, which does not move any more, until it manages to penetrate everything, to the point where it is over, where the blindness disappears for ever. And this is an absolutely tangible experience, something more concrete than the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever.

CWM 7: 193-94

Change yourself to change the world

It is not an image, it is not just fine words when it is said that if one enters the true consciousness, if one changes one's consciousness, well, the world itself changes for you. And it is not only an appearance or an impression: one sees differently than one does in the ordinary consciousness; relations are different, causes are different, effects are different. And instead of seeing only something which is not transparent — one cannot see what's behind, it is a surface, a crust; it is only this one sees and one can't even see what moves it, what makes it exist — everything is turned inside out, and it is that which appears artificial and unreal, and almost inexistent. And so, when one sees things in this way, normally, you know, without straining oneself, without having to practise meditation and concentration and make strenuous efforts to see things like this, when

it is one's normal, natural vision, then one understands things in a completely different way — naturally, the world is different!

CWM 8: 12

Change of consciousness

There is one phenomenon which obviously seems indispensable if one wants the realisation to become stable.... Experiences come, touch the consciousness, sometimes bring great illuminations, then get blurred, retreat into the background and, outwardly, in your ordinary consciousness, you don't feel that there is a great change, a great difference. And this phenomenon may occur very often, may repeat itself for many years. Suddenly you get a sort of revelation, like an illumination, you are in the true consciousness and have the feeling of having got hold of the real thing. And then, slowly or suddenly, it seems to recede behind you, and you seek but do not find that there is any great change in you.... These things seem to come as heralds or as promises: "See, it will happen", or to tell you, "Well, have faith, it *will be* like that."

And this may recur very often. There is progress, obviously, but it is very slow and hardly apparent.

But then, suddenly — perhaps because one is sufficiently prepared, perhaps simply because the time has come, and it has been so decreed — suddenly, when such an experience occurs, its result in the part of the being where it takes place is a complete reversal of consciousness. It is a very clear, very concrete phenomenon. The best way of describing it is this: a complete reversal. And then the relation of the consciousness with the other parts of the being and with the outer world is as if completely changed. Absolutely like an overturning. And that reversal no longer comes back to the

same old place, the consciousness no longer returns to its former position — Sri Aurobindo would say “status”. Once this has happened in any part of the being, this part of the being is stabilised.

CWM 8: 171

Divine Consciousness and Transformation

Everything turns around the consciousness, the fact of being or not being conscious. And it is only in the supreme Consciousness that you can attain the perfect expression of yourself.

But that the Oneness exists, even if you feel just the opposite, is a fact you can do nothing about, for it is a divine action and a divine fact — it is a divine action and a divine fact. If you are conscious of the Divine, you become conscious of this fact. If you are not conscious of the Divine, the fact exists but you simply are not conscious of it — that’s all.

So, everything turns around a phenomenon of consciousness. And the world is in a state of obscurity, suffering, misery, of... everything, all it is, simply because it is not conscious of the Divine, because it has cut off the connection in its consciousness, because its consciousness is separated from the Divine. That is to say, it has become unconscious.

For the true consciousness is the divine Consciousness. If you cut yourself off from the divine Consciousness, you become absolutely unconscious; that is exactly what has happened. And so, everything there is, the world as it is, your consciousness as it is, things in the state they are in, are the result of this separation of the consciousness and its immediate obscuration.

The minute the individual consciousness is separated from the divine Consciousness, it enters what we call the inconscience, and it is this inconscience that is the cause of

all its miseries.

But all that is, is essentially divine, and the divine Oneness is a fact, you can't do anything about it; all your unconsciousness and all your denials will change nothing — it is a fact, it's like that.

And the conclusion is this, that the true transformation is the transformation of consciousness — all the rest will follow automatically.

CWM 8: 77

The Mother

The world is a cyclic movement (*samsāra*) of the Divine Consciousness in Space and Time. Its law and, in a sense, its object is progression; it exists by movement and would be dissolved by cessation of movement.

*

As each object in the universe is really the whole universe in a different frontal appearance, so each individual soul is all Brahman regarding Itself and world from a centre of cosmic consciousness.

CWSA 17 : 22, 23

Sri Aurobindo

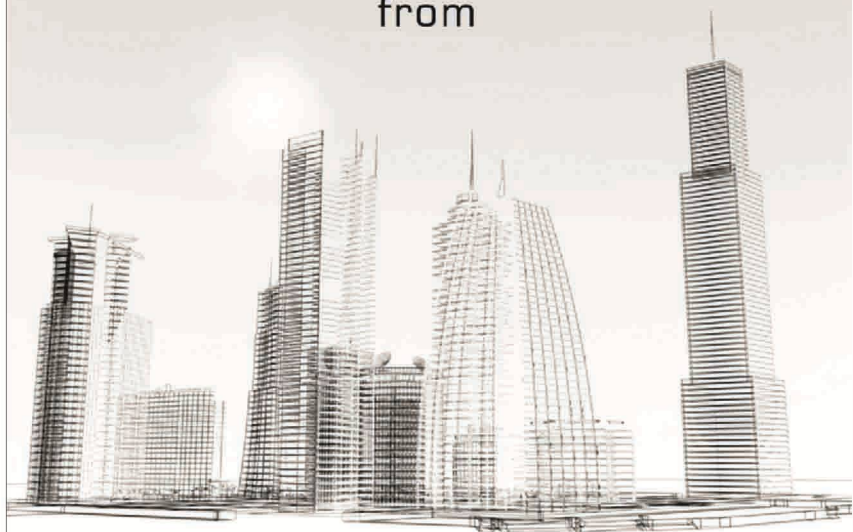
One may seek within oneself, one may remember, may observe; one must notice what is going on, one must pay attention, that's all. Sometimes, when one sees a generous act, hears of something exceptional, when one witnesses heroism or generosity or greatness of soul, meets someone who shows a special talent or acts in an exceptional and beautiful way, there is a kind of enthusiasm or admiration or gratitude which suddenly awakens in the being and opens the door to a state, a new state of consciousness, a light, a warmth, a joy one did not know before.

CWM 8: 404-05

The Mother



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