

All India Magazine

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House of the Lord

Here, in Pondicherry, you cannot breathe without breathing my consciousness. It saturates the atmosphere almost materially, in the subtle physical, and extends to the Lake, ten kilometres from here. Farther, my consciousness can be felt in the material vital, then on the mental plane and the other higher planes, everywhere.

When I came here for the first time, I felt the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo, felt it materially at a distance of ten miles, ten nautical miles, not kilometres. It was very sudden, very concrete, an atmosphere pure, luminous, light, light that lifts you up.

CWM 13: 73

The Mother

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House of the Lord

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

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Editorial: This issue commemorates the formation of what we know today as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Formed after the great event of 24th Nov 1926, the Ashram as well as the yoga has now spread far and wide. Though the yoga can be practiced anywhere, the Ashram remains the place of central Influence for the radiating power of the New Consciousness that Their tapasya brought down to earth and man. More specifically and hence of perennial importance, it is not only the earthly Abode that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother chose for the fulfillment of Their yoga, but also Their seat of tapasya. For this alone if not for other reasons the Sri Aurobindo Ashram will remain a place very dear and sacred to all who walk this Path. Though the yoga is not limited by geographical boundaries and the practitioners of the Integral Yoga are spread everywhere, yet the Ashram by its mere existence provides a Help to earth nourishing its Godward aspiration in the very roots. Therefore we try to take a look at some aspects of the Ashram, some of its fundamental guiding principles. Of course due to shortage of space we cannot deal with all the many-sided complexities of the Ashram life. Only a few aspects are being mentioned here. Please note the word Asram/Ashram respectively has been kept as in the original.



While at the staircase I got an intense desire to see the Mother's rooms. X suggested that when one is in difficulty, one should ask to go near to the Mother.

But the coming near to the Mother should be in the inner rooms, not the outer. For in the inner rooms one can always enter and even arrange to stay there permanently.

CWSA 32: 496-97

Sri Aurobindo

A Dream of the Divine

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities

while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to understand and adopt it nor the conscious force that is indispensable in order to execute it; that is why I call it a dream.

And yet this dream is in the course of becoming a reality; that is what we are striving for in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, on a very small scale, in proportion to our limited means. The realisation is certainly far from perfect, but it is progressive; little by little we are advancing towards our goal which we hope we may one day be able to present to the world as a practical and effective way to emerge from the present chaos, to be born into a new life that is more harmonious and true.

CWM 12: 93-94

A special formation

I heard the Voice and awoke with the feeling of this Power, this Light, this Force of realisation concentrated here which sets everything in motion (as always, it is always the same, a Power in motion). It was a dazzling white light. But then, what I found funny was that there I was, quite in my natural state, and this, the Ashram, was a tiny, tiny part of myself. And throughout the whole experience, it remained like that — a very tiny part of myself. Everything else was ... I can't say deconcentrated, but an entirely general, overall activity, as it normally is every night. And I saw the Ashram

quite clearly — it was something special, made for special reasons, but whereas I seemed to have an immense body, that was very small, very small. ...

The formation represented by the Ashram was located approximately here, at the height of the navel in relation to what I was — but although the body was not delimited, it had certain attributes or undefined forms, each one of which was situated in relation to the other as though each represented one part of the body; each was symbolic of either an activity or a part of the world or a mode of manifestation. So the formation started from about here, near the navel, and went down towards the appendix ...

It's form was elongated, slanting downwards (it always has this form). At the top it looked like a head, then the lines disappeared down below. It had no openings. And then, it was surrounded by various dark sheaths, a very dark purple which is the color of protection. A sparkling light was entering into it — it kept entering, but without making any holes. It passed right through everything, through the purple — through everything. It passed through and entered inside, where there were sparklings of every color, like a cascade. There are always these cascades of force — similar to a cascading stream whose waters neither flow on nor disappear, but accumulate: an accumulation of energies, a condensation. And they accumulate without taking up any more space through a kind of compression. And inside, it's moving, vibrating, vibrating, vibrating, it keeps coming and coming — you don't know where it comes from, but it keeps coming and accumulating.

It was a force with a sparkling white light at its center, the light which is the force of the Divine Mother, and as soon as it was well packed and concentrated inside, or condensed, it took on all the colors — vibrations of every

color ... Like a materialization — these colors were like a materialization of the Divine Force when it enters matter. (Just as matter is a condensation of energy, well, this seemed to be a condensation of Divine Force.....)

The Mother: Conversations with a disciple: July 12, 1960

How things are worked out at the Asram

... There has never been, at any time, a mental plan, a fixed programme or an organisation decided beforehand. The whole thing has taken birth, grown and developed as a living being by a movement of consciousness (Chit-tapas) constantly maintained, increased and fortified. As the Conscious Force descends in matter and radiates, it seeks for fit instruments to express and manifest it. It goes without saying that the more the instrument is open, receptive and plastic, the better are the results. The two obstacles that stand in the way of a smooth and harmonious working in and through the sadhaks are:

(1) the preconceived ideas and mental constructions which block the way to the influence and the working of the conscious force;

(2) the preferences and impulses of the vital which distort and falsify the expression.

Both these things are the natural output of the ego. Without the interference of these two elements my physical intervention would not be necessary.

You are quite right when you do not believe in “Mother likes”, “Mother dislikes”: it is quite a childish interpretation.

There is a clear precise perception of the Force and the Consciousness at work, and whenever this Force gets distorted or the Consciousness is obscured in its action, I have to interfere and rectify the movement. In most cases things are mixed up and there again I have to intervene to separate the

distorted transcription from the pure one.

Otherwise a great freedom of action is left to all, because the Conscious Force can express itself in innumerable ways and for the perfection and integrality of the manifestation no ways are to be *a priori* excluded; a trial is very often given before the selection is made.

CWSA 35: 676-77

Sri Aurobindo

Cradle of the New World

None of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received

the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unflinching trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for that purpose.

CWM 13: 109–10

A Declaration

Some people looking at things superficially, might ask how is it that the Ashram exists in this town for so many years and is not liked by the population?

The first and immediate answer is that all those in this population who are of a higher standard in culture, intelligence, good will and education not only have welcomed the Ashram but have expressed their sympathy, admiration and good-feeling. Sri Aurobindo Ashram has in Pondicherry many sincere and faithful followers and friends.

This said, our position is clear.

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

CWM 13: 124-25

The Mother

The Asram is the Mother's creation and would not have existed but for her, the work she does is her creation and has not been given to her and cannot be taken from her.

CWSA 32: 83

Sri Aurobindo

"I am afraid that you labour under a fundamental misconception regarding the Ashram. It is not an institution planned by Sri Aurobindo with certain rules of management, laws or regulations fixed and made to order. It has grown up of itself out of the force of the Truth he manifests and can follow only the movements of that Truth. Sri Aurobindo and the Ashram form one integral whole. His being is spread out in the Ashram, gathers and takes up the entire life of the latter into itself and into one harmonious spiritual unity. Its life is the life of the Spirit; its growth is the growth of the Spirit. It is entirely wrong to look at the Ashram as a group or collection of Sadhakas or to look at it as having a life or an aspiration or an aim that does or can exist apart from Sri Aurobindo. Its life and movements and activities are an expression, integrally, of its growth and development from within. It has no laws, rules or regulations, except the one law of spiritual growth and development in and through Sri Aurobindo."

Letter written by a sadhak under Sri Aurobindo's directions and corrected by Him. As quoted by Amal Kiran, Our Light and Delight, pp.8-9

The Foundation

Foundations of the material life in the Ashram

There are only two possible foundations for the material life here. One is that one is a member of an Asram founded on the principle of self-giving and surrender. One belongs to the Divine and all one has belongs to the Divine; in giving one gives not what is one's own but what already belongs to the Divine. There is no question of payment or return, no bargain, no room for demand and desire. The Mother is in sole charge and arranges things as best they can be arranged within the means at her disposal and the capacities of her instruments. She is under no obligation to act according to the mental standards or vital desires and claims of the sadhaks; she is not obliged to use a democratic equality in her dealings with them. She is free to deal with each according to what she sees to be his true need or what is best for him in his spiritual progress. No one can be her judge or impose on her his own rule and standard; she alone can make rules, and she can depart from them too if she thinks fit, but no one can demand that she shall do so. Personal demands and desires cannot be imposed on her. If anyone has what he finds to be a real need or a suggestion to make which is within the province assigned to him, he can do so; but if she gives no sanction, he must remain satisfied and drop the matter. This is the spiritual discipline of which the one who represents or embodies the Divine Truth is the centre. Either she is that and all this is the plain common sense of the matter; or she is not and then no one need stay here. Each can go his own way and there is no Asram and no Yoga.

If on the other hand one is not ready to be a member of the Asram or bear the discipline and is still admitted to

some place in the Yoga, he remains apart and meets his own expenses. There is no discipline for him on the material plane, except the rules necessary for the safety of the work; there is no material responsibility for the Mother.

CWSA 32: 374-75

Sri Aurobindo

The decision to do yoga

To do Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not; but if one doesn't, one can still have a life of goodwill, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily — all that — one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference.

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with. You must know what it is, you must take a resolution about it; but once you have taken the resolution, you must no longer flinch. That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing. You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, "I want to do yoga"; and that is why I don't think that I have ever pressed you from this point of view. I can speak to you about the thing. Oh! I tell you a lot about it, you are here for me to speak to you about it; but individually it is only to those who have come saying, "Yes, in any case I have my idea about the yoga and want to do it"; it is good.

And then for them it's something different, and the conditions of life are different, specially inwardly. Specially within, things change.

There is always a consciousness there acting constantly to rectify the situation, which puts you all the time in the presence of obstacles which prevent you from advancing,

make you bump against your own errors and your own blindnesses. And this acts only for those who have decided to do the yoga. For others the Consciousness acts like a light, a knowledge, a protection, a force of progress, so that they may reach their maximum capacities and be able to develop as far as possible in an atmosphere as favourable as possible — but leaving them completely free in their choice.

The decision must come from within. Those who come consciously for the yoga, knowing what yoga is, well, their conditions of living here are... outwardly there is no difference but inwardly there is a very great difference. There is a kind of absoluteness in the consciousness, which does not let them deviate from the path: the errors one commits become immediately visible with consequences strong enough for one not to be able to make any mistake about it, and things become very serious. But it is not often like that.

CWM 7: 198-99

A reduced image of life

I appreciate your feelings about what a sadhak ought to be and from that point of view, what you say is quite true. But it is well understood that the Ashram is not exclusively composed of sadhaks. The Ashram is a reduced image of life where those who practice yoga are a minority, and if I were to keep here only those who are quite sincere in their sadhana, very few indeed would remain.

Sri Aurobindo always reminds us of the fact that the Divine is everywhere and in everything, and asks us to practise a true compassion, as is so beautifully expressed in this aphorism which I am just commenting upon, "Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more charitable and pitiful to others."

CWM 13: 144

The Mother

The Asram a Laboratory

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Asram which is a "laboratory", as Adhar Das puts it, for a spiritual and supramental Yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic and cultured men came for the Yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of the human being. Those in the Asram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.

In the course of the Yoga, collectively — though not for each one necessarily — as each plane is dealt with, all its difficulties arise. That will explain much in the Asram that people do not expect there. When the preliminary work is over in the "laboratory", things must change.

Also much stress has not been laid on human fellowship of the ordinary kind between the inmates, (though good feeling, consideration and courtesy should always be there), because that is not the aim; it is a unity in a new consciousness that is the aim and the first thing is for each to do his sadhana, to arrive at that new consciousness and realise oneness there.

Whatever faults are there in the sadhaks must be removed by the Light from above — a sattwic rule can only change natures predisposed to a sattwic rule.

CWSA 35: 600-01

A field of Spiritual Evolution of another kind

The Ashram itself has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step, the decision resting with the Mother.

CWSA 35: 592-93

Sri Aurobindo

It is not easy to remain here

Do not judge on appearances and do not listen to what people say, because these two things are misleading. But if you find it necessary to go, of course you can go and from an external point of view it may be indeed wiser.

Moreover it is not easy to remain here. There is in the Ashram no exterior discipline and no visible test. But the inner test is severe and constant, one must be very sincere in the aspiration to surmount all egoism and to conquer all vanity in order to be able to stay.

A complete surrender is not outwardly exacted but it is indispensable for those who wish to stick on, and many things come to test the sincerity of the surrender. However the Grace and the help are always there for those who aspire for them and their power is limitless when received with faith and confidence.

CWM 13: 111

The Mother

A symbolic representation of the Earth

The idea is that the earth as a whole must be prepared in all its forms, including even those least ready for the transformation. There must be a symbolic representation of all the elements on earth upon which we can work to establish the link.' The earth is a symbolic representation of the universe, and the group is a symbolic representation of the earth.

Sri Aurobindo and I had discussed the matter in 1914 (quite a long time ago), for we had seen two possibilities: what we are now doing, or to withdraw into solitude and isolation until we had not only attained the Supermind, but begun the material transformation as well. And Sri Aurobindo rightfully said that we could not isolate ourselves, for as you progress, you become more and more universalised, and consequently ... you take the burden upon yourself in any case. ...

And life itself has responded by bringing people forward to form a nucleus. Of course, we clearly saw that this would make the work a bit more complex and difficult (it gives me a heavy responsibility, an enormous material work), but from the overall point of view — for the Work — it's indispensable and even inevitable. And in any case, as we were later able to verify, each one represents simultaneously a possibility and a special difficulty to resolve.

The Mother: Conversations with a disciple: September 20, 1960

A collective work and a collective yoga

No individual solitary transformation apart from the work for the earth (which means more than any individual transformation) would be either possible or useful. (Also no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the Yoga to create an individual superman here and there.) The object of

the Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life. Therefore the existence of the Asram, whatever difficulties it created for ourselves or for the individual, was inevitable. The method was the preparation of the earth consciousness in the human being as represented by the members of the Asram and others (with also a certain working in the general earth consciousness) so as to make the descent of the supramental Force possible. That Force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion.

CWSA 28: 296

This is not an Asram like others — the members are not Sannyasis; it is not *mokṣa* that is the sole aim of the Yoga here. What is being done here is a preparation for a work — a work which will be founded on Yogic consciousness and Yoga-Shakti, and can have no other foundation. Meanwhile every member here is expected to do some work in the Asram as part of his spiritual preparation.

CWSA 29: 232

Sri Aurobindo

Krishna's Light enveloping the Ashram

Violet is the radiance of Krishna's protection, — that was why, very naturally, it brought to you a sense of peace. The Mother says that she always saw it when she was in communion with Krishna and now too constantly sees it enveloping the Asram.

CWSA 30: 157

Sri Aurobindo

The Radiating Centre

Surcharged with divine vibrations

Take a place like this, which is surcharged with certain forces, certain vibrations; these vibrations do not show themselves in visible and tangible things — they can produce changes, but as these changes occur according to a method (as all physical things do), you pass almost logically from one state to another and this logic prevents you from perceiving that there is something here which does not belong to normal life. Well, those who have no other perception than that of the ordinary mind, who see things working out as they habitually do or seem to do in ordinary life, will tell you, “Oh that, that is quite natural.” If they have no other perception than the purely physical perception, if they are not capable of feeling the quality of a vibration (some feel it vaguely, but those who are not even capable of feeling that, who have nothing in them corresponding to that or, if they have something, it is not awakened), they will look at the life here and tell you, “It is like the physical life — you have perhaps some ideas of your own, but there are many who have their own ideas; perhaps you do things in a special way, but there are lots of people who also do things in a special way. After all, it is a life like the one I live.” ... And so, it may very well happen that at a given moment the supramental Force manifests, that it is conscious here, that it acts on Matter, but those who do not consciously participate in its vibration are incapable of perceiving it. People say, “When the supramental force manifests, we shall know it quite well. It will be seen” — not necessarily. They will not feel it any more than those people of little sensitivity who may pass through this place, even live here, without feeling that the atmosphere is different from elsewhere... Listen, as I had when I came from Japan:

I was on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality, I may even say the physical quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a *physical* experience and I guarantee that whoever has a sufficiently awakened consciousness can feel the same thing.

CWM 4: 222-23

The Mother

Sri Aurobindo has become more accessible

Without doubt, you can now communicate easily with Him. There are many who put themselves in contact with Him and find their answers. He has become more accessible to us and He is much more active. ...

If something is not all right and you would like to know the cause, or you want to get rid of a weakness, or get cured, or be cleansed, to have a difficulty removed in order to be purified, — for any answer, come and ask Sri Aurobindo at the Samadhi and you will have the answer. Not only His answer but also His blessings, His compassion, His peace and His illumination. You will be engulfed and seized by His love that is all-powerful. Once you abandon yourself to Him, you will be protected against all mishaps. It is like this — His influence. He reveals Himself to all those who are simple, sincere and humble. He is there, perfectly conscious, and He directs all the activities of the world....

It is formidable. His presence vibrates, concrete, all around the Samadhi. And His influence penetrates and touches the central being and awakens the consciousness to the spiritual life. Even the agnostics, the unbelievers, people of bad-will who come out of curiosity to visit the Samadhi,

return amazed by a mysterious alchemy and find an inner peace, because there He showers His peace and His compassion constantly. It is this that bathes them when they pass before Him. It is an unbelievable surcharged activity of His force and His presence.

*The Mother: Conversations with Mona Sarkar,
Blessings of the Grace, pp. 121-22*

It is He who is there at the Samadhi

When I look at the Samadhi and see what is happening there, I am astonished to find this column of dazzling light vibrating with an energy and a transforming force. It rises like this — (*Mother makes an upward movement with the hands*) with a splendour and a brilliance like an effusion of light from the length and breadth of the Samadhi. It is the New Light materialising....

It is a sanctified place for meditation and not for gossip. Never to speak — one disturbs the atmosphere. He is there with His glorified body sustaining the entire world in a subtle movement, manifesting gradually His consciousness, partially veiled for the Divine descent.

He is the living assurance of our divine possibility, the promise of the Divinity radiating with the divine Light and divine Power — the progressive march towards the Divine Manifestation. That is why the whole atmosphere is charged with a divine and sublime Peace, you understand? It is He who is there — in the divine body — Himself divinised, the representative of the whole humanity, He who, by His own effort, by His tapasya and by the sadhana that He has done in His body, has made His body glorious. The realisations and the experiences He has had, what He has accumulated in His body by this yogic effort, has charged His body with a transforming power. It is charged — charged dynamically

with a force and a light that overflows; it is this that envelops the whole atmosphere. All around, it is His presence. It endures because it is the Supramental force and shows no sign of diminishing. It cannot.

It is this that the people absorb when they pass around the Samadhi. Without knowing it, they are bathed by His love and they do not even realise as to why they are mystified when they approach the Samadhi. It is amazing!... Those who are open are touched, and they return to recharge themselves and to imbibe in their being, this Peace that is in the atmosphere. His presence is so concrete and so living — like a conscious Immensity that dominates and charges this atmosphere. I see how it seems to float in evanescent lights and colours, a beauty of unseisable delight, a spirit of purity and an elusive presence, though unsubstantial yet nearly material, carrying a sweetness unknown to the world. It seems to me that a heart that is one-pointed, aspiring ardently for the Divine, if it stands before the Samadhi and desires nothing but His beatitude, will be transported into a region of delight much better and higher than the ecstasy experienced by the all-powerful heavens or that the earth has ever known.

His devotees and those who aspire — truly aspire to unite their consciousness with Sri Aurobindo who dominates this place with His formidable presence — find the grandeur of His majestic presence, as concrete as you see me now. And those who wish to communicate with Him find His invariable answer. He is there — all-puissant with all His power and He presides over the New Creation from behind the veil with a sustained insistence and an unbelievable patience, but determined, as is His mode of action, gaining victories one after another, first to change the consciousness of humanity and then to transform it in all its dimensions, knowing well that these resistances and

these momentary falls prepare humanity to overcome the obstacles before it, and guiding its mode of action and its attitude by a global movement in the peace of His light. And, above all, this is based on spirituality and not on those so called pseudo-religious movements whose essence is fanaticism, war and unnecessary quarrels.

*The Mother: Conversations with Mona Sarkar,
Blessings of the Grace, pp. 122-25*

Asram atmosphere

It is not the house, it is the inner nearness that matters.

What is true is that there is a strong force going out from here and it is naturally strongest at the centre. But how it affects there, depends on how one receives it. If it is received with simple trust, faith, openness, confidence, then it works as a complete protection. But it can so work too at a distance.

*

What are the Asram precincts? Every house in which the sadhaks of the Asram live is in the Asram precincts. People have a queer way of talking of the houses in this compound as the Asram — it has no meaning. Or do they think the Mother's influence or mine is shut up in a compound?

*

There are two atmospheres in the Asram, ours and that of the sadhaks. When people with a little perceptiveness come from outside, they are struck by the deep calm and peace in the atmosphere and it is only when they mix much with the sadhaks that this perception and influence fade away. The other atmosphere of dullness or unrest is created by the sadhaks themselves — if they were opened to the Mother as they should be, they would live in the calm and peace and not in unrest or dullness.

CWSA 35: 631-32

Sri Aurobindo



Those are the Mother's children and closest to her who are open to her, close to her in their inner being, one with her will — not those who come bodily nearest to her.

CWSA 32: 496

Sri Aurobindo

(The above picture of the Mother reproduced as in the original black & white)

Living in a Spiritual Commune

Aim, conditions and rules of sadhana

The usual sadhanas have for aim the union with the Supreme Consciousness (Sat-chit-ananda). And those who reach there are satisfied with their own liberation and leave the world to its unhappy plight. On the contrary Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts where the others end. Once the union with the Supreme is realised one must bring down that realisation to the exterior world and change the conditions of life upon the earth until a total transformation is accomplished. In accordance with this aim, the sadhaks of the integral yoga do not retire from the world to lead a life of contemplation and meditation. Each one must devote at least one-third of his time to a useful work. All activities are represented in the Ashram and each one chooses the work most congenial to his nature, but must do it in a spirit of service and unselfishness, keeping always in view the aim of integral transformation.

To make this purpose possible the Ashram is organised so that all its inmates find their reasonable needs satisfied and have not to worry about their subsistence.

The rules are very few so that each one can enjoy the freedom needed for his development but a few things are strictly forbidden: they are — (1) politics, (2) smoking, (3) alcoholic drink and (4) sex enjoyment.

Great care is taken for the maintenance of good health and the welfare and normal growth of the body of all, small and big, young and old.

CWM 13: 107-08

The Mother

Each one has his own way of doing sadhana

Each one has his own way of doing sadhana and his own approach to the Divine and need not trouble himself about how the others do it; their success or unsucess, their difficulties, their delusions, their egoism and vanity are in her care; she has an infinite patience, but that does not mean that she approves of their defects or supports them in all they say or do. The Mother takes no sides in any quarrel or antagonism or dispute, but her silence does not mean that she approves what they may say or do when it is improper. The Asram or the spiritual life is not a stage in which some are to be prominent or take a leading part or a field of competition in which one has a claim or can rightly consider himself superior to others. These things are the inventions of the ordinary human attitude to the world and the tendency is to carry it over into the life of sadhana, but that is not the spiritual truth of things. The Mother tolerates all; she does not forbid any criticism of the sadhaks by each other nor does she give these criticisms any value. It is only when the sadhaks see the futility of all these things from the spiritual level that there can be any hope that they will cease.

CWSA 32: 398

A training in the spirit of karmayoga

Work here and work done in the world are of course not the same thing. The work there is not in any way a divine work in special — it is ordinary work in the world. But still one must take it as a training and do it in the spirit of karmayoga — what matters there is not the nature of the work in itself but the spirit in which it is done. It must be in the spirit of the Gita, without desire, with detachment, without repulsion, but doing it as perfectly as possible, not for the sake of the family or promotion or to please the superi-

ors, but simply because it is the thing that has been given in the hand to do. It is a field of inner training, nothing more. One has to learn in it three things, equality, desirelessness, dedication. It is not the work as a thing for its own sake, but one's doing of it and one's way of doing it that one has to dedicate to the Divine. Done in that spirit it does not matter what the work is. If one trains oneself spiritually like that, then one will be ready to do in the true way whatever special work directly for the Divine (such as the Asram work) one may any day be given to do.

CWSA 29: 240-41

All relations to pass from the vital to a spiritual basis

The idea that all sadhaks must be aloof from each other and at daggers drawn is itself a preconceived idea that must be abandoned. Harmony and not strife is the law of Yogic living. This preconceived idea arises perhaps from the old notion of Nirvana as the aim; but Nirvana is not the aim here. The aim here is fulfilment of the Divine in life and for that union and solidarity are indispensable. I find it difficult to see in the mind's eye X developing an aversion for you and it would not be easy for you to develop an aversion for X; so these nightmares of the vital imagination ought not to emerge. Aversion and quarrelling are unyogic, not Yogic tendencies; the fact that this Asram is full of quarrels only shows that it is still an Asram of very imperfect sadhaks, not yet an Asram of Yogis — it does not at all mean that aversion and quarrelling are the dharma of the spiritual seeker. The ideal of the Yoga is that all should be centred in and around the Divine and the life of the sadhaks must be founded on that firm foundation, their personal relations also should have the Divine for their centre. Moreover, all relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual basis

with the vital only as a form and instrument of the spiritual; — this means that from whatever relations they have with each other all jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and other evil vital feelings should be abandoned, for they can be no part of the spiritual life. So also all egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear — the love that loves only for the ego's sake and as soon as the ego is hurt and dissatisfied ceases to love or even cherishes rancour and hate. There must be a real living and lasting unity behind the love. It is understood of course that such things as sexual impurity must disappear also.

CWSA 31: 288-89

Purity and not a cold austerity

All are not indifferent in this Asram to each other, nor is friendship or affection excluded from the Yoga. Friendship with the Divine is a recognised relation in the sadhana. Friendships between the sadhaks exist and are encouraged by the Mother. Only we seek to found them on a surer basis than that on which the bulk of human friendships are insecurely founded. It is precisely because we hold friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things that we want this change — because we do not want to see them broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone — it is to make them truly sacred and secure that we want them rooted in the soul, founded on the rock of the Divine. Our Yoga is not an ascetic Yoga: it aims at purity, but not at a cold austerity. Friendship and love are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire. It is not a vain dream, for we have seen that even in imperfect conditions when a little of the indispensable element is there at the very root the thing is possible. It is

difficult and the old obstacles still cling obstinately. But no victory can be won without a fixed fidelity to the aim and a long effort. There is no other way than to persevere.

CWSA 31: 294-195

Grihastha and the Sannyasin

There is no question about grihastha and Sannyasin here, because the distinction does not exist for us. There is no place for the Sannyasin of the ordinary type at least, because we do not turn our backs on life; neither are we grihasthas, because we do leave behind us the ordinary human life and its institutions and motives. ...

Only two kinds of people can stay here with any true profit;

(1) Those who are ready to absorb the spiritual atmosphere and change.

(2) Those who, if not yet ready, can still surrender to the influence and prepare slowly till they are ready.

CWSA 35: 563-64

The trial period

I have read and considered your letter and have decided to give you the opportunity you ask for — you can reside in the Asram for two or three months to begin with and find out whether this is really the place and the path you were seeking and we also can by a closer observation of your spiritual possibilities discern how best we can help you and whether this Yoga is the best for you.

This trial is necessary for many reasons, but especially because it is a difficult Yoga to follow and not many can really meet the demands it makes on the nature. You have written that you saw in me one who achieved through the perfection of the intellect, its spiritualisation and divinisa-

tion; but in fact I arrived through the complete silence of the mind and whatever spiritualisation and divinisation it attained was through the descent of a higher supra-intellectual knowledge into that silence. The book, *Essays on the Gita*, itself was written in that silence of the mind, without intellectual effort and by a free activity of this knowledge from above. This is important because the principle of this Yoga is not perfection of the human nature as it is but a psychic and spiritual transformation of all the parts of the being through the action of an inner consciousness and then of a higher consciousness which works on them, throws out the old movements or changes them into the image of its own and so transmutes lower into higher nature. It is not so much the perfection of the intellect as a transcendence of it, a transformation of the mind, the substitution of a larger greater principle of knowledge — and so with all the rest of the being.

This is a slow and difficult process; the road is long and it is hard to establish even the necessary basis. The old existing nature resists and obstructs and difficulties rise one after another and repeatedly till they are overcome. It is therefore necessary to be sure that this is the path to which one is called before one finally decides to tread it.

CWSA 35: 585-86

Sri Aurobindo

The real struggle and the remedy

The sadhaks here are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer follows still its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the

most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Asram itself, and not before.

CWSA 35: 591

Ours is neither a political nor a social but a spiritual goal. What we want is a transformation of the individual consciousness, not a change of regime or government. For reaching that goal we put no confidence in any human means, however powerful; our trust is in the Divine Grace alone.

CWM 13: 108

Coming to yoga

It is not from disgust for life and people that one must come to yoga.

It is not to run away from difficulties that one must come here.

It is not even to find the sweetness of love and protection, for the Divine's love and protection can be enjoyed everywhere if one takes the right attitude.

When one wants to give oneself totally in service to the Divine, to consecrate oneself totally to the Divine's work, simply for the joy of giving oneself and of serving, without asking for anything in exchange, except the possibility of consecration and service, then one is ready to come here

and will find the doors wide open.

I give you the blessings given to all my children wherever they are in the world and tell you, "Prepare yourself, my help will always be with you."

CWM 13: 111-12

Hold on to the Path

All of you, my children — I may tell you this, I have repeated it to you and still repeat it — live in an exceptional liberty. Outwardly there are a few limitations, because, as there are many of us and we don't have the whole earth at our disposal, we are obliged to submit to a certain discipline to a certain extent, so that there may not be too great a disorder; but inwardly you live in a marvellous liberty: no social constraint, no moral constraint, no intellectual constraint, no rule, nothing, nothing but a light which is there. If you want to profit by it, you profit by it; if you don't want to, you are free not to.

But the day you make a choice — when you have done it in all sincerity and have felt within yourself a radical decision — the thing is different. There is the light and the path to be followed, quite straight, and you must not deviate from it. It fools no one, you know; yoga is not a joke. You must know what you are doing when you choose it. But when you choose it, you must hold on to it. You have no longer the right to vacillate. You must go straight ahead. There!

All that I ask for is a will to do well, an effort for progress and the wish to be a little better in life than ordinary human beings. You have grown up, developed under conditions which are exceptionally luminous, conscious, harmonious, and full of goodwill; and in response to these conditions you should be in the world an expression of this light, this harmony, this goodwill. This would already be very good, very good.

To do the yoga, this yoga of transformation which, of all things, is the most arduous — it is only if one feels that one has come here for that (I mean here upon earth) and that one has to do nothing else but that, and that it is the only reason of one's existence — even if one has to toil hard, suffer, struggle, it is of no importance — “This is what I want, and nothing else” — then it is different. Otherwise I shall say, “Be happy and be good, and that's all that is asked of you. Be good, in the sense of being understanding, knowing that the conditions in which you have lived are exceptional, and try to live a higher, more noble, more true life than the ordinary one, so as to allow a little of this consciousness, this light and its goodness to express itself in the world. It would be very good.” There we are.

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost.

CWM 7: 199-200

The Mother

One rule for the sadhaka

One rule for you I can lay down, “Do not do, say or think anything which you would want to conceal from the Mother.” And that answers the objections that rose within you — from your vital, is it not? — against bringing “these petty things” to the Mother's notice. Why should you think that the Mother would be bothered by these things or regard them as petty? If *all* the life is to be Yoga, what is there that can be called petty or of no importance? Even if the Mother does not answer, to have brought any matter of your action and self-development before her in the right spirit means to have put it under her protection, in the light of the Truth, under the rays of the Power that is working for the transformation — for immediately those rays begin to play and to

act on the thing brought to her notice. Anything within that advises you not to do it when the spirit in you moves you to do it, may very well be a device of the vital to avoid the ray of the Light and the working of the Force. It may also be observed that if you open yourself to the Mother by putting the movements of any part of you under her observation, that of itself creates a relation, a personal closeness with her other than that which her general, silent or not directly invited action maintains with all the sadhaks.

All this, of course, if you feel ready for this openness, if the spirit moves you to lay what is in you bare before her. For it is then that it is fruitful — when it comes from within and is spontaneous and true.

CWSA 32: 449

Sri Aurobindo

The Mother's method

Most of you came here when you were very small, at an age when there can be no question of the spiritual life or spiritual teaching — it would be altogether premature. You have indeed lived in this atmosphere but without even being aware of it; you are accustomed to seeing me, hearing me; I speak to you as one does to all children, I have even played with you as one plays with children; you only have to come and sit here and you hear me speak, you only have to ask me a question and I answer you, I have never refused to say anything to anybody — it is so easy. It is enough to... live — to sleep, to eat, to do exercises and study at school. You live here as you would live anywhere else. And so, you are used to it.

If I had made strict rules, if I had said, "I shall not tell you anything until you have truly made an effort to know it", then perhaps you might have made some effort, but that's not in keeping with my idea. I believe more in the power of

the atmosphere and of example than of a rigorous teaching. I count more on something awakening in the being through contagion rather than by a methodical, disciplined effort.

Perhaps, after all, something is being prepared and one day it will spring up to the surface.

That is what I hope for.

CWM 9: 372-73

Do not judge by appearances

Instinctively, and without even being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their own conceptions. For, without thinking, quite spontaneously, they tell you, "Oh, this is divine, this is not divine!" What do they know about it? And then there are those who have not yet set foot on the path, who come here and see things or people, and tell you, "This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine." But if you ask them, "What is divine?", they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that's an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less can one pronounce judgments on things.

And there comes a time when all one can do is observe, but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place they now are in and the one they ought to occupy — for this is the great disorder in the world — but one does not judge. One simply observes.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say, "This is divine and that is not divine", for a time comes when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take away anything from it without disturbing everything.

And one or two steps further yet, and one knows with certainty that what shocks us as a contradiction of the Divine is quite simply something not in its proper place. Each thing must be exactly in its place and, besides, it must be supple enough, plastic enough, to admit into a harmonious progressive organisation all the new elements which are constantly added to the manifested universe.

CWM 8: 1-2

Self-righteousness and narrow-mindedness

Take, for example, a person who has friends, whose friends are very fond of her because they see special capacities in her, because it is pleasant to be in her company, one can always learn from her. Then all of a sudden, by a concurrence of circumstances, this person is shunned by society because she has been with another man or because she is living with someone else without being officially married, in short, because of all these social things which have no value in themselves. And all her friends — I am not speaking of those who truly loved her — all her acquaintances, all those who received her kindly, who welcomed her and greeted her with a warm smile when they met her in the street, now turn their heads the other way and walk right past her without a glance — this has happened even here in the Ashram! I do not want to give any details, but anyway, several times something happened which contravened accepted social laws, and people who had shown so much affection and sympathy — oh, they would sometimes say, “This person is lost!”

When such things happen in the world at large, I find it quite natural, but when it happens here, I always get a little shock, in the sense that I say to myself: “Well, well, they haven’t gone beyond that!”

Even people who profess to be broad-minded, to be above

all these “conventions”, fall straight into the trap, immediately. Then to protect their conscience, they say: “Mother does not allow it. Mother does not permit it. Mother does not tolerate it!” — adding one more stupidity to all the others.

It is very difficult to get out of this state. This is truly self-righteousness, this sense of social dignity. But it is narrow-mindedness, because a person with a little intelligence is not going to be caught out by something like that. For example, people who have travelled the world and seen that all these social rules depend entirely on climate, race, custom, and even more on time and period, can smile at all that. But right-minded people — phew!

It is an elementary stage. Until you come out of this state you are unfit for yoga. Because, truly, you are not ready for yoga when you are in that state. It is a rudimentary state.

CWM 10: 78-79

To live normally and to be free

But how can one find a way to be what one should be, in normal conditions?

My child, that is why the Ashram was created! That was the idea. Because, in France, I was always asking myself: How can one find the time to find oneself? How can one even find the time to understand how to become free? So then I thought: a place where material needs will be sufficiently provided for, so that if one truly wants to become free, one can do so. And the Ashram was founded on this idea, not on any other — a place where people would have enough to live on so as to have time to think of the True Thing.

(Mother smiles) Human nature is such that laziness has taken the place of aspiration — not for everyone, but anyway in quite a general way — and licence or libertinism has

taken the place of freedom — which would tend to prove that the human race has to pass through a period of rough handling before it is ready to pull itself away more sincerely from its slavery to activity.

Indeed, the first movement is this: “Oh! To find the place where one can concentrate, find oneself, truly live without being preoccupied with material things.” That is the first aspiration. It was even on this basis, at any rate in the beginning, that disciples were chosen — but it does not last! Things become easy and so one lets oneself go. There are no moral restraints and so one acts foolishly.

CWM 10: 197-98

Advice to Newcomers

Already future teachers and future students are beginning to arrive, some from outside, new to the climate and customs of the country. They are arriving in the Ashram for the first time and know nothing of its life or its customs. Some of them come with a mental aspiration, either to serve or to learn; others come in the hope of doing yoga, of finding the Divine and uniting with Him; finally there are those who want to devote themselves entirely to the divine work upon earth. All of them come impelled by their psychic being, which wants to lead them towards self realisation. They come with their psychic in front and ruling their consciousness; they have a psychic contact with people and things. Everything seems beautiful and good to them, their health improves, their consciousness grows more luminous; they feel happy, peaceful and safe; they think that they have reached their utmost possibility of consciousness. This peace and fullness and joy given by the psychic contact they naturally find everywhere, in everything and everybody. It gives an openness towards the true consciousness pervad-

ing here and working out everything. So long as the openness is there, the peace, the fullness and the joy remain with their immediate results of progress, health and fitness in the physical, quietness and goodwill in the vital, clear understanding and broadness in the mental and a general feeling of security and satisfaction. But it is difficult for a human being to keep up a constant contact with his psychic. As soon as he settles down and the freshness of the new experience fades away, the old person comes back to the surface with all its habits, preferences, small manias, shortcomings and misunderstandings; the peace is replaced by restlessness, the joy vanishes, the understanding is blinded and the feeling that the place is the same as everywhere else creeps in, because one has become what one was everywhere else. Instead of seeing only what has been accomplished, he becomes aware more and more and almost exclusively of what has yet to be done; he becomes morose and discontented and blames people and things instead of blaming himself. He complains of the lack of comfort, of the unbearable climate, of the unsuitable food that makes his digestion painful. Taking support from Sri Aurobindo's teaching that the body is an indispensable basis for the yoga, that it should not be neglected and that, on the contrary, great care should be given to it, the physical consciousness concentrates almost exclusively on the body and tries to find ways of satisfying it. This is practically impossible, for, with a very few exceptions, the more it is given, the more it demands. Besides, the physical being is ignorant and blind; it is full of false notions, preconceived ideas, prejudices and preferences. Indeed, it cannot deal effectively with the body. Only the psychic consciousness has the knowledge and the insight needed to do the right thing in the right way.

You might well ask, what is the remedy for this state of

affairs? For here we are going round in a vicious circle, since the whole trouble comes from drawing away from the psychic and only the psychic can find the solution to the problems. There is consequently only one remedy: be on your guard, hold fast to the psychic, do not allow anything in your consciousness to slip in between your psychic and yourself, close your ears and your understanding to all other suggestions and rely only on the psychic.

CWM 12: 45-46

Repeating the past or building the future

If everywhere the same things are done, we don't need to repeat them, we won't do them any better than others.

And when they put this argument in my way, they couldn't tell me anything that appears more utterly stupid to me. It is done everywhere? That is just the reason for not doing it; for if we do what others do, it is not worth the trouble doing anything at all. We want precisely to introduce into the world something which is not there; but if we keep all the habits of the world, all the preferences of the world, all the constructions of the world, I don't see how we can get out of the rut and do something new.

My children, I have told you, repeated it in every tone, in every way: if you really want to profit by your stay here, try to look at things and understand them with a new vision and a new understanding based on something higher, something deeper, vaster, something more true, something which is not yet but will be one day. And it is because we want to build this future that we have taken this special stand.

CWM 8: 239-40

It is enough if you love her always, remember her often, sit every day a little time before her photograph and call her.

CWSA 32: 282

Sri Aurobindo

Darshan days, — then and now

In the days when Sri Aurobindo used to give Darshan, before he gave it there was always a concentration of certain forces or of a certain realisation which he wanted to give to people. And so each Darshan marked a stage forward; each time something was added. But that was at a time when the number of visitors was very limited. It was organised in another way, and it was part of the necessary preparation.

But this special concentration, now, occurs at other times, not particularly on Darshan days. And it occurs much more often, on other kinds of occasions, in other circumstances. The movement is much accelerated, the march forward, the stages succeed each other much more rapidly. And perhaps it is more difficult to follow; or in any case, if one doesn't take care to keep up, one is much more quickly out-distanced than before; one gets the feeling of being late or of being abandoned. Things change quickly.

And I ought to say that these Darshan times with all this rush of people serve not so much for an inner progress — that is to say, inside the Ashram — as for a diffusion outside. The use we make of these days is a little different; above all, it is to go farther, have a vaster field, reach more distant points. But the concentration is less and there is this inconvenience of a large crowd, which was always there but which has been much greater during these last years than at the beginning. At the beginning there was not such a crowd; and perhaps the quality of the crowd was also a little different.

CWM 8: 262-63

The Mother

Ashram Meditations

In the meditations we formerly used to have there [*at the Ashram*], when we had a morning or evening meditation, my work was to unify the consciousness of everyone and

lift it as high as I could towards the Divine. Those who were able to feel the movement followed it. This was ordinary meditation with an aspiration and ascent towards the Divine. Here, at the Playground, the work is to unify all who are here, make them open and *bring down* the divine force into them. It is the opposite movement and that is why this concentration cannot replace the other, even as the other cannot replace this one. What happens here is exceptional — in the other meditation [*at the Ashram*] I gathered together the consciousness of all who were present and, with the power of aspiration, lifted it towards the Divine, that is, made each one of you progress a little. Here, on the other hand, I take you as you are; each one of you comes saying, “Here we are with our whole day’s activities, we were busy with our body, here it is, we offer to you all our movements, just as they were, just as we are.” And my work is to unify all that, make of it a homogeneous mass and, in answer to this offering (which each one can make in his own way), to open every consciousness, widen the receptivity, make a unity of this receptivity and bring down the Force. So at that moment each one of you, if you are very quiet and attentive, will surely receive something. You will not always be aware of it, but you will receive something.

(In March 1964, the following question was put to the Mother)

And now that you are no longer physically present at the Playground concentrations, what happens?

I hope people have made some progress and do not need the physical presence to feel the Help and the Force.

CWM 4: 106

The Mother

The Widening Circle of Divine Embrace

A Gnostic community

For a very long time the Ashram was only a gathering of individuals, each one representing something, but as an individual and without any collective organisation. They were like separate pawns on a chess-board — united only in appearance — or rather by the purely superficial fact of living together in the same place and having a few habits in common — not even very many, only a few. Each one progressed — or didn't progress — according to his own capacity and with a minimum of relations with others. So, in accordance with the value of the individuals constituting this odd assemblage, one could say that there was a general value, but a very nebulous one, with no collective reality. This lasted a very long time — very long. And it is only quite recently that the need for a collective reality began to appear — which is not necessarily limited to the Ashram but embraces all who have declared themselves — I don't mean materially but in their consciousness — to be disciples of Sri Aurobindo and have tried to live his teaching. Among all of them, and more strongly since the manifestation of the supramental Consciousness and Force, there has awakened the necessity for a true communal life, which would not be based only on purely material circumstances but would represent a deeper truth, and be the beginning of what Sri Aurobindo calls a supramental or gnostic community.... He has said, of course, that, for this, the individuals constituting this collectivity should themselves have this supramental consciousness; but even without attaining an individual perfection — even while very far from it — there was at the same time an inner effort to create this "collective individuality", so to speak. The need for a real union, a deeper bond

has been felt and the effort has been directed towards that realisation.

This has caused some... disturbance, for the tendency was formerly so individualistic that certain habits have been upset, I don't mean materially, for things are not very different from what they were, but in a somewhat deeper consciousness. *And above all* — that is the point I want to emphasise — this has created a certain inner interdependence which has naturally lowered the individual level — a little — except for those who had already attained an inner realisation strong enough to be able to resist this movement of what I might call “levelling”. And this is what gives the impression that the general level has fallen, which is not correct. The general level is on a higher plane than it formerly was, but the individual level has dropped in many cases, and individuals who were capable of one realisation or another have felt, without understanding why, weighed down by a load they did not have to carry before, which is the result of this interdependence. It is just a temporary effect which, on the other hand, will lead to an improvement, a very tangible general progress.

CWM 9: 173-74

Yoga in the world more difficult but more complete

...one must be careful not to have one foot on one side and the other foot on the other, not to stand in two different boats each following its own course. This is what Sri Aurobindo said: one must not lead a “double life”. One must give up one thing or the other — one can't follow both.

This does not mean, however, that one is obliged to get out of the conditions of one's life: it is the inner attitude which must be totally changed. One may do what one is in the habit of doing, but do it with quite a different attitude. I don't

say it is necessary to give up everything in life and go away into solitude, to an ashram necessarily, to do yoga. Now, it is true that if one does yoga in the world and in worldly circumstances, it is more difficult, but it is also more complete. Because, every minute one must face problems which do not present themselves to someone who has left everything and gone into solitude; for such a one these problems are reduced to a minimum—while in life one meets all sorts of difficulties, beginning with the incomprehension of those around you with whom you have to deal; one must be ready for that, be armed with patience, and a great indifference. But in yoga one should no longer care for what people think or say; it is an absolutely indispensable starting-point. You must be absolutely immune to what the world may say or think of you and to the way it treats you. People's understanding must be something quite immaterial to you and should not even slightly touch you. That is why it is generally much more difficult to remain in one's usual surroundings and do yoga than to leave everything and go into solitude; it is much more difficult, but we are not here to do easy things — easy things we leave to those who do not think of transformation.

CWM 4: 377-78

The Mother

Best way to prepare for spiritual life

The best way to prepare oneself for the spiritual life when one has to live in the ordinary occupations and surroundings is to cultivate an entire equality and detachment and the *samatā* of the Gita with the faith that the Divine is there and the Divine Will at work in all things even though at present under the conditions of a world of Ignorance. Beyond this are the Light and Ananda towards which life is working, but the best way for their advent and foundation in the individual being and nature is to grow in this

spiritual equality. That would also solve your difficulty about things unpleasant and disagreeable. All unpleasantness should be faced with this spirit of *samatā*.

*

When one is living in the world, one cannot do as in an Asram — one has to mix with others and keep up outwardly at least ordinary relations with others. The important thing is to keep the inner consciousness open to the Divine and grow in it. As one does that, more or less rapidly according to the inner intensity of the sadhana, the attitude towards others will change. All will be seen more and more in the Divine and the feeling, action, etc. will more and more be determined, not by the old external reactions, but by the growing consciousness within you.

*

The life of *saṁsāra* is in its nature a field of unrest — to go through it in the right way one has to offer one's life and actions to the Divine and pray for the peace of the Divine within. When the mind becomes quiet, one can feel the Divine Mother supporting the life and put everything into her hands.

CWSA 31: 344-45

Sri Aurobindo's Force not limited to the Asram

Certainly, my force is not limited to the Asram and its conditions. As you know it is being largely used for helping the right development of the war and of change in the human world. It is also used for individual purposes outside the scope of the Asram and the practice of Yoga; but that, of course, is silently done and mainly by a spiritual action. The Asram however remains at the centre of the work and without the practice of Yoga the work would not exist and could not have any meaning or fruition. But in the Yoga

itself there are different ways of proceeding for different natures, even though the general path is the same, surrender to the Divine and change of nature. But surrender to the Divine in the completest sense cannot be achieved in a short time, nor can the change of the nature. On the whole, one has to go as quickly as one can and as slowly as is necessary — which seems contradictory but is not.

CWSA 35: 496

You can tell him that reading and study, though they can be useful for preparing the mind, are not in themselves the best means of entering the Yoga. It is self-dedication from within oneself that is the means. Nor is it entrance into the atmosphere of the Asram that is needed, for there are many things in the atmosphere of the Asram, not all of them desirable. It is with the consciousness of the Mother that he must unite and there too a sincere self-consecration in mind and heart and will is the means for it. The work given by the Mother is always meant as a field for that self-consecration; it has to be done as an offering to her so that through the self-offering one may come to feel her Force acting and her presence.

CWSA 35: 547-48

Physical and Inner nearness

Is it possible to receive the Mother's help at a great distance — say Bombay or Calcutta — almost in the same way as here in the Asram?

One can receive everywhere, and if there is a strong spiritual consciousness one can make great progress. But experience does not support the idea that it makes no difference or is almost the same.

*

I want to be close to the Mother. If I was close to her, the hostile forces would not attack me.

You are quite mistaken. Among those who are physically near the Mother there are some who have much worse attacks than you have ever had. It is the inner nearness that saves, not the physical nearness.

*

It is the inner nearness that matters. The idea of the mind — quite natural, of course — that the outer closeness is the sign of the relation or a special favour or the means of rapid progress is not borne out by experience. There are some who see the Mother daily and are very little advanced from what they were years ago — there were others who got worse because it fostered the vital demand in them — on the other hand there are some quite close to the Mother and forward on the path and cherished by her who come to her only very occasionally — and I could instance one case in which there is an interview only once a year, yet there is no one who has made more rapid progress or in whom the love relation has grown to a greater intensity and fervour. In all these things it is best to have an entire confidence in the Mother and the light that guides her.

CWSA 32: 494

If one has the close inner relation, one feels the Mother always near and within and round and there is no insistence on the closer physical relation for its own sake. Those who have not this, should aspire for it and not hanker after the other. If they get the outer closeness, they will find that it means nothing without the inner oneness and closeness. One may be physically near the Mother and yet as far from her as the Sahara desert.

CWSA 32: 495

The one thing important is to keep the inner attitude and establish the inner connection with the Mother independent of all outward circumstances; it is that that brings all that is needed. Those who are most deep in the Yoga are not those who physically see most of the Mother. There are some who are in constant nearness or union with her who apart from the Pranam and the evening meditation come to her only once a year.

CWSA 32: 496

Sri Aurobindo

Learn to get the inner contact

The Mother's retirement has posed a question of great importance for us. Is it going to widen the physical distance that was already existing between her and most Ashramites? And can the affairs of the Ashram be managed without her constant guidance? Do not the true interests of the sadhaks suffer during her retirement? Will she take the same usual care of us as she did before?

You ought not to forget that each one meets in life the exact expression of what he is himself. Grace and blessings are always with you. Not one day have I stopped taking the usual care of those who depend on my force.

*

Do the work — my inspiration and guidance will always be with you; and when it is necessary I shall see you physically. But I am working to lessen more and more this necessity. Because to be able to receive the inner guidance is indispensable for the perfection of the work.

*

Now that you are here, the only thing to do is to forget the past and to concentrate on your work here. It is true that for the moment I cannot see you regularly, but you must learn

to get the *inner* contact (it is one of the chief reasons of my retirement) and then you will know that I am always with you to guide you and to help you and that you can have no better conditions than here to do properly your sadhana.

*

It would be more correct to say that certain thoughts, certain feelings and certain actions take people away from me or create a separation between someone and me in spite of all physical proximity.

*

Is a physical contact with you indispensable ?

No, this physical contact is not indispensable. Certainly for those who have the true attitude, the physical contact helps the body to follow the movement of transformation, but the body is rarely in a state to profit by it. Generally on birthdays it is more receptive.

*

I am no more living an active life; if you are open, help is bound to come.

CWM 13: 78-80

I take the greatest care to open the door within all of you, so that if you have just a small movement of concentration within you, you do not have to wait for long periods in front of a closed door that will not move, to which you have no key and which you do not know how to open.

The door is open, only you must look in that direction. You must not turn your back on it.

*

I am not eager to be the Guru of anyone. It is more spontaneously natural for me to feel the Mother of all and to carry them forward silently through the power of love.

CWM 13: 82

The Mother

Psychic contact can exist at a distance

It is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place, but is everywhere. It is not necessary *for everybody* to be at Pondicherry or physically near the Mother in order to lead the spiritual life or to practise this Yoga, especially in its earlier stages. But that is only one side of the truth; there is another. Otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all or for the existence of the Asram or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few is it well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life. It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this Truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the wakening of the psychic being — that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact. It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many — if they are ready — in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have this development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able to keep the contact and go on with his spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and, if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished

by adverse influences or movements. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of a return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or give a fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent or mixed with a vital motive, — but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This is for those who are not called upon or are not *yet* called upon to live in the Asram under the direct pressure of the central Force and Presence. Those who must so live are those called from the beginning or who have become ready or who are for some reason or another given a chance to form part of the work or creation which is being prepared by the Yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness are indispensable; to depart would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are often in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and the pressure are greater; but so also is their opportunity greater and the power and influence for development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call.

CWSA 35: 574-76

Sri Aurobindo

A special personal tie

It is now long since Sri Aurobindo has put up everywhere in the Ashram this reminder that you all know: “Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you, because she is, indeed, always present.”

This is not a mere phrase, not simply words, it is a fact. I

am with you in a very concrete manner and they who have a subtle vision can see me.

In a general way my Force is there constantly at work, constantly shifting the psychological elements of your being to put them in new relations and defining to yourself the different facets of your nature so that you may see what should be changed, developed, rejected.

But that apart, there is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have turned to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and myself, — and, it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or in Pondicherry, this tie is always true and living. And each time there comes a call, each time there is a need for me to know so that I may send out a force, an inspiration, a protection or any other thing, a sort of message comes to me all of a sudden and I do the needful.....

And this tie between you and me is never cut. There are people who have long ago left the Ashram, in a state of revolt, and yet I keep myself informed of them, I attend to them. You are never abandoned.

In truth, I hold myself responsible for everyone, even for those whom I have met only for one second in my life.

CWM 13: 73-74

The Mother

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

CWSA 32: 156

Sri Aurobindo

Nolini da* on the Sri Aurobindo Ashram

As the earth is the representative of the world, so India is the representative of the earth. For the evolution of the earth, India has been chosen as the channel and the laboratory; all problems confronting humanity are found as if gathered here. All that is solved here will be solved almost automatically in the world and the how of it will be shown. All difficulties are concentrated here because here there is a living consciousness which alone can solve them.

In the same way it may be said that our Ashram here is the symbol of all the difficulties that humanity faces, difficulties psychological and material, national and social. All varieties of contradictions and contraries, obstacles and impediments, ignorances and prejudices are here that confuse the issue and seek to delay the journey as much as possible, towards progress and new creation. This is because it is a place where there is behind the surface movements of negation, an aspiration and a supporting consciousness supreme in power and effectivity. The individuals here have to meet all kinds of difficulties so that a way out of them may be discovered both in the individual nature and in collective achievement.

CWNBKG Vol. 4: 269-70

Mother also said that as India is a representative or an epitome of the world, — just in the same way as the Ashram is the epitome of India and each individual in his turn an epitome of the Ashram, — the world-problems will have to be solved in India. For India has the capacity and is destined to do so.

* Shri Nolini Kanta Gupta, also known as the *Manasa Putra* of Sri Aurobindo, has been with Him right from the freedom struggle and through the Ashram life. He has been one of the foundation pillars of the Ashram.

When India solves her problems the world also will find its problems practically solved. And the Ashram is expected to show the way to the solution of India's problems. Can the Ashram rise up to play its role? At least that was the Mother's intention. It all depends upon its individual members.

Of course, we must remember, Mother's help is always there.

CWNKG 6: 27

Nolinikanta Gupta

The new creation is already there — forming itself — whatever is happening now in the Ashram and outside, is happening so that it may come forward all the sooner. She is breaking the outer scaffolding within which the new reality has been established, or you may call it a dead shell that is being broken so that the new Reality may come out. It is Mother's action with her own Self. She has taken her *Chhinnamasta*¹ form. All things She is destroying are her own selves — she is getting rid, as it were, of the old un-utilisable limbs of her own body. We may remember Sri Aurobindo's lines:

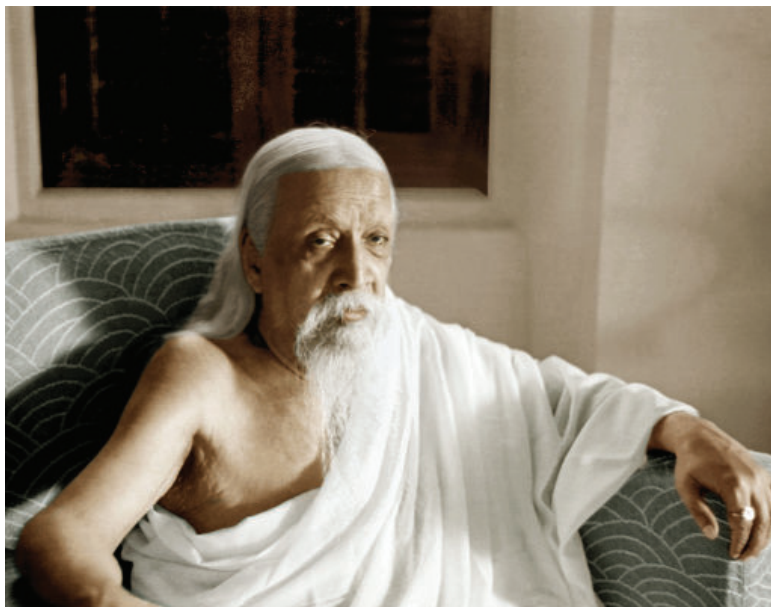
"...the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected."²

CWNKG Vol. 6: 258

Nolinikanta Gupta

1. A ferocious form of the Divine Mother in which She severs her own head.

2. CWSA 12:146



Receiving help from a distance

If he cannot receive help from a distance how does he expect to carry on the Yoga here? This is a Yoga which does not depend upon verbal instructions or anything outward but on the power to open themselves and receive the force and influence even in a complete silence. Those who do not receive it at a distance cannot receive it here also. Also without establishing in oneself calm, sincerity, peace, patience and perseverance this Yoga cannot be done, for many difficulties have to be faced and it takes years and years to overcome them definitely and altogether.

CWSA 35: 597

Sri Aurobindo

Sweet Mother, Somebody asked me this question: "Is it not a great loss for human society if persons endowed with an exceptional capacity to serve mankind, such as a gifted doctor or barrister, come to stay here in the Ashram for their own salvation? They could perhaps serve the Divine better by serving men and the world!"

Nobody comes here for his own salvation because Sri Aurobindo does not believe in *salvation*; for us *salvation* is a meaningless word. We are here to prepare the transformation of the earth and men so that the new creation may take place, and if we make individual efforts to progress, it is because this progress is indispensable for the accomplishment of the work.

I am surprised that after having lived in the Ashram for so long, you can still think in this way and be open to this Sunday-school drivél.

I am sending you a quotation from Sri Aurobindo which will perhaps help to enlighten your thought.

"It is equally ignorant and one thousand miles away from my teaching to find it in your relations with human beings or in the nobility of the human character or an idea that we are here to establish mental and moral and social Truth and justice on human and egoistic lines. I have never promised to do anything of the kind. Human nature is made up of imperfections, even its righteousness and virtue are pretensions, imperfections and prancings of self-approbatory egoism.... What is aimed at by us is a spiritual truth as the basis of life, the first words of which are surrender and union with the Divine and the transcendence of ego. So long as that basis is not established, a sadhak is only an ignorant and imperfect human being struggling with the evils of the lower nature.... What is created by spiritual progress is an inner closeness and intimacy in the inner being, the sense of the Mother's love and presence etc."

CWM 16: 312-13

The Mother

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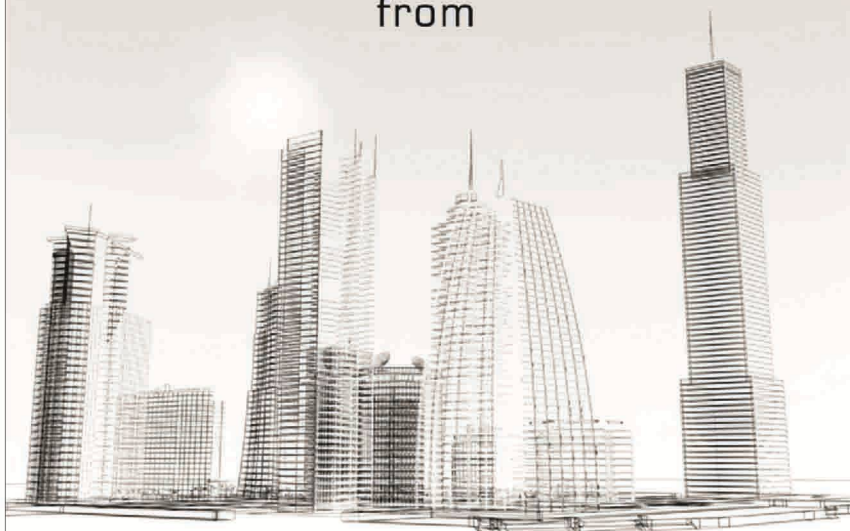
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